Activities and Events

Heavy Metal Tour III

The year started off with the third annual “Heavy Metal Tour” with new hosts H. A. Phillips and Shape-Master Tool joining Algus Packaging, CHS, Clark-Dietrich Building Systems, Driv-Lok, Greenlee/Textron and IDEAL Industries. As in previous years, the students tour these businesses and then rendezvous at the Career Technologies Wing of Kishwaukee College for tours and demonstrations in the departmental labs.

A number of Kishwaukee College leaders spoke to the students about the opportunities available at KC and pizza lunch was provided by Walt LTD and Kishwaukee College. However, the highlight this year was the Proclamation from the Governor’s Office proclaiming the “Tour’s” impact on area businesses, area students and the positive effect it has on the area’s economic posture. Presented by Mr. Joe McKeown from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, we feel very proud that the “Tour” has come so far.

We have scheduled “Heavy Metal Tour IV” for October 14th, once again in concert with National Manufacturing Day. The hosts will be: Alexander Lumber, Algus, Cain Millwork, CHS,
Driv-Lok, Greenlee/Textron, IDEAL Industries and Sycamore Precision along with a revamped program at Kishwaukee College Career Technologies Wing.

**FabTech**

We attended another show at McCormick Place in Chicago called FabTech, which offered a broad view of all kinds of metal fabrication equipment, welding machinery and demonstrations, including teachable moments when STEM and the “real world” collide. Within one of the demonstrations, I witnessed (off-road racer, fabricator, demonstrator and teacher) Ian Johnson helping a young man with his TIG welding. Along with the help, the student heard about the chemistry and physics of the welding process. All of the sudden the student’s eyes lit up – and all of the lectures that he had listened to and not understood came into focus. While this was an “ah-ha” to be sure, it is a great example of how practical knowledge and STEM can interact and make perfect sense.

This year FabTech is in Las Vegas, so transportation may be a problem. But, we will head to the International Manufacturing Technology Show and the student Smartforce Summit to see what’s happening at the leading edge of industrial technology.
The partner tour to Heavy Metal Tour is the Assemble ur Career Tour, which is held in February. This year new hosts, Butitta Automotive, Johnson Controls, Sawicki Motors and Skandia joined Custom Aluminum, CST, Dawn Equipment, Dun-Rite Tool and SK Tool to show the students
What their industries looked like from the inside. Once the tours were complete, we met at Northern Illinois University’s Engineering Building to see what the students are up to and to see what opportunities there could lead to promising careers. Of course, we ate pizza while we listened to Dr. Ghrayeb, but most of the attention is given to the formula race car, ground “bot” and quad-copter. We give many thanks to David Grady, from NIU CEET, for opening the doors at this event.

**Northwestern Illinois Trades Fair**

A new addition this year was a trip to Rockford’s Carpenter’s Training Center to see fourteen different trades represented by their union affiliates. All the schools had students going along to investigate steel working, carpentry, sheet metal working, electricians, operating engineers and teamsters. While this event did not promote going to college, it allowed the students to understand that they needed everything that they were learning in high school as well as further training in the specific endeavor that they wanted to make a profession. We will return next year to participate in this “hands-on” event.
Voices of the Community

This event was conceived by DeKalb senior Andrew Yohanan and turned out to be very successful. The City of DeKalb was represented by Mayor John Rey, Jerrod Heyn and Emily Tipps from the City Manager’s Office. Meanwhile, the county was represented by Paul Borek, Executive Director the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation; Gary Hansen, DeKalb County Administrator and Mark Pietrowski, President of the County Board. Students were required to be carrying a 3.5 or greater GPA or have a special pass from a current teacher. Great presentations, lots of good questions and plans to do more events were only hampered by a lack of available time. Perhaps a better time management plan is in order for next year.
Soft Skills Workshops

At the beginning of the school year, we planned to offer a “Soft Skills” workshop copied from the one Dr. Joe Burgess started at Genoa-Kingston High School last year. Lack of funding held us up until the DeKalb County Community Foundation approved a grant for the project. A huge Thank You to DCCF!

Within a couple weeks we had space, speakers and students lined up for Sycamore High School and Rochelle Township. The success of the program is generated by the quality presenters that talk to and with the students; demonstrate via role play or electronically and bring to light effects that the students have never considered. Amy Horn from KEC; Liz Bockman of Everyday Etiquette; Mary Hess formerly from Ben Gordon; Nicole Prescott of Adventure Works; Kristin Brynteson from NIU, Chris DeVlieger, HR Manager at Suter Foods, Nic Helderman, Facility Manager of Mighty Vine and Bernie Pupino from Kishwaukee College, all provided a wealth of practical information for the participants. This program was considered very worthwhile by the attending students and continues next year, including DeKalb High School.

Sycamore Manufacturing Academy

Sycamore High School, Driv-Lok and IDEAL Industries teamed up to provide the first Manufacturing Academy to a select group of Sycamore High School students. Deemed successful by
the students, their parents, school officials and the business hosts, this program will continue next
year.

