

HARFORD COUNTY
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION
MINUTES OF MEETING

January 13, 2025

8:00-10:00 AM

Attendees: Joe Connolly, Jeanne Donlick, Erin Mock, Becky Pensero, Katie Eckstein, Andrew Thomson, Matt Johnstone, Joshua Oltarzewski, Wade Sewell, Savannah Feist, Sara Saacks, Austin Hill, LaWanda Brown, Madisyn Bobb, Shawn Krout, Rajiv Goel

Breakfast: Mr. Connolly welcomed everyone, with the meeting officially starting at 8:20 AM.

Welcome & Administrative Matters: Mr. Connolly initiated a review of the agenda and the previous minutes. Mr. Sewell approved and Mr. Johnstone seconded the minutes from the October meeting.

Current MSDE and CTE Updates: Mr. Connolly shared that in November, Better Engineering hosted our apprenticeship partner appreciation breakfast, where we received proclamations for National Apprenticeship Week from the US Department of Labor, the State, and the AICPA. Mr. Connolly spoke at a board meeting, presenting positive data, such as an increase in CTE completers. He also spoke at a CTE committee meeting and shared that no students are currently participating in registered apprenticeships, as these require assistance from the Department of Labor.

In December, MSDE released CCR Guidebooks at each school level (K-5, 6-8, 9-10, and across all grades).

The CTE Committee approved the Blueprint 45% Goal by 2031, with clearer details provided. The gold standard is the Registered apprenticeship: 144 hours of related instruction and 250 hours of on-the-job training. Youth-based apprenticeships will still count as long as they are tied to an IRC.

Dr. Hill asked about this process, how it would work with certain programs that take longer to earn the credentials. Mr. Connolly shared that MSDE envisions all students to take IRC exams in 10th grade after taking the first two required courses. This is to align to CCR standards. There will be some CTE programs of study that require seat hours where the IRC exams will need to be given after 10th grade.

Mr. Goel asked if the employers will have to add more instruction to apprenticeships. Mr. Johnstone clarified that Labor, MSDE, and local school systems manage this portion. The Department of Labor has to get employers on board with the new parameters.

Mr. Oltarzewski asked the difference between youth-based apprenticeships versus registered apprenticeships.

Mr. Connolly explained that little is required by the Department of Labor from the business for a Youth-based apprenticeship. The greatest difference is the required hours for each option. Completion of a youth apprenticeship without an IRC does not count toward the Blueprint 45% goal, but still counts as a completer pathway for graduation.

MSDE wants to align with the national career cluster list, 14 total (currently 10). There is no word on how they plan to implement this yet. Mr. Connolly gave an overview of the national career cluster framework for Digital Technology (Data Science, AI, Web & Cloud, etc.).

Dr. Hill asked if the state has considered whether school systems can afford to hire a qualified, knowledgeable teacher for AI and other digital technologies.

Mr. Connolly said that currently, there are 86 programs across 10 career clusters, to be consolidated, with no local or state programs. We can choose the curriculum that best fits our needs, as long as it aligns to the IRCs. The full list of IRCs will be available from the CTE Committee at the end of January.

Mr. Oltarzewski shared that it is easier to transfer between colleges with curriculum being aligned with IRCs at the high school level, rather than using articulated agreements.

Mr. Connolly shared that CTE Family Night to be held on February 6th at PMHS. Mrs. Eckstein said this is targeted toward 4th-7th graders and their families in a fair/expo style. Each program and school are represented by teachers and 2-3 students. They provide information to dispel misconceptions about the programs.

Mr. Goel asked who guides the student on potential pathways. Mrs. Eckstein said this event gives families a broad overview. Ms. Feist talks to her 9th graders about what they're interested in at the beginning and end of the year, whether they are thinking about college or not. This is not required, but she and many other introductory-level teachers discuss this with their students. Mr. Johnstone said the Career Compass 7th grade course, career coaches, Susquehanna Workforce Network, and school counselors are also actively involved.

Mrs. Saacks said that employment is one focus for each school's SPA Team (everyone works together to guide students; as part of the curriculum, they consider what this looks like at each grade level).

