

The CEC Experience

What Is CEC?

Coweta County, Georgia's Central Educational Center (CEC) is a joint venture of the business community, the Coweta County School System, and West Central Technical College (WCTC). Located southwest of Atlanta in Newnan, Georgia, CEC draws students from the three base high schools in Coweta County—Newnan, East Coweta, and Northgate. The career and technical center incorporates the Coweta County campus of WCTC. The instructional staff is divided between Coweta County employees and employees of the WCTC. Any Coweta County high school student may choose to attend CEC as part of the regular high school program. Students register through their base high schools to attend the center for one or more block periods, and return to their base school for some academic courses and for extracurricular activities like sports or band. In this regard, the center is not a traditional high school.

CEC was created in response to needs expressed by local business and industry leaders who believed that area high school graduates were not adequately prepared for the Atlanta-area high tech labor market. In 1997, a group of county leaders in business, industry, education, and government convened to examine educational and workforce issues. After three years of work, CEC opened with a goal that students who chose to attend would achieve one or more technical college certificates of credit (TCCs), or one or more industry recognized certificates, in addition to the high school diploma. After five years of operation, CEC now enrolls nearly 25 percent of all high school age students in Coweta County over the course of a year.

As a local and state-approved charter school, the administrators and teachers at CEC have more flexibility in operating the school, selecting courses, and developing curriculum than they would have at a traditional high school. The leadership is collaborative, student-centered, and supportive of faculty and business environments. The building-level leader is called a CEO, and he describes his role as “servant leader.” Students are called “team members” and teachers are known as “directors,” reflecting the business setting fostered at the school. The organizational structure of CEC reflects its charter school designation, which continues to encourage trust, teamwork, and communication among staff. The curriculum is based on the job competencies related to each of the certificate programs offered. Career exploration work also includes job shadowing, internships, and youth apprenticeships. The emphasis in courses is on project-based learning and accomplishment-driven competencies.

In 2004, CEC enrolled 1,173 students in 9-12th grade, 174 of whom were dual-enrolled in both high school and technical college classes. The school's enrollment mirrors that of the county with about 28% of the students identifying themselves as minority students. In its first three years of operation (2000-2003), CEC served 2,861 students, with 895 students attending for more than one year, and 159 students attending all three years. In CEC's first four years, 559 students were dual-enrolled and earned 657 technical college certificates of credit (TCCs).

How Did It Start?

In Coweta County, Georgia, the employer community, community leaders, WCTC, and the school district each had distinct problems they were trying to solve. The employer community was having a hard time finding qualified workers and community leaders were concerned about economic development as a whole. WCTC, a leader in workforce development serving four counties in the region, had been grappling with how to strengthen programs and reach more individuals in Coweta County. At the same time, the superintendent of schools and school board were struggling to find a way to provide high-quality career and technical programs for a rapidly growing high school population in the most economic manner available.

The School District. While the community in general was satisfied with the quality and rigor of the college preparatory programs offered at the county's high schools, they were concerned about the low percentage of students going on to postsecondary education and the small number of those finishing with degrees. With more and more of the jobs in the county requiring special skills or technical training, district administrators knew they needed to improve career and technical education programs so that students would have increased post-high school options including pursuing and completing postsecondary education where necessary. In order to offer the kind of high tech career and technical education programs that would improve postsecondary and employment outcomes for students, the district would need to make major investments in equipment and facilities at the new high school and revamp programs at the two existing high schools. Administrators began exploring possible strategies for consolidating the career and technical education programs offered across the county under one roof, with the goals of strengthening programs and eliminating the duplication of costs and efforts.

Postsecondary Involvement. The technical college had wanted to expand its presence in Coweta County for years. It had been "borrowing" space at local high schools in order to offer night classes but wanted to provide more flexibility in scheduling and to reach a younger population of students. It, too, was looking for a base for activities to centralize course offerings and activities under one roof. But college administrators wanted more than just a site for classes. They wanted to develop a business and industry joint venture to inform course development and ensure that programs were truly responsive to local labor market needs.

Community Leaders. Local leaders began to realize that a shortage of skilled workers and limited training opportunities might be to blame for the increased reliance on commuting to locate employment. Business leaders, educators, and representatives from local government formed an economic development initiative to provide a framework to discuss what might be done to encourage existing businesses to stay and others to relocate and invest in the county. They began developing Vision 2020, a plan for supporting "smart growth."

Employers. Don Moore, the plant manager at Bon-L, a major manufacturer in Newnan, noticed that many of his employees—even the ones that had graduated from high school—had limited academic proficiency. While he was confident that his company had the subject matter expertise to successfully train people in the technical skills needed to work in the plant, he was hesitant to get into the business of providing wholesale remediation in the areas of reading and mathematics. He felt that the overall lack of basic and employability skills evidenced by his workforce was a symptom of a much larger systemic problem that would be more appropriately

addressed by education. At Chamber of Commerce meetings, other employers were voicing similar concerns. Business leaders knew that in order to solve their problems something would have to be done to change the way education was delivered in Coweta County, and they wanted a seat at the table. On behalf of the employer community and in the spirit of enlightened self-interest, the plant manager at Bon-L approached the superintendent of schools with his workforce concerns.

