



Christian County Phase 1: Explore Report Addendum

On September 21, 2021, Ford NGL visited Christian County High School and Hopkinsville High School to meet with school stakeholder groups, tour CTE labs and visit classrooms to gauge each school's potential for a community-connected approach to transformation. The findings below highlight observations from that visit and support the report that was presented as part of the Phase 1: Explore visit.

Overall School Strengths:

- Both schools have a diverse population of students and staff.
- The school leaders we met care deeply about the students and the community. Most have spent their entire careers in Christian County, and many grew up in the area.
- Both students and staff report a very close community where everyone feels like a family.
- CTE programming within the two schools and at Gateway provide a strong foundation to build career academies.
- The Work-based Learning Co-op program has been very successful and will serve as a model to expand to WBL offerings for more students in the future.

Overall Considerations and Challenges:

- Equity: Some students, but not all students, have amazing opportunities to excel academically, to be supported socially and to participate in work-based learning experiences. Conversations with both students and staff confirmed a lack of a consistent plan to address all students being college, career, and life ready.
- Potential consolidation of two high schools and the Gateway Academy is a major consideration: The vote to consolidate had been approved upon our visit and work is moving forward to combine the two high schools by 2025.
- Perception: Conversations with students and staff validated our original belief that the consolidation is more about perception and misunderstanding than about reality. Students talked about how Gateway students are already combined, and the culture is more about learning and collaboration and less about being a Tiger or a Colonel. The career academy model will help unite the two schools into one.
- Governance and leadership at the community level: Teachers reported the desire to be more engaged with community partners, but a lack of structures and processes has been a barrier to the work being consistent and intentional.
- Business/Civic Engagement: Both students and staff confirmed very little business and civic engagement, especially around supporting instruction. Likewise, after viewing the McGavock video and understanding how business and community partners can enhance instruction, both teachers and students were eager to make that part of the culture at Christian County.
- College and Career Advising and Exposure: Students were very vocal about a lack of intentional and consistent strategy to expose and prepare students for both college and

career. Students that are enrolled at Gateway reported career exposure and opportunities to participate in work-based learning, but many students lacked the general knowledge to access support for college advising or to become a part of the work-based learning opportunities. Most students agreed that the exposure to CTE programming was a brief tour in 8th grade and that many students were not able to be a part of the CTE pathway they requested as their first choice.

Recommendations:

After speaking with school stakeholder groups, these recommendations were validated. The community can begin to progress towards successful career academy visioning, planning, and implementation by considering the following:

1. Conduct benchmarking site visits or virtual tours:
 - a. Teachers are excited about the move to career academies. Work with them and allow them to be advocates for the consolidation and career academies. These teachers will need a “cheat sheet” or messaging matrix to ensure consistent messaging.
 - b. To allow school and community stakeholders to see the model in action, consider attending the Academies of Nashville Virtual study visit in October or March. March’s study visit is scheduled to be in person. Ford NGL will provide information via email.
2. Continue building a culture of equity and access:
 - a. Work with the local chamber and/or Economic Development Center to vet current CTE pathways with regional workforce demand and intentionally include enough capacity for ALL students to be able to engage in a pathway.
 - b. Work with post-secondary partners to identify more college credit-bearing opportunities so more students can earn college credit while in high school. The credit-bearing courses should be in both CTE and general education courses.
 - c. Consider using student voice to build a student-center focus as plans continue for the consolidation.
 - d. Consider a plan to dedicate equitable resources into all CTE pathways.
3. Understand the roles of the Convening Organization and work to secure commitments:
 - a. No additional input for the convening organization based on school visits.
4. Design a college and career advising and exposure strategy:
 - a. No additional recommendations other than a strong validation of the need. Students reported needing support at all levels of college and career advising. The scaffolded (grade level activities for all students) approach should ensure consistent practices.
5. Ensure effective communication:
 - a. The Listening Tours have been a huge success in the community. Every stakeholder group knew of face to face meetings where district office leaders have listened to the needs and concerns of the community and have provided

information about the consolidation. Every stakeholder group expressed an interest in continued direct communication as the plan continues.

- b. Work with the Communications Department to develop various communications tools to ensure consistent messages throughout the visioning, planning and implementation of career academies. Utilize those tools with advocates across the community to build capacity.
 - c. School leaders expressed a desire to include instructional components of the overall consolidation plan and not just sports and facilities.
6. Ensure strategic alignment of the academy themes to the targeted industries:
- a. Current CTE programming does not seem to align with regional workforce needs completely. Consider phasing out legacy pathways if they do not align to industry needs.
 - b. Some CTE programs appear to be funded at a higher level than others. Use local/state industry needs to build modern CTE labs that will help develop the talent needed in the region.
7. Assess and build structures, processes, and policies to enhance strategic business engagement:
- a. Convening Organizations can help develop structures for intentional, consistent, and equitable business partner engagement.
 - b. Move forward with Phase 2 of the Roadmap which will include developing the Profile of a Graduate. This will be a powerful way to connect with the community and give solidarity for moving forward. This will give more stakeholders the opportunity to vision as a district and community.
 - c. Begin to plan for implementation of some career academy structures by next year to continue to engage and excite all stakeholders while the new school is being built. Here is just one example of what that might look like:
 - i. Move to one schedule—AB Block schedule for all campuses, including Gateway.
 - ii. Year 1 (2022-2023): Freshman Academy at two separate schools to avoid additional transportation and several school moves over a few years; begin operating as “one school mindset with two campuses”, the North and South Campus; develop teacher teams for Freshman Academy at each school to support a cohort of students; launch the first phase of college and career advising in Freshman Academy, 9th graders will select their academies in Spring 2023, Gateway and CTE pathways stay in place at each school.
 - iii. Year 2 (2023-2024): Continue operating with two campuses by having Freshman Academy at North and South Campus and add the first level pathway course either at Gateway, North or South Campus; develop teacher teams to support a cohort of students.
 - iv. Year 3 (2024-2025): Move to the new school with academies in place and functioning.
 - v. Develop a timeline starting with the end in mind, and backward plan for getting ready for 2025. Ensure each action is connected to the “why”.
 - vi. Professional development should be provided for anything that they are being asked to do that is new.