

# A NEW DAY DAWNING FOR EAST END STUDENTS

(part 2)



School in New York, Technology Director Richard Kissane attributes program successes to the curriculum because it is “hands-on, out-of-their-seat, building something, designing something, seeing the actual product at the end.”

Mr. Dan DeLeon, principal at Chavez High School, says the program “gives his students something special, beyond the regular high school curriculum.” In Introduction to Engineering Design, students use Autodesk® Inventor to develop 3D drawings. Two major projects completed by PLTW students at Chavez were the Puzzle Cube and Wheel Rim. VAM Drilling, an oil services company in Houston, was so impressed with the Wheel Rim design of one student that they offered him a summer job, which became an after-school job the following year.

*This article is the second in a two-part series about how Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and the Houston Independent School District's (HISD) Chavez High School are making a difference in students' lives and the engineering profession.*

According to PLTW's director of research and evaluation, Gary Edelson, Ed.D., the mission of the program “is to provide the engineers this country needs for the next 50 years.” Successes in other parts of the country include Wheaton High School in Montgomery County, Maryland. Education Week reports that “members of the Academy's (Wheaton) 26-student class of 2007—its first graduating class—went on to study in mechanical, electrical, nuclear, and other engineering fields... claiming more than \$1.6 million in scholarships.” At Albany High

The East End Chamber of Commerce and its members have been very active in supporting the PLTW program at Chavez. The program filled every seat before the 2006 school year started, and the Chamber and its partners made sure there were computers, software, and all necessary school supplies before classes began. At the November 2007 awards dinner, Education-The Horsepower of Success sponsored by the Chamber, PLTW students exhibited

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their work. That evening, Valero Energy CEO, Mr. Bill Greehey, committed \$75,000 for implementation of the program at three East End high schools.

Area universities are also getting involved. Chavez students have visited the University of Houston (UH) to conduct experiments and have been mentored by UH engineering students. Additionally, UH provides PLTW training for teachers. The Texas Education Agency has provided over \$1.5 million to address the critical need for science, technology, engineering, and mathematic (STEM) career fields. Rice University is also offering a summer enrichment program for 25 PLTW incoming ninth graders and 25 PLTW rising tenth graders. Four area chemical plants, Valero Refinery, Texas Petrochemicals, Rhodia, and Lyondell Basell are funding the entire cost of the program.

In addition to individual mentoring, the East End Chamber has also implemented a mentoring program between business families and PLTW student families. This program encourages greater parental support of students and the curriculum and offers tutoring or higher educational planning according to specific student needs. Recently, fifteen chamber member families hosted a hamburger and ice cream social for fifteen "adopted" PLTW student families. One of the PLTW students had been in a gang and wanted to break free. One of the parents in the family that "adopted" this student is a police officer who had all the right connections to help.

In late April 2008, Chavez High School's PLTW was accepted into the National Engineering Academy Network, making this HISD school one of only 21 in the country designated as a "National Engineering Academy."

These efforts have given students hope, and most have improved their grades in other courses. While some people envision Scott Adams's comic strip character Dilbert when they think of engineering, that isn't the case at Chavez. Peers of PLTW students see the program as "cool" and "a way out" of their current environment.

PLTW is proving to be as exciting for the adults partnering with the program as it is for the students. "Our youth are our future and our responsibility," remarked Ms. Diane Lipton, East End Chamber president, "providing this curriculum is one step towards graduating a qualified workforce for our community."

To find out how you can become a part of this dynamic program, encourage students, and help provide enthusiastic

new professionals to stem the engineering shortage, visit PLTW's website at [www.pltw.org](http://www.pltw.org). You can also contact Diane Lipton of the East End Chamber at [diane@eecoc.org](mailto:diane@eecoc.org).



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