Mrs. Eckstein said that MSDE changes to language causes confusion for families; we need to better explain what the acronyms mean, why they matter, how the pieces of the program fit together. Some teachers are meeting with students one-on-one about their progress, potential paths/next steps, and what is needed to keep students on track for graduation.

Mr. Connolly shared that the swearing-in ceremony for next group of PTECH interns will occur in February. There will also be a site visit from an MSDE liaison for PTECH next month. \$41,477 was received as carryover Perkins funds.

Apprenticeship MD: Mr. Johnstone shared that we currently have 251 students in apprenticeships with 168 companies. Specialists are working with counselors and shifting their focus to juniors to prepare for next year. The apprenticeship fair went well at the TUNE Center. Businesses asked for a bigger space in the future, and for us to also bring seniors looking for employment. He also explained that for each apprenticeship opportunity, he must turn in related instruction (course work). We are waiting for the new approval list.

The Grow Your Own program now includes Facilities, Transportation, Education at Edgewood Middle School, Food & Nutrition, and End Point Technician. A Print Shop intern will be starting soon.

Mr. Oltarzewski asked if a college and career fair joining HCC and HCPS with businesses would be possible.

Dr. Hill explained that it would not be fiscally possible to use the arena space, though other HCC spaces may be possible.

Harford Youth Workforce Investment: Mrs. Pensero shared that 128 students are registered in HYWI, up from 96 previously. New spring course offerings are available thanks to HCC. The CNA nursing class is being offered, and a second section of the dental course will be run. The Communications class held a Shark Tank event. 32 certifications have been earned this school year. During HCC's Spring Break, students will go to EDHS for resume writing, financial literacy, and career planning. The new coordinator at HCC is working to

increase communication between parents and HCC, including progress reports. Mrs. Pensero has access to a shared file with attendance, progress reports, etc. They are working to finalize course offerings for next year.

Mrs. Saacks asked where the funding would come from with the MD Leads grant ending.

Mrs. Pensero confirmed that we are in Year 1 with SWN. After next year, we are unsure of a future funding source at this time.

Programs of Study Updates and Lottery Discussion: MSDE recently allowed CTE to add new programs. We've been asked to add an Academy of Finance at FAHS, but they would not have a credit union like EDHS.

Dr. Hill asked whether previous demographic data will be a barrier, and why other NAF programs are not being considered.

Connolly stated that the request came from FAHS's principal. Demographics have been considered, and they are hoping to have SCS virtually connected with FAHS. HCPS leadership and NAF approvals would be needed. There is no other program that works virtually. This would be a signature, not magnet program.

Mrs. Eckstein shared that this could possibly begin SY 25-26 with a fast track option.

Ms. Brown asked about funding for curriculum work to adjust scheduling.

Dr. Hill expressed concerns that FAHS would offer the inverse demographic-wise of NAF's target student group, but SCS's inclusion could assist with this, and be beneficial if the two groups were integrated in classes.

Mr. Sewell asked if students would have to start the program in 9th grade year.

Dr. Hill said that they can start later if they are driven, especially ones who have taken AP courses. From there, they can complete their work through an apprenticeship.

Mr. Sewell said the AOF advisory board would support programs at both EDHS and FAHS.

Programs of Study Updates and Lottery Discussion: Mr. Connolly and Mrs. Eckstein shared that no lottery system for the magnet programs existed until 3 years ago, when a 50% lotter was implemented per MSDE guidance to remove barriers to student access. Currently, 100% lottery is being considered.

Ms. Donlick said that this committee created the magnet criteria (attendance, GPA, essay, activities).

Mr. Sewell asked if data is being tracked for merit versus lottery student success.

Ms. Donlick would like to finish a full cohort before evaluating this process. Since the change, there are concerns that withdrawn student numbers have doubled, and students are having issues in their technical areas. There are misconceptions for students on what CTE programs are. 50/50 seems fair, with minimum requirements added, but she doesn't advocate 100% lottery. She also shared that apprenticeships and dual enrollment provide further options for students. She felt that the previous process, holding interest meetings with students to discuss their goals and reasons for applying was more effective, however, MSDE mandated the move to essays to remove bias.

HCC Updates: Dr. Hill instructed members to direct workforce questions to himself until Mr. Limpert's replacement is found. A new Associate VP of Workforce and Career Education has been hired, Dr. Savin.