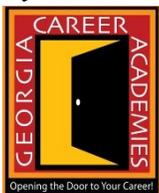




A MESSAGE FROM THE LT. GOVERNOR

This edition's feature article highlights the great work of the City Schools of Decatur. Leading the way as one of Georgia's first Charter Systems, CSD is doing an incredible job of teaching a wide variety of students proficiently and effectively. From pre-school toddlers through an award winning high school (and a soon to be Career Academy), CSD's remarkable system is geared towards cutting edge technology, yet they are dedicated to the core building blocks of education as one of the guiding principles of their charter. As other systems look forward, considering charters or other innovative programs, I encourage all to keep your eye on the City Schools of Decatur.

Casey Coughlin



GeorgiaCAN

Fundamental Education

with a

Flair for Innovation:

By Kaitlyn Turner, Office of the Lt. Governor



With skylines and a city square, City Schools of Decatur is a quintessential metropolitan school district. It is also one of the first Charter Systems in the state of Georgia. Since its charter in July of 2008 the system has quickly achieved a high level of excellence that includes some of the highest SAT scores in the state of Georgia paired with one of the highest percentages of seniors continuing to college. The district, with its seven schools, serves over 2,800 students. With over 77 percent of their teaching staff holding advanced degrees, CSD strives daily to incorporate innovation with basic education.

Inspired Teaching, Creative Learning

Being a Charter System provides each school with the freedom to design their system and initiate areas of innovation that will truly advance student achievement. Oakhurst Elementary, serving kindergarten through third grade, has taken innovation to new heights. Students learn using the latest technology, including Apple computers and smart boards while continuing to excel at pencil and paper (and crayons). Moreover, as an Expeditionary Learning School, Oakhurst is a model for the nation, where educators from across the country come to study the method. With Expeditionary Learning, a challenging, engaging, and hands-on curriculum is promoted to improve student achievement as well as teaching the students compassion and good citizenship. Teachers are the key to Expeditionary Learning success. At Oakhurst, in one kindergarten classroom a certified yoga instructor and teacher has the children combining learning about animals with yoga instruction. "Good Morning Loves" is an everyday welcome from a British teacher in another.



(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1 - City Schools of Decatur)

Smart Testing, Targeted Results

Along with international and artistic influences, the Charter System administers a special test called a MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessment. The MAP assessment is given in addition to standard State and Federal required testing to help measure growth in the classroom. Administered three times a year, the MAP test allows a teacher to measure the growth and progress of a student. These tests are administered on laptops with headphones and challenge students with a different type of testing. In place of giving the same test to all children, these tests are “smart” programs that conform to an individual student. If a student answers a question wrong, the test becomes easier, and for a student who is answering all questions correctly the questions become more complicated. With the use of MAP testing, City Schools of Decatur boast a strong balance of fundamental learning with advancing innovation with education.



Local Control, Local Success

At the heart of all charters is the idea that local control equates to local success. City Schools of Decatur has implemented this philosophy with its School Leadership Teams or “SLTs” which govern each school. Each team, consisting of elected parents of the children and the school superintendant, work hand-in-hand with parents, faculty, and staff of the individual schools. With a personal investment, SLT members care deeply about the future of the school and the advancement of its students. The teams are diverse, with the high school SLT even including a student member to offer a unique perspective. Governing through School Leadership Teams allows the schools to govern themselves and advance as a system.

As stated in its charter, an important goal of the school system is transparency, with all minutes, documents, and policies placed online for the parents to see. They also publish annual report cards, financial numbers, and monthly newsletters.

Closing the Gap, Leading the Way

City Schools of Decatur Superintendant Dr. Phyllis Edwards has taken the district from a jumbled community of schools to a unitary system. In 2003, the system had a 50-point achievement gap. Since that time, and with the help of the charter system goals, they now have a 10-point gap in language arts, and a 30-point gap in mathematics. And that gap continues to narrow.

In addition, many of the schools have been accepted into the prestigious International Baccalaureate program. Dr. Edwards, in her quest for excellence in education, is not only closing the achievement gap but also working to take City Schools of Decatur above international standards. According to Dr. Edwards, “Our vision is to be one of the top ten community school systems in the nation. I believe we are well on our way to realizing that vision.”

The City Schools of Decatur offers first-rate facilities for its students with the recent opening of a new high school stadium and a new gymnasium and auditorium opening in the fall. They have also applied for funding to start their own Career Academy, which will offer even more choices for students striving to pursue a technical career path.

City Schools of Decatur provides students the resources every other school district offers and more, combining first-rate facilities, fundamental education, and a flair for innovation. With more than 15 other systems considering Charter status, City Schools of Decatur serves as a trailblazer for others to follow.

If you would like to find out more about City Schools of Decatur, please visit their website at <http://www.decatur-city.k12.ga.us> or contact them at info@csdectur.org.

