

HCST Receives \$100K for Pre-Apprenticeship Program



The Hudson County Schools of Technology has received a \$100,000 grant from the New Jersey Department of Education to build a pre-apprenticeship Design and Fabrication (d|Fab) program. This unique program will help prepare high school students for on the job apprenticeship opportunities after graduation.

"In keeping with the foundation of HCST, students continue to find new and innovative ways to keep learning alive, both in and out of the classroom," said **Superintendent Amy Lin Rodriguez**. "The HCST community is committed to working with all members to continue preparations for a bright and successful future. This grant will enable us to fulfill our mission through a world class education that prepares them for a seamless transition to the workforce."



The district will continue its partnership with Eastern Millworks Inc. – a Jersey City based architectural woodworking company – and join Drape Kings to create new opportunities in an industry that continues to create much needed skill jobs. Additionally, HCST will be working closely with Hudson County Community College and New Jersey Institute of Technology to provide students with college credits while they work in industry-related internships. Overseeing the program within the district is Apprenticeship and Internship Coordinator Amy DeGise, Design and Fabrication Academy Supervisor Gregory Simon, Supervisor of Basic Skills Linda DiGiacomo and Design and Fabrication Teacher-in-Charge Michael Diamond.

"The Hudson County Schools of Technology's vision is to prepare our students for their future goals through meaningful, innovative programming," said **Apprenticeship and Internship Coordinator Amy DeGise**. "With the right support, the district hopes to offer more pathways to career exploration and planning, so we are thrilled to be introducing this new experience to our student community."

Funding is being made possible through the New Direction (EXPAND) grant, a statewide program designed to give better opportunities for students to gain the skills they need to secure high quality jobs.

"We often talk about providing options and opportunities that allow high school graduates to move on to successful careers, even if they choose not to go to college," said **Dr. Lamont Repollet, Commissioner of Education**. "These kinds of partnerships with school districts, industry and higher education can give young people the real-world experience they need for success after high school."

A Message from the Superintendent

Dear HCST Community:

In this edition of HCST Connections, we wanted to highlight our district's observation of February's Career and Technical Education Month. As an unprecedented pandemic forced us into trying, unexpected times, the strength and support of our HCST community with the efforts of our dedicated students and staff, have successfully enabled us to transition to our new virtual environment. I hope these selections from our past educational opportunities will help brighten your spirits as we look forward to providing more of these unique learning experiences in the near future. Please continue to stay safe and healthy.

Superintendent

Amy Lin - Rodriguez

Culinary Students Showcase Skills at Hudson County Community College



County Prep Culinary Arts students have had the opportunity to visit Hudson County Community College throughout the school year as part of the "Extended Culinary Student for the Day" program. Through the partnership, students had the opportunity to work one-on-one with renowned chefs to prepare dishes for their peers.

During their most recent session, culinary students showcased their talents by preparing scrumptious ribs, spicy buffalo chicken, delightful macaroni and cheese, exotic potatoes, and deep fried grilled cheese sandwiches.

