



Bridging the
Worlds of School
and Work: Profiles
and Insights



FORD
NEXT GENERATION
LEARNING 
Community Connected Learning

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BRIDGING THE WORLDS OF SCHOOL AND WORK: PROFILES AND INSIGHTS

FORD NGL POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP REPORT

Introduction

One of the benefits of being part of the Ford Next Generation Network is the support and insights shared by other communities. The transformational journey keeps students as the focus while our communities prepare them for college, careers, lifelong learning, and leadership. That journey certainly has its successes and its challenges. Navigating the journey can be more efficient and effective if we share and learn from each other.

The core talent development strategy for preparing the workforce of tomorrow today is Ford NGL Community-connected Learning. Powerful partnerships between the business community and educators are required to effectively execute that strategy. Structures and processes must be in place to support those efforts. This report is one way we are examining and sharing how communities plan, implement, and sustain their partnerships.

This report contains summaries derived from a series of interviews with employee partners and school district personnel. Individual interviews and forums were conducted during the month of April 2018. Interviews were limited in scope, reflect a point in time, and are edited for presentation purposes. The insights shared represent the consolidated views, observations, and recommendations of those interviewed. Ford NGL is extremely grateful for the time spent by the interviewees and for the open and honest answers and reflections they provided.

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AVID PHYSICAL THERAPY


Coachella Valley, California

AVID Physical Therapy and its Movement for Life Clinics are part of a group of award winning physical therapy private practices with three locations in the Coachella Valley and San Bernardino area. With the help of its staff of 40 and its many patients, AVID Physical Therapy strives towards a common goal of bettering its community. It is actively involved in communities through sponsorships and participation in a variety of events and activities including its partnership with Coachella Valley Unified School District, Desert Sands Unified School District and the Palm Springs Unified School District. AVID began its involvement with academies of Coachella Valley in 2012.

Interviewed for this report was Bob Kambe, Director of Business Relations, AVID Physical Therapy.

Origins of Engagement

Around 2012, AVID Physical Therapy recognized that in the Coachella Valley there would be a huge need in the medical field for medical and health care professionals. The population of the area was growing rapidly and the number of retirees was increasing dramatically. The Coachella Valley needed qualified professionals in healthcare and was going to need many more in the future. That's when AVID realized one of the best things they could do for their business, for the community, and for area students was to partner with the medical and health academies. AVID now offers a number of internships every year. Students serve as interns for either a six month period or for a full year. Once they graduate from high school, many are hired on a part-time basis as physical therapy aides while in college, and it allows AVID to continue the mentoring process. Bob Kambe says, "That has worked out really well for us. We have future doctors of physical therapy and physical therapy assistants in the pipeline to return to the Coachella Valley."



In the Coachella Valley, employee partners must maintain effective relationships with three school districts.

Organizational Relationships and Systems

In the Coachella Valley, employee partners must maintain effective relationships with three school districts. Kambe acknowledges that it was a little rough in the beginning. It took a while to establish the contacts and develop solid working relationships, process, and communications. Now those relationships exist with all three districts, and meetings are held on a regular basis. Building on that experience, AVID and other business partners have put together a coalition. The coalition serves as a mentor organization for new businesses that wish to partner too. When a new partner comes on, they are paired with an existing partner and the school district.

Maintaining Engagement

When there is a personnel change in the district or academy, there can be a period when there is a drop-off in engagement. AVID believes it is important to have key people monitor those kinds of situations and alert all parties to areas of concern. According to Kambe, "We don't want to have any downtime or slippage in the benchmarks we have set. Communication and timely follow-up and follow-through are key to success."

Challenges

There are two challenges for AVID and the school districts. The first is the burn-out factor and the amount of time teachers/coordinators have to invest to be successful. "We have fantastic leaders, but it's difficult, because they are pulled in so many different directions," says Kambe. The second challenge is location and transportation. One district is very rural, so the transportation issues result in students from that district having less access to their internships. We are working with the local Sunline bus company to assist us with getting the students to their internships.

Measuring Results

AVID developed and maintains an internship process, overview of best practices. As experience demonstrates the need for a change in the internship and mentoring process, it is tied to the need for change in the curriculum. The same is true when academies ask for adjustments or improvements to the internship or mentoring process. Managing change effectively is one reason why constant communication is key. AVID Physical Therapy also maintains mentoring relationships that were built during the student internships, and those relationships continue through college and grad school. Bob Kambe and the AVID team do whatever they can to open doors for the students.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY LOUISVILLE ASSEMBLY PLANT AND KENTUCKY TRUCK PLANT

Louisville, Kentucky

The Ford Motor Company is an American multinational automaker headquartered in Dearborn, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. It was founded by Henry Ford and incorporated on June 16, 1903. The company sells automobiles and commercial vehicles under the Ford brand and most luxury cars under the Lincoln brand.

The Kentucky Truck Plant opened in 1969. Current products include the F-250-F-550, Super Duty pickups, Ford Expedition, and Lincoln Navigator. The Louisville Assembly Plant opened in 1955 and currently produces the Ford Escape and Lincoln MKC. The two plants combined employ approximately 15,000. The plants have partnered with the local schools for three years.

The International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) is one of the largest and most diverse unions in North America, with members in virtually every sector of the economy. UAW represents workplaces ranging from multinational corporations, small manufacturers, state and local governments, colleges and universities, to hospitals and private non-profit organizations. The UAW has more than 400,000 active members and more than 580,000 retired members in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. UAW Local 862 represents workers at the Ford Motor Company Louisville Assembly and Kentucky Truck Plants in Louisville, Kentucky.

Interviewed for this report were Rodney Janes, Building Chair, Kentucky Truck Plant, UAW Local 862; Holly Elliot, Body Interior PVT Engineer, Ford Motor Company; and Tami Hatfield, Labor Relations Supervisor serving as the Community Relations Representative and Training Coordinator, Louisville Assembly Plant, Ford Motor Company.

Origins of Engagement

About five years ago, the Ford Motor Company facilities in Louisville, Kentucky found itself struggling to find applicants for assembly team jobs. In addition, among those applicants very few, if any, were young, recent high school graduates. The question became, how do we educate these students about opportunities in manufacturing?

Jefferson County had started work with Ford NGL, and representatives from Ford began working closely with the schools to expose students to manufacturing. Tours were established, and over 700 students a year now visit the plants. Teacher externships were initiated because each teacher reaches about 150 students a day. It is a way to showcase manufacturing and assembly concepts, so those concepts can be integrated into the curriculum. And that's not all.

More and more activities and competitions have been offered that educate students about the real world of work. Experiences included solar panel cars, career fairs, real world warranty challenges, and even a global challenge with the Amazing Global Workplace. In that challenge students learned what it takes to make a global decision and competed against teams sponsored by other major companies.

The United Auto Workers are also committed to being a positive force in its communities and wanted to get more involved in the Louisville area. There had been one person working part-time with the schools, but in order for the UAW to expand its support and participation, a full time role was established. Rodney Janes of Local 862 now fills that role. There was an official UAW partnership signing with the schools on March 29, 2018, and Janes is now working with 13 academies. He is also working with the Greater Louisville Labor Council which is 5400 members strong representing 54 unions. The goal is for the UAW to support the schools and work jointly, when possible, with the Greater Louisville Council. Support is provided not only in the pathways that Ford is highly interested in, but in other areas as well.

