

## Polk County Career Academy Concepts, Self-Assessment, and Improvement Strategies (February 25, 2010)

### Background:

In Polk County, career academies have been initiated at different points in time and under different funding streams. Not all academies have pursued the same “academy definition.” In order to create a common academy definition, Polk County’s Workforce Education Department along with school administrators and teachers created a list of 16 concepts that should be evident in every Polk County career academy. These concepts include observable practices and activities. As they are implemented across the county, we are moving all career academies ever-closer to a universal vision of a fully developed academy.

A fully developed career academy is a small learning community also sometimes called a school-within-a-school. Academy students spend much or all of their day together as they attend both career and technical education (CTE) courses and academic classes in which the content has been integrated and is tied to the academy theme. Academic content is taught in an applied manner. (*Concepts 1, 13, and 16*)

Students with a variety of learning styles and learning needs enroll in Polk County academies. Academy instructors provide differentiated instruction to meet their enrollees’ needs. They also focus on both reading and math skill acquisition as appropriate. Students are expected to complete their academy instruction with high-level academic and CTE skills and with industry certification if available. (*Concepts 2, 7, and 12*)

School personnel, including administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers across the school are familiar enough about the academy to describe it to people in the community. Guidance counselors provide specific and meaningful information to potential students and their parents so they can make informed decisions about applying to enroll in the career academy. They also continue to provide information and advisement to students and their parents after students are enrolled in the academy. Both counselors and teachers ensure that academy students and their parents are knowledgeable about Florida Gold Seal. (*Concepts 9 and 10*)

In Polk County, academies are open to enrollment of students from throughout the district. Students in a career academy have applied to be there. They and their parents are educated about the academy theme and about postsecondary degree programs and careers that academy students may want to pursue. Students and parents are aware of the high-growth, high-demand careers the students can pursue. Parents know that their students are part of a small learning community. (*Concepts 9 and 11*)

Parents, students, school personnel, and both business and community partners are all represented on the academy’s advisory council that meets at least twice a year. (*Concept 5*)

Through the business partnerships, students develop a meaningful and realistic perception of the world-of-work. They hear guest speakers, they interact with business representatives, they visit business sites, and they take part in a work-based learning experience prior to high school graduation. Students also graduate with workplace competencies that include the ability to create resumes and portfolios, the skills to perform well during interviews, the capacity to analyze and solve problems in the workplace, and the ability to work well in teams. (*Concepts 4, 6, 8 and 14*)

A career academy has an active partnership with postsecondary institutions. In Polk County, a primary postsecondary partner is Polk State College. In most or all academies, students have the opportunity to earn college credit through their academy coursework. Both medical and automotive academies also have articulation agreements with Ridge and Traviss Career Centers. (*Concept 3*)

The effectiveness of Polk County career academies will be based on the degree to which they implement all 16 academy concepts; the extent to which they offer enrollment to a wide-range of students (including individuals pursuing careers non-traditional for their gender); and the overall performance of academy students with a focus on FCAT Reading and Math, graduation rates of academy enrollees, completion of industry certification, and enrollment of academy graduates in postsecondary education. The Workforce Education Department will be responsible for coordinating the academy evaluation process. (*Concept 15*)

### **Directions:**

As part of Polk County's First Annual Career Academy Conference, every academy is to complete a two-part self assessment. An academy team to include the academy lead teacher, at least one academic teacher (if available), at least one administrator, and one guidance counselor should participate in this self-assessment activity.

The directions are simple. The academy team is to rate its implementation of each concept based on a five-point Likert scale. **Put an "X" in the box under the number that most accurately reflects this academy's implementation of the concept. (1= not at all, 2= to a limited but unsatisfactory degree, 3= to a level that meets the academy definition, 4 = to a level that goes above and beyond the academy requirements, 5 = to an exemplary level, which could make this a model for high-performing academies)**

If the team rates performance as a "3," "4" or "5," team members will then list example(s) of observable activities or documentation that they believe confirms their rating. If the team ranks performance on a concept at "1" or "2," team members will list the action or actions that must be done to improve performance.