Personal conversations among individuals evolved into extended deliberations among the organizations. Others in the community joined in the deliberations. The deliberations evolved into a series of meetings. In 1997, the loosely affiliated group decided to formalize a steering committee comprised of 20 influential community members representing a broad cross-section of stakeholder groups. Interest and excitement surrounded what appeared to be a unique opportunity to forge new alliances among high schools, the technical college, and the private sector. All the necessary ingredients were on the table. All that was needed was a process to help the group work together in a winning combination.

Dr. Joe Harless, a nationally respected consultant, who for 30 years helped business, industry, and the military improve the performance of their employees, happened to live in town. Given his experience and interest, Harless was designated as the chair of the steering committee. In 1998, Harless would publish *The Eden Conspiracy*, which explored how education could be reformed around accomplishment-based curriculum, an approach that was uniquely suited to addressing the multitude of concerns the various stakeholders brought to the table.

The committee reviewed the literature on successful school-business partnerships, explored promising and effective pedagogical strategies, visited exemplary programs, was steeped in accomplishment-based curriculum development, and most importantly, developed a deep and authentic understanding of the unique needs of each stakeholder group. From this understanding, a common vision was formed.

Conceptual Vision

Coweta County would develop an educational center which consolidated secondary, postsecondary, and adult learning offerings under one roof. CEC would be a place where the highest levels of learning for all could be achieved. Drawing on the best research and practice available, the steering committee identified the basic building blocks on which the CEC would be built. Expectations for student performance would be high, given the expanding demands of the new economy. Experiential learning through applied and hands-on projects would be a common part of the daily classroom. Young people would be given new flexibility to “design” a program of study that prepared them for multiple pathways beyond high school—pathways dictated by changes in the economy. These would combine advanced technical training with a higher level of academic instruction than traditionally seen in connection with vocational education. Seemingly separated levels of education, secondary and technical college, would be vertically integrated into a seamless mix through instructor collaborations and dual-enrollment opportunities. This core instructional package would be topped with heavy doses of work-based learning—real opportunities to practice classroom learning in the local economy. Along the way, local business would provide advice, counsel, direction, funding, equipment, and expertise in the classroom.

The first step in implementing the vision was learning what employers were looking for when hiring county graduates. The school system and WCTC, in conjunction with the Coweta County Chamber of Commerce, conducted a community needs assessment, mailing a survey to all of the chamber membership. Follow-up visits were conducted after the survey was mailed to ensure a high response rate. The most frequent response of local employers was that high school students and adults needed to be taught and assessed on work ethic. The steering committee also learned that the local healthcare providers had the greatest need for additional employees and so health occupations would need to be a significant part of CEC's offerings. Needs assessment findings were analyzed to develop the curricula for CEC.

CEC was established based on a comprehensive needs assessment and its curriculum represents the expressed needs of the local community in producing students who are capable of accomplishing discrete, tangible tasks. In Coweta County, the needs assessment reflected particular emphasis on the match between skills of workers and needs of employers, retention of top students, and economic development and revitalization.

The Central Educational Center: Research Report 1. Florida State University.

After 18 months of intensive work, the committee produced an action plan. CEC was not to be the county's fourth high school, but rather an opportunity to provide a higher level of technical education services to every high school student in one central location. As technical programs are equipment intensive and have a large start-up cost, it made sense to centralize those costs into one center serving the entire county. A site for CEC was obtained when the school board donated a former middle school with approximately 65,000 square feet of space. A local tax referendum and a special state "Model Project Grant" allowed for renovation of the physical

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space and then expansion, doubling the building's square footage. High technology labs housing both technical college and high school programs were added, many built and equipped by business partners. Towards the end of the CEC design process, the steering committee realized the need for flexibilities that didn't exist within the public

school system, particularly in the areas of staffing and seat time requirements. The committee determined that the way to get these flexibilities was through opening a charter school. A charter application was approved by the Coweta County Board of Education and the state Board of Education in 1999. CEC opened its doors to students in August 2000.

CEC START-UP TIMELINE

<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Description</i>
1995-96	Business community expresses educational concerns	Coweta County business community expresses concerns to superintendent over state of preparedness of employees, local economic health, and retention of top students.
1997	Superintendent asks Joe Harless to apply performance technology model to address these concerns	Joe Harless, world-renowned performance technologist and local Coweta County resident, begins looking at how to apply his Accomplishment Based Curriculum Development (ABCD) system to education.

