

**A COOK'S TOUR:
THE JOURNEY
TO BECOME A MODEL**

Culinary Arts Academy

By Susan C. Bantang

Susan C. Bantang

is academy coordinator at West Boca Raton Community High School in Boca Raton, Florida. She can be contacted at bantans@palmbeach.k12.fl.us.



A student in West Boca High's culinary arts academy makes a gingerbread house.


In his book, A Whole New Mind...Why Right Brainers Will Rule the Future, former White House speechwriter Daniel H. Pink emphasizes that “we are our stories.” He states that “story” is one of six essential aptitudes that represent a pathway to understanding what doesn't run through the left side of the brain. This yearning for self-knowledge, through stories, is evident in many places, including the “scrapbooking” movement, where people assemble the artifacts of their lives into a narrative that tells the world who they are and what they're about. This story is about how the West Boca Raton Community High School's Culinary Arts Academy achieved national model status as it works to prepare the next generation of culinary artists.

A History

West Boca High is a comprehensive high school located in Palm Beach County, the fifth largest school district in Florida and the 11th largest in the nation. With a student body of more than 2,200 students, the school's motto is “Preparing Students Today...For The Careers Of Tomorrow.” West Boca recently received an “A” rating from the Florida Department of Education and was named one of the 50 highest performing high schools in the state. More than 1,300 students and 15 career and technical education (CTE) instructors comprise West Boca in four academies: culinary arts, drafting and

design, information technology and medical sciences. Using academic rigor, integrated laboratory and work-based learning, the school prepares students for future endeavors in college, continuing education and the global economy. The culinary academy, established in 2004, adopted national standards that have served as a foundation for its excellence. In November 2007, the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) recognized the academy for its achievements with the National Standards of Practice “Award of Distinction.”

Drawn from many years of research and experience, the National Standards of Practice were developed by an informal



consortium of national career academy organizations—including NCAC and the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE). Introduced at a press conference in Washington, D.C., in December 2004, and endorsed by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor, the standards are framed around 10 key elements for successful, sustained implementation of academies. By sharing West Boca's model academy story, we wish to inspire CTE educators to develop academy programs that focus on academic rigor and relevant career preparation—programs that will equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in an international marketplace.

Secret Ingredients

The members of West Boca's Culinary Arts Competition Team have a passion for the culinary arts, demonstrating the drive and dedication required for skill mastery. This was the first high school team to capture first place in the prestigious Palm Beach County American Culinary Federation Competition, held in October 2006 at the Florida Culinary Institute. The team competed against postsecondary culinary institutions and other high schools. The secret ingredients for such successes, and a successful model academy, are all of the students, administrators, teachers, parents and business professionals who worked together to meet and exceed the national standards for career academies, along with the following framework:

Standard I—Defined mission and goals: The career academy has a written definition of its mission and goals. These are available to the administrators, teachers, students, parents, advisory board and others involved in the academy.

Standard II—Academy structure: An academy needs to have a well-defined structure within the high school, reflecting its status as a small learning community.

Standard III—Host district and school: Career academies exist in a variety of district and high school contexts that are important determinants of an academy's success.

Standard IV—Faculty and staff: Appropriate teacher selection, leadership, credentialing and cooperation are critical. This academy's teachers bring a wealth of education and training to the program. For the past 27 years, academy coordinator Susan Bantang has concentrated her studies in the field of

career education in New Jersey and Florida. She has served as a teacher, media specialist, public relations specialist and guidance counselor. In 2005, Bantang was the first educator to be named "Person of the Year" by the Greater Boca Raton Chamber of Commerce.

All three academy instructors are professional chefs with varied educational pathways and backgrounds. Department Chair Chef Nancy Hall is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America. Hall worked as a professional chef in local culinary landmarks before joining the school district as a food service manager. Chef Linda Pearson is a graduate of the adult culinary arts program at the former South Technical Institute and Florida International University. Prior to pursuing a 25-year teaching career, Pearson was an executive chef.

