By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

Career Academy is new terminology floating around educational circles here these days.

So, what is it exactly?

Students at Chase County Schools and their parents can learn a lot more about it at a program at the school next week.

A “kickoff celebration” will be held Monday night at the school auditorium, when local school and Mid-Plains Community College (MPCC) officials will discuss the new program.

The Career Academy Program, started this school year at CCS as a Mid-Plains pilot program, adds a fifth year to the high school student’s program, but also adds a lot of other benefits.

By using a combination of dual-credit high school classes, the student’s other high school classes and courses taken through Mid-Plains, a student can earn both his/her high school degree and an Associate’s Degree after the “fifth year.”

Monday’s program will open with refreshments served by the high school’s Pro Start class at 6:30 p.m. The program will begin at 7 p.m.

Brenda Ledall, coordinator of Mid-Plains’ extended campus in Imperial, is excited about the Career Academy and next week’s kick-off.

“We’d certainly like to have a good turnout Monday, and hopefully answer some questions,” Ledall said.

“We are excited to have this opportunity to help students” through the Career Academy Program, she said.

With concerns about the economy looming, Ledall noted the Career Academy can aid students as they finish two years of college while still at home.

It saves on college room and board costs and helps build confidence with students about taking college classes, she noted. In addition, they can greatly benefit from the support of local teachers here and their families as they transition into college studies.

Once the high school degree and Associate’s Degree are earned, the student can then enter a four-year college with two years of college credit already behind them, or enter the work force.

“We hope to keep some of the Career Academy students here to help fill our work force,” she noted.

Ledall said special invitations have been sent to current sophomores at CCS and their parents, but the program is open to all interested.

Sophomores are targeted, she said, because students need to start the program their junior year in high school. Registrations will also be starting soon for summer and fall Mid-Plains classes.

There are currently five CCS students who have expressed interest in the Career Academy Program, Ledall said, and are working on targeted classes this school year.

Dual credit classes are a big part of the program, from which the student gains credit for that class in both high school and college, she noted. This fall, there will be dual credit classes at CCS in accounting, computer applications, advanced biology, welding, Honors English and writing. Dual credit classes in speech and intermediate algebra will be offered in the summer.

On the program from Mid-Plains Monday will be Dr. Michael Chipps, MPCC president, and Dr. Richard Tubbs, McCook Community College CEO and vice president of MPCC academic education.

Local officials who will speak at the program include Supt. Matt Fisher, Guidance Counselor

Marcie Yaw and Paul Ekberg, the school's Internet technology consultant, and Ledall.

The Career Academy Program planners received some good news recently—a $74,210 grant from the Career Education Partnership Act. Ekberg and Fisher will discuss the grant and how it will be used in the program.

The grant was received to assist the partnership between MPCC and Chase County Schools, as well as Wauneta-Palisade Schools and the Dundy County/Stratton Schools.

The grant money can be used to directly assist students in the three schools who take an MPCC class from a targeted list in the business management, web/graphic design or information technology areas. They will be helped with tuition costs paid to Mid-Plains when enrolled in those classes.

On Monday night, MPCC officials will also be talking about the "new" Imperial extended campus at the corner of 14th and Broadway. MPCC recently purchased the former pharmacy building there, which will be remodeled to accommodate MPCC offerings and the Career Academy.