

## **Not Your Typical Classroom: IGNITE Pathways Transforms Education in Southwest Iowa**

Woodbine, IA (February 8, 2020) – ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ is a common question asked of students throughout their education. Schools today are focusing on the question more and more when it comes to curriculum and courses. In Southwest Iowa, a program, known as IGNITE Pathways, has been developed for regional students to help answer the question and find their career path at an earlier age (while saving a few extra dollars). Students will need to act fast to enroll for the Fall 2021 semester as seats are limited for courses.

IGNITE Pathways is the first-of-its-kind programming in the Southwest Iowa Region. This program is a Career and Technical Education (CTE) ‘Pathway’ designed to create hands-on experiences for students to easily transition into post-graduation life. The competency-based curriculum transforms the way students learn technical skills. These skills help make students employable regardless of the field of study they end up in. The program is also completely free to students.

As the world advances, educators are realizing that the current education model may not be benefiting all students. IGNITE Pathways is custom-fit to students who learn more by being ‘hands-on.’ This modernized way of education also allows students to move at their own speed. Right now, 40% of students ‘learn by doing’ versus the traditional classroom setting.

“One of the biggest reasons I am excited is I don't always do the best sitting still in a classroom, with the STEM program I have the chance to take classes that I enjoy and do more hands-on learning,” said student Clay Kelley. “The classes I am taking through the program will give me a head start in my career and teach me many new skills.” Kelley’s course path is in HVAC, which is one of the many careers involved in IGNITE Pathways.

“The program is an excellent way to give our kids more choices in classes. Not all kids learn the same,” said Randy Vandemark, Instructor and CEO of Vandemark HVAC.

IGNITE Pathways’ goal is to create business- and industry-leading professionals with a passion for their career and expertise. These students will gain an understanding of large organizations and how they operate, problem-solve, innovate and thrive, by participating in apprenticeships during school to receive certifications right after graduation. Programs like IGNITE Pathways will help lower the cost of college tuition, while also building a quality workforce for Southwest Iowa communities.

“The educational programming offered through IGNITE Pathways is undeniably impressive but what's more are the unique financial incentives for schools in working together for the benefit of students,” said Woodbine School District Superintendent Justin Wagner. “These additional dollars coming back to our communities will help us grow and sustain rural communities.”

IGNITE Pathways stems from a larger initiative called ‘Future Ready Iowa.’ Future Ready Iowa is a workforce initiative that was created after Iowa received a National Governors Association grant. The initiative connects Iowans to training and education opportunities that help secure careers and improve lives. Future Ready Iowa, and programs like IGNITE Pathways, are working toward a major goal: by 2025, 70% of Iowans will have a postsecondary training education or certification.

IGNITE Pathways will work in conjunction with The CREW Center’s new STEM + Career Tech Ed Center in Woodbine. For more information about IGNITE Pathways, visit the program’s website [ignite-pathways.com](http://ignite-pathways.com).

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### **About IGNITE Pathways**

IGNITE Pathways is the first-of-its-kind programming in the Southwest Iowa Region. This program provides hands-on experience for students to easily transition into post-graduation life. The program is designed for students who ‘learn by doing’ versus the traditional education model. Fall 2021 enrollment is open now but seats are limited. Visit [ignite-pathways.com](http://ignite-pathways.com) for more information.