



ECPS EXPRESS

Monthly News and Notes about Essex County Public Schools

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Career and Technical Education Prepares All Students for the Future

Recently, the Virginia Board of Education determined that all high school graduates be “life-ready” and must, among other things, demonstrate productive workplace skills, qualities and behaviors as well as achieve and apply appropriate academic and technical knowledge. Essex County Public Schools wholeheartedly embraces that goal and as a result, all ninth-grade students

now take at least one Career and Technical Education (CTE) class, and then have the opportunity to take more CTE classes as they go through high school.

The wide range of CTE classes gives students the chance to explore a career and possibly uncover a passion that they can pursue after graduation by landing a job in that field, or enrolling in a two-year or four-year college program for more education.

“What most people remember as Vocational Education is now known as Career and Technical Education, which has become a stepping stone into some very well-paying jobs as well as a foundation for a two- or four-year degree,” said Superintendent Dr. Scott A. Burckbuchler. “It really has expanded from what VocEd programs used to be. These programs offer a wide array of opportunities for our students and prepare them to be productive citizens.”

Indeed, Essex High School students can explore their interests in a variety of fields such as computer information systems, web and multimedia design, sports and fashion marketing, business law, entrepreneurship, nursing, engineering, and culinary arts. In addition, all 10th graders take personal finance and a workplace readiness class in which they acquire marketable skills such as teamwork, interviewing, resume writing, communication, collaboration and more.

“Ninety percent of our students are enrolled in at least one CTE class and about the same percentage of our juniors and seniors are completing a path that leads to industry credentials, such as Microsoft certification or culinary certification,” said Essex High School Principal Kim Parks. “In fact, many of them graduate with multiple CTE credentials, which makes them extremely marketable when it comes time to find a job.”

Beyond the CTE classes offered at Essex High School, students can take advanced courses at the Northern Neck Technical Center (NNTC), which serves six surrounding school divisions and offers a wider range of fields, including marine trades, carpentry cosmetology, auto body and collision repair, and horticulture and landscaping. Nearly 20 percent of the 300 students at NNTC are from Essex High School. Last year, NNTC served 54 EHS students who earned 66 total state/national certifications and 12 state licenses in certified nursing assistance and cosmetology.

“We take our 10th graders to the NNTC on a field trip so they can see what current students are doing there and possibly be inspired to explore a particular field,” said Principal Parks.

“Of course, we don’t expect all our students to know what they want to be when they grow up,” she said, “but we believe in giving them multiple opportunities to imagine themselves in one of these careers. We actually start having these conversations with parents and students while in the eighth grade so we can start mapping out a plan that will work for their academic and career goals.”

Todd Davis, assistant principal of NNTC, said that the most popular programs are nursing and culinary arts, both of which can earn students college credits at the community college through a dual enrollment program. “Essentially, these students along with our engineering students, can graduate from high school with a high school diploma, industry certification and, in some cases, an associate’s degree.”

“And about 35 students get placed in jobs before graduating high school,” Mr. Davis said. “In their final semester, we get them a paid internship such as in hair salons and autobody shops, or as cooks, home/nursing health care providers, or marine boat technicians, and then they have a head start once they graduate.”

“We love seeing the kids come over here and the light bulb goes off when they find something they are passionate about,” said Mr. Davis.

Superintendent Burckbuchler agreed, “This is what education is all about ... helping students find their own pathways to excellence and then preparing them to succeed.”



Essex High School students who attend NNTC show their skills: Syncere Gray in carpentry, Tori Pollard in culinary arts, and Jorge Mendoza and Daniel Gutierrez in auto technology.

Happy Holidays!



On behalf of Essex County Public Schools, I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We count every student and faculty/staff member among our greatest blessings and are committed to meeting the individual needs of our students by continuing to celebrate and care for them.

“Dr. B”
Scott A. Burckbuchler, Ph.D., Superintendent

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