

# K-12 CORNER

## INNOVATION PREPARES STUDENTS FOR FUTURE

By Katie Coffin

### Technology Teacher Returns to Industry Roots

Phillip Springer spent 30 years as a machinist before switching to a career in education. Now, he's putting his industrial experience back to work.

Springer was a volunteer mentor for Fort Wayne North Side High School's robotics team when the school approached him to help implement Conexus Indiana's Hire Technology program. This high school advanced manufacturing and logistics (AML) curriculum is designed to prepare students to enter the workforce at a middle-skill level immediately after high school or give them a jumpstart on postsecondary AML studies.

Now in his fourth year teaching the Hire Technology curriculum, Springer spends time in the community recruiting employers for the new internship program. The goal is for students to have hands-on work experience before they graduate.

Last summer, Springer picked up his trade as a machinist again and completed an "internship" of his own alongside his students at Press-Seal Corporation in Fort Wayne. He worked eight-hour days, four days per week in the tool room, and continues to devote two nights per week through the school year. It's a good way to keep an eye on his students, Springer remarks with a laugh. But more importantly, he's building rapport with a local employer.

Internships were a new concept to Press-Seal in 2015 as well. Nearly half of its employees are between the ages of 40 and 59, so company leaders overhauled the recruitment process to attract and train young talent. Now, Press-Seal offers a handful of internship, cooperative and apprenticeship opportunities.

"I think the students that did the internship have gotten a lot out of it," Springer shares. "Two of the four that interned this past summer are still working co-ops, so they're going to school part of the day and working part of the day. (Working at Press-Seal) gives me a chance to keep my skills up to par, and I just think it makes for a better (business-education) relationship."



Phillip Springer says employers in the Fort Wayne area have been very receptive to high school interns. "Every company I talk to is dying to get face time with potential employees," he says.

To paint a realistic picture of the manufacturing industry, Springer recently took 44 students and a school counselor to 80/20 Inc., a machining manufacturer in Columbia City. He encourages teachers and counselors throughout the state to visit employers in their communities and immerse themselves in workplaces so they can share those experiences with students.

"Developing relationships with companies – that's how we can find out what companies want," Springer concludes. "That seems to be a concern with companies that there are certain skill sets they're having a lot of trouble finding. So knowing that and talking to those companies firsthand and finding out how I can tailor my program to help students acquire some of those skill sets before they graduate from school – that's how the collaboration is going to make a difference."

**RESOURCE:** Phillip Springer, Fort Wayne North Side High School, at [www.northside.fwcs.k12.in.us](http://www.northside.fwcs.k12.in.us)

### Students Gain Appreciation for Home Region

Nick Fugate knows where he wants to settle down one day – Northwest Indiana. But that wasn't always the case.

"I couldn't wait to graduate high school and get away."

That's how Fugate, a senior at LaPorte High School, would have expressed his feelings about Northwest Indiana not long ago. However, a yearlong experience in the South Shore Leadership Youth for Community Engagement (SLYCE) program changed his perspective.

Managed by the South Shore Leadership Center, SLYCE seeks to engage young leaders in their communities through service, networking and civic involvement with hopes that the students will apply their talents locally. Fugate graduated with 55 other students as

part of the program's third class in November.

"I personally love living and working in Northwest Indiana," Fugate affirms. "When I first entered the SLYCE program, I didn't think much of the region. SLYCE helped me see the region in a different light."

Through the program, several students participated in a panel discussion at the Graduate to Success Summit hosted by READY NWI and America's Promise Alliance. The focus was the findings of a high school student opinion poll about the region conducted by the Center for Workforce Innovations.

Miriam Soriano, a senior at Morton High School in Hammond, participated on the panel along with Fugate. She says she "felt very grateful that (community leaders) were

taking our opinions into account."

The data provides regional leaders with areas of focus. Approximately 30% of students, for example, revealed they weren't predisposed to living in a certain area, but instead the job they secure after graduation would determine their location. The same percentage noted that they haven't learned much about employers and jobs in Northwest Indiana, indicating that a better effort to expose students to local employers and job opportunities could increase talent retention.

"My family and friends are in this region, and even if job opportunities take me away for a little while, I ultimately plan to settle down here in Northwest Indiana," Fugate concludes. "It's a great place for families to flourish."

**RESOURCES:** Miriam Soriano | Nick Fugate | [www.readynwi.com](http://www.readynwi.com)

# New Program Makes Computer Science ‘Cool’

By 2020, there will be one million more information technology jobs in the United States than computer science students, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This gap has prompted many leaders in the technology industry to think creatively about how to increase interest in computer careers. One promising initiative is the Hour of Code.

Launched in 2013, Code.org is a non-profit designed to expand computer science access to every student with the goal of making it part of core curriculum. Hour of Code is an online program that offers students (and adults) hands-on exposure to coding. Currently, the effort spans more than 180 countries, reaching tens of millions of students.

Anyone can visit Code.org at any time and complete an Hour of Code. There are several themes for activities, including *Star Wars*, *Frozen* and *Angry Birds*. Each program has about 20 exercises in which the user builds code and sees the results play out on the screen. Instructional videos throughout each program feature a person who uses coding in his or her career.

It's all about showing students how coding is relevant in everyday life and, potentially, to their future career.

During National Computer Science Education Week (December 7-13, 2015),



Troy Cockrum's role as director of innovative teaching at Little Flower Catholic School involves integrating new technology and programs, like the Hour of Code, into the classroom.

Eleven Fifty Academy in Carmel hosted four sessions per day in which coding instructors guided school classes and other participants through Hour of Code activities. Eleven Fifty Academy employees also went to nine WorkOne sites throughout the state to engage adults in the program.

“The Hour of Code is part of our

outreach partnership with NexTech,” explains John Qualls, president of Eleven Fifty Academy. “It’s really about trying to catch those kids in the important time between fourth grade and eighth grade when they’re trying to decide whether or not being smart is cool. At the end of the day, we want them to understand you can be smart and cool.”

Troy Cockrum, director of innovative teaching at Little Flower Catholic School in Indianapolis, took third and seventh grade classes to Eleven Fifty for Hour of Code sessions. His students were engaged with the content, and some caught on so quickly they began helping others.

“I felt it was important to expose the students to coding and computer programming because it’s such a part of their current world, and it’ll be part of their future,” Cockrum comments. “I wanted them to understand the basics of what coding consists of and give them the motivation to pursue it further. We have a lot of kids who say they want to build video games when they grow up, but they don’t understand what that actually means. The sooner they’re exposed to it (coding), the more they can learn about this career path well before they’re in high school or college.”



No experience is needed to complete an Hour of Code, and the courses are appropriate for “ages four to 104.”

**RESOURCES:** [www.code.org](http://www.code.org) | Troy Cockrum, Little Flower Catholic School, at [www.littleflowerparish.org](http://www.littleflowerparish.org) | John Qualls, Eleven Fifty Academy, at [www.elevenfifty.com](http://www.elevenfifty.com)