Organizational Relationships and Systems

Tami Hatfield is the Senior Human Relations Associate serving as the Community Relations Representative and Training Coordinator at the Louisville Assembly Plant. She serves on the advisory board. She and the schools have developed a relationship based on trust. "The main thing is having one person as the point of contact. You have to know the scope of the need and the event or project. You have to make sure one person knows and understands all the efforts going into the task," said Hatfield.

Rodney Janes, Building Chair, Kentucky Truck Plant, UAW Local 862 commented on how amazing the academy coaches are and mentioned how important it is to engage with a mentorship mindset. He emphasized one more vital point. He said, "To get connected you have to see firsthand what is going on in the schools. When I was asked to come onboard for a project-based learning experience, I didn't know what that was, but when I saw it in person it all clicked. It's hands-on learning with real world relevance."



The United Auto Workers are also committed to being a positive force in its communities

Holly Elliot, Body Interior PVT Engineer is involved as a community outreach coordinator. In that role she serves as a point person. She provides project and event information to teachers and works with them and the academy coach to plan and organize. "Initially we meet monthly, and then, as we get closer to an event, we meet more often. The lead teachers and academy coach help keep us all on task," said Elliot.

Maintaining Engagement

Tami Hatfield is involved with each district and helped develop a business partner checklist. Businesses don't always know how they can contribute, so a checklist provides ideas and clarity. She suggests making good use of meeting time when business partners are in attendance. Focus on ideas or projects that excite the business partner, and that will get everyone engaged.

Another way to keep employees, company leadership, and the community engaged is to promote and publicize the work. Hatfield noted that, "My plant managers loved it, because they got positive press on the 5 o'clock news. It is also important to recognize employees who participate and give back, and make sure their leadership knows about their contributions as well."

Rodney Janes believes there are five key components to maintaining an effective partnership.

1. Don't be an armchair quarterback. Get to know what's going on with teachers. Teachers need help and support, and business can help them with their challenges.
2. Be transparent.
3. Share great stories. Communicate your success.
4. Share best practices.
5. Get the parents involved. Showing up for a meeting is good, but hands-on involvement is great!

Challenges

It is important to have the support of all of the academy teachers, or it can be challenging to move initiatives forward. Hatfield noted how Ford NGL helped prepare the teachers to participate as a team. "We found that when teachers come as a team, it was so much better. Teams are motivated and engaged, and the opportunity to actually do and implement is much higher."

Measuring Results

In the beginning, students were surveyed after their plant tour and asked if they might like to one day work for Ford. Initially the positive responses were in the low 20s, but over time as the process was refined and supported, the "yes" answers grew to over 270. That is close to 40% of those who participated. Ford Louisville representatives were asked what advice they would give future businesses beginning their participation in the transformation. To get the desired results they made the following suggestions.

- Assign a dedicated person(s) and make it part of their job responsibilities.
- Make sure that person is someone who knows the overall business, can connect with everyone in the organization, and is an effective communicator.
- Top management must buy-in for the long haul. They have to know they won't see an immediate return on investment. It takes time, but the results are worth it.
- It's all about the network. Ford NGL provides the connections to other communities, their experiences, and their expertise.

GAYLORD OPRYLAND

Nashville, Tennessee

Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center is a large hotel and convention located in Nashville, Tennessee. It is owned by Gaylord Hotels, a division of Ryman Hospitality Properties and operated by Marriott International. Lynne Maynor was interviewed for this report and serves as the Director of Leadership and Development. Her role includes the design and development of a leadership college for all leaders within Gaylord Opryland and the roster of electives to serve the general employee population.

Origins of Engagement

Eleven years ago, Gaylord Opryland leadership assigned Lynne Maynor, Director of Leadership and Development to work with McGavock High School. Maynor recalls that her first order of business was to try and understand where the relationship stood and exactly what was going on. The first year was spent building the relationship and then defining and prioritizing the “ask.” That information was then brought back and shared with the organization.

Organizational Relationships and Systems

Today Maynor has a steering committee at Gaylord Opryland along with the front of the house, food and beverage, and other personnel who are genuinely interested in the work. She is on the advisory board, hospitality partnership council, and functions internally as the “academy coach” for Gaylord. She is the point person for providing internships, guest speakers, and field trips. Sponsored activities are broken down into hospitality/tourism and culinary. Initial activities are run separately then participants are brought together, so they can see the full picture.

Maynor maintains a strong relationship with McGavock’s academy coach. “I sort of ‘clear the path’ for what’s going on and try to bring a common language. We say the same thing, but they speak in terms of academics, and we speak in terms of competencies,” said Maynor. To make everything run smoothly forms were developed so dates, times, locations, guest speakers, topics, and objectives are clear and mutually understood. Forms help expedite the “ask” to its implementation.

Maintaining Engagement

As in any business people come and go, so to sustain engagement it is important to keep the executive team at Gaylord informed and up to date on the career academy. Part of doing that involves taking the executives on an annual tour of the academy. It’s a way for them to actually see what is going on. Maynor calls it an “executive touchpoint.” “Seeing is believing, so seeing the whole of McGavock makes a big impression. I took the whole HR team and the executive team when we had a few new leaders.”

Maintaining engagement with the schools is more than attending advisory committee or partnership meetings. Participating in academy team meetings is a great way to know what is going on, keep the relationship strong, and see what might be planned. Maintaining a solid rapport with the teachers builds trust and ensures things are moving forward. Robbin Wall, the McGavock Principal, also knows Lynne Maynor is able to offer resources to the teachers. As the Director of Leadership Training for Gaylord, she is able to bring training to the teachers on topics such as the seven habits of highly effective people, the change cycle, and other learning components. That helps to keep teachers in the know, and at the same time reinforces the working relationship. “We make the connections to pathways and stress the need for soft skills and basic skills,” says Maynor.

Challenges

Time is always a challenge, so one way Maynor has addressed that need at Gaylord Opryland is by building in-house competencies. Chefs, event management, and others are trained, so that management and coordination of events can be delegated. Maynor is kept informed, but having others trained builds sustainability in the process. She also connects them with PENCIL. PENCIL functions as an intermediary, and engages business and education for the Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS).

Keeping the energy level sustained, particularly when there is turnover in school personnel, is the other big challenge. When new people arrive, they don’t know the language, the process, or roles. They don’t know what the advisory board does or even the names of the partners. And, like most professionals coming into new surroundings, they sense their plate is already pretty full. Maynor’s response is proactive. “I act to quickly communicate and meet with them. I invite them to experience Gaylord and start explaining the roles and responsibilities. I describe how we can provide resources. Then I try to get them to participate in an externship. Immerse them in the business for three days, and they come out onboard!” says Maynor.

Measuring Results

Data is tracked and results are measured in a variety of ways. Dashboard components are provided as requested by MNPS and PENCIL. Employee volunteer hours are tracked for Marriott. Gaylord Opryland also tracks internal things specific to youth development such as college group interactions and interns after high school.