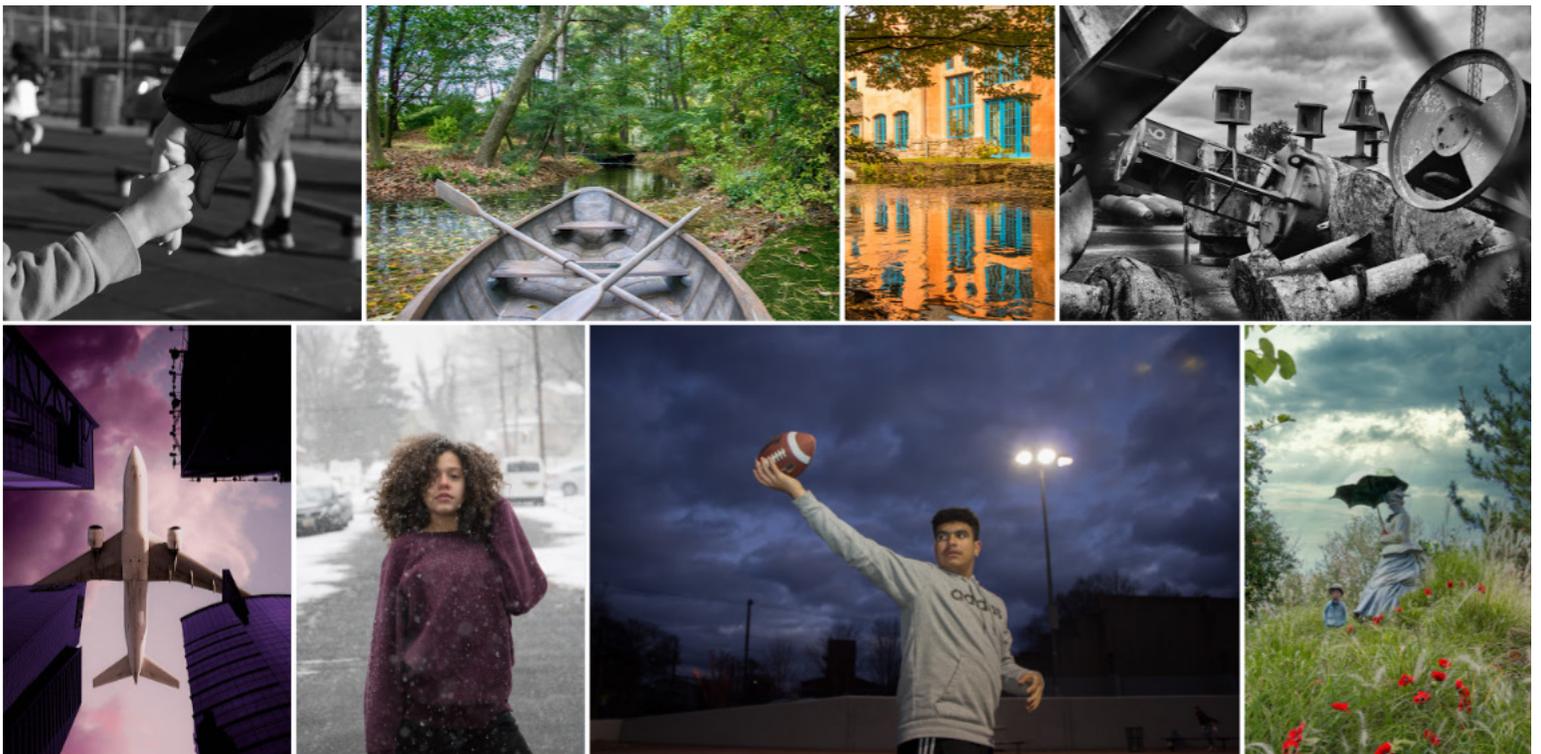
Early Childhood Students Participate in 'Junior Achievement High School Heroes Program'



Students in **Ms. Bello's** early childhood education classes at County Prep High School have been participating in the "Junior Achievement High School Heroes Program." The students visited Cordero School in Jersey City to shadow teachers and deliver interactive lessons on personal finance.

Through this Structured Learning Experience, students were able to put their leadership, organization, presentation and communication skills to the test while learning first hand the importance of teamwork and preparedness.

Photography Students Win Big at Pingry School Exhibition



County Prep Photography students had a historic win at the Pingry School Exhibition this year. For the first time, a record eight students in the Commercial Photography Department received Judges Awards at the prestigious event. **The winners are:**

Freshmen: Fady Kelada for "Odell Hands" and Sariah Olivera for "Snow Day"

Sophomores: Grace Bertrand for "Family" and Casey Kelly for "Rustic"

Juniors: Jaiden Betancourt for "Merry Poppins," Aneesa Cortez for "Into the Woods" and Ashleigh Hernandez for "The Upside Down"

Seniors: Sherwin Dewan for "Perspective"

Explore Middle School Student Takes Top Prize at MLK Oratory Contest



Gabriel Marandino, a seventh grade student at Explore Middle School, took home the top prize this year at Jersey City's Martin Luther King Jr. Oratory Contest for his recitation of "*Where Do We Go From Here?*" This is the fourth consecutive year Gabriel has participated in the citywide contest, each year being recognized for his talent and passion.

