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Ithaca schools get STEM boost

Nonprofit raising funds to support tech education

By D.W. Nutt

The sciences in the Ithaca City School District are about to get a collaborative boost.

Ithaca STEM Advocates is a new initiative that seeks to raise interest in, and funding for, the fields of science, technology, engineering and math — STEM for short — in Ithaca schools.

Formed two months ago, the volunteer-run group is an affiliate of Ithaca Public Education Initiative, a not-for-profit able to accept tax-deductible donations to support educational programs in the district.

Ithaca STEM Advocates will seek foundation grants and coordinate sponsorships for STEM activities and technology purchases, with a strong emphasis on experiential “hands-on” learning, according to group president Illa Burbank.

Burbank pointed to statistics from the Department of Labor that showed the greatest job growth in this decade would be in the areas of health care, and computer and information technology, which all require a strong background in STEM.

“Supporting that in the earlier years is great because it gives the kids the opportunity to experience some of these things to see if it’s interesting to them or not,” said Burbank.

Ithaca STEM Advocates also strives to bridge the gap that currently exists with females and minorities in STEM fields. And by encouraging involvement with a variety of clubs, teams and events, Burbank hopes students will see the fun parts of science “beyond the formulas.”

“It’s really easy to lose sight of how much fun science can be when you’re just doing it for classroom work,” she said.

Additional Facts

On The Web

For more information about Ithaca STEM Advocates, including a calender of local

STEM events, visit IthacaSTEM.org
