

The Polk County Career Academy Evaluation and Continuous Improvement Process

(as applied to individual academies)

Voluntary Public School
Choice Conference
June 2010

Evaluation = The process of examining a system or system component to determine the extent to which specified properties are present

The primary question to consider when approaching evaluation is whether we are measuring or counting the right “stuff” in order to create an accurate, meaningful, and complete picture of performance. When deciding how and what to measure and record in an evaluation process, keep in mind:

- Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted. *Albert Einstein*
- There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all. *Peter F. Drucker*
- The trouble with a good many of us is that we come to a conclusion before we arrive at the end. *F.J. Mills*

Continuous Improvement = The ongoing effort to improve products, services or processes

Continuous improvement means to move ever-closer to a defined standard of excellence. It is difficult to define excellence, to believe that it will ever be achieved, and to endure the journey toward its achievement. When addressing continuous improvement, remember:

- Once you choose hope, anything's possible. *Christopher Reeve*
- When you go in search of honey you must expect to be stung by bees. *Joseph Joubert*
- Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. *Albert Einstein*

Overview

Florida Career Academies

Career academies are small, personalized learning communities within a high school that select a subset of students and teachers for a two-, three-, or four-year span. Students enter the academy through a voluntary process; they must apply and be accepted with parental knowledge and support.

A career academy involves teachers from different subjects working together as a team. Staff teams, who often share common planning time, work together to implement the key features of the model and provide students with exposure to the career field. Students are grouped together for several periods every day with a core group of teachers. This promotes a family-like atmosphere and results in close student-teacher ties.

A career academy includes the following essential elements:

- A small learning community
- A college-prep curriculum with a career theme
- Partnerships with employers, the community, and higher education

By design, these three central elements of a career academy lead to a school that is rigorous, relevant, and relational. As such, career academies are an excellent example of a reform model for Florida's policymakers and practitioners to consider in high school reform. (Florida Department of Education website)

Polk County Career Academies

Polk County has been in the process of developing career academies over the past fifteen years. However, individual academies have been established under a variety of funding streams with different criteria and goals. Therefore, all academies have not traditionally used the same measures to define success.

In the spring and summer of 2009, Polk County district staff members used Florida's career academy definition and the CAPE indicators as they worked with school-based administrators and teachers to identify 16 Polk County career academy concepts. Developers agreed that these concepts should be present in every one of the district's career academies. The intent was to establish common standards to be used to define successful academy implementation across the county.

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The 16 concepts were presented to CTE teachers and school-based administrators from all Polk County academies in November 2009. Best practices connected to those concepts were also presented by academy personnel to approximately 120 attendees at the First Annual Polk County Career Academy Conference in January 2010. Conference participants included CTE and academic teachers, guidance counselors, school and district administrators, business partners, and school board members.

Since January 2010, four concepts have been combined to create two, and indicators-of-success have been further defined. The resulting list of 14 concepts and indicators is included beginning on **page 7**. Additionally, these 14 concepts have been organized into four categories that represent the core components of academy implementation. They are presented on **page 11**.

To examine learning outcomes, Polk County is aligning its career academy student performance outcomes with those of the Perkins IV Local Performance Targets. Beginning in August 2010, school personnel will be given reports to show how academy students are performing as compared to other students in each academy's host school. An academy student is identified by the academy flag. The report format is included on **page 12**. District and school personnel are also exploring follow-up processes to assess the rate at which academy students both enroll in and complete postsecondary education.

The Polk County Career Academy Evaluation and Continuous Improvement through Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle

