



November 10th 2017

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To Whom It May Concern:

As Deputy State Superintendent at the Oregon Department of Education I supported our leadership team running the agency. I lead and supported 12 direct reports. For ten years we worked with some of the best people in under the most difficult circumstances. We had some of the most talented educators in Oregon on our team. The leadership of the Knight HS Digital Design & Engineering Academy would have fit right in with that leadership team.

The Academy operates as a school-within-a-high school. The high quality staff and low income student body take advantage of a learning community featuring rigorous integrated academics in the most high-quality career-technical education environment I have ever seen. Students are offered a full engineering pathway and an advanced makerspace. Going well beyond facilities and curriculum the leadership team offers an integrated system of student supports, and a full continuum of work-based learning experiences.

Staff at the school focus on students' ability to demonstrate a clear progression of knowledge and skills to succeed during transitions in secondary and postsecondary opportunities. Students are supported and encouraged to gain college credit for both engineering and general education/core academic courses while still in high school through articulation agreements and Advanced Placement. Digital Design & Engineering students create integrated projects as part of their cohort class offerings, and are encouraged to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including athletics, social gatherings, clubs, career-technical student organization, robotics, electric car, and an internationally-ranked autonomous drone team, among others.

Many educators and VIPs come to visit Digital Design & Engineering (DD&E) because of the outcomes students from low income and diverse populations have achieved. This is a site where they are getting the good work done. We feel it is important to remind amazed visitors that it takes time to recruit and build a team of dedicated educators and create this kind of culture they have here. I have seen this school multiple times and I know the staff feel supported, because they know that leadership will get them what they need to serve the students. Educators at the school (and many other schools) know that over time this team has figured it out.

Over the past seven years the Digital Design & Engineering has created a community of students all preparing to be successful in career or college. Through a focus on inquiry based critical thinking skills the team at DD&E are changing lives. The skills for successful college graduates or successful employees are similar: digital literacy, inventiveness, communication skills, and the ability to produce results with real-world application.

DD&E opened in 2010 to serve grades 9 to 12 as a California Partnership Academy; Knight HS, where it is housed, has over 2,975 students. All academy students participate in CTE pathways with a STEM focus. When they started the school and district leadership worked hard to ensure community stakeholders were at the table. The community was invested in better education, a stronger economy and a brighter future with DD&E as a new partner. Among the partners are Northrop Grumman, offering internships, classroom speakers, and hosting the High School



Innovation Challenge. Lockheed Martin also partners by providing mentors, speakers, and supplying funding for the program. The Air Force Research Lab has been a partner from the start, particularly as related to unmanned aerial vehicles and Summer Gateway Academies for younger students.

Since its opening DD&E has been a diverse student body economically and culturally. The school has several indicators showing impressive student achievement, greater engagement, reduced dropout and increased college-going rates compared to similar populations. I am far from the only one to recognize the work they are doing. The California School Boards Association gave them the Golden Bell award for delivering superior Career Technical/STEM education to students since 2010.

The program implementation, talented staff and partners have created a great school. This track record is why community partners are deeply engaged in the schools success. The team are inspiring students inside the classroom and outside the classroom with multiple opportunities like this one seen in this video: <http://abc7.com/society/cool-kids-edward-aimee-mentor-students-in-digital-design/1669536/>

DD&E students are our future; we already have an older than average workforce and peak retirement in the near future. Since 2010 99% of the new family wage jobs created required post-secondary training. Not every student chooses college but they all need real-world skills that they are gaining from the CTE programs. Entrepreneurship is a requirement at DD&E. Students in the Engineering pathways have a curricular objective to innovate or invent.

Industry partners recognize the quality of DD&E teaching and how students respond in the classroom. DD&E classrooms intentionally cultivate a sense of wonder, the excitement of discovery, and the satisfaction of trying hard. The self-direction and self-discipline required, as well as the learned skill of team work and trust, are sought after abilities in the work-place and have allowed his students access to internships previously only open to students in college.

DD&E is a strong school worthy of recognition because they are doing everything they can to prepare the students in the community for a prosperous future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ed Dennis