Lessons Learned

When asked what advice she would recommend to future Ford NGL communities, Lynne offered this suggestion. “Get the school’s course books, and see where you can plug in. If I can sit down with my experts and review the resources the teachers are using, it is extremely helpful. Then we can meet with the CTE and core teachers and start planning. We can shape their perspective of hospitality and infuse project-based learning. Donna Gilley, the Director of Nashville Academies, came in and taught my leaders Teaching Through the Lens. Now we have five files of how we use math in our operations, and we can show its relevance in the classroom.”

NORTON HEALTHCARE

Louisville, Kentucky

Norton Healthcare is a leader in serving adult and pediatric patients throughout Greater Louisville, Southern Indiana, the commonwealth of Kentucky, and beyond. The hospital and health care system is the third largest private employer in the Louisville area, providing care at more than 250 locations throughout Greater Louisville and Southern Indiana. The Louisville-based, not-for-profit system includes five Louisville hospitals; seven outpatient centers; 14 Norton Immediate Care Centers; more than 14,000 employees; more than 850 employed medical providers; and approximately 2,000 total physicians on its medical staff. Norton Healthcare’s purpose is to provide quality health care to all those it serves, in a manner that responds to the needs of its communities and honors its faith heritage. Consistent with that mission, a little over two years ago Norton Healthcare extended its many community initiatives by beginning a working relationship with Louisville high schools.

Interviewed for this report was Christy Ralston, Director, Office of Workforce Development, Norton Healthcare.

Origins of Engagement

Jackie Beard is the Systems Director, Talent Acquisition and Workforce Development at Norton Healthcare Inc. She helped create a health careers collaborative that focused on what the healthcare sector had to do to ensure it remained vibrant and talent rich in the future. Initially the collaborative worked with college partners. In time, there was a realization that it had to go deeper. There was a belief that if they worked upstream as well, there were some things that could be fixed or improved if addressed earlier in the education process. As a result, Christy Ralston, Director of Workforce Development for Norton Healthcare, Jackie Beard, and a small group of healthcare workers reached out and traveled to Jefferson County Schools and Metro Nashville Public Schools. They looked at the work and the roles filled by organizations such as PENCIL. The goal was to see what the educational healthcare model could look like in Louisville. How could programming be developed from the employer side?

Organizational Relationships and Systems

Ralston believes there are two key elements to building and maintaining effective relationships and systems – trust and planning time. Trust encourages honest and open rapport. Partners, who trust one another, look for mutually beneficial ways to work together. They don't start the conversation with "no" but look for ways to work their way to "yes." Sufficient planning time is also essential, but it is more than time. It is time spent at the right time, with the right agenda, and with the right people who are passionate and committed to shared objectives.

For Norton Healthcare, trust and planning were essential as it had to tackle a variety of barriers, especially when it came to job shadowing and internships. There were safety, age, and HIPAA issues. There were needs for additional vaccinations and immunizations. There were parental consent issues, flexibility on hours, and even language barriers to deal with. But, with trust, planning, and involving the community at large, Ralston is pleased with the results. She says, "Super excited for us! We're breaking down barriers that have been there for years."

Maintaining Engagement

A good part of engagement is doing all that is possible to understand and appreciate each other's worlds. Norton Healthcare began with a needs assessment, so there would be a plan with everyone on the same page. Leadership goes into the schools and provides externships for educators and academy coaches. A Norton representative meets with every student and has genuine conversations with them. Norton learns about the students from a holistic viewpoint, helps set realistic goals, and shows them the progression and related responsibilities and rewards. Norton Healthcare also knows it must have the support of faculty, staff, and parents. Their help is needed with the messaging, and they must understand the environment and process. Ralston believes, "You must be transparent. You need to build that good rapport, so when the challenges come, you can have a direct conversation. There is an education on all sides. It must be approached collaboratively, and we must look for ways to integrate our efforts."

Gaining and maintaining leadership and employee support is easier than it might have been if Norton Healthcare had started its workforce development efforts at the high school level. Years ago it began with a local summer works program for college age students followed by setting up programs specifically for college students. Those initiatives helped build a culture of education within the organization. Then, when it came time to move into the high school level programs, it was more of a natural evolution.

Challenges

- The community is far more diverse than expected and translators can often be required.
- High school is full of cliques that influence participation.

- Unlike working with college students, parental permissions are required.
- High school students in general have a shorter attention span and are often very busy with extracurricular activities.
- People are asked to do a number of things different from what they are accustomed such as coming in multiple times for TB testing.
- It's easy to abandon things too early. Results from workforce strategies take time.

Measuring Results

One measurement of engagement is captured by tracking hours spent on the process. In others, results and rewards are shown by documenting how many students job shadow, intern, and ultimately stay with Norton Healthcare. Norton measures retention, engagement, and overall satisfaction and hosts celebrations at each level of attainment.

VYSTAR CREDIT UNION

Jacksonville, Florida

For over 65 years, VyStar Credit Union has been dedicated to improving the financial lives of its members and supporting the communities in 22 Northeast to Central Florida counties. VyStar is the fourth largest financial institution in North Florida and the 14th largest employer in Florida with over 1400 employees. Its vision is to be the primary financial institution for its members and bring credit union services to more people. In support on its vision and mission, VyStar has been actively involved with area schools for over 12 years. Among the many support services and engagement activities it provides are student internships, teacher externships, guest speakers, and in school branches.

Interviewed for this report was Michael Rathjen, Manager of Student Branches, VyStar Credit Union.

Origins of Engagement

The VyStar partnership with the schools originated with St. Johns County when its local branch vice president joined the career academy advisory board. Through that experience VyStar was able to see what career and technical education has to offer, and what students were able to learn through internships and hands-on experiences. Serving on the advisory board was a great opportunity to listen, observe, and see exactly what the needs of the academy and its students were.

A main objective of VyStar is to promote financial literacy in its communities. It wasn't long before the connection was made between that objective and insights gained by serving on the advisory board. VyStar was willing to be part of something new and innovative, and in 2007 it opened its first in high school branch. Twelve St. John's high students worked all summer in an established branch then in the fall began running the branch within the school. It was a paid internship arrangement. Today the program has grown to 14 different locations with over 160 students participating.



A main objective of VyStar is to promote financial literacy in its communities.

Organizational Systems and Relationships

The CEO and the Chief of Member Services for VyStar stay involved with the local chamber and career source for economic development. VyStar stays involved with other activities as well including the Teacher of the Year ceremony. They also take what they call a “360 degree approach” to staying in front of the school board. They continue to follow-up to see what the needs are and work to maintain open and transparent communications. Michael Rathjen manages the student run branches. He says, “In order for this collaboration to be sustainable, you have to maintain deep and wide relationships throughout the school district. We have a dedicated staff to oversee our high school programs, and that sets us apart from our competition.”

Maintaining Engagement

Communication and follow-up is vital to student engagement, maintaining an effective working relationship with the school, and parental support. The application for the internship is very clear and is prepared so that the school can filter applications. Filtering the applications helps VyStar work more effectively. Since the positions within the school credit union branch are for a one year term, students must be 100% committed. Then they need to be effectively brought onboard in a timely manner. Clear expectations are set for what students are accountable for each day.

