



## Boards Making a Difference

### Hamburg Brings MakerSpace Program to Life

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How many boards actually spearhead the initiatives that move districts forward? While the board's role is to support district initiatives, it's not necessarily the board's role to inspire the ideas. That's not the case with the Hamburg school board. Several years ago, the whole board read a book called "Makerspace" and participated in a book study. Then, they sent a leadership team of students to both the University of Nebraska at Lincoln's Innovation Center and Iowa State University's MakerSpace to experience the programs in person.



Following a student presentation of their research, the board approved funding for Hamburg's very own MakerSpace program. The district's monetary commitment--\$140,000—is slated to be used primarily for equipment. The district attempted to pass a bond issue for an entire building to house the program, but when it failed, they regrouped and planned to instead add on a smaller building addition using penny sales tax funds. While the community wasn't supportive of that bond issue, they did overwhelmingly support and pass the Public Education & Recreation Levy (PERL) tax to help with additional funding.



"This is going to take hands-on learning to another level. When students are engaged in activities like 3D printing, woodworking, laser cutting—they're actually learning how to make it work and seeing firsthand the results of their learning," said Board President Dave Mincer.

The MakerSpace program will feature classes on embroidery, quilting, laser-cutting, computer numerical control laser cutting (CNC), welding, pottery, woodworking, screen printing, visual reality, culinary arts, bookmaking, TV/recording and graphic design.

"I have never seen a bunch of kids so excited to go to school! That's something that you strive for, as a teacher or a board member. Our students don't have the same opportunities as those in larger cities,

so whatever we can provide as a school to give these kids the tools they need, we're going to do it," said Board Member Debbie Reeves.

## MAKERSPACE BRINGS HOPE TO THE COMMUNITY

The MakerSpace program is not only for students—it's for the community, through adult education, and school leaders believe it can even help spur economic development.

"It's hard in these small communities like ours. If a community member wants to be an entrepreneur and create something, it's difficult because equipment is so expensive. CNC equipment alone is \$50,000. We are providing the space and equipment—all participants need to purchase is the materials," said Superintendent Mike Wells.

The MakerSpace program will be open to the public every evening for a set number of hours. "School is the only possible resource for our community. After the 2011 flood, our main street was empty. No grocery store, few businesses remained. We are in one of the poorest areas of the state and educationally, we're going to spur a higher level of learning for both students and the community," said Wells.

## STAFF INVESTMENT IS KEY

Students and the community isn't the only groups that will benefit from the program. All Hamburg educators have voluntarily signed up for professional development around the programs and have been trained in quilting, CNC, lasers, etc. These educators will teach students in the MakerSpace program. Both teachers and staff are invested in this initiative. "Staff are so excited about the MakerSpace program, they are volunteering and doing research on their own," said Wells.

## NEXT STEPS: COMMUNITY OUTREACH EFFORTS

The building addition, which will house the MakerSpace program, is scheduled to open November 2018. Once the building is complete, the district plans to host community tours to educate parents and community members on the program and class offerings. "Getting the word out, even in this small community, has been difficult. Parents are so busy. It's hard to get your public invested in what you're





trying to do. We want them to know we want our little district to be the place where you want to bring your kids. I'd like this program to be what makes Hamburg grow again," said Reeves.

**Meet the Hamburg School Board**