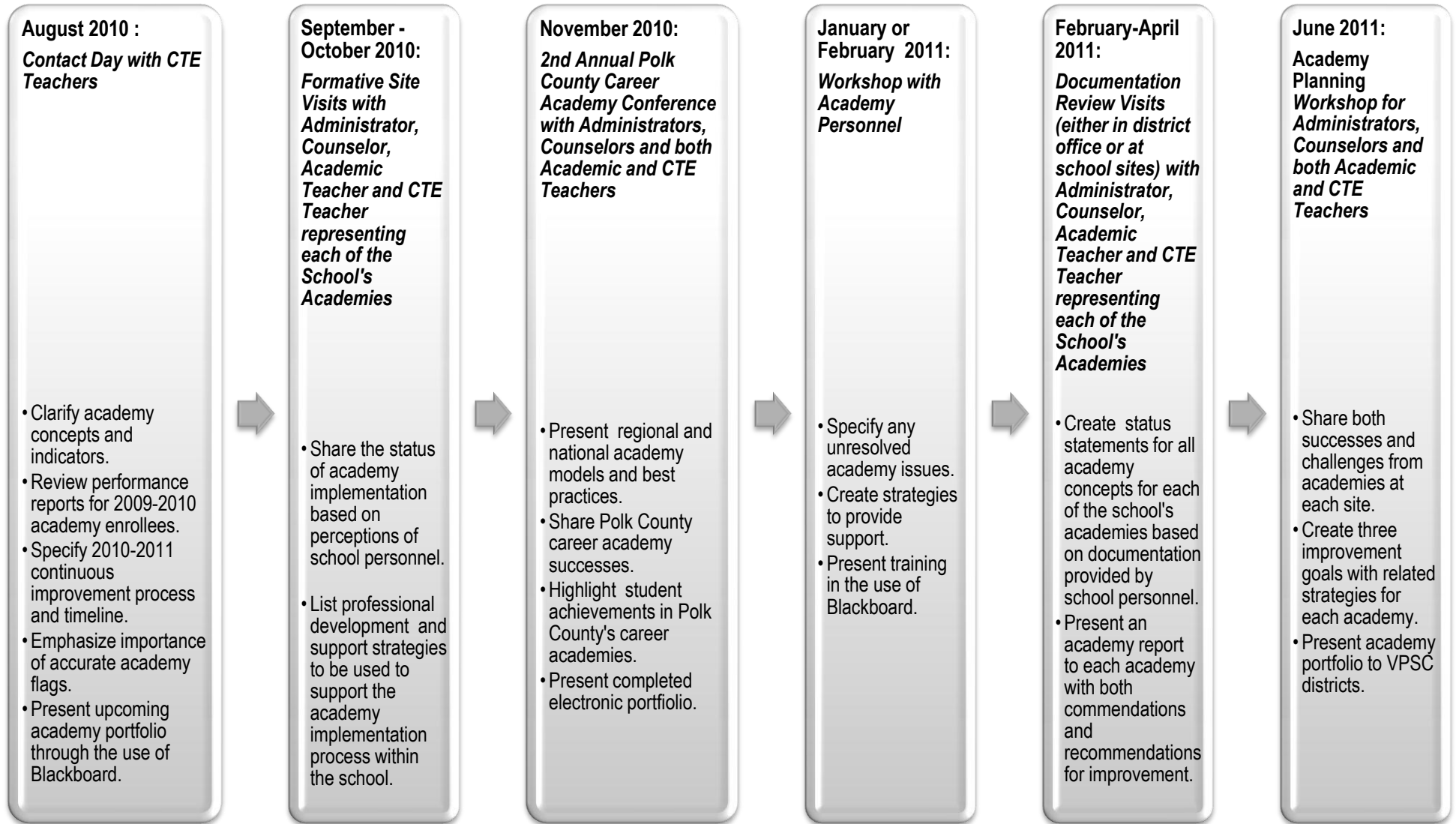
Polk County is using the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) or Deming Cycle to drive continuous improvement. A timeline of projected activities is included beginning on **page 5**. Evaluation and continuous improvement focus on answering specific questions based on the characteristics and the learning outcomes associated individual academies:

- To what degree has each of the 14 academy concepts been implemented as evidenced through documentation, interviews, and other indicators as appropriate? (evaluation)
- How do the performance outcomes of academy students on specific measures compare with those of the total student population of the school and the county? (evaluation)
- Where gaps in performance exist, what are the underlying causes? (evaluation)
- What strategic plan has been created to address gaps in performance? (continuous improvement)
- To what degree is the strategic plan being implemented? (continuous improvement)
- What is the status of both academy concept implementation and student performance after completion of the strategic plan? (evaluation)

Finally, Polk County career academies require the support of targeted professional development activities. Polk County district staff members implement a variety of professional development strategies throughout the year to support both evaluation and continuous improvement processes. The 2010-2011 professional development and continuous development timeline is included on **page 4**.

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Polk County Professional Development and Continuous Improvement Timeline 2010-2011