Georgia Career Academy Network

Georgia CAN provide a great education for our children and the Career Academy Network was developed to support that effort. In Georgia, career academies are designed to partner local school systems, local businesses and industries, and schools within the state’s technical college system or university system. These Partnerships enable the development of high school and college-level programs that prepare students for quality, in-demand jobs, and success in higher

education. Students find the career academies’ challenging, hands-on programs provide greater relevancy and value. This leads to higher graduation rates, immediate employment opportunities, and greater access to college. The specified training for students is attractive to area businesses, and communities prosper from a highly-trained and skilled local workforce. The Georgia Career Academy Network seeks to provide the leadership at the state level to ensure success at the local level.

**Today's Associate Degree:
It's Not Your Father's Degree**

by David Hirning as printed by MSN.com

Once upon a time, community colleges and other career schools were way stations for students who couldn't get into or afford a four-year school. These students would typically get their Associate of Arts (A.A.) or Associate of Science (A.S.) degree and then, if they'd proven themselves, would have the option of transferring to a university to pursue a bachelor's degree.

Today, many students are bypassing the four-year degree to enter the workforce straight out of career schools. Jobs in some of the most vibrant and growing fields today, such as many healthcare disciplines, are available to those possessing a two-year Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree.

According to data from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), two occupations requiring only an associate degree--physical therapist assistant and dental hygienist--are projected to be among the top ten fastest-growing jobs in the next decade. The demand for both jobs is expected to rise more than 40 percent by 2014, and both are highly rated in terms of annual compensation. Dental hygienists typically make at least \$43,600 per year, according to the BLS, while physical therapist assistants make between \$28,580 and \$43,590 annually.

"There's tremendous demand for career degrees in some of these fields, such as nursing," says Fred Piegonski, the executive assistant to the president at Los Angeles City Colleges, part of a community college system that serves about 100,000 students each quarter. "We have waiting lists to get into these types of

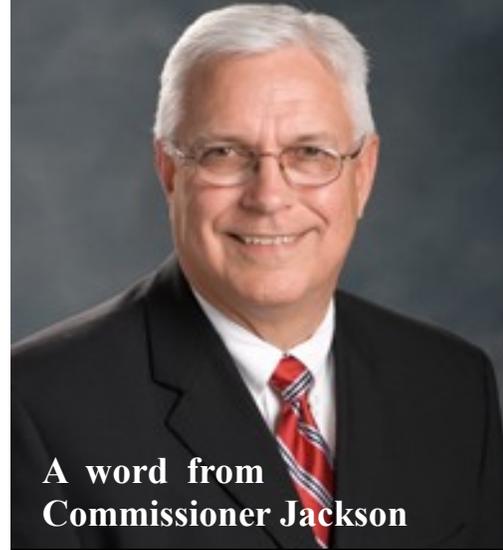
programs." Other in demand healthcare jobs that career-school graduates are targeting include surgical technologist, respiratory care therapist, optician, and even forensic scientist (think CSI).

"People go with the trends and the times," says Christine Kirk, a program supervisor at the career planning office of Seattle Central Community College (SCCC). "A few years ago, everyone flooded the IT [information technology] programs. Now that four-year degrees are often required for those jobs, our students are looking at new fields, such as healthcare and environmental science."

That focus seems to be paying off for many students. According to an SCCC study, students graduating from an A.A.S. or certification program had a better chance of finding a job (75 percent employment rate as compared to 65 percent) and earned a higher hourly wage (\$14.82 versus \$11.51) than those receiving a traditional transfer degree (A.A. or A.S.).

Career-oriented schools are also a great option for students to explore growing fields besides healthcare that don't require a four-year degree. At L.A. City College, for example, programs in early childhood development and cinema/television are very popular. Students graduating from these programs can land jobs in a preschool, or as a sound or lighting technician for a film company. More and more, for associate degree holders today, it's "Lights, camera, action!" in pursuing their careers.

(re-published from <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/departments/careertraining/?article=todaysassociatedegree>)



**A word from
Commissioner Jackson**

The momentum for career academies keeps growing!

The TCSG received eight career academy grant applications by the September 8, 2009 deadline with a total requested amount of \$21,470,645. The next step is the career academy grant reviews, and sixteen readers are currently busy reviewing and grading the criteria as set forth in the grant application.

