

Lawrence Township Public Schools

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NEWS

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Date: February 8, 2011

CAREER ACADEMIES TO OPEN AT LAWRENCE HIGH SCHOOL

The Research is in: Students in Career Academies Perform Better in High School – and Lawrence High School is Ready

Looking for a rich, rigorous academic curriculum with ample honors and advanced placement course offerings? Do you want to extend your learning experiences beyond the school walls with authentic hands-on opportunities giving a taste of the real world? Would you like to interact with college/university professors, researchers, and other professionals working in fields such as business, international studies, science, technology, arts, and humanities? How about earning college credit before graduating high school?

Then look no further than Lawrence Township Public Schools.

Debuting in September 2011 are three new career academies at Lawrence High School (LHS): the Academy of Arts and Humanities, the Academy of Business and International Studies, and the Academy of Science and Technology. The academies

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will be housed within the high school and will provide students with an academically rigorous college prep program with a career theme.

The career academies are extensions of two existing academies and complete the progression of students through LHS. The 9th Grade Academy launched in 2008 and provides a smooth transition for students moving from the Middle to High School. Goals include personalizing the freshman experience and helping students quickly to connect to high school.

Begun in 2009 the 10th Grade Academy continues personalization and begins career exploration, thus preparing students for selecting a career academy for their junior and senior years.

Lawrence's career academies will provide one of the broadest offerings of electives in Mercer County as well as opportunities such as earning college credit while in high school; taking online, virtual courses; experiencing internships or job shadowing; developing leadership skills; achieving specialized career certifications (such as the already popular CISCO certification); and having priority scheduling for sought after courses within an academy.

Additionally and as required by state law, all students must take core courses, many of which are available in an honors or advanced placement format. Core courses include language arts, mathematics, science, social studies and health, safety and physical education.

The career academies are for *all* juniors and seniors. Students interested in enrolling in one of the three academies should contact their guidance counselor.

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Each academy has an advisory board composed of parents, community members, business owners, teachers, and administrators. As the career academy program grows and moves forward, course offerings will evolve to meet student interest and society's needs.

"The goal of the academies is to expose all students to potential careers via a variety of 'real-world' experiences that a student enrolled in the regular high school curriculum likely would not get," said LHS Principal David Roman. "We truly are personalizing their experience at Lawrence."

Chiara Shah, LHS teacher leading the Academy of Science and Technology, added, "A particular benefit of the academies is offering a 'try before you buy' element to education. A student will have more focused experiences – 'I thought I wanted to go into law, but I realize it's not really for me...but engineering is.'"

The Academy of Arts and Humanities boasts very successful music and theater programs; creative electives in photography, graphics arts, and television production; humanities courses in criminal law and sociology; and the "Promising Teachers of Tomorrow" program – to name a few. Adding to this depth, the academy is looking forward to providing artists in residence workshops and other enriching cultural experiences.

Jill Vaughn, LHS teacher leading the Academy of Arts and Humanities, related, "The academies are not brand new ideas, but rather were born out of several years of strategic planning with the community. Based on research, career academies, which result in small learning communities, help students succeed in high school and beyond."

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The Academy of Business and International Studies offers a focused range of courses including sports marketing and honors accounting as well as several culinary and fashion business courses. This academy also houses world languages, including Mandarin, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, and American Sign Language. Most recently, thanks to a grant funded by the Lawrence Township Education Foundation, the academy implemented a bank...the Cardinal Bank...within the high school that not only provides traditional banking services for faculty and students, but also gives student tellers solid, hands-on work experience.

Jeff Rick, LHS business education teacher leading the Academy of Business and International Studies, offered, “While the academies are set up to prepare all students for college, those students who do not go on to college will have gained valuable experience and skills in addition to a high school diploma. Whether it’s job shadowing, an internship, or a specialized certification, the ‘extras’ in the academy will prepare students for both college and the workforce.”

“One aspect that makes the academies so appealing for students is the Senior Experience,” Ms. Vaughn said. “Every student in our academy will have the opportunity to gain job experience, explore leadership, participate in service learning, or attain college credit – all while maintaining a rigorous academic course load.”