Inspiration found through goIT Computer Science Program
BUFFALO – More than 300 middle school students and almost 40 teachers in Johnson County School District #1 were treated to an immersive, hands-on education in information technology at Buffalo Middle School in October.

The Wyoming Department of Workforce Services and the Wyoming Department of Education teamed up with Tata Consultancy Services to introduce students to the field of computer science, which is projected to be one of the industries with the greatest demand for skilled workers in the coming years. The initiative, goIT, included a train-the-trainer session for teachers on Oct. 8 and a student competition Oct. 9 and 10.

Students in the competition were tasked with creating an app that would solve a challenge in their communities. The 325 students were divided into 15 classrooms, then separated into groups of four. Their instructors, fresh from the train-the-trainer class, introduced the students to design thinking and computer science, then launched the students in a fully immersive design thinking project that challenged the groups to identify a problem or inefficiency in their communities and propose a viable solution in the form of a mobile app.

One group created an app that would help farmers and ranchers find temporary helpers for brandings, haying and other agricultural tasks; another group’s app organized the community to build a dog park. The overall winning group created an app titled “Recycle Go,” which allowed users to scan recyclable materials and determine whether facilities in the area could accommodate those substances.

Judges included Johnson County School District #1 Superintendent Jim Wagner; Director of School Support Division John Bole; Department of Workforce Services Deputy Director John Ysebaert; DWS Administrator Tobi Cates; and DWS Administrator Jason Wolfe.

TCS pioneered the goIT program with the goal of demystifying computer science to help students gain the skills and confidence required to pursue STEM degrees.

The program has gotten off to a fast start and is being piloted by Johnson County School District #1 and will be rolled out across the state over the next year.

Since its launch in 2009, goIT has touched more than 17,000 students in 59 cities across North America, and 70 percent of goIT students say they’re more interested in STEM fields after experiencing the program.

Six regions launch Next Generation Sector Partnerships
At a Next Generation Sector Partnership Academy in Lander in May, business leaders divided Wyoming into nine regions in order to focus efforts to foster growth in specific industries. Each region subsequently decided on an industry of focus, and six of those nine regions have launched their Next Generation Sector Partnerships.

The regions and their industries of focus are as follows:
- Laramie County: Construction/Trades/Hospitality
  Partnership launch Aug. 21
- Goshen, Platte and Niobrara counties: Healthcare
  Partnership launch Sept. 10
- Campbell, Crook and Weston counties: Finance and Insurance
  Partnership launch Sept. 12
- Sweetwater, Lincoln, Uinta, Sublette and Carbon counties: Manufacturing
  Partnership launch Oct. 4
- Park, Big Horn, Washakie and Hot Springs counties: Healthcare
  Partnership launch Oct. 22
- Sheridan and Johnson counties: Manufacturing
  Partnership launch Nov. 1

Albany County is planning to discuss Manufacturing, and will launch its partnership in January. Teton and Fremont counties are planning to break into separate regions, with Teton County focusing on Technology and Fremont County focusing on Healthcare. Their launches are slated for January. Converse County will investigate either Healthcare or Construction, and a partnership launch has yet to be determined.

Workers’ Compensation Officer/Owner Average Wage for 2018
$11,339.25/quarter; $3,779.75/month

Unemployment Insurance Taxable Wage Base for 2018
$24,700
The Next Gen strategy aims to position industry professionals as the leaders in economic growth, with the public sector (such as economic developers, educators and workforce professionals) following their lead. It’s a reversal from how such partnerships tend to operate, with the public sector frequently directing industries toward their own vision of the future. And it asks companies to do something they wouldn’t normally do: sit down with their competitors to discuss mutually beneficial progress.

“I am thrilled with the outcomes from the Big Horn Basin Healthcare Partnership launch,” said Amy Quick from the Wyoming Business Council. “The meeting started with a slight air of uncertainty or skepticism, a feeling maybe of, ‘here’s just another meeting,’ but ended with enthusiasm and commitments on real actionable items from everyone. It was awe-inspiring to be a part of a meeting like that where in less than two hours, people who may not have previously known one another came together, identified opportunities, and then committed to work together to take concrete actions.”

