EWIN Awards Planning Grant to River Forest Community Schools Led Partnership

The Education Workforce Innovation Network (EWIN) has awarded a $7,000 planning grant to River Forest Community Schools (RFCS), which is spearheading a community partnership made up of 16 regional businesses, postsecondary institutions, organizations and agencies. Their goal is to collaboratively implement a full advanced manufacturing pathway with K-12 aligned curriculum and postsecondary certifications and degrees that lead to high-demand, high-wage employment.

“The district believes it is the responsibility of schools to prepare students in academic and college/career readiness skills in order to be successful in today’s ever-changing global society,” said River Forest Assistant Superintendent Kevin Trezak. “Graduation pathways are a critical component of aligning resources and programming to meet this responsibility.”

Grant funding will support partners as they explore innovative models through research and site visits both in- and out-of-state. Plus, EWIN will provide technical assistance to help the group collaboratively determine strategies for building manufacturing career awareness, boosting employability skills, increasing focused curricular offerings and expanding staff training.

Rachelle Baker, graduation pathway coordinator, River Forest High School, said “Preparing River Forest students and supporting their career goals are our top priorities. Developing an advanced manufacturing pathway with EWIN and partners is an invaluable resource for increasing student achievement, verifiable skills and future quality of life. From being involved in a student’s academic plan to supporting their holistic growth, River Forest, EWIN & partners are equipping students with essential tools for success.”

In addition to RFCS, the partnership includes: Praxair, Indiana Manufacturers Association, Calumet Area Industrial Commission, Northwest Indiana Forum, The City of Hobart Economic Development, Lake Shore Chamber of Commerce, Center of Workforce Innovations, Vincennes University, Ivy Tech Community College, Purdue University Northwest, Indiana University Northwest, U.S. Army, Neighbors’ Educational Opportunities, Via Marketing, World of Words and Innovations in Learning.

This is EWIN’s fourth round of planning grants offered to education-workforce partnerships across Indiana to support development of implementation plans for sector-based career pathways. These pathways help make students college and career ready, inspire curricular programs grounded in the real world, engage businesses in K-16 learning experiences and provide the local workforce with highly skilled employees.

EWIN is an initiative of the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL), a non-profit at the University of Indianapolis, which unites districts, schools, communities, universities and businesses to build a sense of urgency and form innovative collaborations for statewide educational and economic improvement.

For more information, contact EWIN Director of Education Workforce Innovation Network Erin Foster at 317-791-5991.