

# New Tech named demonstration site for third year

Leader News Service

Three's a charm for New Tech @ Ruston.

The national New Tech Network has announced that the Ruston High School program has been named an official Demonstration Site and Exemplary School for the third consecutive year. This designation acknowledges the high level of implementation of key New Tech components including project-based learning, teaching and assessing 21st Century skills, technology use in the classroom and the unique culture that empowers students.

"We would like to officially congratulate New Tech @ Ruston on successfully maintaining Demonstration Site status within the New Tech Network," Kris Williams, of the Demonstration Site Cer-

tification and Support Team for the New Tech Network, said. "We sincerely thank the entire Ruston team for its continued willingness to allow others, both in and out of the New Tech Network, to learn from the great success that this school is achieving. It is certainly a thrill for us to once again have New Tech @ Ruston as one of our premiere recruiting sites and commend everyone on its team for meeting such a high level of expectations for your students and yourselves."

The announcement from the national network came following the school's most successful recruiting season with 147 incoming freshmen choosing to apply for enrollment in the award-winning program. As school now gets under way, NT@R welcomes 110 freshmen into the available slots, as well as formally opening its newly constructed building.

"This is an incredibly exciting time for our New Tech initiative," Cathi Cox-Boniol, ACHIEVE coordinator and

member of the New Tech @ Ruston Advisory Board, said. "Not only have we been identified once again as one of the best schools across the national network, but we are thrilled to begin the year with our new facilities as well as an outstanding staff helmed by a superb leadership team. We anticipate that this is going to be our best year yet."

Missy Wooley, award-winning STEM instructor at Ruston High School and integral part of the New Tech research, has been tapped as NT@R director this year. For the new director, helping a school designated as a national Demonstration Site is an honor and privilege.

"We are so honored with this distinction," Wooley said. "As a demo site, we will host schools from across the country as they are in the research phase of becoming a New Tech school. This results in building a strong network of educators and community leaders who support each other through this challenging process. Plus it provides

opportunities for our students to share our learning model with adults beyond our community and region."

Leaders believe the Ruston-Lincoln Parish community has already benefitted tremendously from the quick ascent New Tech @ Ruston has taken into the national spotlight. For Community Trust Bank Senior Vice President and New Tech @ Ruston Advisory Board member Ryan Kilpatrick, this can be attributed to the work of a solid team of stakeholders.

"NT@R being named a demonstration site again is a direct reflection of the students, staff, administration and school board and their hard work to make the program at Ruston High one of the best programs in the state of Louisiana and the nation," Kilpatrick said. "The success stories that come from both students and parents offer evidence that NT@R is having a positive impact on the way our students are learning. They are being prepared for future endeavors whether



Submitted photo

**American Studies and World Studies teacher Tara Griffin (right) will be part of the New Tech @ Ruston staff working with other schools and communities as part of the school's third year as a national Demonstration Site.**

that's a form of higher education or entering the workforce and they will represent our community well."

Wooley indicates that the success of the school has

been very positive in attracting more and more students and families into the unique learning experience.

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## Bell: Lincoln's New Tech program a source of pride

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This year's record number of applicants serves to solidify the appeal of the opportunities within the New Tech model. Plus, the community's vote of confidence in supporting funding that provided the new, state-of-the-art upperclassman New Tech facility that opened on the Ruston High School campus for the upcoming year further suggests the tremendous interest and pride in this award-winning initiative.

"Things are really in place this year with such a strong student body, expanded and improved facilities, excited and energetic staff, and solid leadership team," Wooley said. "We feel like our program will be able to take off to new heights with tremendous possibilities at our fingertips."

Joining Wooley in a new

leadership capacity is Kim Goree, part of the foundational NT@R staff and a nationally certified New Tech teacher and trainer, as she serves as teacher advocate. Catherine Letendre, formerly coordinator for the initiative, now moves into the assistant director position.

In addition, with more than half the New Tech faculty new to the staff, there is the potential for fresh energy and ideas. For RHS principal Mike Milstead, this should prove to only elevate the program further.

"It's important to remember that it was our goal from the very beginning to not only become a Demonstration Site but also be considered one of the best schools out there," Milstead said. "And that's for Ruston High School as much as anything

else. Through this effort, we are reaching students that might not have been reached otherwise, and we feel that we are raising the achievement level of students that may have been disengaged. In looking at the remarkable achievement we're getting on the standardized tests from students who were previously disengaged, we know that bringing New Tech to Ruston High School was the right thing to do. All students involved are better off for having gone through the program. And with what is potentially the strongest staff to date in place, we feel like even greater things are going to happen for us as well as those who visit."

In addition to its Demonstration Site designation, NT@R has also been tapped to host the fall Meeting of the Minds event that will bring

teachers and leaders from across the network to the Ruston campus for a four day professional development experience.

"Our New Tech program has become such a source of pride for this district and the entire community," Superintendent Danny Bell said. "Plus, it's been such a shining light for our state. It is overwhelming to think of the number of visitors and guests that we've had to this district and community as a result of this award-winning initiative. It has allowed us to provide a broader spotlight on our city and parish while highlighting a true source of high achievement and success. But I am confident that this is only the beginning of the wonderful things we will experience and benefit from as New Tech @ Ruston continues to grow and excel."