

Workforce Implementation Team April 26 Follow-up and Minutes

Some specific follow-up includes:

1. Find out all the current career development programs currently being offered through the school system, Athens Tech, and elsewhere in the community. What are the gaps and challenges to building high quality capacity? What dual enrollment and joint enrollment programs are offered?
2. Examine the Technical Career Academy and the Walton Career Academy and determine how they might help us to move forward.
3. Schedule Mark Whitfield and/or Mark Peevey to come and meet with us.
4. Invite the Superintendent to our next meeting.
5. Set up a meeting with the Superintendent and School Board members with local Employers to allow the Employers to share their concerns about the workforce product that is coming out of our schools.
6. Find out the funding and timelines for developing a charter school in Georgia.

Present: Clay Gilbert, Red Petrovs, Tom Gausvik, Flora Tydings, Bart Freeman, Dan Hunter, Carol Rayburn, Cassie Drennon Bryant, Doug Bolen, Alicia Battle, Jim Geiser

Clay opened the meeting and had everyone introduce themselves. He went over the initiative, and the task of the group over the next couple of months. Handouts were given which explain the Central Educational Center Model. Some specific components of the school include:

- It is a joint venture of the business community, the Coweta County School System, and West Central Technical College.
- CEC was created in response to needs expressed by business and industry leaders.
- The school is set up as a public charter school model receiving the per child public school dollars.
- The curriculum is based on the job competencies related to each of the certificate programs offered.
- A single industrial prospect generated \$75 million of initial local economic impact by expanding and creating 300 jobs. The key reason for their decision was, "...because CEC exists."
- Coweta's dropout rate has fallen by nearly half since CEC opened, Coweta's SAT scores also rose.

At this point the group began brainstorming some ideas related to developing a model in Athens:

- Look for an umbrella group that could possibly expand the current dual enrollment programs already in existence. One goal could be to get more students into the dual enrollment programs.

- Look at existing programs already in operation such as the Performance Learning Center and Clarke County's Career Technical Programs.
- Look at using the Athens Tech facility as a possible location for expanding programs.
- Employers believe they have been left out of the design of existing programs.
- For this model to be successful, EMPLOYERS must have high involvement and ownership.
- Business must be involved in curriculum development.
- It was suggested that we contact Mark Whitfield from CEC and/or Mark Peevey from Walton Career Center to come and answer questions and share their experiences.
- Money is a major issue in building capacity.
- There was concern that the County School Superintendent apparently does not support a CEC model.
- It was suggested that Dr. Holloway be invited to the next meeting.
- It was suggested that a group of employers meet with the School Board and Superintendent to discuss their concerns about the school system's poor workforce preparation. Employers want to tell the school system what they expect from their schools.
- It was suggested that perhaps the Technical Career Academy could be expanded to support the needs of Athens.
- Joint enrollment was also mentioned as an option.
- It was mentioned that we needed to find out the funding and application timelines for a charter school.
- It was mentioned that shared governance is a foundation for the model that would be developed.
- It was mentioned that this model would need to be business and industry driven.
- We are not seeking an "alternative" school, we are seeking a school that will address the economic workforce needs of our community.
- We are not seeking an education reform model, but rather a workforce development model.
- It was mentioned that the best national models have buy-in from the employers, the school system, the technical college, and the community.
- Perhaps it is not necessary to create another facility. We have to be very creative and open-minded.

In summary, our goals include:

1. To create the best workforce development school model defined by employers, the school system, Athens Tech, and the community. We must think far beyond the normal models.
2. We must seek to engage employers, the school system, Athens Tech, and the community to develop this model. However, we will not allow any single player to undermine the vision. Whatever model is developed will include shared decision-making.

3. It is emphasized that we must start by looking at the current resources and programs that exist in the community as we create this model. How can we build the capacity of these successful programs?
4. Leadership is needed at all levels of this process.
5. There will be political implications to the development of the school. We must develop strategies to address this issue.

The next meeting was scheduled for May 8 at 2:00 at the Department of Labor. Mark Whitlock, the CEO from the Central Educational Center has agreed to attend.