A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Diploma & More

Computer Information Specialist program offers WCCC students three key certifications

By BRIAN FERRY

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Most high school graduates leave school with one significant piece of paper.

Students in the Warren County Career Center's Computer Information Specialist program could walk away with a diploma plus three separate certifications.

"Businesses in Warren approached WCCC personnel and encouraged us to expand our student offerings in the IT (information technology) field," Career Center Principal Delores Berry said.

A team with members from the community and the school was formed to come up with some options.

"The team was looking for a career program that could provide completers with serious financial opportunities for immediate work or a smooth transition to a post-secondary institution," Berry said.

In the computer age, that means certifications. So the Computer Information Specialist program, with a variety of areas of study was formed.

"The Warren County Career Center is excited about this program that prepares students to become computer information specialists," Berry said. "The Career Center curriculum covers personal computers, laptops and portable devices,

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> **Delores Berry**
> **WCCC principal**

operating systems, printers and scanners, networks, security, safety and environmental issues and concludes with professionalism and communication."

The first year of the program is off to a good start, with enrollment numbers close to the cap for the class.

During a recent school board meeting, board member Jeff Lockett said the program is "dynamically changing to the positive."

"Twenty students are currently enrolled with the goal of earning industry certifications in A+ Essentials, CompTIA Network, CompTIA Security, CompTIA Server, and Linux+," Berry said.

CompTIA is a major portion of the course.

"The Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA), an internationally recognized certification organization, has developed specialized initiatives and programs dedicated to major areas within the information technology (IT) industry," Berry said. "They include convergence technology, e-commerce, IT training, software services, certification, public policy and workforce development."

The class is designed with annual steps that bring students higher into the IT employment echelon.

"Upon completion of a student's first year, the goal is credentials that bring students to the PC

Tools of the trade
Nickole Edwards and Cody Gardiner work together on a task during CompTIA A+ Certification training.
Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry

Service Technician level," she said.

Also after one year, students will be qualified to provide phone support as a "Help Desk Technician."

That paperwork puts students in good standing in the tech world, but there is more to come.

"The goal for second-year students is to earn credentials to become a Network Support Technician," Berry said. "High school graduates have the opportunity in year three of the program to qualify as a LAN (Local Area Network) administrator."

The combination of the credentials and the soft skills included in the program are expected to make for highly employable graduates.

"Certified IT professionals report that industry credentials afford individuals with secure employment and considerable opportunities for personal professional development," Berry said. "When high schools can graduate students with industry certifications in hand, this has a positive impact on the companies and on the young people that they employ."

"It's a wonderful opportunity for kids," she said.

Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry
Clipping cable
Maryanne Elder cuts the coating of a cable revealing the wires within.

Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry
Network
Erik Krantz reveals the individual wires in a cable prior to attaching a network connector head to it.

Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry
Attentive
CompTIA students (from left) James Christman and Kyle Pfleuger listen as Teacher Terry Emerich introduces new material.

Times Observer photo by Brian Ferry
CompTIA
Teacher Terry Emerich instructs a class on CompTIA A+ Certification at Warren County Career Center.