

Google Joins Students@Work Week

Written by Greg Behr
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Google is pleased to join Caldwell County schools and other businesses across North Carolina for Students@Work Week. The release says the goal of the week is to raise North Carolina's graduation rate by offering middle school students a look at future opportunities in the local workplace. Students@Work is a joint initiative between the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE). Throughout the week, middle school students will take part in job shadowing or job mentoring programs to help them connect what they are learning in the classroom with the real world of work in their communities.

This year's initiative spans all 100 North Carolina counties, includes more than 90 companies and will affect more than 20,000 students. "Thanks to hard work from teachers and students, North Carolina recorded its highest-ever high school graduation rate in 2012-13," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson. "Our state's business community also plays a vital role in encouraging students to graduate by offering job shadowing and internship experiences that help them connect what they are learning in school to their career goals for the future."

Caldwell County is participating in the program through an in-school visit by Google to Caldwell County School's Education Center to mentor students about the career possibilities that exist in the data center and more broadly information technology industry. Each of the eight Caldwell County Middle Schools will send four students to take part in Students@Work with Google, these 32 students taking the opportunity to spend the day with Google employees literally learning the ins and outs of what makes computers work. In fact, they will build working computers from a box of parts. At the end of the day, eight students will go home with one of the computers assembled.

"Students@Work offers Googlers a unique opportunity to pass on their expertise to the next generation who will likely be even more savvy with and dependent on computers as part of their careers and daily lives," says Enoch Moeller, manager, Google's Lenoir Data Center. "For the kids, the unique experience of creating a working computer from just spare parts is an opportunity to see that technology isn't as intimidating as they may have originally thought." The Students@Work initiative centers its efforts around middle school students because middle school is a crucial time for dropout prevention. The program helps to emphasize future career options, as well as the importance of staying in school, before students enter the ninth-grade. For more information about Google's participation in Students@Work Week, contact Greg Behr (919.272.5621) or Billy Warden (919.412.0630). For more information about NCBCE, visit www.ncbce.org.

Gravity Games Registration Open Until March 22

On another front, Google and Appalachian State University present the fifth annual NC Gravity Games next month in downtown Lenoir. The Gravity Games is a real-world experience in which students from across the state use STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) lessons to build and race their own gravity powered cars. The deadline for registration is March 22 at www.NCGravityGames.com.