<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Description</i>
1997	Community steering committee formed. Needs assessment conducted.	20+ members of the community, representing business and industry, parents, education, and government, came together to study the problem and conduct a needs assessment.
1997	Data analyzed and curriculum is developed.	Analysis of needs assessment data is conducted. Steering committee uses this analysis to develop curricula.
1997-98	Central Educational Center site is identified.	Coweta County identifies former middle school as site for CEC. The value of the site contributed by the Coweta County Board of Education was approximately \$7 million.
1998	<i>The Eden Conspiracy</i> by Joe Harless is published.	Joe Harless' book details an educational revolution based on his experience, research, and accomplishment-based curriculum development system.
1998	A meeting with Governor Roy Barnes is arranged by Coweta County representatives.	A meeting between the Governor and Coweta County representatives leads to pledge that state's technical college system will work with Coweta County to build a model of educational reform.
1999	Central Educational Center school charter is written, submitted, and approved.	A formal charter application is submitted for the Central Educational Center.
2000	E-SPLOST contributes to CEC site renovations	Special educational tax passed in Coweta County in 1997 leads to \$2 million in renovations to donated site from 1999-2001.
2000	Governor and legislature agree to provide "Governor's Model Project Grant."	Governor Barnes and Georgia's legislature, led by Coweta County's legislative delegation, agree to provide \$7 million to allow physical build-out of original steering committee design. Planning and building begin in 2000 and are completed in summer of 2001.
2000	Steering committee hires CEO of CEC	Mark Whitlock, VP at Bank of America, is selected to lead CEC.
2000	New board of directors established	17-member board of directors: 9 parents (3 from each of the 3 high schools), 4 business members, and 4 educators.
2000	CEC opens	CEC opens for its inaugural year on August 10, 2000.

Organization and Structure of CEC

CEC's name was chosen to convey the concept of multiple educational entities offering learning opportunities in one building located in the center of Coweta County. It offers a rich array of educational services to a diverse student population. The high school program provides technical and academic courses for secondary students within the county system. Co-location with a WCTC campus allows a group of these high school students to be dually enrolled in technical college classes. CEC also houses the county's Performance Learning Center, added in 2005, a credit recovery program for high school students have been out of regular schools for an extended period of time and need to catch up. In addition, WCTC enrolls adults in day and evening postsecondary programs and GED courses on its Newnan campus. Evening high school for the county takes place at CEC as well, with most students taking remedial or make-up classes in order to stay on track for graduation. Lastly, the center offers local employers the opportunity for off-site and customized training.¹

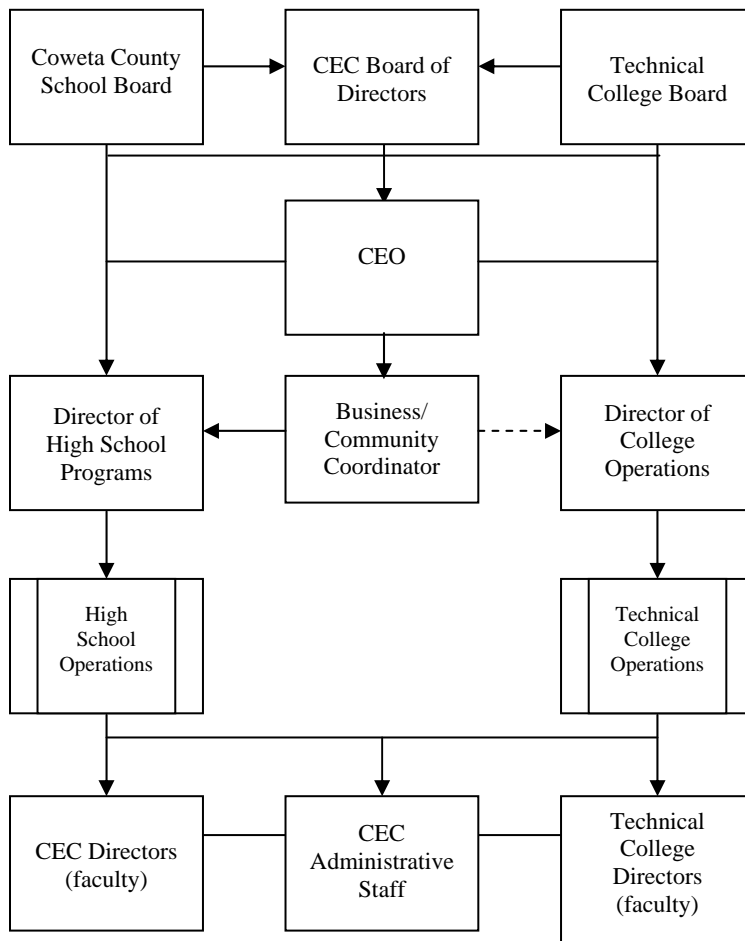
¹ This guide focuses on the day-time high school programs, including dual enrollment, and will use the term "CEC" to refer to this subset of the center's population and activities.

In order to understand how CEC was implemented and the reconceptualized structure of education shared by community stakeholders, it is essential to recognize that CEC was established as a charter school. Charter school status in Georgia affords schools a remarkable degree of freedom with respect to organizational structure, management, and instructional practice.

The charter must adhere to certain state and school district parameters and Georgia’s charter schools are obligated to report to the local board of education. Yet, CEC is deliberately positioned to be directly accountable to business and parents. In the case of CEC, flexibility is most visibly manifested in its mandate to respond to business and community needs. CEC’s charter makes it possible for partners to create and maintain a school culture and climate distinct from that of traditional high schools. For example, adjusting the number of hours of seat time a student needs while offering work-based learning and off-site experiences is considerably easier at CEC than it would be in a regular school environment.

