

# Academy School District 20

## Background

Academy District Twenty was established in 1957. It encompasses approximately 130 square miles in the central section of El Paso County. The District is located fifty miles south of Denver and immediately north of the City of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Currently, Academy District Twenty is composed of:

- Seven high schools (including one alternative high school and one online high school)
- Five middle schools (plus one alternative program)
- Eighteen elementary schools
- One charter school, The Classical Academy, which has three elementary sites, one middle school site, one high school site, and one college pathways site

Additionally, Academy District 20 has a Home School Academy program that serves students in grades K-12. Further, the District has multiple schools participating in the International Baccalaureate program at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

<b>2010 October Count: 23,127 total student count</b>		
	<b># of Students</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Free & Reduced	2,602	11.25
White (not Hispanic)	17,549	75.88
Minority	5,578	24.12
English Language Learners	397	1.72

<b>2009 Academy District 20 Graduation/Completion Rate</b> <b>(Source: CDE website)</b>	
Graduation Rate	91.6%
Completion Rate	94.3%

With minimal Perkins money, the district was able to access other funds to support programs such as Project Lead the Way summer camps and their Aerospace Institute.

The district also used Perkins funds for 29 female students to attend a day at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs' Engineering School (UCCS). This day provided hands-on experiences in math and science with Air Force Academy and UCCS instructors. This was a collaborative effort with multiple Colorado Springs school districts so slots were selectively allocated.

This past year, the district amended its Perkins plan to permit an upgrade of their Auto CAD software to enable CAD students at their Rampart High School to redesign the district's Human Resources office space.

Perkins funding also enabled the district to deploy a new performance contract for extended contract time

for teachers to engage in: curriculum alignment; articulation development; or, installation/preparation of software or labs. This new contract has various levels of accountability where levels vary according to number of extra hours needed.

## Key Innovation(s)

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Perkins funding has enabled Academy School District 20 to conduct several innovative activities including:

- Participating in an Air Force Academy grant for an Aerospace Institute (AI). This came about due to the success of the district's Project Lead the Way programs. With AI, students attended a one week program culminating with conducting a mission at the Challenger Learning Center. Students also were able to take field trips to Lockheed Martin and the Wings Over the Rockies Museum.
- Operating four camps last summer, also funded by a private entity, for elementary and middle school students. Evaluations completed by parents garnered extremely positive feedback. The Project Lead the Way instructor ran the middle school camp at Discovery Canyon High School. High School students attended the Air Academy High School camp. Mentors in two of the camps were high school grads. One female mentor hailing from the Colorado School of Mines has been involved in this effort for three years.
- Operating a Girls STEM day at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs for middle school females.
- Redesigning the Human Resource office space at the district's administrative building Rampart High School CAD students interviewed employees about what they wanted in a new space. Students presented work to an advisory committee. Due to advice of the committee, the students revised their design. Human Resources will be using this design to reallocate space.
- Sending Construction Tech students from three high schools to Construction Career Days in Colorado Springs. The district's Rampart High School was able to provide prefab boxes that other students were able to finish on-site during the day. Female students constituted twenty-five percent of the attendance.
- Having curriculum teams review program data (5-yr trends) with advisory committees. The CTE data has been compiled for a report to the district's school board. Data review is an intentional part of professional development and teachers can use it in PLCs, site planning and building reviews.

Academy School District 20's Perkins-funded endeavors help students set their sights on the next level of their career path. Specifically, this is done via their middle school camps and their field trip to the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs. Both of these endeavors help students transition to high school engineering programs and STEM initiatives.

The secret to the district's successful application of Perkins resources relies upon leveraging resources, providing summer camps and extended experiences for students that relate to CTE, and an improved process the CTE Director has developed for requesting funds.

Perkins-funds helped support STEM skills by:

- Providing buses to field trips and minimal pay for mentors from colleges to assist with extended experiences for students;

- Enabling female students to practice hands-on math and science skills related to engineering projects at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs.

In fact, the district dedicated an entire project in its “Local Plan” to STEM which incorporated the extended experiences, software upgrades, engineering mentors and the acquisition of digital logic boards for the Discovery Canyon High School *Project Lead the Way* program.

Again, the district excelled at implementing strategies to recruit and retain underrepresented genders in non-traditional career programs via its camps and extended experiences for female students.

## Key Factors to Implementation

District teachers/staff having access to training resources has been, and will be, vital toward the district’s success with its Perkins-funded endeavors. The district recognizes the value of their teachers obtaining continued on-going industry-specific training. They also recognize the importance of continued training to help further align their curriculum with the Colorado Community College System Office for CTE’s (CCCS) content standards. Continued excellence is expected in this regard because the specialized technical training opportunities furnished by CCCS are accessible to the district’s teachers.

In achieving their success, the district has had to overcome, and will continue to face, the following obstacles:

- Finding resources for extended experiences for students or requiring an increase in registration costs.
- Logistical challenges of having minimal staff to run additional extended experiences now that they have proven to be successful.
- Time for professional development to make curriculum alignment meaningful for teachers using CCCS content standards.

Key to the success of the District’s Perkins-funded efforts has been:

- Having a dedicated CTE Director
- Building support from the administration
- Presentations to the school board on: student data; number of completers; how many courses they have taken, and the follow-up that has been pursued.

The district keeps its Perkins-supported programs linked to business/industry and labor market demand by:

- Having strong and functional advisory committees that review data and see presentations from students.
- Partnering with Pikes Peak Community College to sustain a Post-secondary and Secondary Advisory Committee for networking. The district has used the successful template that was developed for this group for all of its advisory committees.
- Creating a wiki for one of the advisory committees to facilitate even more industry input.

To attract additional financial resources the district has demonstrated that it is quite effective at tapping into its connections with the community and its institutions.

## RESULTS

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The district's Perkins-funded endeavors have resulted in:

- Larger numbers of female students in STEM initiatives/programs and Construction programs.
- Their CTE Programs having embraced special needs students (the percentage of these students in CTE classes is comparable to that within the school as a whole).

Perkins funds have helped strengthened the district's CTE operations by providing:

- Professional development opportunities for teachers; and,
- Critical upgrades to software.

In sum, the district has many examples of best uses of Perkins funds that could be replicated by other Perkins recipients across Colorado. In fact, the district would be willing to host others to come see their programs and take back with them what might work in their community.

The practices of the district's *Project Lead the Way* instructor particularly should be examined by other Perkins recipients. This teacher has a phenomenal organizational structure for keeping track of tools, Fischer Techniques pieces, and computer and photo-type lab equipment built by him and his students. Further, this teacher's students have a neat, replicable contest in which groups compete against each other in creating a design and then each has to build their adversary's project. To help facilitate the replication of its successes, the district has extensive documented pictures/success stories of students.