

CCHS to welcome first class of Cougar New Tech

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The future of education is coming to Colleton County High School, and it'll be the Cougar New Tech Entrepreneurial Academy that ushers it in.

When CCHS begins fall classes this month, a group of 80 rising freshmen will make up the inaugural class of the Cougar New Tech Entrepreneurial Academy, an enterprising new school of study being integrated into the high school's curriculum so as to better prepare students for college and the professional world.

So what is the Cougar New Tech Entrepreneurial Academy (besides a mouthful)? How does it work? What will it do?

According to Melissa Crosby, who will serve as the dean of Cougar New Tech, the program will incorporate a more modern approach to instruction that introduces students to scholarly concepts through real-world problem solving in a group setting, as opposed to the traditional lecture-and-textbook style of teaching.

Cougar New Tech's instructional model will emphasize project-based group learning across multiple areas of study, as opposed to individually learning about one subject or honing one skill at a time.

Crosby, in a memo sent out this week, says, "Cougar New Tech Entrepreneurial Academy is a progressive school where learners use technology to complete group projects as they would in a professional work environment. Courses are taught in double-classrooms by pairs of facilitators who integrate subject content to create projects that are both standards-based and relevant to learners' lives."

Essentially, instead of simply sitting in a class taking their own notes each day to prepare for their own individual tests (Eyes on your own paper, children!), students will work in groups to complete projects that illustrate they not only have a proper grasp of the material they've learned, but also that they can work, communicate and think well in groups — critical skills for when they later enter college and the workforce.

The idea is to apply contextually the things learned in school to everyday life, and hopefully eliminate the age-old question, "When am I ever going to need to know this?" In math it could be learning to calculate interest rates for buying a car or a home. Lessons on different cultures, world history or current events might be paired with the learning of a foreign language.

Technology will be a significant part of Cougar New Tech's instruction, as students will be presenting their work across many multimedia platforms, and will have to utilize various software programs to complete the tasks they are assigned.

CCHS, along with Scott's Branch High School in Summerton, will be the first South Carolina high schools to become part of the national New Tech Network.

According to literature from the New Tech Network Crosby provided in her memo, New Tech students have a 6-percent higher graduation rate than do average students, and grow 75-percent more in higher-order thinking skills during high school, enroll in college at a 9-percent greater rate and stay in college longer than those who do not take New Tech courses.

Colleton County plans to slowly phase out its business school in favor of Cougar New Tech over the next four school years, going from only a freshman-level program to one that encompasses all four years of a student's high school career.

Orientation for Cougar New Tech students will be August 5-7. There will be a special ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new school of study Aug. 4 at 5 p.m. in the CCHS Performing Arts Center.

For more information on getting your child involved in the Cougar New Tech program at, contact Melissa Crosby by phone at (843)-782-0031; ext. 52233, or by email at mcrosby@colletonsd.org.

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