



Career and Professional Academies

What are career and professional academies?

Career and professional academies (academies) are public high school career and technical education programs that lead to a high school diploma, industry certification, and opportunities for students to simultaneously earn postsecondary credit.¹ Academies are an important component of state and national efforts to increase high school graduation rates and better prepare students for employment in the modern workforce.² The academy concept was developed using national standards such as the Career Academy National Standards of Practice and the States Career Clusters Initiative.³ Okaloosa County School District's CHOICE Institutes program was an influential model in expanding the academy concept statewide.⁴

Florida's academies utilize the following essential components to deliver a rigorous and relevant curriculum that prepares the student for both postsecondary education and employment:

- ❖ Small learning environments;
- ❖ A college preparatory curriculum with a career theme;
- ❖ Integration of core academic content into relevant career courses;
- ❖ Personalized student advisement; and
- ❖ Partnerships with higher education, employers, and the community.⁵

Florida law requires each district school board to operate at least one academy, which may be established as a school within an existing high school or as a total school configuration offering multiple academies.⁶ School boards must develop a five-year strategic plan in partnership with local workforce boards, employers, and state-approved postsecondary institutions to better align

¹ Section 1003.493(1), F.S.

² Section 1003.493(2), F.S.; Florida Department of Education, *Florida's Career Academies*, at 2 (2006), available at http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/careeracademies/pdf/career_acad.pdf; Southern Regional Education Board, *High Schools That Work, Lost in Transition: Building a Better Path from School to College and Careers*, at 3-10 (2008), available at http://publications.sreb.org/2008/08V01_LostInTransition.pdf.

³ See University of California at Berkeley, Career Academy Support Network, Resources, *Career Academy National Standards of Practice*, http://casn.berkeley.edu/resource_files/national_standards.pdf (last visited June 7, 2010); see National Career Technical Education Foundation, States Career Clusters Initiative, *About Us*, <http://www.careerclusters.org/aboutus.php> (last visited July 20, 2010). Florida's career and technical education curriculum frameworks are based upon the career clusters developed by the States Career Cluster Initiative.

⁴ Staff of Florida Senate Committee on Education PreK-12, *Legislative Bill Analysis for CS/CS/SB 1232* (2007).

⁵ Sections 1003.491(1) and 1003.493(4), F.S.; Staff of Florida Senate Committee on Education, *High School Reform: Interim Project Report 2006-115*, at 5-6 (Sept. 2005), available at http://www.flsenate.gov/data/Publications/2006/Senate/reports/interim_reports/pdf/2006-115ed.pdf [hereinafter *Senate Interim Project*]; Council for Education Policy and Research, *Career and Professional Education: Preparing Florida's Students for the Knowledge Economy*, at 6-18 (Sept. 2004), available at <http://www.cepri.state.fl.us/pdf/Career%20Education%20Draft%20FINAL.pdf> (see policy recommendations).

⁶ Section 1003.491(2), F.S. School districts were required to register at least one academy by the 2008-09 academic year. *Id.* Two or more school districts may collaborate in developing and offering academies. Section 1003.491(2), F.S.

academy programs with local workforce needs.⁷ Currently, there are 838 registered academies. Miami-Dade County school district has registered the most academies (153), followed by Hillsborough (103), Palm Beach (65), Orange (51), and Broward (40) county school districts.⁸

Are courses offered by career and professional academies required to lead to industry certification?

Yes. All courses offered in an academy must lead to industry certification or postsecondary credit linked directly to the career theme of the course.⁹ At least 50 percent of students enrolled in an academy course must achieve industry certifications or college credits during the second year the course is offered in order for the course to be offered in a third year. Furthermore, at least 66 percent of students enrolled in such a course must achieve industry certifications or college credits during the third year the course is offered for it to be offered a fourth year or thereafter.¹⁰

School districts must take measures to ensure that academy courses are academically rigorous, meet or exceed appropriate state academic standards, and result in industry certification.¹¹ The rigor and relevance of proposed academy courses is reviewed by a curriculum review committee approved by Workforce Florida, Inc. in accordance with a review process established by the State Board of Education.¹²

How are industry certifications identified and approved for use by career and professional academies?

The state board is required to work jointly with Workforce Florida, Inc. and Enterprise Florida, Inc. to develop and adopt rules for implementing an industry certification process.¹³ The Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) is required to identify appropriate industry certifications based on the highest national standards available.¹⁴ AWI defines “industry certification” as “a voluntary process, through which individuals are assessed by an independent, third-party certifying entity using predetermined standards for knowledge, skills and competencies, resulting in the award of a time-limited credential that is nationally recognized and applicable to an

⁷ Section 1003.491(2), F.S.

⁸ Florida Department of Education, Career Academies, *Programs by County*, <http://data.fldoe.org/careeracademies/default.cfm?action=county&countyID=all> (last visited July 20, 2010).

