

Student-run Executive Grille Restaurant is 'dream come true' for culinary students

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District's popular culinary arts program and student-run Executive Grill restaurant made headlines in February with the grand opening of its new, state-of-the-art Culinary Center at East Tech High School. Culinary instructors and students gave key patrons a sneak peek of the new facility at a

VIP event where students surprised CEO Eric S. Gordon with a dedicated table in his name.



"It's a dream come true for our students and staff," said Michael Szalkowski, graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and chief instructor of the career-tech program. "We now have state-of-the-art combi ovens, a hand-held ordering system, variable dining seating in our dining room, and an integrated camera system to live-stream our lessons."

The restaurant became a popular lunch stop in the CMSD community when it opened in the



Jane Addams College and Career Center in 1998. Transfer of the program to East Technical High School this year is part of the District's \$5.6 million investment at the school, and Szalkowski said CMSD's program now rivals the training facility of any suburban career center, and is likely to attract more students to pursue careers in culinary arts in Cleveland.

"Our students now train on the modern equipment used in the nation's finest restaurants," he said. "This will make it easier for students to enter the workforce after graduation or move on to college or culinary institutes for post-secondary training."

The new facility at East Tech includes a computer lab, demo kitchen, locker rooms a restaurant kitchen and a separate pastry arts kitchen. In addition to the restaurant, students operate the only student-run food truck in northeast Ohio, fully supported by the

Executive Grille's work stations where students prepare all menu items.

The Culinary Arts career path is part of the District's Career-Technical Education (CTE) program that gives high school students an opportunity to get a head start on preparing for college and careers.

Career Tech students at East Tech HS serve the public not only in their Executive Grille restaurant but also in showcasing their work through annual holiday meal and pastry sales and floral sales. Students engage in internships, apprenticeships, and job-shadowing in the



fields of Culinary Arts, Horticulture, Urban Agriculture, Animal Science and Hospitality. Their classrooms include a greenhouse on the Washington Park campus, and hydroponic garden towers where students grow plants, vegetables, and herbs used in their Executive Grille restaurant. In other classrooms, students study and care for birds, mammals, and reptiles



and make all-natural, dog biscuits sold in the Executive Grille.

Career tech programs at CMSD are available to student in grades 9-12. Incoming freshmen are introduced to career pathways through orientation coursework in their first year, before enrolling in coursework specific to their chosen career path in grades 10-12. Students earn certificates and



credentials and graduate with a competitive advantage as they advancing toward careers in their chosen field.