Challenges

Personnel changes are one of the challenges mentioned frequently by business, school, and district representatives. Michael Rathjen reflects on how, in one of their partner schools, they have changed four principles and five teachers in just five years. To deal with personnel changes he suggests being prepared. Rathjen said, “You just have to be ready for movement. Be ready to bring that new person up to speed as soon as possible.” Another challenge seen frequently is the lack of funding to support the programs developed through the school and business partner relationship. Rathjen notes, “There will always be some kind of limited resources. Sometimes the burden of limited resources falls on the teacher’s shoulders and that can ultimately lead to decreased engagement.”

Measuring Results

VyStar keeps track of the number of students who apply to work in the in-school credit union. That gives them an indication of buy-in and a sense for return on investment. The number of students who participate in VyStar’s financial education program is also tracked as well as how many new accounts are opened at each school branch.

ELK GROVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Sacramento County, California

Located in southern Sacramento County, the Elk Grove Unified School District (EGUSD) is the fifth largest school district in California. EGUSD covers 320 square miles and includes 65 schools comprised of 40 elementary schools, nine middle schools, nine high schools, five alternative education schools, an adult school, one charter school and a virtual academy. It offers a multitude of educational programs including over 65 career-themed academies and pathways with 15 industry sectors. Rigorous academics are combined with career-based learning and real world workplace experiences. On January 14, 2016 in recognition of its outstanding Explore EGUSD career and technical education academies, pathways and partnerships, Elk Grove Unified School District was named California’s second Ford Next Generation Learning (Ford NGL) community.

Interviewed for this report were Sue Hubbard, Program Specialist, Linked Learning and Cindy Lascola, Design and Technology Academy Lead, Monterey Trail High School.

Origins of Engagement

Academies and pathways have long been a practice in Elk Grove Unified School District (EGUSD). In fact, the partnership with Ford NGL began more than a decade ago with Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies (Ford PAS) and Elk Grove serving as one of the Ford PAS training hubs. As Ford PAS developed into Ford Next Generation Learning (Ford NGL), Elk Grove continued its efforts to bring greater focus and improved results to its programs. Ford NGL’s distinct but interconnected strands of transforming teaching and learning, transforming the secondary school experience, and transforming business and civic engagement aligned with Elk Grove’s vision for “every student to be learning in every classroom, in every subject every day” in ways that “prepare them to be college and career ready.” Elk Grove and Ford NGL share a visionary approach to education that develops healthy, productive graduates that will become part of a capable, sustainable workforce. With a shared vision and values it has been a natural fit for EGUSD to continue its relationship with Ford NGL and become a Ford NGL hub.

Organizational Systems and Relationships

Sue Hubbard Program Specialist, Linked Learning, noted the following:

- There is an expectation that the academies maintain strong advisory panels.
- Common planning time is encouraged although it is still a challenge.
- Teacher teams work well together.
- Professional development is a high priority.

Elk Grove has an industry pipeline developer whose role is more outward facing. They try to bring businesses into the process. Then in most cases academy coordinators (academy leads) or industry sector coaches help set up and support the relationship. They work with the sites on what that business partner relationship might look like and help coordinate the start of work-based activities. This team is also helping to scale Ford NGL Community-connected Learning.

Some other actions EGUSD takes to establish and build business partner relationships include:

- An annual Map Your Future event attended by about 1,500 people including business and post-secondary partners along with academy and pathways representation.
- An academy certification event hosted by the district to which the business partners are invited.
- A Ford NGL annual retreat at which business partners are recognized for their contributions to innovative teaching and learning.
- Readiness training for the students, so that they are prepared to interact effectively and appropriately with business partners.

Cindy Lascola is the Design and Technology Academy (DATA) Lead at Monterey Trail High School in EGUSD and remembers a time when there weren’t a lot of business partners. In her role she is responsible for establishing and maintaining mentorships for 11th grade students. It was a long time ago when Lascola started working on the program, but back then she sensed a belief that businesses weren’t all that interested in partnering. In reality, she found it to be quite the opposite. Her advice to others is to start small. “I didn’t ask for a lot. Would you be willing to speak briefly to one of our classes? Over time as trust and understanding grew, I could ask for more. Can you provide materials about your business that we can use in class? Would you consider being a mentor? Now a lot of companies actually come to us!”

The mentorship relationship itself is primarily electronic based, but it is supported with a minimum of two face-to-face activities. Mentors must be willing to invest an average of one to two hours a week. Students sign participation contracts, and safety protocols and email monitoring is part of the program.

Maintaining Engagement

One of the ways engagement with the business partners is maintained is by celebrating the partnership. Most of that is done at the site or school level. At Monterey Trail High School they recognize academy partners by putting up posters in class and plaques on the wall. Partners see that as evidence they are appreciated. During the annual DATA academy graduation ceremony, one of the business partners is recognized by academy students with a homemade ceramic award and a plaque. There is an acknowledgement that more of this needs to be done on a broader scale and on a more public basis.


As mentioned earlier, the DATA mentorship program at Monterey Trail High School is supported with two live events. The events engage the mentors at the school site and reinforce common goals and working relationships. The year is kicked off with an ice cream social. Then mid-year there is an all day event based on an engineering PBL. For example, this year there was an elaborate egg-drop called “Minion Mayhem” in which students had to design transporters for their minions. The awards for this year’s event, were custom Minion trophies that were designed on computer aided design (CAD) software, then 3D printed, then hand-painted. The base of the trophies were also designed on a CAD program, cut out using a plasma cutter, and then welded together. Other past events have included trebuchets and rocket launchers. The Minion Mayhem event had 90% of the mentors attending!

In terms of engaging and maintaining the support of school teachers, Lascola said, “Most business partners are set up through the CTE program. Teachers respect the process. During one of the monthly DATA Academy meetings, we partnered with the Sacramento Electric Vehicles Foundation, and they provided a presentation and a car display consisting of eight battery electric vehicles. The science teachers really got into it. Teachers like to attend these types of events, and it’s easier when it’s organized for them. They get hooked, and then we get them involved by asking how it can grow and be improved.”

Challenges

Current challenges include:

- Preparing thoroughly for internships.
- Barriers and limitations imposed by the school schedule.
- Creating a master schedule that maximizes teacher planning and teacher professional development.
- Transportation for work-based experiences and internships. (One CTE van has been purchased to help with this challenge.)
- Time is always a challenge! Example: Offers coming in from business partners are amazing, but unless those come well in advance, there is not sufficient time to design curriculum to incorporate and support the offer.



Mentors must be willing to invest an average of one to two hours a week.

Measuring Results

Results are measured by things such as:

- Student surveys.
- Graduates returning with a desire to give back.
- Advisory board feedback.
- The California Partnership Academy Annual Report which measures engagement, what is done, number of activities, etc.

Recommendations for New Communities

- Start slowly. Look at what other Ford NGL communities are doing, but don’t try to replicate all at once. You may be overwhelmed if you take on too much too soon.
- Student leadership is vital. Have student leaders who are trained and informed to interact with the business partners.
- Have a strong advisory group and maintain frequent and open lines of honest communication.

METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Nashville, Tennessee

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, or MNPS, is a school district that serves the city of Nashville, Tennessee and Davidson County. More than 82,000 students are currently enrolled in the district’s 73 elementary schools, 33 middle schools, 25 high schools, 18 charter schools, and eight specialty schools.

The Academies of Nashville is one of the best college and career prep programs in the nation because of the effort to transform high schools in Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) that started more than a decade ago. Today, the Academies of Nashville has 39 wall-to-wall academies in the district’s 12 zoned high schools. Being part of the Ford NGL network provides essential ongoing support, resources and professional development vital to continuing the Academies of Nashville in its Metro Schools.

Interviewed for this report was Donna Gilley, Director of Academies of Nashville.

Origins of Engagement

In 2005 MNPS was struggling with low graduation rates of around 58%. It was clear something big and bold was required. After working with community partners, MNPS sought to engage more civic and business organizations. It started that outreach with a group from the Nashville Chamber of Commerce who expressed a desire to be more involved with the public schools. Initially the engagement was to help determine what the schools should look like and what high school graduates should be like in terms of knowledge and skills. Once that was determined, it shifted to a reverse design process. Partners like the Nashville Chamber, Alignment Nashville, Gaylord, Deloitte, NES, St. Thomas Health, and the PENCIL Foundation played major roles. PENCIL continues to help organize and onboard business engagement including the development of business partnership agreements.

Organizational Systems and Relationships

The Nashville Chamber, Ford Next Generation Learning, and Alignment Nashville came together to develop structures. “...that’s key! You have to have structures and protocols in place to ensure that business engagement is

efficient. Businesses move at a quicker pace, and structures allow it as partners to move quickly,” said Donna Gilley, Director of Academies of Nashville. The Nashville Chamber brought in “anchor partners” like Gaylord and CMT to design the process. Then the Chamber and Alignment reached out to partners to determine what the academies would look like. Processes and procedures were developed at different tiers. CEO Champions is at the highest level with the role of advocacy. At another level at district are the partnership councils which include the chairs of all the school level advisory boards.

As mentioned earlier, PENCIL developed a business partnership agreement and a menu of options for business engagement. The agreement ensures businesses understand the serious commitment they are making. These founding partners set up the structures and the processes the Nashville community is still using today.

To underscore the importance of these structures and relationships Gilley stated, “About 10 years ago, we decided that as a city, public education was not just a problem for MNPS. It’s a community issue. All of our community partners meant that, and they do everything they can to support us.”

Maintaining Engagement

Maintaining engagement and sustainability requires a variety of processes, protocols, and actions including but not limited to:

- A minimum of four advisory board meetings a year.
- A template of conversations that must be held with partners to assure all schools and their advisory boards are having the same discussions about key topics like experiential learning.
- Career Exploration Fair for 9th grade, industry-related field trips for 10th grade, job shadows for 11th grade, externships for teachers, and internships for students.
- Continued professional development training for school academy coaches and team leaders with oversight by the district.
- A dedicated academy coach without a teaching load who can nurture and sustain relationships with business partners, make sure communication is consistent and transparent, and make sure partners and the teachers are on the same page.
- Teachers who determine and communicate the standards of what is to be taught and how those standards tie into experiential learning.
- Tracking the investment and reporting back to the business partner. They appreciate the feedback and recognition.
- Simple courtesies and acknowledgements such as the principle taking the time to meet and greet partners when they visit the school.

Challenges

After being involved with the transformation for a dozen years, Gilley compares it to a diet. You know eating healthy and staying active delivers positive results. You also know how much work it was to establish new patterns and behaviors, yet sometimes it can be tempting to fall back into the old ways. Gilley acknowledges, “Thankfully it has become more institutionalized, but at the same time I must remember it takes training for the academy coach and for the teachers. It is really important to continue professional development and growth.”

Budgets are also a challenge, and MNPS is currently conducting budget meetings. It appears the budget will be cut, but the career academy budget must go before the mayor and the CEO champions. If there is a cut they will want to know why and what the impact will be. One thing that is not negotiable in Nashville is having a dedicated

academy coach. Just like they must have a counselor, they must have an academy coach, because their role is critical and valued. Every high school has a full time academy coach, and it has been that way now for eleven years.

Measuring Results

PENCIL conducts an annual partner survey to help keep a pulse on how everything is going. Sometimes the feedback is not positive, but it provides an opportunity to engage with the business partner and figure out how to work better together. It may indicate the need for more or different academy coach or teacher training. Sometimes the conversations are difficult, but because common goals and objectives are shared, the discussions can be open and honest. “We want our partners to know we are making changes based on their recommendations...that we don’t just read and disregard their feedback. We want business partners, academy coaches, and teachers know we take feedback to heart,” said Donna Gilley.

Data dashboards are kept and communicated. Goals are set at the academy, school, and district level including ACT and SAT performance, graduation rate, dual enrollment, and industry certifications. SMART goals are set and reported on quarterly at partnership and other meetings.

Recommendations for New Communities

When asked for lessons learned and recommendations for new communities, Gilley offered the following insights.

- The academy coach is a vital role. In the early years they must dedicate about 75% of their time recruiting, nurturing, and building business partnerships. The other 25% is spent in team meetings, internal activities, working in the school to make sure the career academy model is being implemented with fidelity. As the transformation is institutionalized, the time will be split about 50/50.
- Provide training on how to work with businesses.
- Be willing and courageous enough to bring a partner into tough decisions, and be committed (fully committed) to really listening to and accepting their advice.
- The district, principals, and academy coaches must have open and transparent communication with partners. If that doesn’t happen they will not be partners for long.
- Give partners at least a three week window for engagement. You can’t call and expect them to be there tomorrow.
- Make sure the academy coach communicates via email with each partner every other week. It can be an update on what is going on at the school or an invitation to a school play or sporting event. Take the time to build and nurture relationships.



Sometimes the conversations are difficult, but because common goals and objectives are shared, the discussions can be open and honest

PALM SPRINGS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Coachella Valley, California

Coachella Valley includes schools in the Palm Springs Unified School District, Desert Sands Unified School District and Coachella Valley Unified School District. Palm Springs Unified School District (PSUSD) governs the western half of the valley; the Coachella Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) and Desert Sands Unified School District (DSUSD) oversee communities in the eastern half. PSUSD employs more than 2000 administrators, certificated staff and classified staff. More than 23,000 students are enrolled in sixteen elementary schools, four middle schools, four high schools, and a continuation high school. DSUSD has nineteen elementary schools, seven middle schools, 4 high schools, 2 continuation high schools, and one alternative education school, and a preschool. CVUSD has 14 elementary schools, 3 middle schools and 3 high schools, plus one continuation high school and one special school for teenage mothers.

Interviewed for this report was Steve Pinning, Director, Linked Learning and CTE, Palm Springs Unified School District.

