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Local News

Hilton to pursue technical education endorsement

Sarah F. Lascari/Messenger Post Correspondent

April 25, 2002

The voluntary initiative offers students greater flexibility within their curriculum.

In an effort to follow its excellence in student learning long-range plan, Hilton High School expects to offer a Career and Technical Education (CTE) endorsement, beginning with the class of 2005.

"We're really at the very beginning stages of this," said Deborah Godlove, program coordinator for Career and Technical Education, noting that district officials hope to apply for state approval this fall.

The CTE is a voluntary initiative from the New York State Education Department, passed in February 2001, offering students greater flexibility within their curriculum while still meeting graduation requirements.

"It's not a different diploma," said Godlove, also a family and consumer sciences teacher. "It's an endorsement that will be attached to the student's diploma." CTE students must take the same Regents exams as students taking a more traditional course load, she added, noting the endorsement shows colleges and employers that students have attained various real-world competencies.

"The idea [behind the initiative] was to have career and technical education. Students have the opportunity to take on a rigorous curriculum, just like all the other students were doing," said Bill Hirschen, spokesman for the state education department. "I think the Regents . . . wanted to create this path for . . . students that would provide them with relevant education," toward their desired career paths, in addition to meeting the state standards, he added.

"I'm very excited about looking at programs like this," Superintendent John Cooper said, noting the district wants to create new ways for students to meet, and exceed, ever-growing state requirements. The district is also exploring the possibility of offering an International Baccalaureate program, as well as a fine arts program. "These programs are clearly beyond the standards," Cooper said.

The district is pursuing CTE tracks in five skill areas, Godlove said, including engineering, computer networking, elementary/early childhood education, Microsoft Office User Specialist (MOUS), and management/marketing.

A Cisco Networking Academy, offering students the opportunity to become Cisco-certified network analysts will be available this fall.

Two teachers will attend Cisco training at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) this summer, Godlove said. The district, she added, was already working toward offering this program prior to pursuing CTE status, and this will be an integral part of the four-year computer networking track.

"I think [the Cisco training] would be a really positive opportunity for our students who are interested in that particular area," said Susan Allen, assistant superintendent for



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instruction, noting that network computer administration is a fast-growing career field. Cooper agreed, adding that students can graduate with this certification and get starting jobs of \$30,000 without additional training.

The district is also looking to offer Project Lead the Way (PLTW), a currently established pre-engineering program involving several other school districts in the county, Allen said. PLTW, the product of a partnership between RIT, local schools, and the Charitable Ventures Foundation, acquaints high school students with the academics, equipment and procedures they can expect to experience within a college engineering curriculum.

"We would certainly need to look at our courses, and in some cases develop one or two more that would be of a more integrated nature," Allen said, but portions of the engineering, computer networking, and elementary/early childhood education tracks are already in place.

The district currently offers classes to students pursuing their Child Development Associate (CDA), a credential often required to work in a certified daycare center or nursery school, Godlove said. The Microsoft Office User Specialist (MOUS) track of the program, expected to offer classes in the software components of Microsoft Office and culminate in a national certification exam, as well as the management/marketing track, are still in the early phases of development, Allen said.

Since the district already had a strong career and technical educational department, it made sense to pursue the CTE endorsement, Godlove said. "We felt that this was an important piece to offer our students. It's also part of us trying to make education more meaningful to everybody," she said, adding that students don't always see the connections between math class, for example, and the "real world".

The overall price tag of implementing the CTE endorsement is difficult to predict, officials said, since some of the course work is already available. Staff development costs and equipment purchases will be spread out over several years, accounted for in the budget process, Allen said.

"[The money] is coming from our typical sources of funding here in the district," said Hilton High School Principal David Dimbleby, such as state aid, grants and local funding sources. Families would have to pay registration fees for national exams, similar to how students currently pay for Advanced Placement exams, he said. No state funding is attached to the CTE initiative, Hirschen said.

All five of the planned tracks will likely help students accumulate college credits, Godlove said, citing district relationships with Monroe Community College, RIT and SUNY Brockport. For students to receive the CTE endorsement, Godlove said, they must pass national tests selected by the district, in addition to performing a demonstration and creating a portfolio. On-the-job work experience will be included as applicable, she said.

"This is by no means a watered-down program. The national exams are pretty tough," Godlove said.

Dimbleby acknowledged the district's need to take a different approach in helping all students meet rising state standards, despite an increase in Regents diploma graduates over the last five years. "We think the CTE diploma has the potential to help us do that," he said.

Students will decide, based on their aptitudes, how they want to be involved in the program, Dimbleby said. This choice will occur in 10th grade, since upper classmen have the most room in their schedules for electives. While enrollment assessments are premature at this point, Dimbleby said he expects 20 to 30 percent of the student population to be involved.

The Computer Networking strand of the program is expected to be available in September 2003, then others will be phased in. "I would hope within four to five years


we would be able to offer the various strands that we're looking at," Allen said.

The only other school in Monroe County that has been approved for the CTE endorsement is Monroe No. 1 BOCES, Hirschen said.

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