

Hobart High School Success Story

"We want our students to find their passion and strengthen that passion. We want our students to know that with hard work and perseverance, they can and will have jobs that they love."

Dr. Peggy Buffington
Superintendent

AUTODESK.
Certified User

Hobart High School Inspires Future Engineers with Autodesk Certification

In a small city, tucked in the northwest corner of Indiana, stands



a high school that is building students' passion and careers in the most impressive way. Hobart High School offers classes, internships, partnerships with a local college, and industry-recognized certifications. "Our mission is 'Success for All Students,' explains Dr. Peggy Buffington, superintendent of Hobart School District, "and we take that very seriously."

"We want our students to find their passion and strengthen that passion," continues Dr. Buffington, "We want our students to know that with hard work and perseverance, they can and will have jobs that they love."

Hobart High School serves around 1,300 students each year. For each student to be able to explore and find their dream, the school offers numerous career pathways, including specialized career courses, hands-on instruction, and Certiport's official industry-recognized certifications.

The school is largely divided into five "Schools of Education": Engineering and Industrial Technology, Human Services, Communications and Fine Arts, Health and Natural Sciences, and Business Services and Information Technology. Each program offers a variety of classes where students can explore different careers. However, they also work together so that students can have a more holistic experience.

One of the largest programs in Hobart High School is Engineering

and Industrial Technology. It explores many different engineering courses, such as Civil Engineering and Architecture and Mechanical Drafting and Design, as well as certifications in Autodesk, a leading engineering design software.



Engineering and Industrial Technology

Engineering and Industrial Technology program begins in 9th grade, with more than 100 freshman students taking the Principles of Engineering class in a single year. From there, students choose to continue studying engineering at an advanced level or pivot to a different path.

For those who continue to study engineering, the Engineering Design and Development course is the most advanced course the school has to offer. It's a hands-on, crossover class where students can infuse their engineering skills with additional skills acquired in classes such as entrepreneurship and marketing.

"In this class, students are actively finding ways to engineer new products or systems and take them to the market," says Daniel Schultz, a business and engineering teacher at Hobart High School. "They really get to use all the skills they have and be very creative. And it is remarkable what they achieve. Just in the past two years, students in this class have won $80,000 in cash awards and scholarships, established three patents, and launched three companies."



"This kind of hands-on, holistic experience is critical," adds Dr. Buffington. "For instance, we had a student who was interested in both engineering and health sciences and didn't know which one to choose. We found a way for her to do both. She joined an engineering class and was able to develop a prototype machine geared towards people who suffer from arthritis! It was a perfect merger of the two fields she wanted to pursue."

Value of Certifications

"I want my students to leave the class with the skills and credentials necessary to step right into a job," says Daniel. "They learn these skills through lessons and projects. They get the credentials through certifications."

For Daniel, certification is part of his curriculum. He prepares all his 9th-grade students to take the Autodesk Inventor Certified User exam by the end of the school year. He also prepares his older students for the opportunity to gain additional certification by taking the Autodesk Fusion 360 Certified User exam.

"Students can fulfill their graduation requirements and get up to six college credits with certifications," says Daniel. "But most importantly, they can use certifications to stand out from others."

"What's especially great about the Autodesk certifications," explains Dr. Buffington, "is that it can benefit students whether they decide to continue with engineering or not. The Autodesk certifications are versatile. There are jobs that students can get just because they know how to use this software as they pursue their goals."

Breaking The Barrier

The Autodesk Certified User exams were first introduced to Hobart High School under the initiative of Dr. Peggy Buffington. She had two goals in mind: give students employable credentials and help them to overcome fear and doubt.

"The word engineering can be intimidating to students. I noticed that many students would question if they were good enough to pursue engineering. But when we introduced it as learning a computer software called Autodesk [instead of engineering], it felt more doable to them."

Many students who took this course since earned a certification and have gone on to be successful in the engineering field, further validating the effectiveness of Dr. Buffington's insight and the program.



Finding and Strengthening Passion

Hobart High School's creed is "All my life, I want to be a Brickie. Work, work, work!" This creed is etched deeply into the hearts of Hobart's educators. Their collective goal is for all students to find meaningful careers that make them happy. They do so by providing various classes, which include hands-on experiences, and set them up for future success through certification and other credentials.

"I had a student who was interested in physical therapy," said Dr. Buffington. "So her counselor and I arranged an internship for her at the local hospital. After her internship, she came back and said, 'I don't want to be a physical therapist. I want to be a family practitioner!' That's the type of experience that I want all my students to have. By providing opportunities and experiences in many different fields, I want them to find and strengthen their passion."

"As for me, I found my passion and the career that aligns with it. I am passionate about helping students find and grow their passion. It's the most fulfilling career of all."

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Teacher Spotlight

Daniel Schultz is a proud alumnus of Hobart High School. He attended Purdue University, where he majored in Civil Engineering and minored in Business and Math. After working as a civil engineer for several years, Daniel started his own business. It inspired Dr. Peggy Buffington, superintendent of Hobart Schools, to invite Mr. Schultz to teach an Entrepreneurship class.

With that invitation, Daniel started teaching one class a day while managing his business. After three years, an opportunity arose in which he could join the school as a full-time engineering teacher. By then his love for students and teaching had grown so deep that he could not resist. "I think the school knew," says Daniel with a smile, "that once I start teaching one class, I would love it so much that I would eventually want to do it full-time."

Since joining, Daniel has been deeply involved with integrating business and engineering fields. His students have been invited to meet the CEOs of Google and Dell, give a pitch on a Shark Tank casting call, and have performed exceptionally well in various competitions, including Innovate WithIN, a statewide entrepreneur competition where they achieved first and second place.

"We don't give kids enough credit. I have students [that] I would hire over professionals with whom I have worked during my career," says Daniel. "I don't want students leaving my class having completed the same project that is being done at thousands of schools nationwide each year. Their ideas and passions lead the curriculum, and they leave my classroom as marketable and interesting people."

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