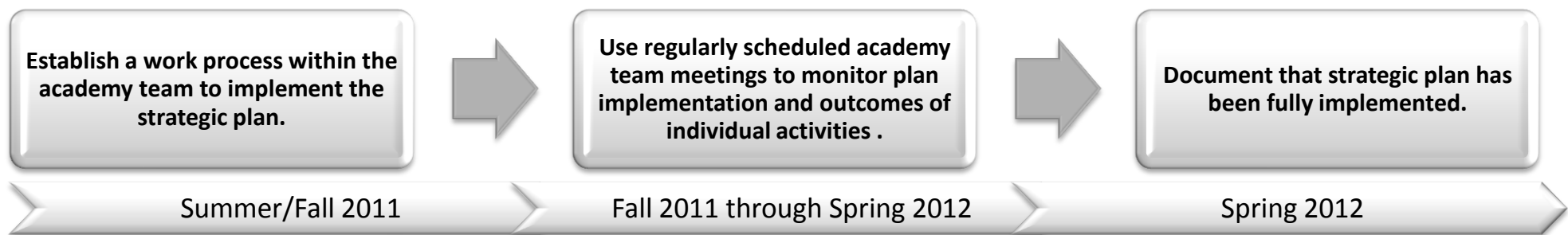


Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) or Deming Cycle as Applied to Polk County Career Academies

PLAN



DO



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CHECK



ACT



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Implementation of Polk County Career Academy Concept Self Assessment

Concept	Documentation/Evidence	Degree of Implementation*				
		1	2	3	4	5
<p>1. Integrate academic and CTE curricula resulting in a curriculum that answers the question, "Why do I have to do this?" It also uses real life approaches including hands-on projects. It makes learning authentic for students. In situations in which an academy has a large enough cohort, that academy should include applied academic courses that present subject matter in a way that integrates a particular academic discipline (such as mathematics, science, English) with career field applications. Subject matter is taught in an applied context of concrete, real world examples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an identified sequence of academic and CTE courses (every program- of- study). • At least one academic teacher is an identified member of the academy team. • There are minutes/notes from scheduled academic/CTE teacher meetings to be held at least monthly (more often during initial planning/mapping process). • Documentation provided by teachers shows that no less than 20% of student time in both academic and CTE classes is spent in integrated projects. • Where applied academic courses are implemented, the course curriculum reflects an overall career-field focus. 					
<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"> • Notes from CTE/academic teacher meetings reflect discussions regarding learning styles and challenges of students. • Lesson or unit plans exhibit activities that address various learning styles to include auditory, visual and kinesthetic. • Lesson or unit plans also show that students are expected to know information, apply concepts, and problem solve. They must analyze and synthesize information. All levels of Bloom's Taxonomy are addressed. • Strategies to deal with learning styles are evident in integrated plans created for concept #1. 					
<p>3. Partner with postsecondary education 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 articulation agreements, 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"> • In any academy that has been in place for at least four years, a minimum of 80% of academy program completers meet the requirements of any existing articulation agreements. • In the absence of a local articulation agreement, an academy shows implementation of dual enrollment and/or advanced placement courses as part of the academy's program-of-study. If dual enrollment or advanced placement courses are part of the academy program-of-study, a minimum of 75% of academy students enrolling in these courses show success as indicated by successful course completion for dual enrollment courses and scoring a 3, 4 or 5 on AP tests. • Programs-of-study to show articulation agreements and/or dual enrollment or AP courses are illustrated on posters in academy classrooms. They are also marketed through strategies that include at a minimum website postings and written communication to students and parents. 					

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<p>4. Partner with business and community 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. 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The academy has a list of community and business partners with details to show the role each partner plays in support of academy activities. • Detail for each partner indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Specifics about individuals who have been guest speakers to include the number of occasions, topic(s), number of students touched, etc. ○ Details about businesses or organizations that have hosted tours for teachers, students or parents with description(s) of tour(s) and list(s) of participants ○ Particulars about business or organization site visit(s) to include when it/they occurred, who participated, the reason(s) for the visit(s), and the outcomes. ○ Information regarding those businesses and organizations that have provided teacher and/or student internships with a description about the length of the internship(s), number and subject area(s) of participants, the experience provided, and the internship evaluation from both the host and the teacher or student participant. ○ Details regarding businesses or community organizations that have hosted open houses for parents to include when the event(s) occurred, who attended, and the intent. ○ Information about the function of specific business and community partners in senior projects to include their role(s) in providing experiences for students and serving on panel(s) for student presentations. ○ A list of business and community organization representatives who serve on the advisory council with a description regarding the degree to which individual representatives have been active in council activities. 					
<p>5. Implement an academy advisory council 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"> • The advisory council has representation from business and industry, parents, administration, guidance, student, and both CTE and academic teachers. • The advisory council meets at least twice a year. • The council addresses the appropriateness of curriculum, student needs, enrollment capacity, marketing needs, academy goals, the academy mission, etc. In short, the council is actively engaged in identifying the academy's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and in creating and monitoring a plan to strengthen performance. • Meeting notes show when and where meetings were held, who attended, topics discussed and decisions made. 					
<p>6. Engage students in work-based learning 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"> • At least 90% of academy program completers participate in a work-based-learning experience. • Each participant spends a minimum of 90 hours in the workplace environment. If the student is working in a school-based enterprise, the workplace environment may be on the school campus. 					

