

Professor Dave Chatterjee speaks at Stockbridge STEAM Academy

Johnny Jackson Nov 18, 2013

STOCKBRIDGE — Would-be engineers and mathematicians overwhelmed the speaker with questions about the professions.

Dr. Dave Chatterjee spoke to the energized group of Stockbridge STEAM Academy students recently about the career opportunities awaiting them nearly a decade into the future.

“Students were highly engaged and literally had responses before I completed asking the question,” said Chatterjee. “They also asked great follow-up questions. I was also impressed by their current level of knowledge and awareness.”

Chatterjee is associate professor in the management information systems department at the University of Georgia’s Terry College of Business and board chair for the Society for Information Management Atlanta Chapter.

His career talk was part of society’s endeavor to support science, technology, engineering and mathematics education by encouraging young students to pursue STEM careers and engaging more females to consider those hard science fields.

“The STEM initiative is a move in the right direction,” he said. “But for the initiative to be successful several things will need to happen.”

Chatterjee gave examples of what he believes should be done to help progress the STEM education movement. He said more time in the curriculum should be devoted to STEM-related classes which should be made mandatory.

“The very best teachers should be teaching math and science courses and efforts should be made to make the classes exciting and engaging from elementary and middle school years,” he said. “In other words, the seeds to develop top-notch technological talent need to be sown at a very early age. Kids should do math and science for fun.”

Chatterjee added that schools offering STEM programs should receive strong corporate and government support be it in the form of internships, funding, guest speakers or tours of facilities.

About 40 underclassmen are part of the STEAM Academy program at Stockbridge High, whose curriculum is designed to incorporate support from business, community and government.



Principal Eric Watson said 32 freshmen and nine sophomores were selected to begin rolling out the program he describes as a “school within a school.”

The program began a year ago with eighth-graders but officially kicked-off this fall with ninth- and 10th-graders. It is designed to provide rigorous interdisciplinary education focused on STEAM subjects — science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.

Watson said a new class of freshmen will be added annually to the program. Those students will be selected the year prior to participate in an eighth-grade advanced mathematics course for high-achieving students transitioning from Austin Road Middle and Stockbridge Middle to the high school.

The high school-level course prepares the eighth-graders for the rigor they will encounter as ninth-graders in the program, said Watson, adding the program's vision to form partnerships among students, teachers, parents and the community.

He said the goal is to graduate "highly sought-after" students with 21st Century communications skills, Advanced Placement coursework in all disciplines, presentation and workplace skills, project management and team leadership expertise and global consciousness.