

School District trains, aims to implement life science courses

by **KIMBERLY MCDOWELL**
Editor

Over the course of the last week, faculty throughout the West Seneca Central School District have attended two orientation programs that will eventually prepare them to foster learning for students seeking careers in the life sciences industry.

According to Breann Petro, the district's community relations coordinator, this staff development is in conjunction with the school district's intent to implement a strand of new life science courses, likely through an additional academy.

The school district currently offers five academies in the areas of finance, information technology, education, visual arts

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and engineering.

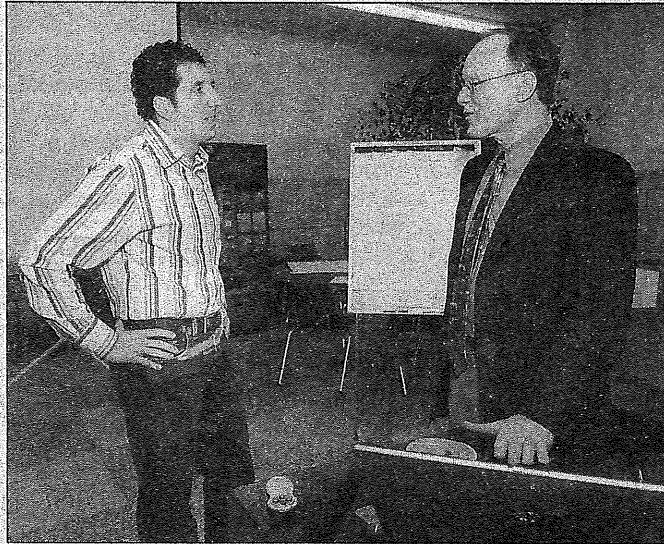
On Jan. 27, approximately 50 secondary-level science teachers and counselors participated in an orientation program presented by Brian Pettit, an ambassador of iSciWNY.

The organization serves as a gateway to the life sciences industry by creating an awareness of career pathways within Western New York, as well as education and training needed for such job opportunities.

iSciWNY operates in connection with the New York State Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences.

Located in downtown Buffalo, the COE was created in 2002 as part of a \$200 million dollar investment — from state, federal, industry and philanthropic sources — to create a hub of life sciences expertise and innovation in Upstate New York.

The life sciences industry, according to the iSciWNY ambassador, uses science and technology to develop products and services that aim to improve health and well-being, such as medical tests, devices and drugs.



Emilio Mancino, left, an Earth science teacher at West Senior, speaks with iSciWNY ambassador Brian Pettit after a presentation last week on science-related careers available in Western New York. The program was held Jan. 27 in West's cafeteria for all science teachers throughout the district.

Photo by John Rusac
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Some products created here in WNY include batteries for pacemakers — the pacemaker was developed in North Tonawanda — blood pressure cuffs, IV bags, temperature therapy systems and surgical kits.

Also present for the districtwide presentation was Superior Group, a staffing and workforce solution company. Representatives further discussed with West Seneca faculty the various employment opportunities in WNY and the skills necessary to work in the life sciences field.

In addition to the program, teachers and staff were also given the opportunity last week to observe science professionals at work. They visited both the COE and Polymer Conversions, a plastics technology center in Orchard Park.

For additional information on the current academies offered through the school district, visit www.wscschools.org and click on the link for "Academics" and then "The Academies."

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