At the end of the workshops, participants were asked to volunteer to champion one or more of the opportunities highlighted in the discussion.

For more information about the Next Generation Sector Partnerships, visit wyowdc.wyo.gov/nextgen.

Updated definition

The Workers’ Compensation division recently updated their Rules. One of the changes affecting employers was a change to the definition for Clerical Office Occupations. The definition now reads:

“Clerical Office Occupations. Employees whose duties are confined to keeping the books and records of the business or who are engaged wholly in office work where such books and records are kept. Employees shall have a physical separation from exposure to the hazards associated with the business’ normal activities. Employees shall not have direct contact with, supervision of, or be involved in physical labor of, the employer’s operation, except, if incidental. Employees who qualify may include employees who work with financial or employee records, correspondence, or telephone duties. Employees qualifying for the clerical office occupation classification who perform any duties outside of the clerical office area or who perform duties which are not directly related to the performance duties inside the clerical office, become disqualified for the clerical office occupation classification for the reporting period when the non-clerical work is performed. The limited exceptions allowed are solely for the direct travel to and from a local post office, bank, or office supply store.”

Wyoming Unemployment Insurance Tax team earns national award

CHEYENNE – Wyoming’s Department of Workforce Services earned the Excellence in Unemployment Insurance Tax award for small states at this year’s National Association of State Workforce Agencies conference in Birmingham, Alabama. Presented by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Excellence in Unemployment Insurance Tax award recognizes high standards and strong communication between the Unemployment Insurance division and the businesses it serves.

Accepting the award on behalf of the UI Tax team were Kris Funk, UI tax chief, and Tobi Cates, the Workforce Programs Administrator for the Department of Workforce Services.

“This award recognizes the deep commitment and hard work the people in our Unemployment Insurance division do every day,” Cates said. “We’re pleased to accept the award, but we’re not done yet. We will be rolling out the employer side of our WYUI online system in May, and we’re only going to get better as we do.”

The Wyoming Unemployment Insurance program recently launched a new online portal for its clients, allowing those filing for unemployment more control of their claims. The online portal will be expanded in the coming year to give employers a more user-friendly system to manage their unemployment tax filings and associated services.

Federal OSHA amends recordkeeping rules

On July 27, 2018, Wyoming OSHA was informed by Federal OSHA that they have plans to issue a proposed rule that would amend its recordkeeping regulation by rescinding the requirement for establishments with 250 or more employees to electronically submit information from OSHA Forms 300 (Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses) and 301 (Injury and Illness Incident Report).

These establishments will continue to be required to submit information from their Form 300A (Summary of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses).

This new rule would protect sensitive worker information from potential disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Wyoming’s Sunshine Law. The proposed rule would also require covered employers to submit their Employer Identification Number electronically along with their injury and data submission.

Federal OSHA indicated the injury and illness data electronically submitted to OSHA from Form 300A gives it useful information to help identify high-hazard establishments for enforcement targeting, and Wyoming OSHA concurs.

However, Federal OSHA has provisionally determined that electronic submission of Forms 300 and 301 adds uncertain enforcement benefits while significantly increasing the risk to worker privacy.

A pre-publication copy of the proposed rule is available on the OSHA website. (osha.gov/ooc/2018-16059_1688928.pdf)

Federal OSHA has also issued a news release. (osha.gov/news/newsreleases/trade/07272018).

The proposed rule will be published in the Federal Register.

In summary, until Federal OSHA issues a new rule relating to 1904.41(c)(1), Wyoming OSHA will not enforce the requirements relating to employers with 250 or more employees to electronically submit information relating to the OSHA 300 or 301.

Applicable employers will be required to electronically submit their information relating to their OSHA 300A summary as defined in 1904.41(c)(2): Beginning in 2019, establishments that are required to submit under paragraph (a)(1) or (2) of this section will have to submit all of the required information by March 2 of the year after the calendar year covered by the form or forms (for example, by March 2, 2019, for the forms covering 2018).