

From National Standards of Practice for Career Academies

The Career Academy National Standards of Practice (NSOP) were developed by an informal consortium of career academy organizations: College and Career Academy Support Network (CCASN), National Academy Foundation (NAF), National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC), National Center for Education & the Economy (NCEE) America's Choice, Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) High Schools that Work, and Talent Development High Schools/Center for Research on Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR)

NOTE: Also participating in the NCAC-coordinated 2013 revision of the Career Academy National Standards of Practice were the following organizations: Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), The Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR), ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (NASDCTEC)

To view an expanded version of the National Standards of Practice for Career Academies, see http://casn.berkeley.edu/resource_files/national_standards.pdf

NOTE: Highlighted criteria are ones that influence and/or are impacted by the master schedule.

I. Defined Mission and Goals

The career academy has a written definition of its mission, goals, and benchmarks. These are developed by and available to the administrators, teachers, students, parents, advisory board, and others involved in the academy. These include the following elements:

- a. College and career connections
- b. Student aspirations
- c. Student achievement
- d. Commitment to equity – Each school ensures that the career academy reflects the demographic mix of the school as a whole, including students with disabilities and English language learners.
- e. Stakeholder involvement

II. Academy Design

An academy has a well-defined design within the high school, reflecting its status as a **small learning community**.

- a. **Cross-grade articulation. The academy incorporates at least a two, a three, or an overall four-year experience, ending in the senior year, with articulation in its teacher team, curriculum, and instruction across grade levels. An introduction to the academy's encompassing career**

exploration precedes the academy experience. The academy has a clear program of study that includes a definitive course sequence.

- b. Student selection. Entry to the academy is voluntary and accessible to every student.** The recruitment/selection process is written and widely available. New students are provided an orientation to the academy based upon their own talents, aspirations and interests. Parents or guardians participate in this process and approve of the choice made by their son or daughter. **Academy enrollment reflects the general high school population, including students with disabilities and English language learners.**
- c. Cohort Scheduling. Academy classes consist of academy students who take a series of classes together each year. The academy students take at least two courses per grade level as a cohort with at least 80% of the enrollment in these courses academy students.**
- d. Physical space. When possible, both academic and career and technical education (CTE) academy classrooms are near each other in the high school building. Rooms allow for flexible configurations required by project-based learning.**
- e. Small size, supportive atmosphere.** The academy maintains personalization through limited size, academy staff teamwork (including counselors, library/media specialists, academy-based administrators, and other support staff), and a supportive atmosphere.
- f. Academy planning There is ample opportunity for the academy staff, advisory board, and others to plan the academy together. The ideal time would be during the school day.**

III. Host Community and High School

Career academies exist in a variety of district and high school contexts, which are important determinants of an academy's success.

- a. Support from the Board of Education and Superintendent
- b. Support from the principal and high school administration
- c. Adequate funding, facilities, equipment and materials.

IV. Faculty & Staff

Appropriate staff selection, leadership, credentialing, and cooperation are critical to an academy's success.

- a. **Teacher Leader(s)/Coordinator(s)** One teacher (sometimes two) and a dedicated school administrator take the lead, serving as the academy Coordinators. They attend advisory board meetings, interact with school

administrators and board members, manage the budget, help to coordinate teacher professional development, and coordinate employer, higher education, and parental involvement. **Release time and/or a stipend is provided for this role.**

b. Academy staff Teachers are credentialed in their field, volunteer in the academy, and are committed to its mission and goals. Since the career academy's success rests on good teaching and teamwork among a cross-disciplinary group of staff, they must be well qualified and willingly involved in this role. They understand and support the philosophy and purpose of the academy, **work together as a team, and teach a majority of their classes in the academy. The academy staff design instruction and curriculum around a career theme and cooperatively share the duties of operating the academy.**

c. Support from the counselors, non-academy teachers, and classified staff.

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 critical.

a. Common planning time. The site administrator ensures that academy staff are provided common planning time within the high school schedule for purposes of program coordination, curricular integration, business involvement, and resolution of student challenges.

b. Professional development

c. Volunteer & parent orientation.

VI. Governance & Leadership

The academy has a governing structure that incorporates the explicit roles of all stakeholders and the leaders of the advisory board

a. Network of Support

b. Regular meetings

c. A healthy partnership

d. A student voice

VII. Teaching and Learning

The teaching and learning within an academy meets or exceeds external standards and college entrance requirements while differing from a comprehensive high school by focusing learning around a theme.

a. External standards

b. Rigorous learning

c. Sequenced, integrated, and relevant curriculum

Curriculum articulates from the beginning of an academy through the senior year with a defined course sequence and at least two core academic classes and one career/theme class each year. Curriculum is integrated among the academic classes and between these and the career class. Learning illustrates applications of academic subjects outside the classroom, incorporates current technology and 21st century skills, and includes authentic project-based learning.

d. Post-secondary planning

e. Dual credit options

Options for post-secondary credit exist in a variety of ways and may include articulation agreements, dual credit and/or college credit for upper classmen, concurrent credit, transcribed credit, AP, AICE and IB credit. The academy articulates its upper level curriculum with relevant postsecondary programs.

f. Development of a portfolio and participation in a capstone project.

VIII. Employer, Higher Education & Community Involvement

A career academy links high school to its host community and involves members of the employer, postsecondary education, and civic community in certain aspects of its operation.

a. Local industry/economic needs

b. Community involvement

c. Citizenship

d. Work-based learning

IX. Student Assessment

Improvements in student performance are central to an academy's mission. It is important to gather data that reflect whether students are showing improvement and to report these accurately and fairly to maintain the academy's integrity.

a. Student data

b. Multiple academic measures

c. Technical learning

d. Accurate reporting

e. Evidence of impact

X. Sustainability

No new academy functions perfectly. Even well established and highly functioning academies benefit from self-examination and refinement. Ensuring and improving the quality of a career academy requires engaging in a regular cycle of improvement.

a. Academy implementation

b. Academy refinements

c. Reflection of the academy's mission and goals.