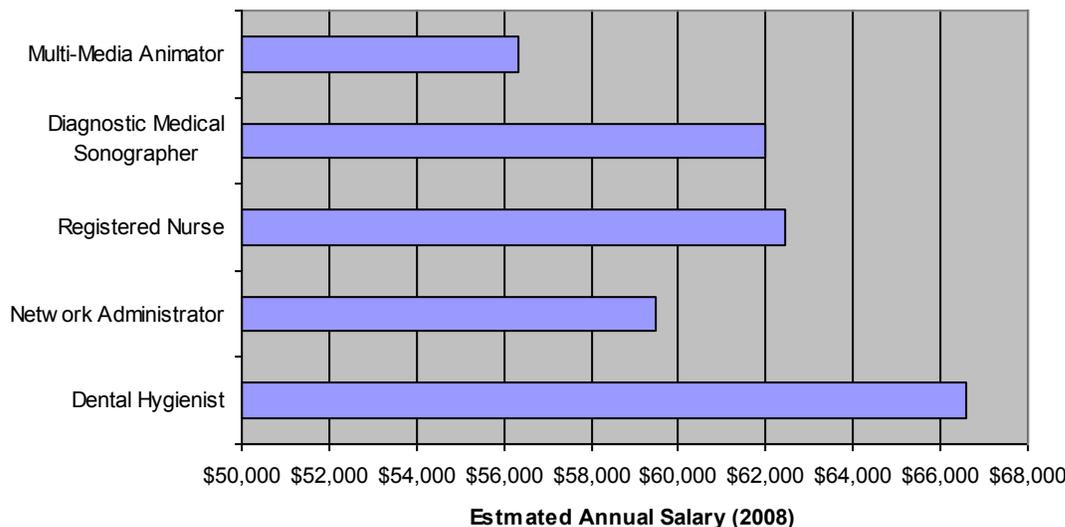
Soon, the highest-rated applicants will be asked to give a brief presentation to a panel of evaluators regarding their blueprint and plans for their career academy, as well as discuss additional program factors and other value-added activities. Examples of additional presentation items include involvement with the Georgia Work Ready program, intentions to incorporate initiatives that combine academic and career activities like the Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies, and methodology for delivering instruction using the latest and best technology.

The entire process should conclude by December 1, 2009 and will be followed soon after by the announcement of a great new roster of career academy awards.

The continued success of Georgia's highly-innovative career academy program is an important priority for the Technical College System of Georgia. There's outstanding value in this partnership of local school systems, the state's technical colleges and local businesses because the high school and college-level programs keep students in school and trains them for jobs that bring success and prosperity to the individual as well as to our communities and our state.

I thank each of the eight school systems who understand the critical importance of career academies to their students' education and who worked long and hard to submit their application for the next round of grants. I also want to express everyone's appreciation to Governor Perdue, Lt. Governor Cagle and the members of the Georgia General Assembly for their belief in and commitment to these academies which can, and will, change lives, improve futures and contribute to a better and stronger Georgia.

Five of the Top Paying Jobs for Associate Degree Graduates





GeorgiaCAN

240 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

*"Leading the nation in
workforce development"*

404.656.5030 ph

404.656.6739 fax

www.georgiacareeracademies.org

Sites of Interest

Organizations

[National Career Academy Coalition](#)
[Career Academy Support Network](#)
[Georgia Charter Schools Association](#)
[Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies](#)
[Georgia Career Academies](#)

Related Resources

[Technical College System of Georgia](#)
[Georgia DOE - Charter School Office](#)
[Office of Lt. Governor Casey Cagle](#)
[Georgia Work Ready](#)

Subscribe

Know of others who would like to receive this newsletter? Let us know! Send an email with the subject "Subscribe to GA CAN Newsletter" to brian.knight@ltgov.ga.gov.

Career Academies

[Central Education Center](#)
[Rockdale Career Academy](#)
[Tech High School](#)
[Walton Career Academy](#)
[Whitfield Career Academy](#)
[Golden Isle Career Academy](#)



GOOD LUCK ROUND THREE CAREER ACADEMY GRANT APPLICANTS!!

Eight Georgia Schools submitted finalized applications vying for over 15 million dollars in Career Academy Project funding on Tuesday, September 8. Each school is collaborating with a nearby Technical College to open new doors for students throughout Georgia.

City of Decatur Schools in conjunction with DeKalb Tech
Carroll County Schools in conjunction with West GA Tech
High School for Media & Recording Arts in conjunction with DeKalb Tech
Liberty County Schools in conjunction with Savannah Tech
Newton County Schools in conjunction with DeKalb Tech
Savannah Gateway Academy Charter School in conjunction w/ Savannah Tech
Central Education Center in conjunction with West GA Tech
Rockdale Career Academy in conjunction with DeKalb Tech



Six of these schools are applying for first time funding to develop a Career Academy Program in their community, while two others are applying for funds to expand their current career academy.

Look for award announcements later this year. Good luck and keep up the great work.

To learn more about the Georgia Career Academy Project and upcoming grant opportunities contact **Jenny Williams** with the Georgia Career and Technical College System at **404-679-5830** or jwilliams@tcsge.edu.