

Gibault Students Now Have The Option Of Taking E-Learning Credit Courses

By Bethany Prange

THE INDEPENDENT

Starting this month, students at Gibault Catholic High School in Waterloo will have the option to take new online classes in a variety of subjects, from oceanography to Mandarin Chinese.

Gibault administrators are adding more "e-learning" courses to their curriculum, expanding on what the traditional classroom can offer to students.

Students will be able to take additional elective courses that are not currently in the standard curriculum. In addition to Mandarin Chinese and oceanography, students can choose from a total of 13 different courses on topics such as international business, java programming and digital photography.

Gibault has partnered with Illinois Virtual School, an institution accredited by the state that employs certified, highly-qualified teachers.

Though these courses are offered solely online, Gibault

faculty member Heather Johnson will mentor students who choose an online course and help them stay on schedule to complete the course by May 19.

However, if students need specific help during the course, they can ask the online instructor via email, instant messaging, real-time chat, Facetime or Skype. Students can also call the online instructor with pressing questions.

Gibault will issue high school credit for a completed course.

The school plans to expand the course offerings for the 2015-2016 school year.

"The idea is that in about two years our own teachers would be writing their own online courses, so students could take those classes online, opening their schedules up for other opportunities," said Patricia Herzing, director of enrollment and teacher at Gibault. "The goal is to use this time to let our teachers to have the time and the incentive to



Gibault teachers Patricia Herzing and Matt Schweizer discuss the school's eLearning program to folks attending the National Catholic Education Association's regional meeting in suburban Chicago.

write their own online classes."

Gibault teachers and administrators have been recognized locally and nationally for their efforts to use cutting-edge technology and embrace e-learning opportunities.

Last fall, Principal Russ Hart and teachers Matt Schweizer and Herzing presented to the National Catholic Education Association regional meeting held in suburban Chicago.

The presentation explained Gibault's use of technology to replace traditional snow days. The school utilizes

an electronic management system, My Big Campus, to provide students with productive learning opportunities outside the classroom.

This allows students to log on anywhere with a Wi-Fi connection and do work on their studies, Schweizer said.

"Every teacher who has classes for that day assigns a day's worth of graded, meaningful work," Schweizer said. "The curriculum continues regardless, just like it was any other day."

In November, Gibault teachers shared their new

approach to snow days with teachers from Lutheran high schools in St. Louis.

The presentation was so well received that Gibault was invited to present to the Midwest Conference for Lutheran High Schools on February 27, 2015. Fifteen Lutheran high schools from several states throughout the Midwest will be at the conference.

The snow day concept worked so well, in fact, it has led to the new e-learning opportunities offered for the coming semester, Schweizer said.



Ss. Peter and Paul Grade School put friends and family members in the Christmas spirit with their annual Christmas Concert. This was the first performance for new SPPS band and music teacher, Bryan Mueller, center. During the concert, Mary Ellen Koeniger, right, plays the xylophone.

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