⁹ Section 1003.493(5), F.S. Research identifies industry certification and a rigorous curriculum as fundamental to the effectiveness of academy programs. *Senate Interim Project, supra* note 44, at 3-5; Southern Regional Education Board, High Schools That Work Project, *Quality Career/Technical Programs Prepare Students to Succeed in a New, More Challenging Economy*, at 1 (Oct. 2008), available at http://publications.sreb.org/2008/08V23w_BestPractices_Quality_CT.pdf.

¹⁰ Section 1003.493(5), F.S.; rule 6A-6.0573(8), F.A.C.

¹¹ Section 1003.491(3)(f), F.S.

¹² Section 1003.491(4), F.S.; s. 1003.493(4)(a) and (5), F.S.

¹³ Section 1003.492(2), F.S.; see rule 6A-6.0573, F.A.C.

¹⁴ Section 1003.492(2), F.S.

occupation that is included in the workforce system's targeted occupation list or determined to be an occupation that is critical, emerging, or addresses a local need."¹⁵

The selection of industry certifications for use by academies occurs in two phases. First, Workforce Florida, Inc. must identify industry certifications that meet the AWI definition and compile them into a comprehensive list.¹⁶ DOE must then:

- ❖ Review the comprehensive list;
- ❖ Identify certifications that are academically rigorous, at least 150 hours in length, attainable via a secondary education program, and that have been offered for at least one year in a school district;
- ❖ Compile a preliminary list of industry certifications that qualify for additional weighted funding;
- ❖ Consider district requests that industry certifications be added to the approved list; and
- ❖ Annually publish a final list.¹⁷

Industry certifications on the final approved list are eligible for additional weighted funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP).¹⁸

AWI's comprehensive list includes 440 industry certifications.¹⁹ From this list, DOE has identified 183 industry certifications as funding-eligible for the 2010-11 academic year.²⁰ Most industry certifications on this list require passage of a subject area examination and some combination of work experience, educational attainment, or on-the-job training.²¹ DOE has approved industry certifications in such career fields as information technology; automotive and aircraft mechanics; welding; and nursing. Certifying entities include Adobe Systems, Microsoft Corporation, the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence, the American Welding Society, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Florida Department of Health.²²

¹⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Technical Assistance Paper: Florida Career and Professional Development Act*, at 1 (March 2010) available at <http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/pdf/CAPE-Act-TechAssist.pdf>.

¹⁶ Section 1003.492(2), F.S.; rule 6A-6.0573(1) and (2), F.A.C. Workforce Florida, Inc's comprehensive list is entitled the "*Comprehensive Industry Certification List*." This list must be published by March 1 of each calendar year. Rule 6A-6.0573(1) and (2), F.A.C.; see Agency for Workforce Innovation, *2010-2011 Comprehensive Industry Certification List* (March 2010), available at http://www.workforceflorida.com/cape/CAPE2010-11_FinalCondensedVersionJB.pdf [hereinafter *Comprehensive Industry Certification List*].

¹⁷ Rule 6A-6.0573(3)-(5), F.A.C.

¹⁸ Section 1011.62(1)(p), F.S.; rule 6A-6.0573(3), F.A.C. The final industry certification list is entitled the "*Industry Certification Funding List*." This list must be published by July 1 of each calendar year. Rule 6A-6.0573(5), F.A.C.; Florida Department of Education, *2010-11 Industry Certification Funding List*, (July 2010) available at <http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/fcpea/pdf/1011icfl.pdf> [hereinafter *Industry Certification Funding List*].

¹⁹ *Comprehensive Industry Certification List*, *supra* note 16.

²⁰ *Industry Certification Funding List*, *supra* note 18.

²¹ See Florida Department of Education, *Industry Certification Descriptions*, <http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/programs/IndustryCert/> (last visited June 9, 2010).

²² See *Industry Certification Funding List*, *supra* note 18.

What are “career clusters?”

Career clusters were initially developed by the States Career Clusters Initiative, a collaborative venture by the U.S. Department of Education, the National Career and Technical Education Foundation, and other career and technical education stakeholders. Career clusters are designed to identify the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare students for a broad range of career opportunities within a career field.²³ The DOE has developed curriculum frameworks based on the career clusters in 17 broad career areas:

- ❖ Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources;
- ❖ Architecture and Construction;
- ❖ Arts, Audio/Visual Technology, and Communication;
- ❖ Business, Management, and Administration;
- ❖ Education and Training;
- ❖ Energy;
- ❖ Finance;
- ❖ Government and Public Administration;
- ❖ Health Science;
- ❖ Hospitality and Tourism;
- ❖ Human Services;
- ❖ Information Technology;
- ❖ Law, Public Safety, and Security;
- ❖ Manufacturing;
- ❖ Marketing, Sales, and Service;
- ❖ Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; and
- ❖ Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics.

