

## Career Academy Model

Academies are high school based "schools-within-schools." They incorporate a number of innovative features, including a close family-like atmosphere, integration of academic and career-related curriculum, and involvement of employers in a number of roles. They have been carefully evaluated and shown to have positive impacts on school performance, including attendance, credits, grades, and graduation rates. Academies generally operate in grades 10-12; a few operate in grades 9-12 or 11-12. They incorporate:

- A focus on college preparation that is coordinated with a career focus;
- Three core academic classes and one career-related class taken within the academy, with other courses taken in regular classes;
- A voluntary student selection process that targets ninth graders who show potential but may be lacking in motivation, and that results in enrollments that reflect the cross section of students in the high school;
- A small group of teachers who work as a team to plan and manage the program;
- A variety of motivational activities, including parental support, a well developed reward structure, speakers, field trips, a mentor program, paid workplace internships, and regular monitoring of progress with feedback to students;
- A focus on postsecondary goals, including college, technical training, and work.

### Three-Year Progression

<u>Grade 10</u>	<u>Grade 11</u>	<u>Summer</u>	<u>Grade 12</u>
<p>Students enter program</p> <p><u>Classes:</u> English, math, science and/or social studies (total of 3); technical (1) Elective classes</p> <p>Speakers &amp; field trips</p> <p>Motivational activities</p> <p>Parental support</p>	<p><u>Classes:</u> English, math, science and/or social studies (3); technical (1) Elective classes are provided</p> <p>Speakers &amp; field trips</p> <p>Motivational activities</p> <p>Mentor program</p>	<p><u>Classes:</u> Summer school</p> <p>Students who are performing well in other classes summer jobs in a local company</p> <p>Job supervision</p> <p>End-of-summer rating</p>	<p><u>Classes:</u> Technical (1); perhaps English and/or econ./gov't.; mainstreamed</p> <p>Preparation for either college entry or work</p> <p>Possible p.m. part-time work</p>
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**Curriculum.** The career focus for an Academy is determined by an analysis of the local labor market, with an eye toward fields that are growing and healthy, that offer jobs with career ladders, and that have companies willing to support the program. Academies focus on many different industries, ranging from health to electronics, banking/ finance, marketing, agriculture, telecommunications/ media, construction, domestic/ international trade, and many others. The career education is kept broad, focusing on industries rather than specific jobs, with applications of academics in the field a key ingredient.

**Staffing.** Teachers request to participate in the program, and must be willing to work with "at-risk" students. A lead teacher is usually provided with a reduction in class load (typically from five to three or four classes per day), and all academy teachers have a common preparation period. Teachers meet regularly to plan the program activities and curriculum, coordinate with employer representatives, meet with parents, and devise strategies for dealing with problem students.

**Student Selection.** Students are selected primarily because of their interest in the academy's career field. The program is voluntary: students must apply and be interviewed. About 50-60 students are typically selected for entry at the sophomore level each year, with 100-150 typically enrolled across grades 10-12.

**Employer Involvement.** The "partnership" at each academy is between schools and employers. Employer representatives: a) serve on an academy steering committee that guides the program; b) help to develop the technical curriculum; c) provide speakers for academy classes, and host field trips to give students exposure to workplaces; d) provide mentors who serve as career-related role models; and e) provide summer internships and part-time school-year jobs.

**The Mentor Program.** In the eleventh grade, a mentor is matched to each academy student. Mentors are employees of participating businesses who volunteer to be career related "big brothers or sisters," devoting a minimum of two hours per month.

**Workplace Learning.** After the junior year those students performing well enough to be on track for graduation are placed in summer internships. Students apply for these jobs as they would in the open market; i.e., they prepare resumes, complete job

application forms, and have interviews. Companies make the hiring decisions. For interested students, these jobs sometimes continue part-time through the senior year.