

Recognizing Career Academy Innovation

THROUGH THE FORD PARTNERSHIP FOR ADVANCED STUDIES, FORD MOTOR COMPANY FUND FOCUSES ON PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL CAREERS.

ARE WE PREPARING OUR STUDENTS TO BE creative, innovative thinkers? Are they ready to compete in a global knowledge economy?

The readers of *Techniques* know that for America to stay competitive, the public education system must be transformed to better meet the needs of a changing economy. For this to be achieved, schools, universities, businesses and government must work together to ensure success for all students. To make learning relevant, we must create links between schools and business, between the courses students take and real-life experiences.

Unlike traditional corporate foundations that support existing organizations and initiatives, Ford Motor Company Fund focuses its educational giving on creating and implementing innovative new programs that cultivate the skills needed to create tomorrow's innovations. These initiatives will form creative, nontraditional partnerships with outside foundations, companies, educational organizations, state and local governments, and community-based organizations.

Welcome to the Real World

Can real learning take place without making a connection with the real world? Of course not. Statistics prove that public education is best accomplished when it is a truly public endeavor. This means welcoming and involving students in work places, retail environments, city centers and cultural institutions—all places where students have been largely absent and where extraordinary yet underutilized educational resources often exist.

Through a contextual, project and inquiry-based teaching and learning process, opportunities can be created that give students a chance to cultivate applied skills needed

in the workplace and to understand how learning connects to careers or to solving real-world problems. This innovative approach to learning fosters higher standards of workforce excellence consistent with the demands of the 21st century.

Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies (Ford PAS), Ford Motor Company Fund's signature education-based program, is an academically rigorous high school curriculum that prepares students for success in college and professional careers in fields such as business, engineering and technology. Taught by trained and certified high school teachers in school-based, after-school, and summer-camp settings, the Ford PAS curriculum is currently used in 116 sites across 21 states. Since an important aspect of the Ford PAS experience is the extension of learning beyond the classroom, Ford helps communities engage in the education process by establishing partnerships with local businesses and higher education institutions.

The Ford CAIC Initiative

Continuing to draw on career themes to bring real-world relevance to academic instruction, Ford Motor Company Fund launched the Ford Career Academy Innovation Community (Ford CAIC) recognition program. This initiative supports medium-size school districts and communities that wish to increase the number of students learning in an academically rigorous, career-theme structure. The program provides a 12-Point Action Plan consisting of best practices critical in implementing successful and sustainable career academies. This plan will serve as the basis of the technical assistance provided by Ford Motor Company Fund.

Employers need a better understand-

Cheryl Carrier

is the director of the Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies. She can be contacted at ccarrier@ford.com.



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ing of the classroom environment, and academics need a better understanding of the workplace. Linking the goals and resources of the workforce, economic development groups and school districts together ensures instruction is meaningful and learning is relevant to the community's workplace needs.

In 2003, Henry Ford Learning Institute (HFLLI) was launched to develop a national network of small schools based on the highly successful Henry Ford Academy (HFA) high school model, which provides career and college preparation through strong academics and exposure to future opportunities. Each new academy will produce a nexus for change through the creation of innovative learning laboratories that are embedded within the community, supported by partner organizations, and intended to drive reforms in public education.

By locating public education in public spaces, the academy model connects academic rigor to the real world while infusing adult relationships to support a learning environment to actively engage students. This dual focus is a key differentiator of the academy and is congruent with the "new" three Rs of rigor, relevance and relationships, which are prevalent in every facet of the academy. The academy design framework will help new schools incorporate elements that make the academy effective: partners in learning, public school in a public space, workplace is the

learning space, and teaching and learning for authentic achievement.

At the Turning Point

High school is a pivotal point in the lives of young people. Success or failure at this juncture affects students' abilities to achieve academic, financial and personal growth for the rest of their lives. What occurs in U.S. high schools directly affects the competitiveness of the city, our nation's economy and the future of American society. There is an urgent need for high school reform.

Educational programs that emphasize career and college preparation through strong academics and exposure to future opportunities ensure young people will not only learn the critical content of today—science, math, engineering—but important life skills such as teamwork, innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, and the like. Students become business savvy at a young age, allowing them to address real-world issues and compete in a global market.

Ford has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to creating partnerships that lead to educational reform, including its role as a founding partner and ongoing supporter of the model HFA in Dearborn, Michigan. The direct, hands-on involvement of more than 400 individual Ford employees who serve as tutors, mentors, lecturers, curriculum advisers, student project sponsors, project partners and coaches for thousands of hours each year is a powerful example of "partners in learning." Ford volunteers serve all 450 students and their families, and the 32 academy teachers, administrators and support staff. Ford executives also facilitate additional community relationships and serve on the HFLLI and HFA-Dearborn's Board of Directors.

Ford recognizes that strong business support is vital to achieving excellence in education. Giving back to the community through innovative learning platforms is just one of the ways that Ford Motor Company is focused on developing the next generation of students. **■**

Learn More

For more information on Ford PAS or Ford CAIC, please contact Cheryl Carrier at 313-248-8028 or ccarrier@ford.com. Information on Ford PAS can be found at www.FordPAS.org. For more information on HFA or HFLLI, please contact Mike Schmidt at 313-248-6833 or mschmi14@ford.com. Additional information on Henry Ford Learning Institute can be found at www.hfli.org.