

“An Interview With Dr. Hessinger, DASD Chief Academic Officer”

by John Clegg, Off the Record Editor-In-Chief

(John Clegg, is a senior at East)

Question	Answer
1. What advantages does the STEM academy provide for its students?	<p>All students enrolled in the STEM Academy will be issued a laptop. Through this one-to-one laptop initiative, learning will be non-traditional in that technology will be leveraged to change teaching and learning. The atmosphere of the building will be a college preparatory, academy atmosphere.</p> <p>Students enrolled in the Academy will be learning with other students who have similar interests.</p> <p>The DASD STEM Academy’s goal is to prepare students for higher education in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.</p> <p>The STEM Academy will provide students with the opportunity to focus on the connections among science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines through real-world, project-based learning experiences.</p> <p>The schedule of the school will look different – most likely there will be longer periods for project-based learning (this is a recommendation that the Board will vote on in January). We envision that students will work on teams to solve problems and perhaps collaborate with students around the globe.</p> <p>The building that will house the Academy will be totally renovated into a state-of-the art learning environment. The building renovation plans were recently presented to the Board Facilities Committee.</p> <p>The capacity of the building is approximately 800 full-time, full-day students. This smaller size school will provide a collaborative school atmosphere with unique academic opportunities.</p>
2. What are some of the differences between the STEM academy and the math/science courses offered at DEHS?	<p>While the course offerings have not yet been determined, the sequence of courses will most likely differ from those offered in the current high schools.</p> <p>The STEM Academy will offer an integrated approach to these disciplines. In addition, we will be offering the opportunity for students to elect engineering courses at the Academy. More curriculum decisions will be forthcoming.</p>
3. What is the STEM committee looking to do in terms of extracurricular activities / sports for the STEM magnet school?	<p>The specific activities have not been determined, however, the Core Team has forwarded a recommendation to the School Board for their action in January. If the Board approves the recommendation, the STEM Academy will be a “magnet” school. This means that students could return to their home schools (East or West) for sports and other after school activities. The STEM Academy would also offer some clubs, competitions or other activities based upon students’ interests, but it will not offer athletics or theatrical/ musical performance groups. One of the questions that must be answered is, “how can STEM students continue to participate in the performing music groups?” Once we have an answer to this question, we will disseminate it to the public.</p>
4. Would honors / AP courses be offered at the STEM academy?	<p>We have not determined exactly which courses will be offered at what levels. We are investigating the possibility of implementing the International Baccalaureate Program, which is an internationally recognized college preparatory program. If we adopt that program, we probably would not duplicate our AP offerings, since the IB Higher Level courses are recognized around the world like AP courses are recognized in the USA.</p> <p>We will indeed offer courses that are academically rigorous.</p>
5. Do you have any other comments about the STEM program for	<p>Another recommendation that has been sent to the Board for January action is that the school would open in fall 2011 with a maximum of 500 ninth and tenth graders. These students are currently seventh and eighth graders. That means that the STEM Academy</p>

DEHS students?

would be open to students who are currently in eighth grade and below.

The sub-committees and core team are meeting on a regular basis to answer many questions about the details of the Academy. Some examples of the decisions that will be made this spring are:

- Which courses will be offered?
- What is the application and admissions process?
- What will the schedule look like?

It is expected that the Academy Administrator will be hired for July 2010 to oversee the planning for the start-up for the school. The Academy Administrator would be responsible for tasks such as: publicity, hiring staff, creating a schedule, obtaining resources and enrolling students.