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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
5.15.24

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS EMBRACES COMMUNITY SCHOOLING
New Initiative for Adults in the Community
Expands Certification Program for Students

MONTCLAIR, NJ – May 15, 2024 – The Montclair Public School District has entered a partnership with New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) to provide training for adults in the community who may be interested in the manufacturing and supply chain/logistics industries. With these industries facing a crisis as many veteran and knowledgeable employees are nearing retirement, more high paying and stable manufacturing jobs are becoming available for adults and students of all backgrounds. While the District has been successful in providing alternate pathways and certification for students once graduating from high school, Montclair Public Schools is embarking on a new initiative that will expand those opportunities, spearheaded by Secondary Education Director Damen Cooper. “We understand that students thrive when their families thrive. As our District is strongly supportive of family engagement and giving back to the community, finding a route for adults to gain access to the job market is a natural fit,” said Cooper.

Beginning this fall, classes will be held at Montclair High School, free-of-charge, for adults in the community interested in gaining the foundational skills and discovering the options and pathways for a promising career in these industries. Participants do not have to be a parent or caregiver of a child in the school system to take advantage of this program. Adults will also receive a scholarship to enroll in Essex County College to further their training. Currently, Montclair is the only District in the state providing this experience for adults in the community.

The program prepares participants not only for careers as maintenance and mechanical workers, but also graphic designers, sales managers, electrical assemblers, welders, industrial truck and forklift operators, purchasing agents, computer systems and software engineers, and
much more. Participants will learn how to transform ideas into products from the onset of planning and design, then to production and skills for distribution and eventually, sales.

Superintendent Jonathan Ponds has been a strong proponent of community schooling. “With this new program, adults in the community will have training and career opportunities that are easily accessible. Creating new pathways for gainful employment is a win for our families and students. We encourage lifelong learning, reinforcing the value of education and personal growth beyond the traditional school years,” said Ponds.

In a further expansion of the certification program, students at Montclair High School will also be eligible to enroll in a full-year program with two sections being offered in September. The current cohort of seniors has used virtual welding equipment in their training and have learned how robotics and technology are used in the industry. New enrollees will have the chance to use actual welding equipment providing them with even more hands-on experience.

Besides the classes and training, all candidates in the program will gain access to job opportunities in one of the largest networks in the state. New Jersey is home to more than 10,000 manufacturers and STEM firms, employing over 350,000 individuals. The goal of NJMEP’s Manufacturing Training Program is to expose, prepare and certify individuals for career pathways in this vital industry by providing the skills and foundational knowledge needed to thrive within this industry by gaining manufacturing credentials and hands-on training experiences.

Larry Banks, Manager, Pro Action Education Network and Workforce Development, NJMEP, who was on hand at the May 13 Board of Education meeting, said, “In today’s job market, no matter what age, background, or current career path, it is truly vital to equip and prepare yourself for the many opportunities you may or may not know even exist. This program will not only shine a light on the potential career pathways that exist within the manufacturing industry but also prepare participants for what is possible both worldwide and right in their backyard.”

Cooper will be implementing a campaign to recruit interested community members. Scheduling for adult courses in September will be available at the end of August. More information on the logistics of adult programs will be forthcoming. Interested students will learn more through the High School guidance office.

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