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Schools receive \$14,000 in grants

By Keith Lawrence Messenger-Inquirer

Three local schools have been awarded nearly \$14,000 in grants from the Michigan-based Dart Foundation for "innovative instructional programs in science, technology, engineering and math."

Apollo High School, on behalf of the Life Science Academy, will receive \$4,970 for teacher training, equipment, supplies and fees for its biomedical science program.

Estes Elementary will receive \$3,760 for the purchase of a Makerbot 3-D printer, which will let third- and fourth-grade students "design, invent and fabricate objects with hands-on applications."

And Owensboro High School will get \$5,000 for a new "Introduction to Engineering Design" course.

Marcia Carpenter, director of the Community Campus program, said the grant to Apollo is really for that program, which is a partnership of Apollo, Daviess County, Owensboro, Owensboro Catholic, Hancock County and Trinity high schools.

It allows students to begin earning college credit as early as the ninth grade.

The 30-year-old Dart Foundation invited schools from 14 states where Dart Container has facilities to apply for grants of up to \$5,000 "to support programs designed to increase student interest, academic achievement and career awareness in STEM fields."

Dart has an Owensboro facility at 2400 Harbor Road.

Three of the 17 grants in Kentucky went to programs in the city and county schools here.

"We are excited to have the opportunity to use a 3-D printer for project-based learning activities in the classroom as well as the after-school program," Ryan Williams, Estes curriculum facilitator and project coordinator, said in a news release.

"The Makerbot curriculum has daily lessons that will enable students to produce and share models across many disciplines," he said. "For example, math lessons integrate instruction in biomechanics, biology, aeronautics and art. A sample activity is the design and printing of a 3-D house that will withstand erosion on a problematic plot of land."

At OHS, the new course "will address the need for ninth- through 12th-grade students to learn the engineering principles of design process, research and analysis, teamwork, communication methods, engineering standards and technical documentation," the school system said.

Students will use 3-D solid modeling design software to design solutions to problems.

They will also be able to intern with local engineering firms.

"The primary goal for this course is to prepare students for the Autodesk Inventor Certified User exam," Bryan Blount, Project Lead the Way coordinator, said in the news release.

"In order to pass this exam, students must be able to create 3-D models of industrial machinery," he said.

Project Lead The Way describes itself as "the nation's leading provider of science, technology, engineering and math programs."

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