

## CONSTRUCTION CAREERS ACADEMY

### INTRODUCTION

Construction Careers Academy (CCA), located in San Antonio, Texas, is a magnet school that is part of a bigger campus — Warren High School. When the Northside Independent School District was planning to start another magnet school, the principal of Warren High School and her husband were key in the development of the construction education focused program. The principal's husband was a contractor who drew attention to the fact that the industry does not have enough people entering the field.

Established in 2009, CCA is a direct response to industry needs and serves as one solution to improve workforce development and close the gap in skilled worker shortages.

### DEVELOPING PROGRAMS

Students have a choice of six majors, including Electrical/HVAC; Plumbing/Pipefitting and Welding; Construction Management; Carpentry; Applied Engineering; and Architecture and Design. As part of CCA's curricula, students earn industry certifications and credentials, such as OSHA, NCCER Core, CPR, AutoCad and more, as well as college credit.

A Department of Labor (DOL) High School Apprenticeship Program, CCA students may receive over 800 apprenticeship hours in plumbing, electrical or carpentry. Because the DOL apprenticeship program offers journeyman hours, students can begin working with a company in the field at age 16.

A unique course to CCA is geometry in construction. The class fulfills all the typical geometry state requirements but is construction-focused, using measurements related to various crafts in the industry. Students earn required geometry credits but in relation to ways they may utilize measurements in their potential careers.

One change that CCA made was to their enrollment requirements. They found they were missing students who were interested in the offered career paths and successful in the programs by requiring a higher grade point average (GPA). While a minimum GPA requirement remains, screening focuses more on attendance and discipline, giving students who may not be high performing academic scholars a better chance at making it into the academy. With 500-600 applications for 150 slots, the Academy is in high demand.

# BEST PRACTICE PROFILES

## CONNECTING WITH INDUSTRY

The Academy partnered with the local contractors who were building the district's schools because they were familiar with the schools and had a sense of what was needed in the industry.

CCA's partnerships have successfully grown as school officials continue to reach out to industry members to create partnerships that benefit the students, school and industry. The school's industry partners sit on the business advisory board, facilitate shadowing and field trips, offer internships and summer jobs, provide donations and more.

Feedback is an important part of the partnership. CCA requests feedback from the businesses that hire the students to ask what adjustments they can make to improve their programs to better prepare students for the challenges they will face at work.

## FINDING THE RIGHT MARKET

Public relations has been a key part of the growth at CCA. Between active social media accounts and marketable construction products, the Academy connects with the local community. CCA has found that industry members are quick to contribute and become partners once they tour the school and see the projects the students are learning about and building.

CCA's advice to other educational institutions? Ask. Start with companies you are familiar with. Many industry companies have money put aside for community projects, and they want to help bring young people into the business.

## FUNDING AND BEYOND

The Northside Independent School District does obtain Perkins funding and provides the money to CCA to help support the campus. CCA also works with contractors for donations.

In addition, the students build marketable projects that resonate with the local community — children's picnic tables; backyard chicken coops; deer blinds; and tiny homes. Each of these projects teach the students valuable skills between drawing and following plans, construction, getting permits and passing inspections and more. CCA's goal is teach the students real life skills and be good stewards of the school's funding.

# BEST PRACTICE PROFILES

## HIGHER EDUCATION

CCA has an articulation agreement with St. Phillips College. The students receive college credit for their courses and graduate with at least one year of college credit. Instructors at CCA are adjunct professors at the college, so the students can get the dual credit for their classes.

Due to this, one of the challenges that CCA has encountered is finding instructors. Because the instructors will be adjunct professors, they need to have a college degree for the most part — master plumbers and master electricians are the exception. CCA also requires their instructors to have industry experience and be NCCER-certified craft instructors.

CCA recommends finding a higher education institution that offers the same programs your school offers and developing a dual credit agreement. This is an important selling point to students and parents as they are considering whether to apply to CCA. Being able to explain that students will earn college credit and parents can save tuition dollars by attending the school may make the difference on which school a student will attend. Perhaps even more importantly, it gives students the confidence to know that they can succeed at college if they want to pursue a degree.

## SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM

Of their students, 60 percent continue their college education. Of that 60 percent, 35 percent enter a construction, architectural or engineering course of study.

The other 40 percent enter the workforce with 90 percent working in a construction-related occupation. In fact, several graduates work with Habitat for Humanities or the industry partners that offered summer jobs, internships and shadowing. With the first graduating class in 2013, CCA is now seeing their graduates come back as the industry representatives doing interviews and career talks.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

From the business advisory board to the parent partnership to the principal's cabinet, CCA welcomes the involvement of the community and people the school impacts. The student board, called the principal's cabinet, gives students a voice and is actively included. The parent partnership meets monthly and is highly involved in the school.

In fact, the parent partnership was the driving force behind establishing interviewing and resume writing workshops. The process was so successful that students were getting hired at local businesses while doing mock interviews.

# BEST PRACTICE PROFILES

## SUMMARY

Being proactive and searching for as many partners as possible leads to success. Constantly marketing the school helps it get a lot of visibility. Students and parents are typically familiar with CCA prior to the time the student would decide if they want to apply.

There are many students that thrive in this type of setting. Some students are not interested in taking the traditional approach to higher education and want to learn a skill. For too many years high schools have been pushing college and have lost some students that are not interested in pursuing a degree. CCA offers different opportunities that are appealing to the student who isn't interested in college. The hands-on approach that leads to industry credentials, credit toward an apprenticeship and college credit is very attractive to many students.



[www.nisd.net/cca](http://www.nisd.net/cca)