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Concept	Documentation/Evidence	Degree of Implementation*				
		1	2	3	4	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each student has a work-based learning plan and record to show dates and hours engaged in work-based learning and activities or skills addressed. Students may also be required to complete portfolios and/or create other projects or make presentations tied to the work-based experience. 					
<p>7. Include industry certification as part of the academy, to be required <u>only</u> if a program-specific certification is available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a certification is listed on the CAPE academy certification list, a minimum of 75% of academy program completers will attempt the certification exam. (This percentage is applicable to any academy that has been in existence for at least four years and for every certification that has been in place at least two years.)* At least 80% of those tested pass the certification exams. <p><i>*In situations in which certifications pose extreme challenges, the program area TRST may recommend an alternative certification.</i></p>					
<p>8. Implement personalized student advisement with parents through which <u>each academy</u> must hold a parent meeting to inform parents about the course curriculum and activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each academy engages students and parents in parent meetings at least once annually. Parents from every academy course/component are invited. At least one guidance counselor is in attendance at each meeting. Each academy maintains documentation to show the number and names of parent participants. The academy provides copies of materials given to parents to show academy curriculum and activities. (Florida Gold Seal requirements must be included in materials.) The academy shows an alternative method of communication used with parents not in attendance. 					
<p>9. Familiarize students with opportunities and requirements attached to Florida Gold Seal. Requirements should be marketed within each academy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each academy provides documentation to show activities used to familiarize students with FL Gold Seal. Each academy website has a link to FL Gold Seal requirements. 					
<p>10. Align the academy with high growth, high demand, high pay careers in order to (a) tie the academy curriculum to careers critical to the state's economic vitality and growth and (b) prepare students for careers in which they will be able to find jobs that pay well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every Polk County career academy shows documentation of strategies used to inform students about high growth, high demand, and high pay careers. Programs-of-study for each academy reflect both secondary and postsecondary education needed to enter careers aligned with that academy. They also list specific careers tied to each program-of-study. Where challenges occur in terms of aligning an academy's curriculum with high growth, high demand, <u>or</u> high pay careers, the district's TRST's helps establish strategies. 					
<p>11. Demonstrate intensive reading and math intervention 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"> Lesson plans for each academy lists strategies used to build students' reading and math skills. They include specific techniques for struggling students. To the degree possible, academy teachers complete CAR-PD. Academy teachers are strongly encouraged to complete CATER. 					