The following organizational chart delineates the lines of reporting and governance structure of CEC.

CENTRAL EDUCATIONAL CENTER ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Building-level administration includes the CEO, the directors of high school programs and college operations, and the business/community coordinator. Upon opening CEC, this last position initially became that of director of technical and career education, focused internally on ensuring the technical programs were functioning optimally. Once programs were operating smoothly, the position transitioned to its intended role, focused on external relationships and work-based learning opportunities. The organizational chart presents the reporting relationships of these positions to their respective boards. The CEC board and the Board of Education cooperate to hire a CEO, a director of the high school program, and a business/community coordinator. The county school system provides staff and secondary instructors. In addition, the technical college provides a director of college operations, support staff, and college instructors. The CEO ensures the continuous improvement of the joint venture and supervises the actions of each administrator. It's instructional to note the deliberate use of nontraditional titles for these positions. For example, in a traditional high school, the director of high school programs would be called the principal. The terminology of "CEO" and "director" is more consistent with the business-like culture that pervades CEC.

Leadership

At CEC, the CEO holds responsibility for oversight and integration of high school, technical and career education, and college operations. Specifically, his role includes reinforcing the vision and mission of the center, staying close to those inside the school while keeping in touch with the outside community, and pursuing continuous improvement. He acts as a facilitator, building and strengthening connections among business partners, the school district, WCTC, parents, state and local political officials, and the community at-large. The CEO is the public "face" of CEC. Internally, he takes responsibility for communicating a vision to all, acting as a mentor, developer, and facilitator, planning strategically, and attracting and retaining students, among other things.

The current CEO described his position as one of "servant leader," as he has little direct control over those he manages, who are employed by one of two partners, and CEC has little budget of its own. He manages the center with a focus on culture, rather than procedure. The culture developed at CEC includes setting high expectations, creating a business environment, maintaining industry connections, and fostering work ethic among students. CEC's leadership values and encourages trust, team work, and communication among staff and students. Management philosophy was further identified as: hire great people; provide clear goals; expect and support continuous improvement; and build a culture of continuous change. Leadership at CEC involves a conscious commitment on the part of the CEO to extend a high level of autonomy and respect to the administrative directors, with an emphasis on professionalism that they in turn extend to the instructional staff. It's worth noting that the terminology of "directors" is applied to the classroom instructor, thereby elevating the professional status typically afforded "teachers."²

The CEO reports to a board of directors as dictated in the school's charter. The board meets at least every other month to conduct strategic planning and reflect on progress. The board considers and advises on issues such as student attendance, busing schedules, tracking outcomes,

² For the purposes of this guide, we employ the term instructor to reference the directors of program instruction to avoid potential confusion.

resource acquisition and distribution, communications, and marketing. In keeping with the charter school mission of engaging parents, parents today hold six (two from each of the three high schools) of the seats on the 17-member board, with six held by business representatives, and five by educators. In addition, the school board and the WCTC board review the CEC curriculum at regular intervals. With the charter ultimately awarded by the state, the CEO encounters three layers of audit via the CEC board, the Coweta County Board of Education, and the Department of Education for the State of Georgia. Additional layers of audit—through WCTC and its governing body, the state’s Department of Technical and Adult Education—stem from the design of CEC to seamlessly integrate secondary and postsecondary education. This increased scrutiny actually results in accreditation of activities by two different SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) divisions—one accrediting secondary and one accrediting postsecondary programs.

Courses, Programs of Study, and Curriculum

Through an initial needs analysis, local business and industry helped identify the major areas of concentration. Programs of study are organized under four broad career paths: Health and Medical; Business and Computer Information Systems; Technology and Engineering; and other Services. Students can choose from programs that range from high tech (e.g., computer repair, computer networking, and CAD) to construction and production (e.g., pre-engineering, machine tool technology, and metal joining) to health care (e.g., dental assisting, patient care assisting), travel and tourism, and broadcast video.

With respect to curriculum development, teachers and administrators meet with representatives from business who serve as subject matter experts (SMEs) to identify skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors needed in the workplace. The curriculum is built around those parameters while continuing to meet state standards. An important feature of this reconceptualized education is the ability for business representatives to inform, design, and help deliver the curriculum. To ensure that classrooms are adequately equipped, discussions with employer partners include identification and acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment and technology.

Through open lines of communication with the community and through the more formalized structure of program advisory committees formed of SMEs, business and industry have the opportunity to guide and influence curriculum development. Employers continue to have a great influence on the creation of new programs. New programs will be created when, for example, demand from high school students and data from the Department of Labor document the need for a college-level cosmetology program at CEC. The planned opening of an automotive manufacturing plant in the region will drive new programs to certify students in auto manufacturing with a focus on robotics, while local employers have indicated their need for employees certified in (electronic) auto maintenance. Programs in need of expansion include construction and welding. The business community needs additional workers in these areas, and some 100 students could not enroll in these programs in 2006 due to lack of space. Connecting data in such manner drives the expansion (and contraction) of existing programs. CEC’s physical facility will need to be reconfigured and several existing programs will need to be eliminated. Those that no longer align with labor market demands and do not have minimal placement,

retention, or graduation rates will be targeted for termination so that the school’s limited space can be used to address the highest priority needs.

