

# **1. Career Academy with Hands-On Educational Opportunities**

## **DRAFT WORKFORCE INITIATIVE Updated February 19, 2008**

**Original Workforce Initiative:** Create a workforce development school by August 2009, in collaboration with the Clarke County School District (CCSD), area employers, and Athens Technical College to provide vocational technical education (modeled after the Newnan, GA Central Educational Center) to meet the needs of youth and adult students and address the workforce demands of the region.

**Summary of Progress:** Over the past year, the workforce team has worked to implement a Career Academy for students in Athens Clarke County. A strong collaborative team including the Clarke County School District, Athens Technical College, University of Georgia, Chamber of Commerce, Family Connection/Community in Schools, and Clarke County Government has worked to develop the ideal career academy model for Athens. In September, the collaborative group presented to the Clarke County Board of Education an LEA (Local Education Authority) charter application to allow the group to pursue DTAE funds to build and implement a Career Academy on-site at Athens Tech. The school would have primarily served students from the Performance Learning Center (PLC), dropout students, and students at high risk of dropping out of school. The Clarke County School District approved the LEA charter. The group subsequently submitted an application to the Department of Technical and Adult Education for \$3.2 million to help build a facility to house the Career Academy. The grant application was not among those funded.

The group reconvened to determine their next steps. They did a gap analysis to try to determine areas where the charter petition and grant may have been weak. The gap analysis produced the following three recommendations:

1. Renew the Career Academy conversation with the vision of having an open enrollment policy to serve all high school students who want to participate. Bring all players to the table and brainstorm how to create the best model for our community. This would need to be done in a very positive, inclusive, and strategic manner.
  - The efforts around this career academy and the career academies at the local high schools would ideally be combined to supplement current offerings with future growth opportunities.
  - A middle school component would be added to increase awareness and reduce dropout rates for future high school students; therefore, middle school students can also become more aware of career opportunities at an earlier age.
  - Engage employers at the level where they see this career academy as their workforce training center.
2. Develop a governance model that truly provides shared ownership to allow employers and other community members the confidence to fully commit to implementation.
  - Arrange a meeting with business leaders and school board officials to outline the governance model needed to most effectively govern the career academy.
3. Continue to examine components of the other career academies that add to the value of our application by building on the strengths of these successes.

## **Current Status of Career Academy Model:**

- I.** The vision for the Career Academy will include Early Childhood through college (Early Childhood-16) and will work to align and consciously build upon all programs, curricula, and experiences throughout the education process.
- II.** The partners: Clarke County School District, Athens Technical College, University of Georgia, Chamber of Commerce, Family Connections, and Clarke County Government are developing a revised Career Academy which will indicate a larger vision as well as a new partnership paradigm.
- III.** Although the Career Academy will ultimately include the comprehensive alignment, the immediate focus will include five main areas:
  - A. Expanded opportunities at Athens Technical College for high school students**
    - Athens Tech and CCSD are developing a special opportunity for students from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 to 4:00 on Fridays.
  - B. Expansion of capacity and opportunities to support students who are unsuccessful in traditional settings. These opportunities could include a variety of settings:**
    - Expansion of the Performance Learning Center and provide support at an earlier age to students who could potentially prosper in that environment.
    - Develop a Performance Learning Center at the middle school level.
    - Initiate an Early College Program primarily targeting low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, and other young people underrepresented in higher education.
  - C. Expanded opportunities for career technical and internship/apprenticeship opportunities for students at all three high schools.**
    - Addition of at least 100 new internships and apprenticeships provided by the University of Georgia in the 2008-2009 school year.
    - Inclusion of the current career academy opportunities at the existing high schools if it is in the best interest of students.
  - D. Expansion of Career Technical opportunities for middle school students through an expanded Adopt-a-School Program.**
    - Expand Adopt-a-Class to develop an aligned career technical curriculum to implement throughout the nine-month school year.
    - Engage businesses in middle school to begin identifying workforce skills and workforce needs.
  - E. Continued development of a new partnership model that forces institutional boundaries to change so that all partners are benefited.**
    - Focus on more shared decision making and shared resources.
    - Address outcomes to benefit all partners. (i.e. rather than outcomes being limited to such things as graduation rates and CRCT (Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests) scores; outcomes would also include such things as economic expansion and workforce readiness.)