

## **The Academies of Louisville**

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During the summer of 2016, the Jefferson County Public School (JCPS) Superintendent invited a cross-section of Louisville citizens to a two-day meeting to discuss an innovative approach to the education of high school students. Based on recent visits to the Nashville, TN school district, the Superintendent wanted business and community leaders, school board members, and high school principals to learn more about a model where career pathways were a core element in the high school curriculum of a student. Ford Next Generation Learning (Ford NGL) leaders had introduced this concept that Nashville, TN was using successfully in their school district. Ford Motor Company is a large employer in Louisville and the Ford NGL personnel are a non-profit foundation arm of Ford Motor Company dedicated to improving educational outcomes in communities where Ford has a significant presence.

The JCPS Superintendent wanted to increase the focus on career ready students graduating from JCPS high schools instead of the primary focus being solely on college ready graduates. The goal was to elevate the importance of career ready pathways as a realistic addition to the normal high school curriculum. Career pathways such as health services, information technology, manufacturing, construction or hospitality help graduates with true pathways that match their interests in future careers. This model is dependent upon the engagement of local businesses to partner with high schools in designated career pathways. A graduating senior would be required to complete four courses in a specific pathway while having the opportunity for certifications or work experience in the pathway. Core high school classes such as English or History would have the opportunity to support the overall education of a student in a designated pathway by using pertinent examples of pathways in core fields of study.

This partnership of the business community in the high schools was exactly the type of proactive engagement GEA was seeking in the Blueprint completed two years earlier. The JCPS call for business engagement gained several local employers to advocate for this type of workforce development. Norton Health Care, UPS, Lantech, and GEA were key employers to see the benefits of this approach to high school education.

A small “task force” was created with these employers and JCPS personnel to determine how best to bring what was subsequently called the Academies of Louisville to life. The local workforce investment board, KentuckianaWorks, and local chamber of commerce, Greater Louisville Inc., also brought their engagement and leadership to the task force. Discussions such as what business partnerships would look like and how best to structure the Academies were held over many months.

Beginning during the 2017-2018 school year JCPS had 11 of its 28 high schools desire to implement the Academies of Louisville model. This commitment by 11 high schools was a clear indication that principals were interested a new approach to educating students at the high school level. The Academies model has expanded to 15 high schools for the 2019-2020 school year and will add a sixteenth school next year. The expansion of high schools will lead to an increase in dual credit and certification opportunities for students as well.

Business partners began with ~20 employers and has expanded to 115+ different employers in Louisville. Business partnerships require employers to partner with high schools supporting specific career pathways ideally directly connected to their business purpose. The partnerships can consist of sending in business personnel into the schools to work with teachers, speak on relevant topics, or

engage with students on projects connected to a pathway. Employers can host students for company tours or hire students for internships or summer positions.

KentuckianaWorks and GLI have provided administrative leadership and structure in conjunction with JCPS personnel. Each participating Academies high school had added an Academy Principal and Academy Coach to focus the faculty and provide a contact inside the high school for the business community. In Louisville, the Mayor has a successful summer employment initiative called SummerWorks to support paid employment in the career pathway desired by the student.

The original group brought together in the summer of 2016 continues as the Guiding Team for the Academies of Louisville initiative to help identify ongoing goals and provide a sounding board for the development of the Academies. The task force, established post the original meeting, continues to exist as the Executive Committee of the Guiding Team with the core group of employers still engaged.

### **Doss High School Partnership**

Doss High School, one of the original 11 JCPS high schools, has been the education Academies partner with GEA since 2017. Doss High School has four primary career pathways; manufacturing, information technology, business/finance, and health services. GEA began its partnership focused on three of the pathways in 2017 and is adding health services as an area of focus beginning in 2019.

The partnership is flexible enough for all business partners to support their partner school in whatever way makes the most sense for both the school and business. For GEA, this involves a multi-pronged approach due to both the size of GEA and the multiple pathways the company supports. Students are given tours of the GEA facilities and the chance to talk with leaders and employees in professions that align with the pathways. Doss High School has GEA speakers attend a class to talk about what they are doing in their job or supporting concepts of the academic curriculum being taught by the teacher.

GEA is a strong believer in the impact of hands-on learning and has invested in a new mock assembly line and virtual reality space in a dedicated expanded classroom at Doss High School. The goal is to use the assembly line and VR space as hands-on learning tools to support the curriculum of both technical education and non-technical education teachers. The new expanded classroom is being unveiled in October 2019 with both the Louisville Mayor and JCPS Superintendent making comments at the ribbon cutting in support of the Academies of Louisville.

One of the goals of the Doss High School and GEA partnership is to strengthen the relationship each new school year and look for additional opportunities to support the workforce development goals of the school. GEA is hoping that the investment of time and money into the partnership will result in students considering GEA a future employer option post either high school or college.

A new addition to the partnership included a two-day Doss High School faculty and staff retreat in August 2019 prior to the school year beginning. The Doss High School faculty spend two days at GEA's headquarters touring the facilities and hearing from leaders connected to the four career pathways that GEA supports. The goal was to spark new ideas of how best teachers could leverage the partnership with GEA in their academic curriculum. Teachers worked separately in their career pathway brainstorming what they learned and how they would think about incorporating this in the classroom. It could take the form of real life examples taught in class to a guest speaker from GEA to targeted tours of GEA facilities

around specific topics. The feedback was very positive from both the high school faculty and the GEA personnel who interacted with the teachers.

The ongoing success of this partnership is important and GEA has brought the need for structure to manage the relationship. Meetings with GEA personnel and the Doss High School Academy Coach occur every other month while GEA holds its own meetings about the partnership on the off months. There is consistent communication between everyone involved. GEA is expanding its relationship in the 2019-2020 school year by introducing a mentoring program between GEA employees in their early career development programs and students at Doss High School.