In addition to academic grades, students receive a “work ethic grade” comprised of scores from ten traits, such as character, productivity, and cooperation, deemed important for employers. The trait to be emphasized school-wide rotates on a weekly basis. All instructors are expected to work these themes into their curriculum and lesson plans. The work ethic grading rubric was adapted from that used at Georgia’s technical colleges. The work ethic grade does not currently appear on students’ high school transcripts, due to the constraints of the student information system, but efforts are being made to see that it does.

Even administrative concerns like attendance are used to convey an understanding of workplace expectations. For example, absenteeism and tardiness are not considered behavioral problems, but performance related. At CEC, the thinking is that if you’re not there, you can’t learn. This again mirrors the business model—if you are not at work, you can’t do your job. A point deduction system linked to students’ class grade is used to drive the concept home. In addition, just as instructors and administrators go by nontraditional titles at CEC, students are called “team members” to evoke a business-like environment.

Research on work-based learning has shown that it helps students acquire general workplace competencies; explore and plan careers; and acquire knowledge and skills in particular industries. But it also creates another level of learning for the student, one that engages them in the learning process.

CEC has attracted 185 business partners, who provide job shadowing and work-based learning opportunities for hundreds of students in fields ranging from dentistry to manufacturing and graphic design.

CEC offers multiple options for work-based learning:

- *Job shadowing* is the opportunity to spend a day with an employee at a workplace and learn about a particular occupation or industry. It aids students in their career selection and exploration.
- *Internships* involve students working for an employer for a specified period of time, sometimes for just one semester, with a purpose of engaging students in learning through practical on-the-job experience. Internships can be paid or unpaid and both school personnel and supervisors participate in the student’s evaluation.
- *Youth apprenticeships* are state-regulated multi-year programs combining school-based and work-based learning in specific occupational areas—including health science technology, business technology, computer information systems, trade and industry, and teaching. Students commit to both 2,000 hours of on-the-job training and attending postsecondary education.

A group of three work-based learning directors (teachers who are released from most or all classroom teaching duties) ensure that students are registered for work-based learning, develop and monitor learning plans for students in work-based learning, hold one-on-one meetings with employers who will supervise their students, and conduct outreach efforts to create new work-

based learning sites. Technical college instructors in the health fields are responsible for setting up clinical rotation sites.

CEC also offers the core academic subjects most required of Georgia students—English, math, and social studies—to assist them in fulfilling their graduation requirements. These subjects as well as those, like science, with fewer course requirements, are also offered at students' home high schools. The goal was not to “compete” with students' base high schools in the realm of academics, but rather to offer increased opportunities to more students to take quality technical electives. Academic electives such as Latin, German, environmental science, and, from time to time, advanced placement chemistry, are also offered at CEC. The center's central location allows these electives to be offered to all students county-wide in situations where it is not feasible to offer them at each base high school. The CEC student population is defined as anyone who takes a class at CEC, whether academic or technical. Administrators believe that the environment itself and the center's focus on work ethic influences students whether or not they are enrolled in technical classes.

The presence of both academic and technical classes also allows curriculum integration between the two. Thus technical classes become a platform for teaching general academics such as math, English, or sciences. For

example, classes in the patient care assisting program deliver biology content, such as anatomy and nutrition. Academic instructors have learned more about the technical areas being taught and sometimes are able to collaborate with technical instructors to provide a specific application for the content they are teaching, such as equations for pre-engineering. A number of career and technical courses, as well as some academic courses, at the high school level, articulate with programs at the technical college. This means that once high school students are enrolled in a technical college program, competencies achieved through their secondary coursework may be recognized. For example, Algebra II may be recognized in the machine tooling program.

At CEC, faculty and students are engaged in a multi-disciplinary project. Students in environmental science (an academic elective) and horticulture (a technical elective) worked together to raise tilapia in tanks and use the waste water to grow vegetables in aquaponic beds. English classes have written research papers on aquaponics. The entrepreneurship class developed a business plan and fish have been sold to a restaurant. A video production class is chronicling the project, using it as the subject for a documentary and the culinary arts students at the technical college use the fish and vegetables as ingredients for their studies. Pre-engineering students will work on enhancing the structural design of fish tanks and holding areas. Construction students will help to build-out that enhanced design.

Dual Enrollment

CEC itself physically houses high school and technical college programs under its roof. As a founding partner, WCTC sought a physical presence in Coweta County to serve its historically older population of adults wanting to enhance their employability skills and gain industry-recognized certification. The co-location of WCTC with high school programs provided the opportunity to deliver an extended array of options to a younger population through dual enrollment.

