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Career Connections: Classroom, Kitchen, and Beyond

Southeast High School (SEHS) is home to the Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) Academy; the Electronics Communication Center (ECC) Academy; the Center for Leadership; and the Agriscience, Business, and Consumer Sciences (ABC) Academy. Together these small learning communities (SLCs) are making a difference for students as they explore the various career pathways and connections that are preparing them for success in a highly competitive job market.

For the ABC Academy, Chef Mike Niewodowski is at the head of the kitchen teaching Culinary Arts/Consumer Sciences. And what a beautiful commercial kitchen it is!

"Our new kitchen is equipped with gas burning stoves, double stack electric convection ovens, a salamander (open broiler), induction cookware, walk-in refrigerator, walk-in freezer, and dry storage galore," Chef Mike enthused. "My goal is to prepare the students for the workforce. Even if they choose not to follow a culinary arts pathway, they will still have the skills needed to succeed in the workplace."

True to his word, Chef Mike keeps a busy calendar for his students. He provides them with a constant stream of activities and commitments designed to hone their time management and expand their culinary skills. Students prepare a daily lunch for sale to the staff, and they recently prepared a continental breakfast for 50 for the SEHS College and Career Fair. They just wrapped up Gourmet Night for 80 patrons, receiving rave reviews for preparing and serving such favorites as filet of mignon, rack of lamb, and roasted duck breast. Currently they are preparing for the World Hunger Banquet where they will feature foods from France, Mongolia, and Uganda.

"Our program is the best," stated Culinary Club President Samantha Shaw. "It's a tight, family atmosphere and we are getting real world experience. Chef Mike guides us as we explore our interests. Everything is hands-on and we are constantly learning new skills."

Fellow student Donda Russ shared "We're learning about professionalism, cleanliness, time management, customer service, and of course cooking skills. The experience is invaluable."

Providing students with a wealth of opportunities to explore various career pathways and connections is always on the menu for Chef Mike. "The students have just completed Regional SkillsUSA," he shared, "where they competed in the Culinary Arts, Commercial Baking, Food and Beverage Service, Community Service, Job Interview, and Job Skill Demonstration and Leadership events."

By helping students gain solid job skills and valuable experience, Chef Mike and the ABC Academy are providing a strong advantage for a successful future.



Chef Mike delivers last minute instructions to his staff on Gourmet Night.



Guest Chef Crystal Culver teaches students Donda Russ, Justin Rifner, and Crista Abatiello the fine art of professional cake decorating.

JOBS



Restaurant Chefs and Head Cooks
Salary: \$42,800 – \$71,000*
Workplace: restaurants
Hours: varies



Restaurant Cooks
Salary: \$24,700 – \$34,200*
Workplace: restaurants
Hours: varies



First-line Managers, Food Prep
Salary: \$39,700 – \$50,800*
Workplace: entertainment & recreation
Hours: varies



The Southeast High School ABC Academy's mission is to provide students the opportunity to explore their occupational interests while receiving job training that will prepare them for work or college.

Salary data:

*Based on the Florida Research & Economic Database (FRED) annual wage or salary survey data for 2010 in Workforce Region 18.

PARENT CORNER

- Discussion starter: is your child interested in creating in the kitchen? Culinary electives taught by a trained and certified chef might be just the thing to keep them enthusiastic about school!
- Help your children to become more self-sufficient by taking on the responsibility to plan, prepare, and clean up an entire dinner. Ask younger children to help by creating hand-crafted menus and setting the table.
- "Our commercial kitchen really gives students the opportunity to master their culinary skills in an environment that is true to what they will find upon entering the workforce." ABC Academy's Chef Mike Niewodowski. For further information, contact SEHS Academic Advisor Brandy Braver at (941) 741-3366 ext. 2027.

FCAT reading comprehension QUESTION

★ What career events did Chef Mike's students compete in for the regional SkillsUSA event?

Answer: Culinary Arts, Commercial Baking, Food and Beverage Service, Community Service, Job Interview, and Job Skill Demonstration and Leadership events.

What's on the WEB?

- www.altonbrown.com
- www.foodnetwork.com
- www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/highschool/southeast/html/consumer_science.html



EdVantage Strategic Objective #3: Each student will continually participate in the democratic process.



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