

New programs spark students' interest in school

[Isabel Mascarenas](#) ■ 9/19/2008



Tampa, Florida - Middleton High School is working on changing its image. Low student scores and a teacher-student sex scandal last year is just a couple of reasons the school made headlines. This year it's getting noticed for its positive changes.

Two new academies have been added. The Urban Teaching Academy is a 4-year program for students interested in becoming a teacher. The Gaming Academy is a 4-year program for students interested in designing video games.

11th grader Ethan Miller wants to become a game designer. He enjoys the chance to be creative. "I think of stuff that interests me: action, horror, basic kinds of things," he says.

While the class is fun and games, the instructor says kids don't know it, but they're learning.

"With this course kids get to design games, test games and write reviews on them. It brings in basic reading and basic math developing all these skills they need for life," says teacher Eric Goudge.

The new Gaming Academy teaches students video game design, animation and 2-D and 3-D effects.

"There are quite a few colleges give video gaming design this is going to show that school the students been dedicated to it for quite a few years," says Chris Jargo, the district's supervisor of business and technology education.

The program also gives some students a reason to stay in school.

"Anything you can do to spark their interest that would bring them to school and learn is a plus," says Middleton High School Principal Carl Green. "This year from last year, I see goals, I see the opportunities in their eyes," says Green.

Green says his students finally have some stability, "I think the consistency of seeing an administrative staff, of seeing a teaching staff the same staff over and over again is great for the kids. They've always seen changes now they need stability and that's making the biggest differences."

Middleton has been a "D" school since it opened six years ago and that below average image has been hard to shake.

"This school year alone we've done a fantastic job. The kids are doing a fantastic job and the teachers. We're excited," says Green.

It's that positive attitude Green leaves students with each day before dismissal. Over the loud speaker, Green encourages his more than 1,300 students to continue their good behavior and attitude outside of school. Green reminds them they have the tools at school to succeed, "All these things you have to be successful. Let's not stop. Let's keep going."

Isabel Mascareñas, Tampa Bay's 10 News

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