

Policy Statement 97

This We Believe About Business Education in Career Academies

Career academies are a type of learning environment within a school or a small learning community that provides a career-focused, rigorous educational experience. The academy model blends academics, career, and postsecondary opportunities that strengthen student engagement and achievement. Practical and authentic activities are designed to reflect and support the career focus of the academy.

Career academies provide students with a context to examine the relationship between academic study, career exploration, and occupational training. Business education plays an important role in preparing students in all career academies to reach diverse social and economic goals. Therefore, **we believe** that business education is an integral component of *all* career academies helping students to enhance their business-related knowledge and skills.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE CAREER ACADEMIES

An effective career academy is built upon a shared vision that incorporates strong partnerships, relevant curriculum, and dynamic professional learning communities. The identified characteristics are not mutually exclusive, nor static; together they comprise the framework for effective career academies. **We believe** that business educators serve as vital members of all career academy leadership teams to advocate for the inclusion of essential business skills needed in any career.

Shared Vision

A shared vision for career academies is developed through strong partnerships that recognize input from individuals, businesses, and other community partners. The shared vision supports the development and delivery of connected academic and career experiences that enhance student learning and economic well-being of the community. **We believe** that business education provides an important context for developing and supporting a shared vision for *all* career academies.

Partnerships

Partnerships are the driving force of effective career academies. Partners--which may include local chamber of commerce representatives, teachers, parents, students, administrators, and members of the local business and industry community--provide input on program development, curriculum, equipment and supplies, and facilities. These partnerships provide a link between student learning and the needs of the local workforce. Partnerships provide opportunities for education and business/industry collaboration through work-based learning. **We believe** that business educators are important team members in identifying and working with career academy partners.

Curriculum

Career academy curriculum provides the framework for the development of skills necessary for successful transition to employment and continued education in a specific career path. Academy curriculum allows instructors the flexibility to meet required academic standards while integrating career-focused interdisciplinary projects and work-based learning experiences. Together, these experiences and projects provide students with the interpersonal and employability skills needed for success in postsecondary education and career. **We believe** that career academy curriculum should reflect business and industry needs and current practices.

Professional Learning Communities

In career academies, professional learning communities foster collaboration among the team of interdisciplinary teachers. Collaboration is accomplished through common, regular, and purposeful meeting times. Professional learning communities focus on developing curriculum, creating meaningful assessments and activities, and reviewing and determining appropriate instructional practices. Within the professional learning community, teachers identify and address needed professional development as related to their unique responsibilities within the career academy. **We believe** that all career academy educators will participate in professional learning communities and professional development activities that enhance their role in the academy.

CAREER ACADEMY OUTCOMES

Educational

Career academy models support cohort structures, personalized learning, relevant curriculum, and consistent use of skills and knowledge across disciplines. Therefore, students participating in career academies are more engaged in the educational experience resulting in improved school attendance, increased high school completion rates, and a successful transition to postsecondary and career options.

Labor Market

Work-based and extended learning experiences within the career academy curriculum are integral for providing students with more work opportunities. These experiences along with the opportunities to obtain industry-recognized credentials provide students with a competitive edge and the potential to earn significantly higher wages. Career academy students often experience longer employment tenure in occupational areas that directly relate to their career focus.

WE BELIEVE that effective career academies engage all students in learning and ultimately provide a skilled and educated workforce; **therefore, we believe** that business education is an integral component of *all* career academies helping students to develop their knowledge and skills for and about business.