



Greene County—Career and Technical Education: Building Critical Community Partnerships

Greene County Schools found themselves with two problems to solve: Workforce shortages and the need for new school facilities. Through partnerships and community involvement, Greene County Schools developed a solution that addressed both challenges. The dream of building a Career Academy/ Regional Center was brought to life, which now inspires and creates new opportunities for students each day. Greene County shared their secret to accomplishing these goals with board members at the Summit on Student Success on April 27.

Opening its doors in the fall of 2021, the Greene County Career Academy was a joint venture between Iowa Central Community College (ICCC) and Greene County Schools. The facility allows students to complete courses in designated career areas, such as culinary arts, CNA (nursing), agriculture, computer science, manufacturing and more, all offering college credit. Students in grades 10–12 are offered these courses, with all tuition or book fees waived. Students not only learn skills that will last them a lifetime, but they gain a head start on their career path through both the offered coursework and apprenticeship programs.



Hallie Monthei shares her Career Academy journey with board members

Being All in for ALL Students

While the Career Academy boasts immense success today, it was no easy feat to lift this project off the ground. It first required shifting the community culture to focus on being *all in for ALL kids*, but what exactly does that mean? Greene County Schools shared with board members that it required the following:

- Teachers and the community willing to do what it takes to create opportunities;



Board members consider their own district's needs and complete a corresponding survey

- Local businesses donating their time; not about seeking money;
- Everyone supporting everyone;
- We are not in competition with one another—it is a joint effort.

By truly coming together as one community with a common goal, Greene County Schools was able to put students first, creating opportunities as early as first grade. In addition, the community emphasized economic opportunity and the importance of drawing from local businesses or organizations to create a workforce, which naturally led to the formation of local partnerships.

The Importance of Partnerships

Another integral part of constructing the Career Academy was partnerships. With a project this large, Greene County Schools knew they could not do it alone. Firstly, a partnership with Iowa Central Community College was essential to offer college-level courses for students. These courses offer transferable college credits and students follow both the ICCC standards and handbook. To offer a robust curriculum with real-world experiences, Greene County Schools turned to their local partners, such as John Deere, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and PowerLift.

In working with these partners, the Career Academy can encourage career exploration for students of all ages. For example, in partnering with ISU Extension, Greene County Schools is able to offer monthly career exploration camps for students in grades 1–3 and 4–8. The camps, which are consistently at maximum capacity, match the programs offered at the Career Academy. This way, students understand their interests or passions at an early age, prior to even high school. The options include culinary arts, welding, construction, computer science, agriculture, health science and education.

Other Opportunities

In middle school, students register for enCore classes and then are bused over to the Greene County High School and Career Academy to participate. Once again, this not only brings awareness to the numerous opportunities the Career Academy offers in high school but gets students thinking about their future and the paths available to them.

Also, Greene County Schools offered a career planning fair, which hosted 37 booths, 22 speaker sessions and 27 speakers total. Students were welcome to tour the booths and speak with different businesses, then select two speaker sessions to attend based on their interests. In addition, a job fair was hosted offering onsite interviews for those in the Greene County area, not just students.

Through the Eyes of a Student

To close out the presentation, Greene County Schools welcomed Hallie Monthei, a current senior and Career Academy participant. Next year, Hallie will graduate high school with 64 college credits and her associate's degree. With hopes to one day become an educator, Hallie has worked hands-on with

students and completed coursework toward her education degree through the Career Academy. Student voices are always incredibly powerful, and Hallie serves as a testimonial to how the district is preparing students for the future.

Greene County's Five Key Takeaways

1. Identify your community's need—dig in, listen, understand, listen some more;
2. Partner with key community leaders—economic and workforce development;
3. Partner with an area community college;
4. Supportive School Board—committed and all in;
5. Do not give up—try, try again!

Greene County Schools presented their education session to board members, superintendents and district staff at the Summit on Student Success on April 27. Huge thank you to Brett Abbotts, Chris Deal, Teresa Green, Hallie Monthei and Bonnie Silbaugh for sharing the inspiring work happening now in Greene County. To further discuss the Career Academy and the Greene County vision, contact:

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