Dual enrollment provides an excellent mechanism to create smooth, “seamless” transitions between high school and higher education. This is a key feature of CEC and one highly touted across Georgia by state leaders. On a practical level, dual enrollment offers high school students the opportunity to obtain their diploma and one or more technical certificates of credit (TCC) simultaneously.³ As a result, students find themselves better positioned to participate in the labor market immediately after graduation and/or make thoughtful decisions with respect to postsecondary education.

Students who are dually enrolled also receive dual credit—credit from both the high school and technical college—for postsecondary courses taken. The technical college classes offered do not “compete” with the high school, as the college offers only technical classes that the high school does not. Thus dually enrolled students can take technical college classes as high school electives. While the county requires 28 Carnegie units to graduate from high school, the daily

block schedule (see section on Scheduling and Instruction) means that students have the possibility of earning 32.

In its first four years of operation, 559 students have been dual-enrolled and earned 657 technical college certificates of credit. In 2004-05, 13 percent of CEC’s student body was dually enrolled.

Dual enrollment is open to juniors and seniors who are at least 16 years of age, as this is the minimum age to qualify for the Georgia HOPE grant which pays the college tuition for dual enrollees who are residents of Georgia and who are not in default on

student loan obligations. A minimum GPA of 2.5 has also been required (but is being dropped in favor of reliance on entrance test score requirements). Other criteria for dual enrollment are identical to those for adults entering the technical college, with the exception of the requirement to be a high school graduate. High school students also fill out a college application form and submit their transcripts. They must pass the technical college entrance exam—the ACT-developed COMPASS or ASSET test. Students can take the paper-and-pencil ASSET test at any county high school, but CEC is the only secondary facility with a lab to offer the on-line COMPASS test. The passing score needed on the entrance test varies by program of study. Sixty percent of the high school students taking the COMPASS at CEC pass it on the first try, as compared to statewide adult first-time pass rates of less than 50 percent. WCTC has agreed to let high school students retake sections they don’t pass.

As the technical college operates on a quarter system while the high schools work in semesters, schedule changes were necessary to make dual enrollment work. The technical college made adjustments to fit into the high school schedule. Classes needed to be offered during the entire high school semester, though the high school academic year began before the college’s and ended at a different time, and high school students needed to be able to finish the classes needed for any given TCC during one semester. The resulting technical college schedule is called TechStart. Typically, technical college classes are not taught on Fridays and particular classes may require two consecutive high school blocks. Technical college instructors worked to ensure that the entire content of a TCC could be delivered in this format and students progress

³ A TCC is a grouping of college classes (usually three to five) leading to a set of skills or competencies. TCCs often form a portion of a technical college diploma which is in turn often a portion of an associate’s degree.

seamlessly between the various “classes” that comprise the certificate, unaware of the move from one to the next. Even the instructor may be the same. In addition, to award dual credit, technical college quarter hours needed to be converted to Carnegie units.

One of the goals of CEC’s charter is to continually increase the number of dually-enrolled students. The number of dual enrollees is only limited by the availability of enrollment at the technical college. For example, lab-based courses cap their enrollments at a certain number. In developing its dual enrollment program, CEC determined that its students would register for TCC programs, rather than for any specific college classes, as certificates have economic value. TCC earners generally enjoy the college’s 98 percent rate of placement in career-related employment or further education. The desire for students to complete programs rather than simply earn credit led to the development of the schedules that permitted entire TCCs to be completed during one semester. Thus, a number of students graduate from CEC with multiple TCCs. For certain programs which were impossible to fit into one semester, the college divided the coursework and created two certificates, such as basic and advanced dental assisting.

2000-2004 Technical College Certificates of Credit Earned

Certificate	Number Earned
Computer Repair Technician	107
Patient Care Assistant	99
Basic Dental Assisting	87
Basic Gas Metal Arc Welding	50
Advanced Dental Assisting	39
CAD	38
Certified Customer Service Specialist	35
Basic Machine Operator	33
Basic Shielded Metal Arc Welding	28
Child Development Associate	23
Patient Care Technician	20
Basic Culinary Services	20
Certified Manufacturing Specialist	13
CAD—Architectural	12
Basic Gas Tungsten Arc Welding	11
CAD—Mechanical	8
Welding	8
Advanced Culinary Services	8
Web Site Fundamentals	6
Basic Machining	4
Basic Lathe Operator	4
Basic Mill Operator	4
Total	657

Technical College Certificates of Credit Earned by CEC High School Students in 2005-06

Certificate	Number Earned
Basic Dental Assisting	13
Advanced Dental Assisting	6
CAD - Architectural	2
Computer Repair Technician	8
Web Site Fundamentals	4
Patient Care Assistant	27
Patient Care Technician	10
Basic Gas Metal Arc Welding	27
Basic Shielded Metal Arc Welding	6
Basic Gas Tungsten Arc Welding	5
Prep Cook	3
Food Production Worker	22
TOTAL CERTIFICATIONS	133

Performance Learning Center

A Performance Learning Center (PLC) opened in 2004 in Coweta County. (PLCs were developed nationally and are managed in the U.S. by the not-for-profit Communities in Schools.) Initially it was housed at the Winston Dowdell Academy, an alternative school for students unable to remain at their base high schools due to disciplinary and behavioral problems. In the fall of 2005, it moved to CEC, through the advocacy of the superintendent and CEC's CEO. The PLC's specific mission and vision fit well with CEC, as it also has a focus on work-based learning and dual enrollment. PLC is an online high school for students who have been out of the regular high school for an extended period of time. The PLC format allows them to recover lost credits and accrue more in order to graduate. Students take academic classes in English, math, social studies, and science through NovaNet. They can move at their own pace through the curriculum. Half of the students who apply are initially accepted, but students move out as they finish and new spaces open up. Those entering are screened for academic capability to ensure they can read at the 8th grade level or above. In the 2005-2006 school year, there are over 70 PLC students at CEC with 10 percent participating in work-based learning.

