

Arlington school district partners with UTA for STEM Academy

HIGHLIGHTS

Arlington school board members announced a partnership with UT Arlington Thursday night for a special academy geared toward the sciences. Students can earn high school and college credit simultaneously.

By Monica S. Nagy - mnagy@star-telegram.com

Seventh- and eighth-grade science-minded students in Arlington district schools will soon be recruited for a chance to earn college credits and land internships.

At Thursday's school board meeting, Arlington school administrators announced a new partnership with the University of Texas at Arlington that sets up a free, dual-credit academy for students who want to study science, technology, engineering and math.

One hundred students will be recruited in January for the STEM Academy that will open at Martin High School in August 2015.

Students selected can earn high school and college credits simultaneously in one of four subject areas: engineering, biology/biomedical science, computer science and math/science. These students will be able to complete first-year college courses before they graduate, and simplify their transition to college, said Martin math teacher Kelly McCollough.

The relationship will further strengthen the relationship between the school district and university, McCollough said.

Students will also receive internship, mentorship, job shadowing, community service and enrichment opportunities along the way.

Arlington school Superintendent Marcelo Cavazos said the academy will prepare students for high-demand fields that are seeking workers.

McCollough provided some numbers for trustees:

- Only 5 percent of U.S. workers are employed in fields related to science and engineering, although those people are responsible for more than 50 percent of the nation's sustained economic expansion, according to the U.S. Labor Department.
- In 2008, only 31 percent of U.S. bachelor's degrees were awarded in science and engineering fields compared with 61 percent in Japan and 51 percent in China.
- A recent report by the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology estimates there will be 1 million fewer STEM graduates over the next decade than U.S. industries will need.

Students in the academy will be bused to Martin, and it will become their new home campus.

The admission process will include an application and interview. The inaugural year will be 2015-16 with 100 students. An additional 100 will be added each year. Maximum capacity will be 400 freshman through senior students.

Martin High faculty and Principal Marlene Roddy have worked with leaders in UT Arlington's College of Engineering and the College of Science to develop the academy.

"Our children are the future, and AISD is our neighbor. Our two entities coming together makes it clear that we are one community," said Ashley Purgason, assistant dean of UTA's College of Science.



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