

PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS—BEST PRACTICES

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—Joe Pikovsky

Peabody High School

“It’s exciting to note that two students took their A+ certification exams and passed while still in the eighth grade!” Joe Pikovsky, Instructor and Regional Legal Main Contact

When Elbie Yaworsky, chief technology officer for Pittsburgh Public Schools, observed that HP IT Essentials students at Peabody High School were assisting with technology within the school setting and relieving the eight district technicians of some of the burden of hardware and software support, he saw an opportunity to engage other schools in the school district. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a large district consisting of 10 high schools, 17 middle schools, and 53 elementary schools, and it became increasingly difficult for the high school students to continue to provide the same level of hardware/software support to the middle schools too. This led to the idea to pilot HP IT Essentials at the middle school level.

The first middle school to implement the HP IT Essentials pilot curriculum was Reizenstein Middle School, an urban school with 885 students. Reizenstein is a feeder school for Peabody, so the high school regional instructors were able to spend time assisting middle school students with labs. Last year, the school offered three HP IT Essentials I classes of 22 students each. This year Reizenstein is offering four classes of 20 students each. Interest in the course was high and more than 220 students signed up to take it, but the school is limited by the schedule of the two instructors.

Last year another suburban middle school, North Allegheny Intermediate School, in the North Allegheny School District, ran a pilot to teach HP IT Essentials to eighth and ninth graders. This academic year a third middle school, Allegheny Traditional Academy from the Pittsburgh Public Schools, is offering one class to a combination of sixth and seventh graders.

During the summer, the school system employed students as paid interns to work on a districtwide project called the Emerging Links/Digital Divide project. Students from the high school and middle schools, who had reached the legal work age, were hired to refurbish more than 10,000 computers and distribute them to lower income families so that students would have a computer at home to work on school assignments. Pittsburgh Public Schools also serves as a data acquisition site so that students are guaranteed high-speed Internet access at reduced fees.



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“Currently there are 17 local Academies offering HP IT Essentials and 11 offering CCNA certification under Peabody Regional Academy. I expect to sign up 20 new academies for the program after this year’s recruiting seminar and luncheon.”

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Peabody High School

HP IT Essentials Implementation—Preparation for Cisco CCNA

From Joe Pikovsky, Regional Legal Main Contact at Peabody High School: “This year, 18 students from the pilot HP IT Essentials middle school classes are enrolled in CCNA at Peabody High School. These students have an advantage over students who have not taken this course and, in fact, about four ninth-grade students were picked for spots on the technology team that are usually reserved for juniors and seniors. It’s also exciting to note that two of the students took their A+ certification exams and passed while still in the eighth grade.”

Most school districts count high school credits beginning in the ninth grade but because HP IT Essentials is a course taught at the high school level, students receive high school credit for the course taught in middle school. The number of students taking the Cisco® Networking Academy® curriculum at Peabody High School has tripled this year, with a large percentage of the growth in the HP IT Essentials classes.

When asked how he markets and recruits new academies, Joe offered this comment: “I hold a yearly recruiting seminar and luncheon in October and invite administrators, superintendents, and principals from middle schools and high schools in the area. Guest speakers include the superintendent and chief technology officer from the district, who explain the benefits of adopting a technology curriculum and the ability of the students to support the technicians. Because there are only eight technicians to support the 30,000 machines in the district, the students perform the lower-level functions—replacing motherboards and hard drives, upgrading memory, installing network interface cards, etc.—and the technicians can focus on the servers and network.”

In addition, Pittsburgh Public Schools have named approximately 100 staff members to become technical administrators at their respective schools, and they will be required to complete HP IT Essentials.

Currently 17 local academies offer HP IT Essentials and 11 offer Cisco CCNA® under Peabody Regional Academy. After this year’s seminar, Joe expects up to 20 new Academies to sign up for the program, mostly for HP IT Essentials. Through word of mouth the program has become so successful that Joe no longer is in the classroom but is running the technology program full time, which is a win-win situation for all involved.