

**From The Herald Journal
Monday, January 8, 2007**

BRAIN ACADEMY

By Lexie Kite

When school started last fall, 121 local teens breezed through the doors of their new high school without worrying what they should wear, when they would get asked to Homecoming or if they would make team tryouts.

As the first students of InTech Collegiate High School, a new public school chartered by Cache County School District, these uniform-clad kids came to school at Utah State University's Innovation Campus with a different set of concerns.

Most were unsure about their new surroundings, unknown classmates and the challenging curriculum geared toward math, science and engineering. Some were sent by their parents and had no voice in the matter, while others were searching for a more demanding workload without distractions like sporting events or dances.

Despite their varied reasons for attending InTech, all these teens have one thing in common: They will each graduate with an associate's degree, an in-depth knowledge of subjects like math, science and engineering and will enter college a few steps ahead of the game.

"This is not a nerd school! OK, it's kind of a nerd school," said Christina Corn, a ninth grader from Smithfield. "But just because we like to learn and don't worry as much about dating and spending hours getting ready every day doesn't make us nerds."

However, she and a few of her friends did mention that dating at InTech isn't so bad. With a population of 75 percent males, the odds of finding a date are much better (at least for the girls) than their previous schools.

As a self-proclaimed "math enthusiast," Abby Stevens, a freshman from Logan, said the big difference between InTech students and those at some other high schools is that each of her classmates "actually wants to be in school and works hard at it."

The "brainchild of USU's former President Kermit Hall" according to Principal Steve Zsiray, InTech provides the ultimate opportunity for every student in or near the valley to complete high school and at least two years of college in a very challenging learning environment, he said.

In all, five teachers instruct the 121 current students in four years of math, science, engineering, English and history. Any and every high school-aged student is qualified to apply for InTech, where students are chosen based on a random lottery held in March of each year. Enrollment is capped at 300 students (75 per grade) to maintain the small student/teacher ratio.

Walking in to a new school with such a unique curriculum was not easy for Melissa Seidle, InTech's sole counselor. She and the other faculty members had to take on responsibilities they hadn't planned on, but she said she hasn't minded at all.

"In such a short time I've gotten to know these students so well," she said. "This small environment gives them a lot of individual attention and it's so good for them."

"These guys are eager to learn and to work, and now they are around like-minded individuals working right along with them," she added.

As the new advisor for the student newspaper and mother of ninth-grader, Christian, Debora Seiter said opportunities abound at InTech.

"This is a school for serious students — there is no doubt about that," she said. "But who wouldn't want their kid to have an opportunity like this? If you want your kid to be challenged, this is the place."

Rest assured, there is much fun to be had at InTech, said Principal Zsiray. Ski days, casual dances and clubs ranging from chess to student council are open to every student, not to mention the close bonds and friendships that are inevitable in this close learning environment.

"I've seen for myself what a small school with such a unique educational system can do for a child, and I love it," Seiter said.

For more information on InTech Collegiate High School, visit www.intechchs.org or call (435)753-7377.