Chef Emmanuelle Suarez has an international background; he studied in France and Venezuela. A graduate of Atlantic Technical Center and the Florida Culinary Institute, Chef Suarez worked in many private sector culinary positions, including serving as a personal chef.



Standard V—Professional development: Since an academy places teachers and other adults into roles not normally included in their previous training, providing adequate professional development time, leadership and support is important. Social studies, English, math and culinary arts teachers join together in professional development as a small learning community designing interdisciplinary projects.

Standard VI—Governance and leadership: The academy has a governing structure that incorporates the view of all stakeholders, including the business community. In September 2006, the West Boca Chapter of the National Technical Honor Society (NTHS) held its first Induction Ceremony. Thirty-seven academy students were recognized for their academic achievements. West Boca's principal, Francis Giblin, and the NTHS sponsor, the Greater Boca Raton Chamber of Commerce, inducted the first honorary members. Also, during the 2006 Career and Technical Educa-

tion Month, Community Academies Advisory Board (CAAB) vice president and mentor Chef Dominick Laudia received the "Business Partner of the Year Award." Recognizing the need for a highly skilled workforce, CAAB was formed under the direction of Giblin and local leaders of business and higher education. CAAB's motto, "A Driving Force For Career Direction," attests to its mission of offering experience, expertise and resources to prepare academy students to succeed in a global economy.

Standard VII—Curriculum and Instruction: The curriculum within an academy meets or exceeds external standards and college entrance requirements, while differing from a regular high school by focusing learning around a theme. For instance, a professional butcher serves as a mentor, teaching a lesson in safe food handling and proper butchering techniques to Culinary Operations 3 students.

Standard VIII—Employer, higher education and community development: A career academy links high school to its host com-

CIW™ | Certified Internet Web Professional Program

World's Leading Certification for Web Professionals

CIW is a proven Web technology certification program endorsed by industry and educators across the United States and in 30 countries including the United Kingdom, Japan and China. With more than 120,000 certificates issued to 47,000 students worldwide, CIW prepares your students for the global marketplace.

- Industry-recognized, standardized curriculum
- Dual enrollment and college credit opportunities
- Comprehensive instructor and student resources
- Cutting-edge Web technology

Site Design
E-Commerce
SEO
JavaScript
PHP
Security
Project Management
and more!

Get your school's Web technology program and students on the fast track to success today.
Call 800-228-1027 or visit CIW-certified.com/ACTE to get started.



munity and involves members of the employer, higher education and civic communities. There is nothing closer to a chef's heart than fresh ingredients. Our culinary arts instructors purchase their goods from local vendors, but ingredients from one's backyard are best. So Home Depot pitched in to help students construct their own herb garden. They donated the tools, wood, plants and potting soil and volunteered their department manager for building guidance. Business, higher education and community partners are the backbone of any educational endeavor. They are the specialists that help students gain real-world knowledge and skills.

Standard IX—Student assessment: Improvements in student performance are central to an academy's mission. It is important to gather data that reflects whether students are showing improvement and to report these accurately and fairly to maintain the academy's integrity. Move over Iron Chefs, West Boca High's student chefs are leading the challenge. During their first year of operation in 2004, our novice chefs participated in their first in-house competition sponsored by the American Culinary Federation. These future celebrity chefs were awarded medals, ribbons and cooking utensils for their culinary expertise at a ceremony held at the Florida Culinary Institute. Just like in the business world, competition motivates students to become better.

Standard X—Cycle of improvement: No academy functions per-

fectly all the time. Ensuring that an academy remains high-quality requires engaging in a regular, well-defined, objective self-examination. It's good to think big! The academy's 20,000-square-foot kitchen is the envy of professional chefs and culinary schools. We are fortunate to have a cadre of chef mentors willing to join our chef instructors in helping students develop their culinary talents. However, in order to keep our facility running and our cupboards stocked, we need strong financial backing. Our answer is the West Boca Raton High School Educational Foundation, a philanthropic entity that can transform the lives of our students through unique opportunities.