Once all concepts are rated, each academy team will complete two summary steps:

- The team will highlight those two or three concepts on which the academy is performing at the highest levels.
- Team members will also identify the two or three concepts on which they will initiate improvement steps to be implemented prior to the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. They will also list specific actions to be taken to improve performance.

**Date:** February 25, 2010

**School:**

**Academy:**

**Primary Contact (CTE Teacher):**

**Other Individuals Participating in Completion of Self Assessment:**

**Academic Teacher:**

**Administrator:**

**Counselor:**

**Other:**

Concept	Examples of Documentation/Evidence*	Self Ranking February 2010 ***					Evidence of High level of Performance (rating of 3, 4 or 5) OR Steps to be initiated to Improve Performance (rating of 1 or 2)
		1	2	3	4	5	
<p>1. Integrate academic and CTE curricula resulting in:</p> <p>a. Academic classes in which students see how knowledge and skills are applied to the workplace represented by the academy theme.</p> <p>b. CTE classes in which students receive direct instruction in the academic skills and concepts that underlie the work they do.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson or unit plans demonstrating integrated curricula throughout the year</li> <li>Student and teacher interviews</li> <li>Student work products</li> </ul>						
<p>2. Implement teaching/learning issues that take into consideration the learning styles of students. Strategies include activities that provide for learning through application and adaptation. Subjects are made relevant to students thus enhancing student capacity to excel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson or unit plans showing strategies that appeal to a variety of learning styles</li> <li>Demonstrate instructional strategies to include cooperative learning, project-based learning, and a focus on the levels of Bloom's taxonomy</li> </ul>						

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<p>3. <b>Partner with postsecondary education</b> including career centers, community colleges, local colleges, and universities that offer programs of study in related career programs. These programs of study are tied to <b>articulation agreements</b>, which allow high school coursework to be accepted for credit to postsecondary institutions. Articulation agreements position students to save both time and money, promoting efficiency of learning and enhancing admission to college.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulation agreements as appropriate.</li> <li>• Program(s) of study posted in the classroom.</li> <li>• Documentation of activities to familiarize students with postsecondary institutions to include guest speakers, research projects, campus tours, etc.</li> </ul>						
<p>4. <b>Partner with business and community</b> to ensure that both teachers and students have an awareness of local workforce needs. The partnership(s) may also include national organizations supporting specific industries and local workforce councils such as Polk Works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of business/community partners</li> <li>• Documentation of activities such as workforce tours that familiarize school personnel with workforce needs</li> <li>• Documentation of activities to familiarize partners with academy</li> </ul>						
<p>5. <b>Implement an academy advisory council</b> to include primary stakeholder groups to help the academy meet the needs of students, community and business. Council members include academy lead teacher, academic teachers, business/ community partners, parents, and students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of council members</li> <li>• Meeting dates to show meetings at least quarterly</li> <li>• Meeting minutes to show active participation of council in academy decisions</li> </ul>						
<p>6. <b>Engage students in work-based learning</b> referring to any formal learning experience based wholly or predominantly in a work setting. Activities can include on-the-job-training (OJT), apprenticeships, job shadowing, internships, and school-based enterprises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of work-based learning activities for all academy students prior to high school graduation</li> <li>• Student projects, reports, etc. as appropriate</li> </ul>						

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7. <b>Include industry certification as part of the academy, to be required <i>only</i> if a program-specific certification is available</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of available industry certifications for the academy</li> <li>List/percentage of students who attain certification</li> </ul>						
8. <b>Ensure private sector facilities and personnel involvement to show strong partnerships and networking. The academy can use the advisory council to list possible facilities and personnel and make this concept an objective through the advisory board.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of available facilities and personnel</li> <li>Utilization record</li> <li>Council minutes showing discussion and plan</li> </ul>						
9. <b>Implement personalized student advisement with parents</b> through which each school must hold a parent meeting to inform parents about the course curriculum and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of parent/student meetings with academy personnel to include information about articulation agreements, programs of study, industry certification, etc.</li> <li>Meetings may include postsecondary representatives</li> <li>Individual student programs of study</li> </ul>						
10. <b>Familiarize students with opportunities and requirements attached to Florida Gold Seal</b> , which provides an award that may pay a percentage of tuition and allowable fees. Requirements should be marketed within each academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of FL Gold Seal promotion through academy</li> <li>List and percentage of academy graduates earning Gold Seal endorsement</li> </ul>						

