



Press Release

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CONTACT: Juliette Funes

Maritza Fairfield

(909) 445-1001

Whittier High Computer Academy Wins \$20,000 Grant to Boost Program, Support Local Small Businesses

WHITTIER – Whittier High School students will boost the success of three local businesses through creative mobile and emerging technology solutions they will devise with a \$20,000 grant from the Verizon Innovative Learning (VIL) STEM and entrepreneurship program.

Whittier High is one of five Los Angeles-area high schools recently accepted into the two-year program, which provides educators a unique experience to create a design-thinking curriculum, partner with local businesses and teach students entrepreneurship and technology skills through real-world challenges.

More than 150 social science, technology and English students from Whittier High's Cardinal Computer Academy (CCA) – a three-year California Partnership Academy – will take part in the program, set to begin in February.

“Being chosen to participate in the Verizon Innovative Learning program creates tremendous opportunities for CCA students to get the hands-on experience they need to compete for 21st century jobs,” Whittier High teacher and CCA director Kathleen Bailey said. “We are thrilled to be a part of VIL and are ready to get to work in collaboration with our community partners.”

The CCA provides students in grades 10 to 12 with rigorous academics and career technical education, a committed team of teachers and active businesses, and post-secondary partnerships. Students develop marketable workplace skills in the technological field and can earn Microsoft Office certifications as they explore careers.

As business partners in the Verizon program, the CCA has identified the Whittier Museum, 562 Creative, a graphic design, photography and video communications firm, and SmartPrint, a design firm and 3-D studio, all with varying technology needs.

Students will determine the challenges the businesses face, brainstorm ideas, create prototypes of the mobile solutions, conduct user testing, employ feedback and demonstrate their final products at a year-end showcase.

SmartPrint is owned and operated by Manny Cuchilla, who graduated from Whittier High in 2001 and serves as one of the Academy's arts advisers. Cuchilla will work with CCA student groups on two projects – design a print/website/mobile app/3-D modeling template for the Uptown Whittier Directory and create animated virtual reality games for the soon-to-open Whittier Brewing Co.

“I love working with the Academy students,” said Cuchilla, a 2007 graduate of the California Institute of the Arts. “To create effective branding designs, it takes a combination of classroom training and intuition. You must have solid STEM skills but also be willing to think outside of the box. That’s what I want to teach.”

In October, Bailey joined Whittier High teachers Cal Rinard and Matthew Francev at a three-day training session in Arizona where VIL Fellows were announced. Rinard will teach the entrepreneurship classes and Francev the design-thinking courses.

The grant will fund field trips, equipment such as 360-degree cameras and virtual reality goggles, prototyping tools, travel costs to attend conferences, classroom materials and supplies to implement the program, and a student incentive and recognition program. Verizon will provide free tech access for classrooms and immersive training for instructors.

On Feb. 24, VIL partner Arizona State University will host an all-day, in-service training seminar for the Los Angeles-area schools that are also participating in the program at Whittier High School.

“This is a remarkable opportunity for our Cardinal Computer Academy students, who will not only strengthen their STEM skills through this project, but also help local businesses reach success with the knowledge they are gaining from our dedicated team of CCA teachers,” Principal Timothy Liggett said. “We’re excited to see what ideas our students come up with the positive impacts they will have.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

013018_WUHSD_CCAGRANT: Whittier High School Cardinal Computer Academy (CCA) students attend the Engadget Experience in Los Angeles to experience new technology projects, along with CCA teachers Cal Rinard and Kathleen Bailey. The CCA is the recipient of a \$20,000 grant from the Verizon Innovative Learning STEM and entrepreneurship program.

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9401 S. Painter Avenue, Whittier, California 90605-2798 ■ (562) 698-8121 ■ www.wuhsd.org