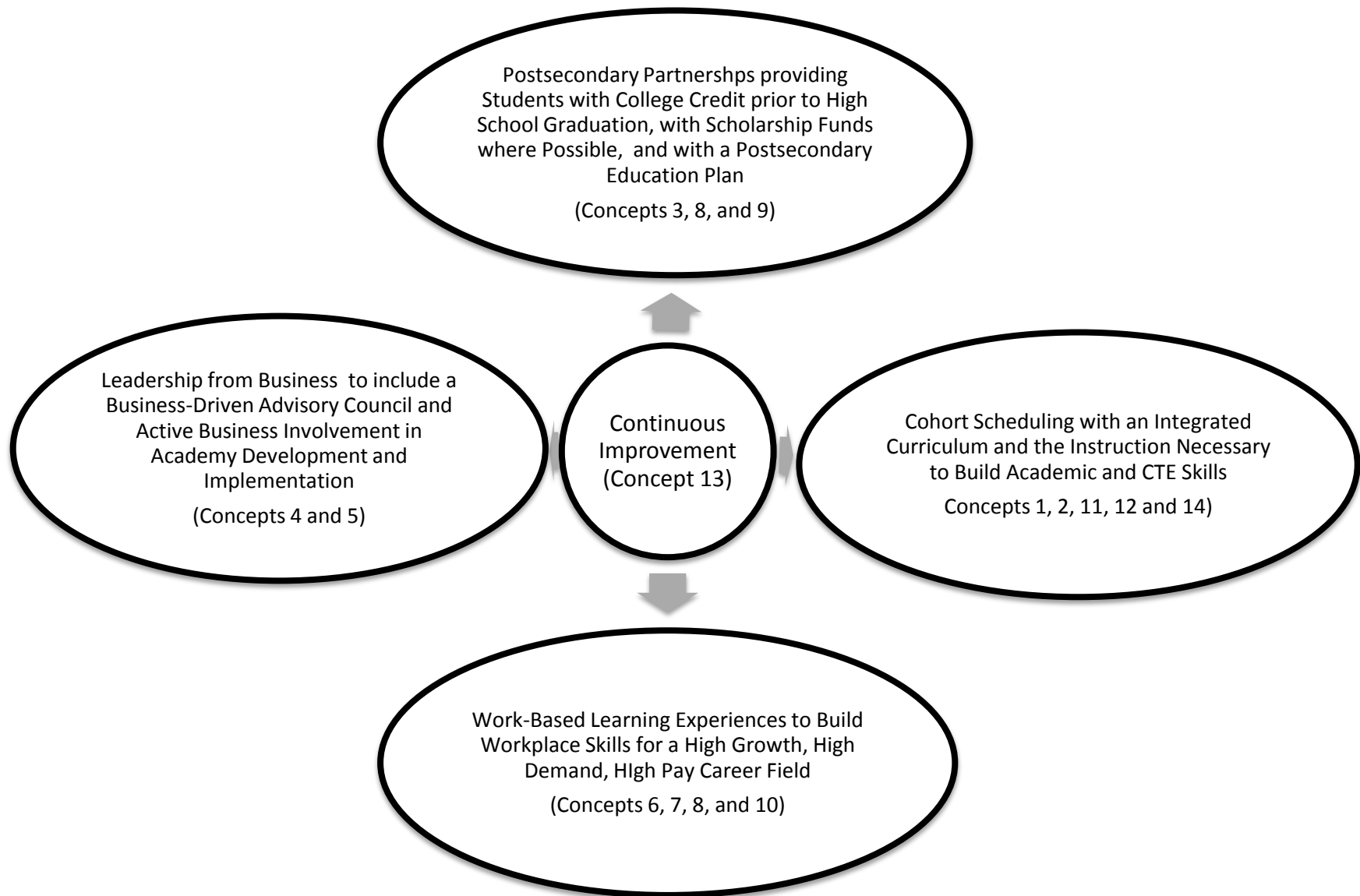
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<p>12. Include credentials in workplace skills to include SCANS Competencies and Skills . Academies may also elect to implement the FL Ready to Work Certification, which can be obtained through the Florida Ready to Work Program (floridareadytowork.com).The student takes online placement tests in three skill areas: Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information and Locating Information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both academic and CTE academy teachers teach SCANS competencies and skills as reflected in their lesson plans. SCANS competencies and skills are visible to academy students in the classrooms via posters, bulletin boards, portfolio components, etc. When possible, academies show implementation and results of the FL Ready to Work Certification process. 					
<p>13. Implement continuous improvement component 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 academy adherence to Polk Career Academy concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each academy records compliance with concepts using evidence as listed in this document. Academy personnel utilize district-generated student reports to assess academy performance in terms of student learning outcomes. Notes from regularly scheduled academy team meetings reflect strategic planning activities. Notes from activities that are part of a district-coordinated continuous improvement timeline reflect participation of designated staff from each academy. A strategic plan updated at the end of each school year lists an academy's commendations, recommendations, goals, strategies, responsibilities, and timeline. 					
<p>14. The academy will cohort schedule as follows: Implement cohort scheduling** that 1) ensures that the academy's CTE teacher and the other teachers with whom students are scheduled as an academy cohort have common planning. and 2) provides for cohort scheduling** of students as follows:</p> <p>a. During year one, 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>b. 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>c. 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"> A school's master schedule with student enrollments in specific classes shows cohort scheduling as listed with this concept. Both academic and CTE teacher lesson plans document integrated activities to show overlap of instruction between academic and CTE courses. 					

* Indicate level of implantation with 1 being very little or no implementation and 5 being outstanding implementation with extremely strong evidence

**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.

Polk County Career Academy Concept Categories



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Polk County Academy Student Performance Reports

Academy or School:

Grade:

Date Run:

This sheet is to be created for each grade (9-12) in every host school and for each grade (9-12) in every academy .

Line Description	Total	Male	Female	Black	White	Hispanic	Other	Special Pops
#								
%								
GPA								
FCAT Reading > = 3 (most recent score) <i>(Performance Indicator 1S1)</i>								
FCAT Math > = 3 (most recent score) <i>(Performance Indicator 1S2)</i>								
Industry Certification (assuming we have an IC flag) <i>(Performance Indicator 2S1)</i>								
Graduation rate (% of seniors leaving with standard diploma GED) <i>(Performance Indicator 3S1)</i>								
Percent of students earning OCP or Industry Certification (yet to be clarified) <i>(Performance Indicator 2S1)</i>								