



New Tech High students bring alternative energy studies to IPL

With IPL experts as resources, students researched and presented about energy options

The halls of New Tech High Academy at Arsenal Technical High School are filled with inquisitive minds like those of Marcus Anderson and Anton Jones, both New Tech High freshmen. These students and their classmates learn not through lectures and testing but through a series of projects. Recently, they were hard at work researching for a presentation to IPL about the feasibility of using alternative fuel sources to generate electricity at IPL.

“When we do a project, we want to have an external partner that can bring real projects to students with real value,” says Cliff Johnson, New Tech High teacher advocate. “IPL has a number of employees who are mentors here. I sense that IPL is really concerned about the quality of education of young people in Indianapolis. The fact that they send managers, analysts and directors in the company to work with us reflects that.”

The most recent project to which Johnson refers is one called “It’s Not Easy Being Green,” which challenged the New Tech High freshmen to evaluate alternative energy resources in which IPL could make future investments. In small groups, the students analyzed coal, biomass, gas-methane capture, natural gas, nuclear energy, solar energy and wind. IPL people visited the school, each taking at least one of these areas, explaining its basic concepts to students, and giving them other resources to consult in their research. After this session, the same IPL employees remained available to students via e-mail. In April, students presented the top projects in a formal presentation at IPL.

Marcus felt the work and presentation had a professional feel. “It felt real. I felt like we were really doing something for IPL,” he said. “Coal won’t be around forever, and in the future, coal prices will go up, so IPL needs to look at other ways to do things.”

Anton also felt like their work was more than a school project. “I liked how they took our ideas seriously,” he said. “We learned that each different kind of energy does different things to the environment, and the people at IPL helped us understand the costs, like how the costs for different types of energy vary depending on what state you’re in.”

The seeds for this green project were sown at Southport Middle School three years ago, when IPL did a similar project aimed at middle school students of teacher Joe Shelbourn. “I told Joe I’d like to do this at an IPS school, and he was glad to help adapt and develop the idea,” said Alice McColgin (PA) of IPL’s Community Involvement Team. “We already had a relationship with New Tech High from IPL’s donation to the school’s science department.”

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An IPL profile



Evelyn Pounds invests years in helping kids succeed

Fostering students’ interest in engineering helps pave the way to technical careers

Evelyn Pounds (PD) grew up in the kind of neighborhood where she saw this happen all too often: a smart, confident child enters adolescence and slowly but surely withers away, drawn into drugs, alcohol and/or crime.

Seventeen years ago, pregnant with her and her husband’s only child, a son, Evelyn knew it wasn’t going to happen to her child. At that same time, Evelyn was invited to volunteer with an organization that helps make sure it doesn’t happen to many other children, as well.

“Rod Conwell (PD) invited me to sit in on a meeting of the Minority Engineering Program of Indianapolis (MEPI),” she said. IPL had developed a partnership in which they hosted monthly Saturday meetings of kids enrolled in MEPI, and IPL volunteers facilitated each session. Quickly, Evelyn became a facilitator, and about four years ago she became a head facilitator and joined the MEPI board of directors. IPL people Dana Smith (PD) and Ed Ross (PD) facilitate IPL’s sessions along with Evelyn, and others from IPL have been involved with MEPI, as well.

“MEPI is a non-profit organization that encourages and prepares students to enter science, technology, engineering and math careers,” Evelyn explains. “IPL and several other companies each sponsor a grade level in 6th to 12th grade. IPL sponsors the 11th grade, and we steer them through college preparation and selection.”

In each monthly session November through May, IPL volunteers and their guest speakers guide students in preparing for college entrance exams like the SAT and ACT, finding financial aid, and researching and evaluating colleges. MEPI students learn how to write and critique

resumes for professional careers and also visit at least one college campus. This year, it was Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology. In June, MEPI participants and their families enjoy a year-end banquet, where MEPI gives students awards and college scholarships.



Evelyn Pounds works with Minority Engineering Program of Indianapolis (MEPI) participant Tre (Joseph) Haskins III at a recent MEPI event at Morris Street.

“These kids are smart,” she says. “But some of them haven’t been given the information that they need to prepare for college.” Once involved in MEPI, students learn about higher-education opportunities and how to reach them quickly. More than 90 percent of MEPI graduates go on to college and graduate.

Some of those alumni come back to talk to current MEPI participants. “We had an alumnus in last month, and he said MEPI played a big part in

keeping him focused on what he wanted to do for his career,” she says. “He went to Rose-Hulman, and now he’s a mechanical engineer for Lilly.”

The boy who sat in on Evelyn’s first MEPI meeting while still in the womb is now 16 years old, and he’s been a MEPI participant since sixth grade. In addition to the work Evelyn does as a head facilitator and board member, she also is involved in her own son’s MEPI projects. “When he entered MEPI he was a young boy busy with games and Pokémon,” she recalls, reflecting on the growth she’s seen in her own son. Over the years, he has built robots, radios and bridges, and created science fair projects, data bases and Web sites, learning along the way about industrial, mechanical, civil and computer engineering, plus science, math and other technology. Now, he’s narrowing his interests and learning about how to select the right college, get admitted and finance it. His experience is typical of any MEPI participant.

Evelyn gives at least 20 hours a month to the organization, and she can’t imagine stopping anytime soon. “It’s great to see those kids find out what the world’s about. I love to see that moment of discovery when they see how important this program is and that they can make a difference,” she says.

MEPI is supported entirely by private and corporate donations and volunteers. Evelyn invites any IPL employee interested in getting involved to contact her at ext. 8952. For more information on the organization, visit mepi.org. ⚡