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The Academy launches new entrepreneurship program

By Emily Cox The Herald-Times

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The Academy of Science and Entrepreneurship. (Courtesy photo)

Teachers often answer student questions, but at the Academy of Science and Entrepreneurship, teachers try to provide tools so students can find answers on their own, said Joann Novak, business and computer science teacher at the school.

A new program, INCubatoredu, furthers that goal of the school. INCubatoredu allows juniors and seniors to come up with ideas for problem-solving apps and products, launched this school year at the Academy, a high school in the Monroe County Community School Corp.

The new program is possible because of a \$1.2 million grant the MCCSC received in June to support a multi-year district-wide plan focused on college, career and life readiness for students. The funds are from Regional Opportunities Initiatives Inc. Ready Schools Implementation Grant program.

“The INcubatoredu program is designed to teach students entrepreneurial skills and give them an opportunity to kind of solve real world problems that they see through an entrepreneurial endeavor,” said Alexis Harmon, principal of the Academy. “So they see a problem and they come up with the solution through a private business model.”

The INCubatoredu class is new this school year and students have already gotten started while the district has all students learning online because of COVID-19 concerns, Harmon said. Some MCCSC students are able to return to in-person school as soon as Monday, but most will be able to return Sept. 8. The online option is still available for all students.

“Students are enthusiastic about it and having good experiences,” Harmon said. “In some ways they can present to their classmates, they can have discussions virtually and they are doing that.”

Harmon said a key part of the class is bringing in mentors and coaches from the community. Coaches are people who are experts in their field and can come in to teach lessons about finance, human resources, marketing or other skills, she said, and mentors are people with experience starting a business or promoting a product who will guide students.

Harmon said the Academy of Science and Entrepreneurship is reaching out to Ivy Tech Community College Bloomington and Indiana University for possible coaches and mentors, as well as to businesses in the area. She said having coaches teach lessons could begin by the end



Joann Novak, business and computer science teacher at the Academy for Science and Entrepreneurship. (Courtesy photo)

of September, but even with students returning in-person, the coaches would be teaching virtually due to visitors not being allowed in buildings because of the virus.

“I think it kind of helps us,” Harmon said. “It’s taking away some of the barriers to people coming and working with our students that we’ve had before, which is they have to get here, they have to plan for that kind of travel time. It’s more of a commitment when you have to physically be here in the building.”

Novak is teaching the course and said in an email that along with mentors and coaches, potential investors could allow students to possibly bring their ideas to the marketplace.

Harmon said students will gain skills that are necessary for post-secondary education or entering a career, including the resiliency to overcome barriers.

“What makes the program appealing to us as a school is that it fits what we believe is important, which is to be directly connected to our community and be participants and active members of it who are making it a better place,” Harmon said.

Launching a new program during a pandemic has been challenging, Harmon said, but regardless, managing the transition back to in-person school is something on everyone’s minds.

Those interested in being involved in the program can contact Stacy Sedory, MCCSC outreach and innovation coordinator, at ssedory@mccsc.edu.



Alexis Harmon, principal of the Academy of Science and Entrepreneurship. (Courtesy photo)

A timeline of the MCCSC's plans for using the ROI grant funds, subject to change due to COVID-19, can be found on the MCCSC's website under departments and new curriculum and instruction.

Contact Emily Cox at 812-331-4243, ecox@heraldt.com or follow @HT_InSchool on Twitter.

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