

Students, parents get closer look at Career Academy

Chase County Schools is piloting Mid-Plains' new program

By JAN SCHULTZ
THE IMPERIAL REPUBLICAN

Twenty high school students attended, or were represented by parents, at a program Monday that provided a closer look at the Career Academy Program.

Chase County Schools is partnering with Mid-Plains Community College (MPCC) to offer the Career Academy option to high school students here.

The new program provides a pathway for students, starting their junior year, to remain in high school one additional year, as they take college-level classes and dual-credit courses, along with a regular slate of high school classes.

After the "fifth year," the student will graduate with both his/her high school diploma and an Associate's Degree.

Officials from both the high school and college commented on the program during a "kick-off" celebration at the school auditorium.

Speakers noted that a student completing the Career Academy Program will be on a "fast track" to their careers.

That means, said CCS School Supt. Matt Fisher, that if the Career Academy student chooses to go on to earn a four-year degree, he or she will already have two years of college behind them.

That saves a year of major college expenses, because the student will be living at home and paying a lower tuition rate for the college courses, Fisher said.

He also noted the program over five years could allow a student more flexibility in their schedules to take some of the high school classes, like music and art, they may not fit in otherwise.

Or, if the student chooses to enter the work force after completing the Career Academy, he or she will also have his or her Associate's Degree in a year's less time.

"We certainly want to keep some of our young, entrepreneurial talent here" working in their communities, said Dr. Richard Tubbs, vice president of MPCC academic education.

Because of that, Dr. Tubbs said the program on the business side has a heavy concentration on entrepreneurship classes and how to run a business.

Supt. Fisher noted students in the program can still graduate with their CCS class after four years, and a year later, take part in the MPCC graduation ceremony as a college student.

Dr. Paul Ekberg, CCS's Internet technology consultant, reviewed the opportunities students have in helping pay for tuition for the college credit classes in this program.

A \$74,000 grant he was instrumental in acquiring helps pay for tuition in the information technology area. Students can apply for internships and actually work in a backup networking "business" he is involved with.

One big plus of the Career Academy Program will be the facilities at the future MPCC extended campus site in Imperial.



Students in Chase County's Pro Start class served refreshments before and after the Career Academy program at the high school. (Republican photo)



Bruce Dowse, who oversees all of MPCC's extended campuses, and Brenda Ledall of Imperial, Imperial's extended campus coordinator, share information about their soon-to-be remodeled quarters at 1324 Broadway. (Republican photo)

The college purchased the former Hometown Pharmacy building at 1324 Broadway.

Bids were due this week for a remodeling project there that will add office space, classrooms and a room for distance learning courses that could originate here.

Purchase of that building was a first for Mid-Plains, said Dr. Michael Chippis, MPCC president.

MPCC's other extended campuses are housed in buildings that are rented.

Dr. Chipps said their addition of an extended campus in Imperial several years ago was due to the importance of this area in the 18 counties they serve.

“Imperial has always been a vital part of our area. It has always been a progressive community,” Dr. Chipps said.

He said if this pilot Career Academy here goes well, they will likely replicate it in other communities in their service area.

The evening also included remarks from Brenda Ledall, extended campus coordinator here, and CCS Guidance Counselor Marcie



Dr. Michael Chipps, president of Mid-Plains Community College, said Imperial is a vital community within the 18 counties they serve. (Republican photo)