Student Enrollment and Demographics

CEC draws students from across the three high schools in Coweta County. The student body represents a cross-section of academic skills and performance, from high achievers to those with special needs. As a charter school, CEC is not allowed to establish admission requirements, however, individual programs can require specific criteria for enrollment. CEC enrolls primarily 10th, 11th, and 12th graders, though 9th graders are able to attend. Seniors are currently given preference in scheduling classes at CEC, though recent discussions have raised the idea of favoring younger students demonstrating a clear career path. Enrollment information for the high school program is provided below.

CEC ENROLLMENT BY SENDING HIGH SCHOOL, FALL 2004							
Schools	Total Enrollment	CEC AM	CEC PM	CEC Full-time	CEC Totals	% of CEC	Distance from CEC
Newnan	1984	160	130	66	356	43%	2 miles
East Coweta	2005	141	105	27	273	33%	10 miles
Northgate	1399	90	94	22	206	25%	17 miles
Totals	5388	391	329	115	835	100%	

The school's demographic make-up mirrors that of the county's three high schools. In 2004-05, CEC's team members were 73 percent White, 24 percent Black, and 2 percent Hispanic. Over half were male (59%) and 11 percent qualified for free or reduced lunch.

Since opening its doors in the fall of 2000, CEC has witnessed substantial growth during its first five years of operation as depicted in the chart below. CEC now enrolls nearly 25 percent of all high school age students in Coweta County. During the 2004-2005 school year, between 10 and 15 percent of the CEC student body attended CEC for the full day. These full-day students are juniors or seniors who've completed many or all of their core courses and are now focusing on technical electives.

CEC PROGRAM GROWTH		
Program Year	School Year	Unique Individuals Served Per Year
1 st year	2000-2001	638
2 nd year	2001-2002	1285
3 rd year	2002-2003	1382
4 th year	2003-2004	1249
5 th year	2004-2005	1173

Faculty

Charter school status affords CEC the luxury of recruiting staff who might not hold conventional teaching certification. While some staff members have a combination of academic and applied experience, others come directly from the world of business or the military. The majority of instructors do have conventional teacher training and traditional teaching backgrounds. What makes instructional practice at CEC unique is that staff members have the freedom to approach education in a nontraditional way and are encouraged to innovate. The climate of the school, the direction from leadership, and the school's charter status encourage this flexibility.

Given CEC's focus, career guidance and career development are integrated into the culture of CEC. That is to say, guidance is not simply the counselor's role, but rather a responsibility shared by all. Every instructor is a counselor. In turn, the counselor's role is less administrative than that in traditional high schools. While still holding responsibilities for scheduling and

posting grades, there is more time dedicated to career guidance and opportunities to meet with student classes. In addition, the counselor runs CEC's student advisory council.

Many of the teachers who joined the CEC staff during the first year volunteered for the position after serving with sub-committees of the steering committee who developed curricula in their areas of expertise. Others joined when the career and technical programs in which they were teaching moved from other high schools and centralized at CEC. A few technical instructors without teacher certification were hired from outside the school system. Additional recruitment was necessary for the academic teaching staff and this focused on those already within the current school system. No net new high school teaching positions were created in Coweta County's high schools during CEC's first year of operation. WCTC needed to hire a new instructional staff for the programs to be offered on its Newnan campus and brought on full-time faculty who would teach during both the day and night programs. At night, WCTC supplements full-time staff with a number of adjunct instructors.

New positions have now been added to the school system and housed at CEC as the county's career and technical education programs expand due to increased enrollments. As CEC adds new staff, administrators seek out people who are creative—who are still motivated and energized by the teaching job. Now that its reputation is established, the superintendent receives frequent requests from teachers within the school system who want jobs at CEC but have no opportunity due to the center's small staff turnover. Expanding the CEC day to potential fifth and sixth blocks might provide more of the district's instructors the opportunity to teach at CEC.