These curriculum frameworks form the basis of more specialized programs offered by academies and other secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs.²⁴ In the 2008-09 academic year, the most frequent career cluster represented by academies was health science (94 academies) followed by information technology (76 academies).²⁵

²³ National Career Technical Education Foundation, States Career Clusters Initiative, *Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.careerclusters.org/faq.php> (last visited July 20, 2010).

²⁴ Florida Department of Education, Career and Technical Education Programs, *Curriculum Frameworks*, <http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/dwdframe/> (last visited July 20, 2010). For example, programs in Food Science, Environmental Horticulture Science and Services, Veterinary Assisting, and Solid Waste Disposal Operations fall under the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources career cluster. See Florida Department of Education, *2010-11 Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources Career Cluster Curriculum Frameworks*, http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/dwdframe/ag_cluster_frame10.asp (last visited July 21, 2010).

²⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Career and Professional Academy Enrollment and Performance Report 2008-2009*, at 1 (Dec. 2009), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/pdf/cpaep.pdf> [hereinafter *Academy Annual Report*].

May high school students enrolled in career and professional academies simultaneously earn alternative course credit in core-curriculum courses?

Yes, but only in a school district that participates in the alternative course credit pilot program.²⁶ The purpose of the pilot program is to provide opportunities for high school students enrolled in nationally or state-recognized industry certification programs to simultaneously earn both career credit and core content credit for Algebra 1a, Algebra 1b, Algebra 1, Geometry, or Biology.²⁷ To earn such credit, students must demonstrate mastery of core content by passing an end-of-course assessment. Alternative credit courses and end-of-course assessments must be approved by DOE.²⁸

The pilot program may be offered in up to three school districts.²⁹ The Manatee County school district is the only district participating in the pilot program.³⁰ The Commissioner of Education must submit a report to the Governor and Legislature by January 1, 2010. The report must specify the number of students choosing to earn an alternative credit, the number of students that received alternative credit, and legislative recommendations for expanding the use of alternative credit for core academic courses required for high school graduation.³¹

How are career and professional academies funded?

A value of 0.3 full-time equivalent student membership (FTE) in the FEFP is calculated for each student who successfully completes an academy and receives the highest level of industry certification and a standard high school diploma. The value is added to the total FTE in secondary career education programs for grades nine through 12 in the subsequent year for courses that were not taken through dual enrollment. Each district must allocate at least 80 percent of the funds provided for industry certification to the program that generated the funds.³²

Funding is subject to the General Appropriations Act (GAA) in the year following official reports on the students who received industry certification. The total amount of funds required depends on the number of districts who offer academies and the number of students who successfully complete the program and receive industry certification and a high school diploma. The total allocation for the FTE bonus is capped at \$15 million annually, unless otherwise specified in the GAA.³³

²⁶ Section 1002.375, F.S.

²⁷ Section 1002.375(2), F.S.

²⁸ Section 1002.375(4), F.S.

²⁹ Section 1002.375(1), F.S.

³⁰ Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, Government Program Summaries, *Career Education*, <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/profiles/2033/> (last visited June 9, 2010).

³¹ Section 1002.375(1), F.S. School districts must apply to, and be selected by, the Commissioner of Education in order to participate in the program. *Id.*

³² Section 1011.62(1)(p), F.S.

³³ *Id.* This FTE cap was established by the Legislature in 2008. Section 8, ch. 2008-142, L.O.F.

Does the Department of Education collect data on career and professional academies?

Yes. DOE is required to work with Workforce Florida, Inc. and Enterprise Florida, Inc. in the annual collection and analysis of academic achievement and performance data of academy students. The analysis must include an evaluation plan and self-assessment tool to determine outcomes such as graduation rates, retention rates, achievement of industry certification, postsecondary enrollment, satisfaction of business and industry, employment rates, earnings figures, and awards of scholarships and postsecondary credit.³⁴

In the 2008-09 academic year, academies served a total of 53,324 students, 1,855 of whom earned at least one industry certification. According to DOE, students enrolled in an academy were slightly more likely to graduate with a standard diploma and had, on average, higher cumulative grade-point averages and lower absence rates than students not enrolled in an academy.³⁵

Where can I get additional information?

Florida Department of Education

Division of Career and Adult Education
(850) 245-0446
<http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/>

Florida House of Representatives

Education Committee
(850) 488-7451
<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov>

³⁴ Section 1003.492(3), F.S. A report and analysis of data on academies must be submitted to the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives by Dec. 31 of each year. *Id.*

³⁵ *Academy Annual Report*, *supra* note 75, at 1 and 15. Among academy 12th graders, 78.1 percent graduated with a standard diploma compared to 66.5 percent among non-academy 12th graders. Among academy 12th graders who earned an industry certification, 94 percent graduated with a standard diploma compared to 76.7 percent among academy students who did not earn a certification. The one-year dropout rate for academy students grades 9-11 (1.4 percent) was a percentage point lower than that of non-academy students. *Id.* at 15.