Origins of Engagement

Coachella Valley's relationship with Ford Motor Company Fund dates back to the spring of 2006. Today the Coachella Valley brings over 12 years of experience as a regional intermediary, facilitating a multi-district, multi-partner, inter-segmental education and economic workforce development initiative to the Ford NGL Network. Its experience as the neutral convener and its deep experience with Ford NGL Stand 3, serves as a resource to the Ford NGL Network. Innovations specific to Strand 3 include developing, aligning, and sustaining regional business, education and civic partner engagement and outcomes-driven collaboration for K-20 college and career pipeline programs. Coachella Valley completed its first Ford NGL Master Plan in 2012, but consistent with its mission and eye to the future, it has elevated its vision by taking the plan to the next level with the development of their regional plan 2.0. This plan includes goals for expanding college access, securing a financial path, and increasing college completion.

Organizational Systems and Relationships

PSUSD works with OneFuture, the convening organization for Coachella Valley, for business outreach. OneFuture has established the targeted industries. The district has created an affiliated agreement with the business partners. There is a work-based learning coordinator at each site. They recruit business partners, and have two CTE teachers on assignment.

The advisory board supports overall program needs. There is common planning time weekly for the teacher teams to discuss student issues and program plans. There is a full pull-out day in the fall and spring per pathway. There is a full day pull out for all CTE teachers and in the spring a full day for all CTE in the region. Teachers on special assignment help with co-teaching or coaching.

The work-based learning coordinators are the point persons for onboarding business partners and working with them on specific "asks." There is an internship handbook, forms for evaluating student performance, and forms for obtaining feedback from the partners. There is an agreement that outlines roles and responsibilities of the internship.

Maintaining Engagement

Each November there is an event where 10th graders see and learn about appropriate worksite behaviors. For the event the district brings in businesses to meet with both new and experienced business partners, and the business representatives and students meet in rounds. The event is also an opportunity to recognize the contributions of the partners and do so in front of their peers.

Throughout the year work-based learning coordinators work with employer partners on specific activities and maintain contact through regular, professional email and phone contact.

Challenges

Steve Pinning, Director Linked Learning and CTE, identified the following challenges and opportunities for improvement. Academies need to:

- Improve the process of preparing students for internships. (Pinning notes that preparedness is different for each student.)
- Communicate well defined, clear expectations for business partners.
- Work with employer partners to assure students are given adequate orientation and onboarding.
- Make sure specific standards are in the curriculum and covered by the teachers before the student begins the internship.
- Improve transportation to and from internships and other employer partner hosted events. (PSUSD added a van to help with transportation needs, but one van cannot serve enough students. The district is working with the transit authority to see what may be possible.)

Measuring Results

Measuring the effects and impact of partnering with business is an area of needed growth. "We do insist that connections made with and through business partners are linked to curriculum standards and to business expectations. As we evaluate work-based learning we want to shift from just completing the experience to competencies applied and gained," said Pinning.

Recommendations for New Communities

- Start with the end in mind. Determine what a graduate from your district should look like. What skills do they need to possess?
- Determine which data elements you will need to track in order to measure program effectiveness. (PSUSD looks at several measures including GPA for CTE academy students, graduation rates, state test scores, attendance rates, suspension rates, licenses and certificates earned, and the number that meet the University of California entrance requirements. Those measures are all compared to students not in one of the school district's CTE programs.)
- If your district serves multiple municipalities, consider working with an intermediary agency. (PSUSD works with OneFuture Coachella Valley. They have the time, expertise, and contacts to more effectively work with the various local governments and businesses.)
- Clear goals and data metrics to measure progress are essential to program improvement.

POLK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Polk County, Florida

Polk County, Florida encompasses an area of more than 1,850 square miles – slightly larger than the state of Rhode Island. Polk County School District is the seventh largest in Florida and thirtieth largest in the United States. Polk County Public Schools has more than 150 schools. The projected student enrollment for 2017-2018 is more than 100,000 with a diverse student body. There are more than 10,600 students whose primary language is other than English. The district is the largest employer in Polk County with more than 13,000 employees.

Interviewed for this report were Kristen Hathcock, Workforce Alliance Liaison; and Misty Lynn, Workforce Alliance Liaison, Polk County School Board.

Origins of Engagement

Polk County was designated a Ford Next Generation Learning Community in January of 2013. At that time it was one of only 17 such communities in the nation. Key to its designation was Polk County's commitment to align community resources to support the growth and sustaining of high school Polk academies with the vision that in time every high school student would be enrolled in an academy within their own school.

Organizational Systems and Relationships

Polk County Public Schools deals with the business community on two levels – district and school. It is an ongoing process in which the advisory boards engage partners at the district level then teachers engage the partners directly. In some cases, for example, instructors have partners who have helped to deepen the bench strength of the partnership. The advisory board may not even be aware of the extent of that relationship. In order to improve communication and collaboration, there is an effort under way to better integrate the two levels of interaction. The goal is to maintain a master list district wide. The academy coach will be the onsite liaison. The district will hand over recruited partners to the academy coach to engage.

Another goal is to onboard business partners within 30 days. An industry specific consortium process has been initiated. Onboarding aligns with survey results that identify areas of interest such as teaching, public service, construction, and so forth. Business partner orientation is conducted per consortium followed by an onsite visit at the school to meet with the principle, CTE teachers, and student ambassadors. Onboarding begins with a thorough review of the partnership agreement and the Polk Vision.

There has also been collaboration with the resource specialist on the curriculum aspects of the partnerships. A roundtable was held to determine what the needs of each school were. Businesses were asked to determine their level of commitment. They completed a business partner template to help define their level of commitment and identify areas of interest such as field trips, guest speakers, etc. Partners are contacted every few weeks to get a “temperature check” on their involvement and satisfaction with the experience and the relationship.

Maintaining Engagement

A clear and effective communication protocol is critical. The academy coach serves as the connector. Teachers express “asks” and concerns through the academy coach. Occasionally it might be bumped up to the district. There remains a need and an opportunity to benefit from additional professional development regarding the best ways to engage business partnerships. Business partners need to understand and buy into what that relationship looks like.

The partnerships are also celebrated. Events include the WE3 Expo, a business breakfast, industry certification celebrations, and Academy Awards.

Challenges

Current and ongoing challenges and opportunities for continued improvement include:

- Establishing the initial business partner commitment with clarity and defined responsibilities.
- Nurturing meaningful business engagement. That includes understanding of the mission and building a sustainable and mutually beneficial working relationship.
- Re-energizing old business partner relationships. Share the message that Polk County Public School District has new energy and is moving forward.
- Embracing the journey – past, present, and future. Remember where we started, celebrate how far we have come, and advance the vision of what can be accomplished.

Measuring Results

The benefits of the partnership are being presented to the business community on a return on investment basis. Included are the review of items such as industry certifications, in-kind donations, and demographic information. Businesses want to know what their involvement is really doing. Polk County Public School District wants them to know the answer to that question and wants them to be pleased with the results.

Monies received from the Career and Professional Education Act (CAPE) are tracked. There are also efforts underway to build a Polk dashboard to measure partnership engagement.

