

Front Range Community College High School

Acceleration Program

Fort Collins, Colorado

Focus on CTE Plans of Study for High School Students

Colorado Innovation Profile

Colorado's Career and Technical Education programs are developing a seamless system of education that ensures ease in student transition from one educational system to another and from one level of instruction to another.

There are eight key strategies that Colorado CTE teachers and administrators are implementing:

- *Implementing Career and Technical Education Plans of Study;*
- *Strengthening Accountability for Results;*
- *Moving To a Project-Based Focus for Local Planning and Implementation;*
- *Assessing Career and Technical Skills;*
- *Integrating Academic and CTE Skills and Knowledge;*
- *Transforming Professional Development, Recruitment and Retention of CTE Teachers;*
- *Ensuring Effective Instruction and Strategies for Special Populations; and*
- *Connecting CTE to Employers and Workforce Priorities.*

The Colorado Community College System has prepared a series of "Innovation Profiles" that describe how Colorado's schools, community colleges and community partners are creating innovative strategies to improve their programs on behalf of students.

Key Innovation Activity

Related Strategy: Implementing Career and Technical Education Plans of Study

Front Range Community College at Larimer, in collaboration with local school districts, offers 400 high school students the opportunity to participate in rigorous CTE programs on a college campus, and to accelerate their accumulation of college credits and make seamless transitions into postsecondary education. FRCC highlights the value of Plans of Study, high standards for teacher hiring and professional development, intensive business and industry involvement, and rigorous expectations for student behavior and effort.

Background

In the 1960s, three school districts (Park, Poudre, and Thompson) sponsored a joint technical vocational center for high school students and adults, known as the Larimer County Vocation/Technical Center.

Over time, the program at the vocational center grew more expansive with a large student body. In 1988, an agreement was reached to absorb the Larimer programs into the Front Range Community College (FRCC). FRCC's Larimer campus became home to both secondary and postsecondary students.

The High School Programs at Front Range Community College

The High School Programs at Front Range Community College are career technical education (CTE) Programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for gainful employment in occupations that match present and emerging needs of the community. Students enrolled in these high school programs spend half of the school day at their home high school and the other half (classes are held from 8-10 am or from 12:30-2:30 pm) at FRCC in one of the following 12 High School Programs:

- Animal Technology and Research;
- Architecture and Landscape Design;
- Automotive Technology and Service;
- Carpentry- Home Framing;
- Ironworking and Industrial Welding;
- Industrial and Design Technology- Manufacturing Emphasis;
- Equine Science and Husbandry;
- Culinary Arts- Chef Program;
- Med-Prep- Certified Nursing Assistant (CAN);
- Plant and Greenhouse Science;
- Wildlife, Forestry, and Natural Resources.

At the FRCC Larimer campus, approximately 400 high school juniors and seniors from Larimer and Weld counties participate in The High School Scholarship Programs. About 42% of students come from the Thompson School District and about 58% from the Poudre School District.

These programs allow juniors and seniors selected by their home high school counselor to attend one of 12 programs and receive a scholarship in the full amount of tuition from their respective school district. The twelve programs are an extension of a student's home high school experience, but are delivered by FRCC. To participate, selected students are expected to be committed to an entire academic school year at FRCC/LC. Students enrolled in these high school programs do not receive a college transcript or college credits, but receive high school "elective" credits on their home high school transcript.¹ Also, high school students do not enroll in classes with college students, but in many cases, are conducting labs in close proximity with college students. Faculty members responsible for the postsecondary and secondary programs closely collaborate about the content of programs and the day-to-day use and sharing of facilities.

¹ FRCC website: <http://www.frontrange.edu/FRCCTemplates/FRCC1.aspx?id=671>

Key Factors in Implementation

CTE Programs of Study

FRCC High School Programs offer students a clear program of study that indicates the necessary academic and CTE courses for a particular course of study. In 10 of the 12 programs, FRCC offers articulation to students upon completion of the High School Program as long as students:

- enroll at FRCC within three years of graduation of high school;
- enroll as a student at FRCC in a related postsecondary program; and
- receive a letter grade of C or above (or a B or above in the Automotive Technology and Service Program) in high school courses.