"The speech means a lot to me. A lot of preparation and hard work goes into preparing for the competition," said Gabriel. "When I give my speech I make sure to include a lot of emotion. I spend a lot

of time thinking about the words and what they mean. I think I was able to achieve first place this year because I not only spoke with my voice but with my heart," Gabriel proudly explained.

Gabriel has performed some of Martin Luther King Jr.'s most notable speeches during the district's Black History Month celebrations and has always received a standing ovation from his peers. His speech selection for this year's competition inspired the school to use the theme of "*Where Do We Go From Here?*" for this year's Black History Month ceremony on February 28.

"It is incredibly important for us to not only celebrate our students' successes but also showcase their talents," said **Explore Middle School Principal Allyson Krone**.

French Students Make High Tech Proud at Language Competition



Students from High Tech High School competed in the second annual "Le Tournoi Lion" French Language Competition at Middletown High School North. The event, which was held on February 22, included competitions in poetry, theatre, short film, song, painting, presentation and 3D sculpture design.

High Tech High School came in second place overall with eleven other schools and over 120 participating

in the competition. Additionally, four students took home individual awards:

- **Yousra Fares:** Best in Poetry, (*La Fontaine: La Cigale et la Fourmi*)
- **Jaz Conlon:** 3D Design of Notre Dame
- **Nicky Sanchez, Renee Goldfinger, Sarah Francis and Marieme N'Diaye:** Best in Theatre (*Le Monologue d'Harpagon from Moliere*)
- **James Espinosa, Katherine Rodriguez, Jessica Gonzalez, Nicky Sanchez:** Best in Original Short film (*Le Mime*)

Other students who participated were Nicole Sarmiento, Omar Tall, Kayla Albuja, Nicole Sanchez, Nancy Abdelmesih, Deandra Hollingsworth, Ashley Rodriguez, Ciaran Kellaghan, Ashanti Crockett, Jennifer Argumedo, Julissa Laignelet, Maya Ramdayal and Willam O'Connor.

County Prep Students Can Earn Credits for LIM College



LIM, the Laboratory Institute of Merchandising, is now officially known as LIM College. Through its unique partnership with HCST, students who complete the four year CTE Clothing and Textile major at County Prep High School are eligible to receive college credit, should they continue their studies at LIM College in Manhattan. Doing this enables students to more easily adapt to their post-secondary careers with a more manageable workload.

Current senior Makayla DeJesus of Jersey City has participated in the partnership program, receiving a four-year Academic Achievement Scholarship to LIM. The work she has completed at County Prep has given her a sense of responsibility; she is confident the skills she's learned over

the past four years have prepared her well for the next chapter of her life. Makayla has accepted her offer to study Marketing and Management at LIM in the fall.

High Tech Observes Week of Respect



Each year, schools throughout New Jersey observe the Week of Respect during the first full week in October. For the past five years, students and staff at High Tech High School have put their own unique spin on this week-long community building event, bringing everyone together through activities designed to cultivate a positive school climate, building tradition and creating bonds with the goal of fostering a sense of campus-wide community.

One of the things that make High Tech's Respect Week unique is their focus on freshmen through a

student-created and performed program "*The High Tech Talk Show: Start the Conversation*". The show focuses on a variety of school-wide issues, like cyber bullying and self-care, and culminates with an introduction to vital school staff before being capped off by words of inspiration from **Assistant Principal Michael Ra**.

