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## **NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Students connect to green careers in new Benicia High School ECH<sub>2</sub>O Academy**

**BENICIA** - Students at Benicia High School will join a new ECH<sub>2</sub>O (Energy, Carbon, Water) Academy next school year designed to give them the knowledge and skills to succeed in environmental resource management careers. The ECH<sub>2</sub>O Academy is being funded by a grant from the California Department of Education's California Partnership Academies .

Polly Farina, Benicia High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) business teacher, is very excited about the ECH<sub>2</sub>O Academy. "In this challenging time for education in California, we are extremely excited to offer Benicia High students this new opportunity," stated Farina. "By connecting academic and hands-on career technical classes with emerging careers, this new Academy will make education relevant and exciting for students *and* staff."

The three-year ECH<sub>2</sub>O Academy will teach students about energy and water auditing and conservation, water treatment and alternative energy using biofuels. According to several government and industry reports, these are projected to be some of the fastest growing occupations in California.

Benicia High School principal Gary Jensen said the school's staff, school district, and business community are truly excited. "The Academy will prepare our young people in a career pathway involving environmental resource management," said Jensen. "The job outlook for this area is escalating at an high rate as everyone tries to do their part in going green."

The idea for the ECH<sub>2</sub>O Academy grew out of the school's 2007 Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation report. The WASC report identified the need to expand school-to-career technical education curriculum at the school to improve academic performance of targeted demographic subgroups and at-risk students. Benicia High School students were surveyed last school year and showed very strong interest in the ECH<sub>2</sub>O Academy.

The ECH<sub>2</sub>O Academy incorporates high school graduation requirements such as English, algebra, science and history classes with classes in career exploration, business/entrepreneurship, biotechnology and a senior seminar/internship. Students in the Freshman Success and ninth grade physical science classes will be the focus of recruitment for the Academy.

Several community partners have expressed their support in the development of the curriculum, providing mentors, job shadows and internship opportunities. These partners include the City of Benicia Planning and Public Works departments, Ennovationz, the Valero Benicia Refinery, the Solano Green Council, Green Build Education Group, Monarch Engineering and Developments, PG&E, the IBEW Local 180, Fairfield-Suisun Water District and Solano Community College.

According to its web site, “The California Partnership Academies represent a high school reform movement that is focused on smaller learning communities with a career theme. Academy components include rigorous academics and career technical education, with a career focus, a committed team of teachers, and active business and post-secondary partnerships.”

For more information on Benicia High School’s ECH<sub>2</sub>O Academy, contact Polly Farina, CTE business teacher, at 707-748-2963.

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