Recommendations for New Communities

- Gain and nurture support from the economic development council and chamber of commerce as they are the foundation for identifying and building business partner relationships.
- Have a strategic plan. Involve a variety of stakeholders. Gather all perspectives.
- The career academy needs to be representative of the local industry. Be aware and be engaged with these entities.
- Be aware of and attend community events. Create and maintain relationships with parents, students, and the local citizenry.
- Obtain buy in from the district, the superintendent, and the school board especially on curriculum and instruction matters.
- Be transparent!



The benefits of the partnership are being presented to the business community on a return on investment basis.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

St. Johns County, Florida

St. Johns County is located in lovely Northeastern Florida and is a haven for beach, water, and warm weather enthusiasts. Much of the area is located along the Atlantic Ocean and inland waterways. St. Johns County School District serves an area of about 600 square miles with a little over 235,000 residents. The district operates 19 elementary, 3 K-8, 7 middle, 7 high, 2 alternative, 1 virtual, 1 technical college, and 3 charter schools plus 2 juvenile justice facilities.

The county's relationship with Ford Motor Company Fund dates back to 2007 when Ford NGL executive director, Cheryl Carrier visited the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce to examine the role of the chamber and involvement with career academies. St. Johns was one of seven regions working collaboratively with the chamber to implement academies. Today St. Johns County Schools has 17 career academies with multiple pathways in their 7 high schools. St. Johns has been innovative in their approach to using business partners including the first to use naming rights as the highest level of engagement.

The content of this report is based on interviews with Michelle Kisch, Career Specialist, Bartram Trail High School and Kathy Mignerey, District Career Specialist.


Origins of Engagement

In 2005, Superintendent Dr. Joseph Joyner asked for career academies to be established. He worked with the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce to identify targeted industries. A conference was held with partners and a guest speaker. Soon after advisory boards for the career academies were established and a determination was made on which schools would house them. Naming rights donors were obtained for three of the early academies – VyStar Credit Union, Stellar, and Flagler Hospital. Initially each had an annual financial obligation designed to be in perpetuity. Later on Citi was added with a five year commitment.

At the academy level Michelle Kisch, Career Specialist, Bartram Trail High School, recounted her experience first as a teacher and then as a career specialist.

"I found it difficult to work with businesses in the south end of the county. Businesses really weren't engaged. The business academy was too broad and needed to be more focused. That's when VyStar Credit Union came in as the sponsoring partner. Then we were in a position to focus better."

As a career specialist (academy coach) Kisch attends chamber of commerce meetings and vets potential partners in terms of what is needed by the school and ways the partner may get involved. When asked what materials she would take with her to these meetings she quickly responded, "I usually take students! They have a presentation and sometimes use PowerPoint and a script." There is also a district form that helps businesses indicate ways they can become involved with the career academies.



Today St. Johns County Schools has 17 career academies with multiple pathways in their 7 high schools.

Organizational Systems and Relationships

Kathy Mignerey, District Career Specialist, outlined some of the structures, roles, and practices as follows:

- There are business advisory boards for each of the career academies with the exception that the IT council serves three academies at three schools. Advisory boards meet four times a year.
- The advisory boards have bylaws, but they tend to be loosely followed. Members and chairs are generally welcome to stay as long as they like. Members who do not show up for half the meetings in a school year are removed and asked for their continued support in other ways.
- Advisory boards are made up of a principal/assistant principal, career specialist (academy coach), CTE teacher(s), district CTE director or career program specialist, and a goal of 6 or more business partners. Business partners makes up at least half of the board.
- Advisory board meetings are held in August/September, November/December, January/February, and March/April.
- There is a pro forma agenda for each of the four meetings to assure appropriate and key items are discussed and addressed in the proper time frame.

The practice for working with new business partners is to funnel their information to the CTE director or the district career specialist. The district CTE staff talks to the partner and determines their interests and potential role(s). They then advise and inform the appropriate school career specialist. This person then contacts the business and discusses specific ways in which partners are needed. If the new partner wants to serve on the advisory board, they are first invited to observe a meeting. The school career specialist then invites the new partner to the school for a tour, to meet the faculty and students, to observe the classrooms, and to review the vision, mission, and goals.

Maintaining Engagement

Managing, monitoring, and maintaining partnerships vary a bit by career specialist and career academy. Partners should be communicated with on a regular basis to demonstrate their participation is valued and to nurture the relationship. Touching base is key to growing relationships, and it is especially important to reach out to partners who aren't attending meetings or seem less engaged. Discussing ways for them to become more involved is a way to keep them onboard and reenergize the relationship.

Michele Kisch recommends getting out there and meeting with partners face to face. "Doing that is a better way to develop the relationship. I used to go to VyStar once a week just to establish and maintain the partnership. I've had to do more of that by phone lately, but I think that you should be out there visiting the partner's place of business, if at all possible."

Other ways business partner engagement is maintained and developed in St. Johns County include:

- Common planning time is scheduled daily where the needs, role, and performance of business partners can be discussed. There are teachers on the advisory boards, and they are able to contact business partners directly or work with the career specialist(s) to make asks on their behalf. Career specialists (academy coaches) meet twice a month with the district CTE staff, including one time in person and once via phone. Those meetings are an opportunity to discuss partner engagement and ways to use the relationship more effectively.
- Professional development days are used to connect with the community and its businesses while bringing new perspectives back to the classroom and keeping industry knowledge current. For example, teachers do externships.

- Celebrating the work and contributions of business partners is a method for enhancing and maintaining relationships. The efforts of business partners are acknowledged an annual academy awards event recognizing Outstanding Business Partner of Year and Rookie Partner of the Year.
- Teachers and parents often have contacts in the business world that can be used to identify and make connections with new potential partners.
- An academy breakfast is another way to engage speakers who have topics of interest to students from multiple career academies. It is a way to both celebrate and vet a partner to see how comfortable they are interacting with the students.
- Parents sometimes come up with community outreach ideas and implement them. At Bartram Trail High School, parents produce the monthly newsletter which is distributed to students, parents, school administrators, district staff, and business partners.

Challenges

It is a challenge to:

- Avoid going to certain board members too frequently with an “ask.”
- Find new partners to help with speakers, mentors, field trips, internships, etc.
- Maintain a diversified board to cover all aspects of an industry.
- Find naming rights partners who will commit to a large financial donation when just starting a program.
- Deal with situations where a business partner commits to doing something and doesn’t follow through. (It doesn’t happen often, but it’s always good to have a backup plan.)

Measuring Results

Business partner surveys, conducted annually, are used to determine their level of satisfaction with involvement and with the performance of teachers, career specialists, and district staff. As a district and school there is a value added report that puts a monetary value on time invested. It is all tracked through Select Survey – an electronic survey system. It is the goal for each career academy to annually generate at least \$50,000 in either financial or in-kind contributions of time or resources.

Sometimes business partners measure the results of their efforts. For example, a number of the high schools hold an annual Reality Fair, which is a financial literacy program designed by VyStar Credit Union. VyStar tracks the number of students who go through the program and administers learning gains through a pre and post-test.

Recommendations for New Communities

Kathy Mignerey offered the following suggestions for communities wanting to expand academy offerings.