FULL-TIME CEC STAFF

Total CEC Staff

58 individuals are listed on 2005-06 staff roster

Coweta County School System

- 10 administrators and support staff, including a career counselor
- 34 directors on high school instructional staff, including paraprofessionals

West Central Technical College

- 9 administrative staff, including a career planner
- 5 directors on college instructional staff

Scheduling and Instruction

Instruction takes place in four 80-minute blocks, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, starting at 8:10 a.m. and ending at 3:10 p.m. CEC offers limited food service, and a lunch period from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. allows students time to commute to or from their base high schools or go out to eat. Students can attend CEC for one, two, or four blocks a day, although administrators are attempting to minimize those present for one block only. About 85 percent of the students drive to CEC. The remaining 15 percent take school buses from their base high schools. The school's schedule, made possible by the flexibility provided by charter school law, allows students to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities at their base high schools. Some adjustments at the base high schools have been necessary as well. For example, in the first year of operation, students at CEC complained that they missed pep rallies at their base high schools. A solution was reached when the high schools coordinated the number and timing of pep rallies and communicated that schedule in advance.

In the classroom, instructors use project-based instructional techniques to link students' learning to the new economy in academic as well as technical classes. Examples of student projects include English students developing a standardized grant proposal which CEC can use, environmental science students raising tilapia in tanks on campus, those in low voltage wiring creating a technical plan to rewire the school hallways, and students in a horticulture class designing a commercial greenhouse and developing a business plan to operate it. Performance-based instruction is emphasized as well. Rooted in instructional science, this teaching method requires that course content be based on specific knowledge, skills, and information students will need to be accomplished citizens in a particular area. Once these have been identified, teachers use particular instructional methods to quickly develop proficiency in these skills among learners. Joe Harless explained the application of instructional science to K-12 education in his book, *The Eden Conspiracy*, and provided a week of training in performance-based instruction to CEC staff before the center opened. Instructors use performance-based assessment techniques when possible. Alumni describe an emphasis on producing products and demonstrating their skills to professionals, rather than testing. For example, students in health occupations programs might demonstrate their proficiency in certain skills under the eye of a registered nurse.

CEC represents the first application of Joe Harless' approach to Instructional System Design in the public educational realm. Harless' well-validated performance technology model used in private industry, the ABCD System, however, does not currently drive all the delivery of specific instruction. Detailed in his book *The Eden Conspiracy*, the ABCD system differs primarily from the traditional subject matter-based curriculum in that its educational goals are clearly defined and measured in the accomplishments of students as defined by the four primary roles they are expected to hold after graduating from high school: as society members, family members, workers, and as individuals. (Harless, 1998 as cited in *The Central Educational Center: Research Report 1*. Florida State University.)

Instructors are given one class period a day for planning and research. In addition, all are free during the mid-day lunch period which serves as a common planning time. One to two days a week, structured faculty activities take place during this time period. These include the meetings of a professional learning group—teachers reading and reviewing a book on education, high school faculty meetings in which programs share their best practices, meetings including both high school and technical college faculty, and professional development.

Results

During the years CEC has been in operation, Coweta County's dropout rate has fallen 3.6 percentage points, improving 42 percent from 8.6 to 5.0. In addition, Coweta's declining SAT scores reversed after CEC opened and now surpass the state average.

Academic outcomes have been very positive. In 2004, CEC students exceeded the state's average graduation test pass rate on all five tests and exceeded the county's average in four out of five tests. Results are even more impressive among CEC's economically disadvantaged students, whose performance on 2004 graduation tests improved upon the county first time pass

rates in the following percentages: writing (+4%), language arts (+7%), math (+15%), social studies (+18%), and science (+19%).

Students who are dually enrolled have even more impressive results. CEC's dual enrollment programs have a graduation rate of 98 percent, more than 20 percent better than the county's general high school graduation rate. In following up a very small sample of dually enrolled students, 100 percent were employed and/or enrolled in higher education 120 days after high school graduation. In the school's first four years, 559 dual-enrollment students earned 657 technical college certifications before graduating from high school. Eighty percent of students in the Class of 2001 graduating with a TCC indicated a likelihood that they would pursue postsecondary education and anecdotal evidence bears this out. Researchers attribute this high proportion to the familiarity CEC students gain with college expectations and environment. In addition, WCTC administrators suggest that dually enrolled students experience a boost to self-esteem when they realize that they can perform at the college level.

Since CEC's enrollment is voluntary and enrollment doubled in the center's second year and has remained well above 1,000 ever since, parent satisfaction is considered quite high. In a survey in the spring of 2004, students reported an 84 percent satisfaction rate with CEC and instructors a 93 percent rate. In many cases, the instructors attributed their high levels of satisfaction to the CEC environment in which they feel a great deal of support and respect.

The advantages of workforce development delivered at the high school- and technical college-levels translate into some very powerful benefits for local industry as well. During the period in which CEC was being formed, Coweta County was faced with the reality that Yamaha, its largest manufacturer, was considering relocating and was actively being courted by other Georgia counties and several states. CEC stepped up to the plate with an offer to establish a lab that would train students in advanced manufacturing skills, guaranteeing Yamaha an affordable way to recruit and train its own workforce locally. CEC's offer was enough to keep the manufacturer in Coweta. In fact, the company decided to build a \$40 million expansion and create an additional 300 jobs for an initial local economic impact of \$75 million. According to Yamaha officials, CEC was the deciding factor in keeping the company in Coweta County and for its expansion. Education and training in the service of workforce development was seen as more valuable than other tax-oriented incentives.

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