

A 'Hive' on the cutting

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION: Perry's new educational space takes ag

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PERRY — It's Monday morning at Perry High School and junior Elissa Uveino is installing a camera mount on a high-tech drone.

While she works, freshman Kayla Jensen simultaneously describes the "Petal it Forward" project she worked on, which included the scientific basis of handing out flowers.

And a few minutes later, sophomore Louie Beck performs a test run on a video game he's animated himself — slowly working out the glitches in the programming.

This isn't your grandfather's agriculture and technology class. Nor your father's, your mother's, or even what students experienced 10 years ago.

It's part of what Perry High School calls "The Hive," or "Habitat for Innovation in Education."

The area — much more of a digital and technological production space than a traditional classroom — opened this past September. It's specifically designed foster cutting-edge learning and career preparation in a rapidly-evolving world.

It's also the latest development in a process which saw the Perry's tech program reinstated 10 years ago, and the return of its agriculture program back in February.

"There's that old saying, 'You don't skate to where the puck is, you skate to where the puck is going,'" said technology teacher Mark Mancari. "We can see some of these technological advancements that are coming down the pipeline and start to introduce them."

"Part of the concept of what

we're trying to do is, 'What are universities looking at right now as far as the cutting edge?' and we're trying to emulate that."

The changes are driven by reality — a new world in which traditional lectures and learning don't always make the grade.

It's also an environment in which cutting-edge technology and agriculture are increasingly intertwined, with relevance way beyond old-style farming.

"I teach all of junior high, which I think is the best thing ever in relation to agriculture, because most of the other schools teach only high school," said ag teacher Megan Burley. "Everybody in seventh and eighth grade needs to take an agricultural class — everybody."

"It exposes my seventh graders to careers in agriculture and when they hit eighth grade it's farm-to-table, or understanding where your food's coming from," she continued. "And in the high school, I teach horticulture, leadership and an independent study."

"It's a growing program, so we're looking to add a couple more classes," she said. "My eighth grade class is trying to grow as much product as possible to incorporate into our school lunch program, so right now we have lettuce we've been harvesting, and we're initially utilizing in the classroom."

That translates to classes, projects and careers earlier generations might otherwise have found unfathomable.

The projects include growing hydroponic crops, monitoring Silver Lake's water quality, and using aerial drones to monitor



Elissa Uveino installs a high-resolution camera on a drone. The district's tech and ag programs are

area croplands. And going even deeper, they have included a student using 3D printers and carbon fiber materials to quite literally produce and manufacture his own circuit boards and drone.

The appeal extends way beyond the traditional boundaries of what people once thought of as ag and shop classes.

Jensen, 14, lives in the village and has no agricultural background — yet she's taking the classes anyway.

"I really like how students like me who don't have an

It was quickly reported amendment through.

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Attorney John J. Ryan led efforts to enlist the support near. exponentially as November impending vote increased Fervor surrounding the movement.

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Mrs. Carl Breed was ap-

