

What is a College and Career Academy?

A small learning community

A college and career academy is a personalized small learning community within a high school OR a small, stand-alone school, involving a cohort of students and a team of teachers for a two-, three-, or four-year span. Students apply to an academy, based on their career interest, and enter through a voluntary process. While academies vary in size, they typically enroll from 30 to 150 students at each grade level. Academy classes include both core academic courses and a sequence of career-technical courses and are usually scheduled back-to-back to support curriculum integration, and students attend them as a cohort. Students are able to complete academy requirements within the regular school day, with the exception of work internships and possible dual enrollment college classes.

A career academy involves teachers from different disciplines working together as a team. This team manages the program, with one team member typically serving as the lead teacher or academy coordinator. Teams function as a community of practice that focuses on students, student learning, and effective implementation of all aspects of the academy program. The teacher team participates in professional development, particularly related to implementing the key features of the model and gaining exposure to the career field.

Team members have common planning time and often release time to support their collaborative work. The joining of a group of students for several periods each day with teachers who they come to know well provides a family-like atmosphere, nurturing close student-teacher ties as well as the necessary conditions to create an academic press.

An academy which functions within a larger comprehensive high school and requires administrator and counselor support. Academy students may also participate in required and elective classes outside the academy, as well as other school-wide activities such as clubs and sports.

College preparatory curriculum with a career theme

Students in a college and career academy are enrolled in an interdisciplinary program of study that involves both career technical courses (typically one or two each year) and academic

courses (typically three or four each year.) These classes meet entrance requirements for four- year colleges and universities and are aligned with Common Core and industry standards. The interdisciplinary and inquiry approaches to learning encourage student engagement and high achievement. Students make meaningful connections between different subjects and their relation to their college and career aspirations.

The career classes develop knowledge and advance skills in a given field. They are designed to expose students to the full range of careers in that field. Special projects require students to bring together academic skills across their subjects and apply these to community and work settings outside the school. Usually the junior and/or senior year includes work experience, a paid or unpaid work internship, and a Senior Project that both connects to community and requires students to defend their learning. During the senior year students are provided with college and career counseling and support for transition to college, career, or a mixture of both.

Partnerships with employers, communities, and higher education

The academy career theme is selected locally, based on an industry that is healthy and can provide a cadre of partners interested in supporting the program. Employers from a group of companies in the selected field work as partners in the academy, serving on a steering committee (along with teachers, administrators, and often parents and students) that governs the program's development and operation. This committee helps to plan the various activities in which employee volunteers participate: as academy speakers, project consultants, and panelists for student exhibitions of work; as field trip and job shadowing hosts at their companies; as individual mentors, career-related "big brothers and sisters" as work internship supervisors during the summer or part-time during the school year; and as community service coordinators. The employer partners may also hire graduates. Postsecondary educational institutions are often included as well, providing course articulation and concurrent enrollment options.

Key Features of College and Career Academies (chart)

| Small Learning Community | College-Prep Curriculum with a Career Theme | Partnerships with Employers, Community, and Higher Education |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Several academy-only classes in grades 9-12, 10-12, or 11-12</p> <p>Self-selected cross-disciplinary team of teacher-managers, with a lead teacher/coordinator</p> <p>Voluntary enrollment, cross-section of students; size limited to maintain personalization</p> <p>A family-like atmosphere with a motivating, supportive, disciplined instructional tone</p> <p>When possible, academy classes blocked back-to-back in the daily schedule</p> | <p>Several academic courses per year that meet high school graduation and college entrance requirements</p> <p>One or more courses per year in a broadly defined career field that lets students explore a full range of career options</p> <p>Academic classes that illustrate applications in the career field</p> <p>Common planning time for teachers to allow curricular integration</p> <p>Projects that bring together skills across academic and career classes, possibly a school-based enterprise</p> | <p>Locally selected career field with a cadre of employer partners</p> <p>Steering Committee that governs program operation</p> <p>Parental involvement in students' decision to enroll, and in various program activities</p> <p>Business representatives who provide role models, show students career options and paths</p> <p>Field trips/job shadowing to illustrate work environments</p> <p>Mentors, employee volunteers that serve as career-</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Support from district and school administrators and counselors</p> <p>Students given opportunity to engage in full range of non-academy courses, electives, and other school activities</p> | <p>Counseling to ensure post secondary plan which may include college, work, or both</p> <p>Articulation with postsecondary curriculum</p> | <p>related "big brothers and sisters"</p> <p>Workplace experiences (paid or unpaid internships, community service) in the last year or two</p> <p>Postsecondary institution articulation, concurrent enrollment</p> |
|--|--|---|

Source: slightly adapted from documents available on the College and Career Academy Support Network (CCASN) website
<http://casn.berkeley.edu>