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<p>11. <b>Align the academy with high growth, high demand, high pay careers</b> in order to <i>a)</i> tie the academy curriculum to careers critical to the state's economic vitality and growth and <i>b)</i> prepare students for careers in which they will be able to find jobs that pay well. (School districts should establish priority career fields. Agency for Workforce Innovation provides a state and regional list.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of high growth, high demand and high wage careers tied to the academy</li> <li>Evidence of activities to build student awareness of these careers</li> </ul>						
<p>12. <b>Demonstrate intensive reading and math intervention</b> including Content Area Reading Professional Development (CAR-PD), Career and Technical Education Reading (CATER), team teaching, and/or thematic Units</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation that teacher has taken CAR-PD or CATER, has reading endorsement or is registered to earn endorsement</li> <li>Documentation of strategies to build reading and math skills of academy students</li> </ul>						
<p>13. <b>Include applied academic courses</b> that present subject matter in a way that integrates a particular academic discipline (such as mathematics, science, English) with personal work-force applications. These courses blend "head skills" and hand skills." Subject matter is taught in an applied context of concrete, real world examples. (goes beyond concept #1 because the entire course is taught in an applied manner)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of academy courses considered to be applied courses</li> <li>Evidence of the infusion of applied strategies throughout the curricula of these courses</li> </ul>						

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<p>14. <b>Include credentials in workplace skills to include</b></p> <p>a. <b>FL Ready to Work Certification</b>, which can be obtained through the Florida Ready to Work Program (<i>floridareadytowork.com</i>)<sup>2222</sup>;</p> <p>b. SCANS competencies and skills focusing on the kinds of competencies and skills that workers must have to succeed in today's workplace; and/or</p> <p>c. Other "soft skills" needed for workplace success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of academy students taking Florida Ready to Work assessments</li> <li>List and percentage of students earning the certification</li> <li>Lesson plans to show instruction in SCANS competencies and/or other workplace skills</li> <li>Student work products to show workplace skill attainment</li> </ul>						
<p>15. <b>Implement an evaluation component</b> that may include National Standards of Practice (if applicable), industry certifications, FCAT achievement, graduation rates, enrollment in postsecondary education, business and industry satisfaction, employment and earnings, completion of postsecondary education and/or academy adherence to Polk Career Academy concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of National Standards of Practice (if applicable)</li> <li>Evidence of industry certification (if applicable) <i>(remaining evaluation to be done by district staff and external evaluator)</i></li> </ul>						

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<p>16. The academy will cohort schedule as follows:  <b>Implement cohort scheduling that 1)</b> ensures that the academy's CTE teacher and the other teachers with whom students are scheduled as an academy cohort have common planning. <b>and 2)</b> provides for cohort scheduling** of students as follows:</p> <p><i>a.</i> During year one (beginning in 2010-11), cohort schedule <u>at least</u> 25 academy students or a minimum of 80% of the cohort group (whichever is less) with at least one non-CTE academy course.</p> <p><i>b.</i> During year two, cohort schedule a second group of <u>at least</u> 25 academy students or a minimum of 80% of the newly added cohort group (whichever is less) in at least one non-CTE academy course. (Maintain cohort scheduling of the year one group.)</p> <p><i>c.</i> During year three, cohort schedule <u>at least</u> 80% of the academy enrollees into at least one non-CTE academy course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student schedules</li> <li>• School's master schedule</li> </ul>						

\*Staff and student interviews may be used to document multiple concepts.

\*\*Cohort scheduling means that the students are scheduled together in one section of a selected non-CTE course and that instruction in that course ties course-specific skills and concepts to the content of the academy.

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