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## GW joins program to help prep students for jobs

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Recommend

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - George Washington High School is partnering with the Challenge Program and Mid-Atlantic Technology, Research & Innovation Center to encourage students to hone the skills they will later need in the work place.

GW is the fourth Kanawha County school to become involved with the Challenge Program, but this is a first for MATRIC. Others already involved with the program are Herbert Hoover, Sissonville and South Charleston high schools.

The goal of the Challenge Program is to get students ready to enter the workplace by giving them a monetary initiative of up to \$250 per year for excelling in four areas - attendance, academics excellence, academic improvement and community service.

Encouraging students to do well in those areas will lead to graduates who are more prepared to enter the workplace, said Jason Keeling, spokesman for MATRIC.

"The idea is to illustrate to them that the good habits formed in high school transfer over into their professional careers. So the four areas in the challenge program reinforce that," Keeling said.

Sophomores, juniors and seniors who excel in those four areas get the \$250 reward at the end of the school year. MATRIC's part in the equation is the \$5,000 contribution the company gave to GW to support those rewards.

There are 17 schools across the state involved with the Challenge Program, now including GW. Those schools are all paired with a business partner.

The school can either decide it wants to be involved with the program and search for a partner or a local business can reach out to a nearby school.

"Every single school in West Virginia is welcome and we would like to have them all in the program," said Mary Dreliszak, director of program development with Challenge.

Finding businesses to sponsor schools isn't always easy. Last year, Nitro High School was sponsored by Walmart, but is without a sponsor this year.

Other area sponsors include NiSource Charitable Foundation at Herbert Hoover, NGK Spark Plugs at Sissonville and Dow Chemical at South Charleston.

This is the first time MATRIC has sponsored a school for the Challenge Program.

"From the perspective of being a heavily science and mathematics-based organization we wanted to demonstrate that there are opportunities in this field in the Kanawha Valley," Keeling said.

In order to reap the benefits of the Challenge Program, students must have perfect attendance and put in some time helping out in their communities. The program does not specify how much community service students must complete, but it must be logged and kept track of by either guidance counselors or administrators.

Counselors must also keep track of students' academic performance and that they are improving in areas where they have previously struggled.

"These award categories relate to success on the job. It is important that you show up everyday, that you learn on the job everyday and improve your skills; it is important that you try to do your best everyday and more and more businesses want their employees to have the spirit of giving back, so each category applies to success in school and real life," Dreliszak said.

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