- Meet with the economic development partners of local and regional chambers of commerce and other related entities to learn what their goals are for future businesses.
- Be sure careers are on the targeted occupations list for your region or state. Analyze the cost to start the program and to carry it for the first three years.
- Seek funding to ensure the program can be fully implemented.
- Finding part-time teachers for new programs can be challenging. Business partners might be able to help with this need for the first two years until it becomes a full-time position by having one of their employees work part-time for the school district and part-time for the business.
- There is a maximum threshold of how many career academies a high school can support.
- The principal is a vital member of the team as they have to allocate FTEs for the teacher(s) and some funds for equipment and materials for the program.

- Cohorting of academic and CTE classes is very challenging when not in a wall-to-wall career academy school. The principal is the one who puts the pressure on the registrar to schedule the classes so that career academy students also share at least two academic courses, to better facilitate cohorted lessons or projects.
- The career specialist and CTE teachers are the ones who put the pressure on the teams to meet and actually develop/implement integrated units.
- Industry certifications keep businesses engaged.
- The career specialist (academy coach) role is vital and non-negotiable! They support the teachers and programs and are the primary connectors with business partners.

When asked what some of the most important components communities starting their transformation journey should keep in mind, Michele Kisch offered the following.

The most important components include:

- An academy coach (career specialist).
- Community buy-in and business partnerships.
- Advisory boards which meet a minimum of four times per year.
- Communicating the “why” career academies are so beneficial to students, and how it leads to more and more success within the community.
- Developing a student’s “buy-in” to internships. (Sometimes buy-in may take as much as a year to achieve.)

VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS

Volusia County, Florida

Volusia County, located in the heart of the beautiful east coast of Florida, is a rapidly growing, progressive area. Sixteen municipalities make up the county with Daytona Beach, DeLand, Deltona, Ormond Beach, and Port Orange as the largest metropolitan areas. Volusia’s 506,000 residents are engaged in a variety of occupations, including tourism, farming, light industry, education, government, and the professions. The public school system of Volusia is equally rich in what it offers. With over 63,000 students and approximately 7,300 employees, the system is the state’s thirteenth largest school district and one of the largest employers in the county.

In the summer of 2013 Volusia County was named the 13th Ford Next Generation Learning community. Today Volusia County School District continues to move forward with expanding career academy opportunities for all students. With 35 career academies across 10 comprehensive high schools, Volusia has many exciting options for students. Its first wall-to-wall academy, Mainland High School, opened in 2016-17 followed by Atlantic High School in 2017-2018. The wall-to-wall model at both schools boosted the overall academy offerings to 40.

Kelly Amy, Coordinator, Strategic Partnerships for Volusia County Schools, was interviewed for this report.

Origins of Engagement

With the desirability and growth trends anticipated for Volusia County the question became one of managing and supporting that growth. Leadership was asking, “How do we ensure we have the trained workforce needed to fill current positions and to entice new businesses to relocate to Volusia and Flagler Counties? Where does the acquisition of skills begin?” In answering those questions it was clear that the very foundation of economic development was grounded in the K-12 system.

What started as a consortium between Flagler and Volusia County Schools, post-secondary schools, and business developed into The Career Connections Consortium. It is a partnership of Volusia County Schools, area business and industry, Career Source of Flagler/Volusia, and Volusia colleges and universities. The Cadre, chaired by, Dr. Willis Walter, advises and evaluates the career and technical education programs and career academies offered through the secondary schools. The 200 plus Cadre members represent businesses in the Volusia area that represent all career cluster areas.

Volusia County Schools, along with the Cadre and Ford NGL embarked on a five year strategic planning process. The process was designed to bring more business input into the development and redesign of the county's CTE programs and career academies. When successful, its schools would keep pace with the demands of the business community. Five pillars of work were identified, and the focus was placed on elevating the learning experience and outcomes for area students. One of the primary goals was to have a positive impact on current and future economic development and sustainability.

Organizational Systems and Relationships

Over the years as the career academies of Volusia County Schools (VCS) developed and grew, Career Connection Cadre became a subcommittee under Career Pathways with oversight by CareerSource Flagler Volusia. CareerSource provides recruitment-related services, human resource information, and training opportunities to businesses and job seekers. It is funded through various public and private sources. Its role is to help the business community reduce recruitment costs and provide the information and resources businesses need to attain and maintain qualified employees. Its mission is to provide innovative customized employment and training solutions to support economic prosperity in collaboration with economic development, education, chambers of commerce, community-based organizations, local governments, and active business partners.

This past January, the Career Connection Cadre worked with VCS to have six regional business representatives tour every career academy in the district. The Cadre hosted a east side and a west side job fair for all graduating seniors and arranged for all the business participants who attended. Only businesses in the database were invited that were currently hiring.

Each career academy has its own advisory board, and they are required to meet a minimum of twice per year. Advisory boards must be run by a partner, have an agenda, and record minutes. There should be at least eight partners on the board. An academy ambassador is preferred to take the minutes, and their participation is an excellent way to involve students in the process.



Five pillars of work were identified, and the focus was placed on elevating the learning experience and outcomes for area students.

Maintaining Engagement

Kelly Amy, Coordinator, Strategic Partnerships for Volusia County Schools, summarized some of the ways they manage and maintain engagement and offered some suggestions based on their experiences.

- Be responsive to what's happening in your community. If there is a business in your community who needs people, they you have to look for ways to engage them. (Avoid a "cookie cutter" approach.)
- Have a business advisory board handbook, and maintain a checklist on ways to partner. These tools help guide the process and can grow and change over time.
- Tours for the community are a critical piece. Until partners and potential partners actually see what career academies do, they don't know exactly how to help.
- Having the students "own" the tours really closes the deal. When others see what the students know and understand and how excited they are about the academy model and its purpose and outcomes – they want to partner.
- Advisory board meetings are evaluated, and the boards must show how they are engaging business partners.
- A record including pictures and results is maintained on a wiki to facilitate evaluation and sharing.
- The academy coach (CTE academy facilitator) is trained and follows business handbook protocols such as thank yous, replies to emails, frequency of contacts, and so forth.
- Academy teams are paid in the summer months to create a business plan and business partners come in for onboarding and to discuss projects.
- Business partners are recognized for their support. There is an Academy Awards district level celebration including Business Partner of the Year.
- Each school has an academy banquet. Businesses like the personalization at the individual school level.

Challenges

Amy noted some of the ongoing challenges include:

- People who have their own agenda and figuring out how to constructively navigate those interests.
- Determining what motivates those who want to participate. Is it long term and broad based or only while their children are involved?
- Frequent changes in board membership, partners, and partner representatives.
- The need for a community coordinator.
- Some businesses are cheerleaders but don't want to "roll up their sleeves." (That said, cheerleaders are always needed to share the positive story.)

Recommendations for New Communities

For new communities Kelly Amy offers these suggestions:

- Spotlight the students in everything you do!
- Prepare the students for their roles in the messaging or event.
- Set the expectations. Businesses want to know what they are and want them to be clearly understood.
- Be specific about the "needs" and articulate the "ask."
- Don't ask for money.
- Focus on time and talent. What expertise does the partner have that will be important to share with the students?

