

ASET pilot promotes engineering technology to students

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Students from Sherwood Park and Ardrossan were the first to experience a new pilot program encouraging teens to pursue careers as engineering technologists.

Elk Island Public Schools jumped at the chance to get students involved in a new program offered by the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta's (ASET).

"We've been thinking about this and talking to school divisions about this for a while, and frankly, there was a great deal of enthusiasm from a lot of school divisions but the first one to jump in was Elk Island Public Schools," said Barry Cavanaugh, chief executive officer and general council at ASET.

The event, which happened Nov.

26, involved almost 20 students who took part in workshops introducing them to a number of engineering technology occupations.

"It's a healthy relationship with the community that EIPS wants to foster and part of the responsibility of high schools and junior highs is to help people think about their futures after," Cavanaugh said.

The students learned and practiced disciplines from engineering technology and mechanical engineering technology.

"Students were given a chance to produce a miniature version of a motor control circuit, which ensures a motor is started and stopped in a safe manner, and ultimately it was employed to control a model crane that the second workshop, mechanical engineering technology, was building a model crane for which that motor control circuit was devised," he recalled.

Students used computer aided design and 3D printing.

"One of the aspects I found really interesting was that the students building the crane ran into challenges with the model and design. Instructors were able to use the opportunity to have students troubleshoot the issues and be creative and responsive in the real world and problem solve," he said. "The students experienced a common situation faced by engineering technology professionals: evaluating projects and troubleshooting."

With the pilot event being a success, ASET will continue the program on a monthly basis. It will also continue to work closely with EIPS students.

"There are 21 such disciplines and people in more than 100 different occupations. They are all over the place from electrical, mechanical, civil engineering, technology, bio mechanical and artificial intelligence and nano-technology," Cavanaugh said.

The CEO said the reactions were all very positive and it sounds like some of the students will be pursuing careers in those related fields, which are in high demand and have salaries starting at \$58,000.

"After they get sufficient experience and meet competency requirements a couple years later, their salary is going to go up significantly and their employability is really high as there is a need for technologists in this province," Cavanaugh said. "Our 17,000 members all seem to really enjoy their profession and it is still interesting to them because they encounter interesting problems everyday." tdosser@postmedia.com twitter.com/travisdosser