There is a minimum of 325 hours of instruction over a nine-month period. The FRCC programs place an emphasis on:

- Hard Skills (career/technical skills)
- Computer Literacy Skills
- Research Skills, basic statistics and reporting
- Career Exploration
- Internships/field experiences (45-75 hours); and
- Professional Workplace Ethics

Emphasis on Counseling and Smooth Transitions

To improve the advising and transition process from the High School Program to postsecondary programs, high school counselors were placed on the advisory group that governs the secondary programs at FRCC. Because of this, counselors at the home high schools are very knowledgeable about the CTE programs and their expectations. For example, if a student wants to apply to FRCC to be in the Animal Technology and Research Program, but has low scores in the sciences on his/her transcript, the counselor at his/her home high school can advise the student of the rigorous expectations for the sciences in that particular program.

Priority on Hiring from Industry, and Developing Teaching Skills

The High School Program is very insistent upon hiring the right teachers. Hiring is not based on educational experience, but on how well the instructor fits the culture of FRCC. The majority of the High School Program at FRCC instructors have spent most of their careers working in the professional field of the program they teach, as opposed to in education.

Because FRCC instructors are subject-matter experts, not teachers, they often need daily support, which is afforded to them by the administration. Instructors also receive standardized, one-on-one training, based on an established set of teaching competencies that the program leadership has identified.

Work-based Experience for Students

Students obtain intensive work-based experience and training afforded through the High School Programs at FRCC. All of the students receive a minimum of 325 hours of education and training, and students in seven of the 12 CTE programs have an internship experience of up to 72 hours.² In the Automotive Technology and Research Program, students are required to apply for internships. The process to apply for an internship starts with a written application, followed by a 24 hour job shadowing at three different auto shops, and finally a one-on-one interview with the manager of the shop. Automotive interns from the High School Programs at FRCC are often offered a full-time job upon completion of their internship.

Professional Work Ethics Training

Professional Work Ethics is a transcribed grade for students in the High School Programs at FRCC. All students receive at least 24 hours of Professional Work Ethics training, with a minimum of 12 hours first semester and 12 hours second semester. The Professional Work Ethics Training highlights the following areas:

- Attendance
- Appearance
- Attitude
- Character
- Cooperation
- Communication
- Organizational Skills
- Productivity
- Respect
- Teamwork

As a capstone to the Professional Work Ethics training, the Rotary Club from Fort Collins comes to FRCC to instruct students in a two-hour session applying the four-way test of Rotarians to various workplace scenarios. In each scenario provided, the Rotary Club members discuss with students how to consider the “four-way test” of:

- Is it the truth?
- Is it fair to all concerned?
- Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
- Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

² FRCC Materials

High Expectations for Student Behavior and Effort

A fundamental concept at the FRCC High School Program is high expectations for students. The expectations for FRCC's high school students can be summarized based on the following: prompt, prepared, participate, polite, positive mental attitude, produce, parents. All of the P's are self-explanatory except the final two. "Produce" is an expectation that asks students to be willing to complete and successfully pass assigned tasks and be willing to do more than is asked. "Parents" represents the expectation that asks students to keep their parents informed and ask for their support.

Another key concept communicated to students is that the FRCC High School Program is a scholarship program, and should be treated as an honor to be there. A strict attendance/tardy policy reinforces this idea. When a student reaches three unexcused absences, he or she will be placed on an Attendance/Tardy Contract by the instructor. Students who exceed six unexcused absences (12 hours of class time) or have excessive excused absences violate their Attendance/Tardy Contract, and may be dropped from the class. Also, the student is responsible for their absences. If a student needs to be absent for any reason, it is the student's responsibility (not the parent's/guardian's) to call the instructor to notify him/her that he/she will not be in class. The strict attendance/tardy policy also serves as a model of the working world.

Intensive Business and Industry Involvement

Because this is a major component of the FRCC High School program, this topic is addressed in depth in a separate Innovation Profile titled "*Front Range Community College High School Program, Focus on Business and Industry Involvement.*"

Results

In a 2007 vocational follow-up survey given to 2005-06 graduates, 73% of graduates were continuing education and 43% were employed in a field related to the training they received at FRCC.

Teachers of the High School Programs noticed that sharing a campus with postsecondary students encouraged a rigorous, college-bound culture amongst the secondary students in the program. Based on data from 2001-2006, 67% of High School Program at FRCC students continued their education at a postsecondary institution, 32% were employed in an area related to their program of study, and students in 10 of the 12 CTE programs received articulated college credit at FRCC.³

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³ Source: CTE Fast Facts, FRCC publication.

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