Evaluation a Success

Preparing for the Culinary Arts Academy NCAC/ACTE National Standards of Practice evaluation was a true team effort on the part of all members of the school community—administrators, teachers, students, parents and CAAB members. Facilitated by the academy coordinator, the team gathered documentation for an evaluation notebook from many sources—including school and local newspapers and district archives. The school's drafting and design academy produced a PowerPoint presentation keyed to each of the standards. That academy also assisted in the evaluation process

- + Cosmetology
- + Licensed Practical Nursing
- + Building Trades
- + Computer Aided Drafting
- + Automotive Technology
- + Network Systems Technology
- + Web Programming
- + Culinary Arts
- + Applied Welding Technology
- + Office Management Technology
- + Early Childhood Education
- + Electrical Trades
- + Emergency Medical Training
- + Heating, Air, & Refrigeration



Student Information Management Software for Career/Technical Programs

Currently managing over 500 Career Technical programs across the country, SchoolDESX with its 27 years experience, has proven to be the most flexible Student Management System on the market today!

We understand the difficulty that Career Technical Centers face when forced to use Student Management software designed for Secondary Academics or Universities. Career Technical Centers offer Trade Programs that require a system to be flexible and feature rich in order to handle complex scheduling, self-paced course work, multiple course credit in one classroom, self paying students vs. financial assistance, customized training, continuing education, and the list goes on...

Though we have many installations that operate at the administration level of Career Technical Centers, we also offer our solution at a discounted price for individual programs to track their student's program progress using all the highly flexible features that are required to obtain the necessary tracking and reporting you demand.

Give us a call to see how you can get SchoolDESX on your desk!



WWW.SCHOOLDESX.COM

Toll Free: 800.324.9393



Chef John Carlino, one of many mentor chefs who volunteer to teach specialized lessons in the culinary arts academy at West Boca High, is teaching students how to prepare one of News Orleans' favorite desserts, bananas foster.

by producing academy attire, signage and informational materials. The school's TV production class produced an academy marketing and recruitment video that gave the evaluators an overview of each academy program. The evaluators observed students in the culinary arts laboratories as they prepared a formal luncheon, complete with ice carvings, demonstrating their creative skills in food preparation, restaurant décor and serving techniques.

A roundtable evaluation session was divided into five main sections:

- Overview of school and academy—video and PowerPoint presentations provided the evaluators with a solid background of the school's programs.
- Interview with academy teachers—our Cohort Interdisciplinary Team demonstrated how the core academic subjects support the culinary arts academy by integrating workplace competencies into the curriculum.
- Interview with academy students—a representative from each grade level,

including alumni, spoke candidly about the knowledge, skills and real-world applications they gained on each level.

- Interview with advisory board members: representatives from postsecondary culinary institutions, along with the CAAB chairman, Chamber of Commerce president, a parent, and chef mentor provided a snapshot of CAAB's mission, goals and accomplishments.
- Interview with the academy team leader and school administrators: the participants presented the evaluators with the challenges and rewards of running a successful academy program.

A Model for Excellence

Preparing for a model evaluation took dedication and commitment, but it was worth it. As a result, academy officials were given the opportunity to present

their strategies, challenges and successes at the Florida Department of Education K-12 Curriculum Conference in Orlando; the NCAC Conference in St. Louis, Missouri; and at the ACTE Annual Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. They are now looking forward to going global by sharing their best practices with foreign educators. They will also be joining the Greater Boca Raton Chamber of Commerce as it forges a 'sister city' relationship with municipalities under consideration in Latin America, Italy and the Bahamas.

Achieving NCAC/ACTE model status has instilled a sense of pride and accomplishment in the academy's students and the entire school community that is beyond measure. **T**

