



Opening Students Minds With New SECME Program

By Chelsea Friedman
Staff Intern

This past school year, teacher Dana McFarlane, approached Coral Springs High School, regarding a SECME program.

With support from Assistant Principal Pam Voss and Principal Susan Leon, it became a course. In March, Coral Springs High School hosted the annual SECME competition and will be doing so again this school year.

SECME stands for Science, Engineering, Communication, Mathematics and Education. This honors elective course is designed for any student with an interest in science, engineering or design. The class, incorporating both science and reading standards, is project-based, with both individual and group projects, with an emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving skills. Students design, research, create, present, reflect, and evaluate each project. The class is open to all students, grades 9 through 12, and no background knowledge is required.

McFarlane was introduced to SECME at Blanche

Ely High School and wanted to share the program with her school. With a major in chemistry and over 21 years of teaching experience, she volunteered to lead SECME as an after school club. The outcome of students interested was so large that SECME became an honors elective course. This past school year, she had enough students for two periods and still offered it as a club. There were about 60 students enrolled from all high school grades. Along with projects, the students are also required to write two book reports and read as much as they can. Her goal in bringing this course to Coral Springs High School was to offer it to all students, not just aspiring engineers, and to teach problem solving and critical thinking skills. It also provides scholarship opportunities.

At the annual SECME competition, students can participate in a brain bowl and create bionic hands, rockets, bridges, cars, banners, posters and essays. CSHS won awards in their first year, including first place for Banner, second for poster, and third place in Water Rockets. McFarlane

won SECME Coordinator of the Year. Pam Voss won SECME Administrator of the Year. FAU offers the most SECME scholarships in South Florida, giving out 25 scholarships each year. As long as the students stay in the engineering field, they can maintain the scholarships throughout their time in college. Seniors Troy Heidler and Ethan Hearne were awarded scholarships worth \$12,000 and \$12,800.

"I hear all good comments from the students," said McFarlane, "Students are re-signing up for the course for the next school year because they enjoy it so much, and in engineering there's always something to improve."

Senior Jonathan Balda added, "I think it's really fun. There's a lot of learning and not too much book work which I like. I've been in the SECME program since early middle school, and now I'm going to be a senior at Coral Springs High School where I can take the course at my school too. So, it's just a lot of fun for me."

Senior Amanda Bush added, "SECME allows us to socialize and gain group skills. You really use your imagination and it's really fun."

Parents have also been supportive by donating money and supplies.

"Someone I really thank for helping me bring this program to CSHS and making it such a success is Mark Eyerman from Blanche Ely High School," said McFarlane.

McFarlane is looking forward to the new heights the SECME program will reach.

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