Valeria Arias, High Tech's Peer Leader Advisor and Anti-Bullying Specialist, organized this year's Respect Week and created interactive spaces across campus -- which included a massive "Respect" sign in High Tech's mall area and a place for students to leave messages of hope and positivity for one another.



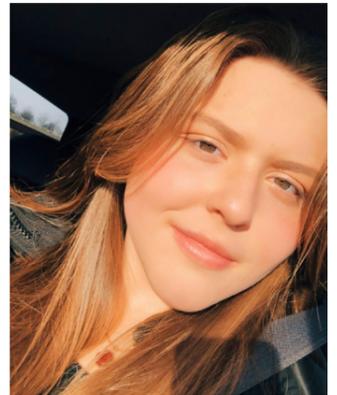
Student Spotlight

Each February, the district observes Career and Technical Education Month. In this edition of HCST Connections Student Spotlight, we are featuring just a small selection of our many students who have excelled in their course work, paving the way to be successful in their future professions.



Rishika Bandamede is a Baking and Pastry Major at High Tech High School who has had an interest in culinary arts since she was six years old. Instead of watching cartoons on the weekend, she was excited to turn on the Food Network and learn from her favorite chef, Ree Drummond. As a sophomore, Rishika became a student in the Culinary Science Academy and has competed in the SkillsUSA Commercial Baking competition. She successfully helped the Food Service Department reduce its carbon footprint by working closely with the Environmental Science program to implement a composting program at High Tech.

Olivia Montanino has used the foundations of working in the kitchen with her mother and grandmother to begin what was bound to be a successful career as a pastry chef. Growing up in Kearny, the diversity and culture developed her passion for food and the love put into each dish that is served. Since studying at High Tech High School, Olivia said her chefs and instructors have helped her become more efficient and become a better time manager. In the fall, she will attend the Culinary Institute of America and study Baking and Pastry, Business and Food Service Management to bring her one step closer to opening her own bakery.



Muhammad Elkayal is a freshman at County Prep High School studying Exercise Science and Sports Medicine. As a first year student, Muhammad has exceeded his instructors' expectations. Having long been interested in medicine, being accepted into the Exercise Science program fostered a desire to learn more about the body and has molded his decision to one day pursue a career as a physical therapist. This year, Muhammad has enjoyed learning about how the bones and muscle groups work together.

Isabella Cordero is a senior studying Computer Programming and Robotics in the D|Fab Academy at High Tech High School. The major's use of science, physics, math and critical thinking has inspired her to one day pursue a degree as either an engineer or math teacher. Isabella has enjoyed working with circuits because finding the correct figuration reminds her of successfully completing a puzzle. Last year, Isabella and her classmates came in third place in the SkillsUSA competition in Industrial Engineering Technology.



Stephany Santiago has spent the past four years busy practicing dance in and out of the classroom at County Prep High School. Having completed multiple rigorous dance programs and volunteered at multiple local organizations, Stephany said what draws her to dance is the ability to not only move rhythmically, but also study the way the body moves and has changed her entire thought process. Studying dance has helped her become diligent, independent and determined and she credits her instructors and classmates with pushing her to step out of her comfort zone. Stephany aspires to be a professional dancer with the intention of later studying physical therapy.

Makena Ortiz is a senior Cosmetology student at County Prep High School. In her time as a student at the Hudson County Schools of Technology, she has proudly completed the state required 1,000 hours of practice to take her exam to become a licensed cosmetologist. Makena has always been interested in beauty, particularly nails and hair, and she hopes the skills she has learned will pave the way for her to open her own salon after earning a business degree.



Mikail Oflaz has proven you are never too young to make a difference. A seventh grade student at Explore Middle School, Mikail has competed in the Montessori Model United Nations program in New York City since third grade. Last year, with the help of his mother, he presented the idea of forming a team within the district to the school's administrators. Because of his leadership, Explore Middle School sent 11 delegates to the conference in February with much success.

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