

Hudson Valley Tech Scouts Regional Pilot Program

A Technology Gap, in Schools and Businesses

The educational approach of many public schools has not kept pace with the learning technologies available to their students at home. As a result, students are buying out of the educational process, squandering high-tech skills on games, shopping and mischief. Business IT courses teach MS Office applications, while students go home to navigate a field of media sources and digital tools they are unprepared to assess critically, or explore efficiently while managing their time. A “Technology Gap” exists between “digital native students and their “digital immigrant” teachers, mirrored in business between IT workers and the rest of the workforce. This gap hits hardest on low-SES, minority students, with less technology at home and fewer supports for learning to use it; these students are also more likely to be at risk of dropping out. Tech Scouts addresses these issues head-on.

An Effective, Low Cost Alternative

Tech Scouts is a business course and a functional school club (just as a Journalism course feeds a high-quality school newspaper). Within a business sequence, the course addresses NY’s Career Development and Occupational Skills (CDOS) Standards 1, 2, 3a, 3b. Beyond these curricular goals, however, Tech Scouts coordinates students to provide tech support, instructional support, and A/V support to their school.

Piloted in 4 Hudson Valley schools (hvscouts.com) and similar to other multi-school projects nationwide, Tech Scouts’ **project-based service-learning context** is a motivating and empowering approach to student skill development, school technology integration and community workforce development. A complete **Tech Scouts sequence** moves from student training and school support to community service projects and paid internships. Here is one version of a 4-semester sequence:

1. **Semester 1: Orientation:** needs assessment, goal setting, interdependent group trainings
2. **Semester 2: School District Student Services**
 - Just-in-time, “Level 1” help desk and repair shop for local schools
 - Computer literacy and technology integration training for teachers
 - Website design and maintenance for schools and the district
3. **Semester 3: Community Service Learning Projects**
 - Refurbishment program placing surplus computers in disadvantaged homes
 - Computer literacy courses for community members
 - Websites for community based organizations
4. **Semester 4: Supervised student Internships** in area businesses, unpaid & paid.

Sought: Business & Education Consortium to Initiate Tech Scouts Programs in Area Schools

A BOCES Technology Coach and Principal of Beyond the Box Web Solutions (a web design and IT support company staffed by Tech Scouts, beyondboxweb.com), I am now gathering a consortium of business and educational leaders to develop and fund a **two-year regional pilot program**, placing Tech Scouts programs in area school districts. Tech Scouts will help our schools accelerate the process of technology integration, motivate students to prepare for IT careers in the Mid Hudson Valley, and improve the quality of our workforce to attract employers and investment. Eventually, I hope that it will be as pervasive in our schools as school newspapers are.

If you might like to help me bring this vision to life, I look forward to your call.

Bram Moreinis