Regular Hours

This year we established regular hours at each high school. Rochelle Township High School
started the week on Monday morning; followed by Genoa-Kingston every Thursday afternoon and
Friday morning at Sycamore High School. Of course, the DeKalb students know where to find me, or
leave a note, if I am out assisting others interested in our program.

Career Fairs

Whether you call them, Job Fairs, Career Fairs, Expo’s, Outreach or Awareness Days, this is
one of the most important opportunities for students to meet the business leaders and talk to them
about career possibilities and expectations. Whether you are in eighth grade and have no idea what
lies ahead or you are a senior and have defined some really good “maybe’s,” these opportunities are
great for students to see that there are more than policemen, firemen, doctors, lawyers, teachers and
coaches. There’s something for everyone, the trick is finding it!

Focus House

The Ogle county Focus House students continued to go on tours of Hormel Packing, Silgan
Containers and the Rochelle Water Reclamation Center.

Lower Profile, but Just as Meaningful

Kishwaukee Education Consortium

KEC provides opportunities for specialized career development for a wide variety of
occupations. About mid-October KEC hosts “Next Steps” and I talk about the topic “How to Get a Job
and Keep It?” Hopefully, bombarding students with twenty minutes of coaching makes them curious
about applications, cover letters, interviews and the first day on the job.

Tenth graders get to tour the facility and ask questions about KEC; Mr. Escamilla provides
seniors with an exposure class, allowing the students to understand what the job market looks like,
how it works and what to expect and in the best interests of the Consortium, I jump in and substitute
for instructors in Advanced Engineering Technology, Welding and Automotive. I use this as a chance
to interact with the students allowing them to see the working world from yet a different perspective.

Mock Interviews

One of the best ways to introduce a student to the anxieties and concepts of interviewing is to
utilize the “mock interview.” Prepared by the instructor but conducted by a third party, the student
gets to conduct themselves exactly as if they were interviewing for a “real” job. Of course, there are 
commonly asked questions. Of course, you should anticipate those and have quality answers already 
composed in your mind.

Mock interviews were conducted in summer school; also during regular “econ ed” classes with 
Mr. Neville, Mr. Schumacher; in 8th grade with Mrs. Hencken’s students; with the Early Childhood 
Education interns and with thirty-two seniors at Hiawatha. Some of the students are coached at 
home and will probably land their first BIG job. Other folks walk away because they cannot stand the 
stress of answering questions or speaking with an adult. Either way, mock interviews are great 
practice and if you are having a problem, what an easy way to identify it and fix it.

Middle School Fun

The sooner that we can feed the curiosity of the student, the quicker they will align 
themselves with a broad career path. No sense being too specific, you are going to change your mind 
or perhaps technology advances will alter your plans. It’s fun to spend time with the junior high 
students, because everything is a new adventure. Carol Hencken from Genoa-Kingston Middle School 
likes to expose the students to as much “real world” as they can handle. Resumes, cover letters, 
interviews, high school advice, whatever the need, Carol reminds the students that in a very short 
amount of time they will be going to work, college or the military and that they must be able to 
understand the expectations.

High School Details

Genoa-Kingston

“Project Lead the Way” is a great initiative that allows students to create “hands-on” projects 
that lead them into STEM questions and classes. GKHS 20/20 embraces technology and provides 
leadership for bringing science and technology into the district.

Rochelle Township

The new “Soft Skills” Workshop coupled up with the job co-op program shows a 
commitment by Superintendent Jamie Craven and the board to provide job ready graduates to the 
community. I am grateful for Andrea O’Reilly at Rochelle High School for lining up students, 
councilors, rooms and permission slips. We realign every Monday morning and like to think that we 
stay about a half step in front of the students.

Sycamore

The Manufacturing Academy and the “Employment Skills” Workshop were highlighted 
previously, but the Thursday Late Stat presenters offer a wide variety of career examples.

DeKalb
We talked about the “Voices of the Community” program and next year the “Soft Skills” program will be in operation.

Hiawatha

English class exposure to resume, cover letters and interviews, then “mock interviews.” Hopefully, there will be more opportunities to interact next year.

Extras

I attended the “2016 Manufacturing Event” at Harper College; the High School Counselors meetings at KEC; the unmanned aircraft workshop at the DeKalb Municipal Airport; FFA Ag Mechanics judging; Chamber dinners; “Train Your Brain” seminar; site “open houses” and Business Retention Meetings. I worked with Adventure Works; substitute workshops; presented at the Leadership Academies; attended the DeKalb School Board meeting with Zach Elliott and the Genoa Economic Development meetings.

In closing, I would like to thank all the leaders of businesses, the schools and especially the students for helping to make each year bigger and better than the previous one. Without everyone working together, we would not be successful; but with the team spirit exhibited, I am sure that we will accomplish everything we set out to do.