

GSD Merges Career Prep with Academic Excellence



Photo by Galen Holley

Tray Yates (left) and Nory Lorenzo (right) roll out slabs of clay in preparation for building lanterns in pottery class.

By Galen Holley
Reporter

Hunter Manning was clearly in his creative space. Standing in a classroom at the Grenada Career and Technical Center, the 14-year-old raked his bangs from his forehead and courteously slowed his work for the benefit of those watching him. Before Manning stood a table and on that a computer tablet mounted on a short tripod. The youngster addressed himself to the set up as if preparing to play Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

"It's called i-Stop Motion," Manning said, nodding his head toward the set up, his voice subdued and elucidative. He took a smooth, azure stone, tossed it up, snatched it from the air then placed it on the table beneath the tablet. Manning gently tapped the tablet's screen. The device made a soft, pleasing click, like the snapping of an old-fashioned camera shutter and an image of the stone showed on the screen. Manning was clearly pleased -- but he wasn't finished. He raised a finger, as if to say, "Wait. There's more." He carefully moved the stone a few inches to the right, took another still shot and repeated the action until he'd moved the stone out of the tablet's field of vision.

At 5:15, Manning admitted, with a whisper of uncertainty, that the app was pretty new to him. He was learning with every tap of the screen, however, and now his project was nearly finished. Manning deftly spliced the frames together and, with a series of taps, the program played the images back in a disjointed, staccato video. The vivified stones danced in symphony, across the tablet screen, finally spelling the word "Aaron." "My cousin's name," Manning said, dismissively. "I'm just practicing."

Across the room, Jamyra Yates sat at a more traditional-looking computer terminal. With each mouse click the 12-year-old's face alternated between radiant approval and brazen discomfiture, as though she were helping a fashion-challenged girlfriend choose from a rack of prom dresses. Beside Yates's keyboard lay a whimsical little bow, the kind a girl her age might wear in her hair. She made it, Yates said, from an assortment of multicolored pipe cleaners. As she spoke, an instructional YouTube video walked Yates through each step of making the craft.

"You can make things and edit them," Yates said, clearly searching for the right word. "You can transform ideas," she said, her finespun, endearing voice registering just an octave below conceit. "You can inspire people."

The technology Yates and Manning used in their Photoshop class was made available to GSD students through the 21st Century Grant. GSD was awarded the federal money because of leaders' commitment to merging academic learning with real-world, career-oriented training. According to Superintendent Dr. David Daigneault, the \$1.5 million, dispensed over five years, has enabled educators to re-imagine the traditional classroom and to realize their vision of carving out a unique



Photo by Galen Holley

(Photo left) Caydence Trost and Keyshawn Purnell lay down tracks for a podcast in the sound booth.

counterclockwise and loosening the vice on his board. "I like to build games. It's an outlet for my creativity." Sixteen-

language, tools and traditions, of a trade, arming them with the stratagems to move confidently from the classroom into the workplace. "The Grenada School District embraces technology and innovation as tenets of an integrated educational experience and our personnel are continually re-imagining traditional learning models in order to best serve the needs and high expectations of today's students," said Russell. The impetus to apply for the 21st Century Grant emerged from what Russell described as the "culture of enrichment as well as intellectual and vocational nourishment" that permeates GSD.

Amid all the work and moving about at the Career and Technical Center, Grace Bowers found a quiet corner of respite to vent her creative energy. The 17-year-old was painting a candy bowl she'd fashioned from clay. She colored her dainty creation a fetching, light shade she called Moody Blue. Bowers said she used a simple pinch technique to form the piece, pressing the wet clay under her thumbs and slowly working it into shape. "This is really calming," said Bowers, softly closing her eyes and nodding her head rhythmically to the music that streamed through her ear buds. Pottery class included both young men and women, most of them deeply immersed in pressing clay into Asian-inspired lamps.

Like the culinary arts class, also made possible by the 21st Century Grant, pottery offered those with perhaps a lighter touch than, say, archery, also among the choices, to express their inner muse. For Bowers, the class provided what she described as a cool, quiet place in

which to decompress, an oasis, she said, from the frenetic pace of high school life.

"I've just picked random letters and pressed them into the clay," said Bowers, musingly. "It's a Valentine's Day gift for someone." She raked her hair over ear, and gently shifted the bowl in her hands. "I think they'll like it," she said.

GSD learning opportunities are made possible by the 21st Century Grant. The funding has bolstered Grenada's efforts to expand its

educational horizon to include classes in which intellectual curiosity intersects with real-world job preparation.



Photo by Galen Holley

Brandon Smith (left) and Grayson Bauer (right) work diligently building bird houses in Building Trades.

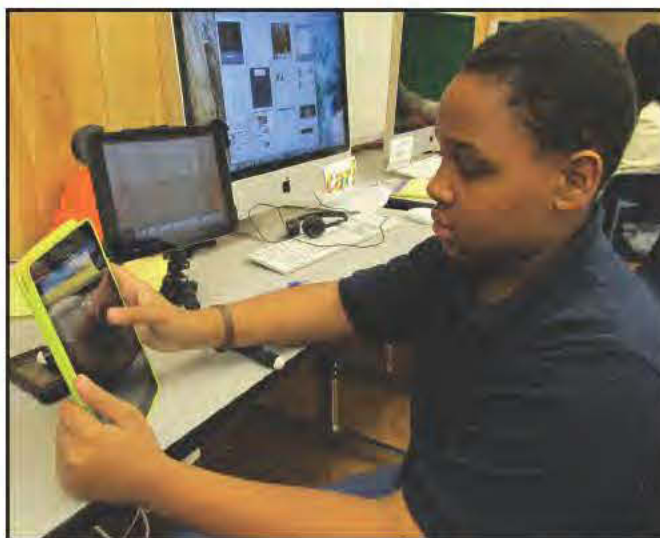
learning space, one in which students' intellectual curiosity dovetails nicely with fun, hands-on work.

"In order to succeed in today's highly competitive, specialized and increasingly technology-driven job market, students can benefit from immersing themselves early in the culture of a career," said Daigneault. "Our classes allow students to familiarize themselves with the tools of the trade and, in some cases, to make contacts that can help them segue nicely from the classroom to the workplace."

In a high-ceilinged, open space adjoining the Photoshop classroom, 17-year-old Brandon Smith tightened a table-mounted vice on a triangular piece of pine. The youngster picked up a cordless drill with a boring bit, lowered his safety glasses onto his nose and, leaning over the wood, eased a small portion of weight down over the drill. The bit threw off curled peels of hot, fragrant wood as it sank into the soft board. "It's a birdhouse," Smith said, without looking up.

Fred Taylor's building trades class was comprised of a small but able cadre of young men who needed little by way of instruction in the arcana of wood-working. Taylor moved unobtrusively about the room, watching, waiting for a silent look from one of the boys, saying that the youngster was unsure how to countersink a screw or if he should first apply sealer or shellac. Sharing Smith's workstation was Grayson Bauer. "I'm pretty good with my hands in general," said Bauer, spinning the chrome handle

year-old Daundre Herron said he was used to tackling larger projects, like building housing for shaggier, four-legged creatures. On the other hand, Herron slyly conceded, "Birds have to live, too." Like most 16-year-old boys, Herron had only a vague idea of what he'd like to do in life but he was certain it would involve working with his hands. Smith's class was the kind of environment where he could imbibe the com-



Carl Travis investigates music and sounds to add to his i-stop motion project in photoshop class.

pendious skills of the tradesman, Herron said.

That's the value added from woodshop and other classes like it, funded by the 21st Century Grant, according to Administrative Operations Officer Lynne Russell: familiarizing students with the