

CHS computer science course teaches coding, critical thinking

Special to The Clinton Courier

In its second year at the Clinton High School Career Complex, the Computer Science Principles (CSP) course is providing college-level coursework for CHS students.

“It is an introductory course that covers much of what is covered in an intro-level computer science course at any college or university,” said instructor Justin Odom.

CSP uses the Project Lead the Way curriculum. It covers seven “big ideas” of computer science, Odom said, including creativity, abstraction, data and information, algorithms, programming, Internet and global impact.

Students develop games and apps, learn more about careers in computer science, and do “countless hours of programming,” he said. Their hard work is paying off; last school year Odom’s students on the CHS team won first place statewide in the CSpire coding competition and earned college scholarship money.

“Half of all available STEM jobs are in some field of computing, and that is the reason why we saw fit to offer this course to students,” Odom said.

Odom, a former CPSD Teacher of the Year, said CSP is his favorite class to teach.

“It truly allows the students to learn however much they want to learn,” he said. “I can teach them a general con-



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Last May, the Clinton High School coding team won first place in the statewide CSpire Coding Competition. Pictured (l to r) are instructor Justin Odom and students Nhat Van, Will Harrell, Josie Nasekos and Clark Hensley.

cept, and they can run with it however far they want to go.”

The course is difficult, because students are essentially learning a new language while simultaneously trying to apply their knowledge of that language, he said.

“It’s challenging, but typically they rise to the occasion, because this

is a field they are interested in,” he said.

This is the key, said Dr. Tim Martin, superintendent of schools.

“Relevance makes rigor possible,” Martin said. “Courses like this are very difficult, but our students are ready and willing to work harder, because they understand how today’s classwork impacts their col-

lege and career plans.”

To enroll in Computer Science Principles, students must first complete Principles of Engineering or Information Technology 1 and 2. These prerequisite courses are available through the CHS Career Complex for tenth through twelfth grade students.

For more information, contact Odom at jodom@clintonpublicschools.com.



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