



Coxsackie-Athens Central School District

Coxsackie-Athens Central Schools (CACS) is a rural New York state school district located along the Hudson River approximately 20 miles south of Albany. It consists of two elementary schools, one middle school, and a high school. The system serves approximately 1,200 students, K-12. This Learning 2025 Lighthouse System empowers educators to take ownership for establishing goals and strategies to reach targets articulated in the district's strategic plan. The plan emphasizes three major goals: (1) By 2030, all schools will become a place where space and time are flexible with students using a variety of technological tools to demonstrate life, career, and college-ready competencies; (2) By 2030, all students will be developing a partnership with an international or domestic organization that results in the student designing and proposing a solution to a real-world problem their organizational partner has; and (3) By 2030, all students will be exemplary communicators, collaborators, critical and creative thinkers as well as have the attributes to self-direct their learning in any setting.

As these long-range goals suggest, CACS reinforces the importance of creating a culture that embraces a future-driven mindset. It reinforces the critical value of personalization in public education, including teachers helping to develop personalized learning plans for students by using digital badges aligned with course standards. Similarly, the system uses micro-credentials as a way to change teachers' instructional practices by encouraging staff choice, decision making, and problem solving. Students are now able to demonstrate their mastery of skills and content using this badge system, completing a series of challenges ranging from specific course content and life indicators to coding. As part of this initiative, the district is developing a systemic badge program to replace report cards in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten (a system expected to have full implementation by the 2024-25 academic year).

The CACS approach to transforming instruction emphasizes both personalization and integration. By providing students with a project-based learning environment that is assessed through a standards-based curriculum, students develop multiple standards at one time. They are then able to accelerate their learning and decrease learning gaps. The system also stresses the value of small class sizes to reinforce strong relationships with adults. Assessment tends toward performance-based approaches, including students in each grade level completing at least one interdisciplinary project, focused on a central theme as well as the potential for community services and career exploration. To address learning and achievement gaps, the system has formalized a flexible experiential learning program (FLEX) that allows students options for when and where they learn. Similarly, student voice and choice are critical for their future learning success. The FLEX program reinforces the value of addressing the Whole Learner, including mental health support and continuous monitoring as part of its multi-tiered approach to service delivery.

CACS provides all students with access to college-level coursework via 36 college and AP courses. This implementation process includes changing beliefs, removing barriers and antiquated prerequisites, and extensive outreach and communication to parents and students about the importance of preparation for post-secondary education. This process has extended to the district's articulated vision for

educational improvement, using a tactical planning team (LINKS) approach that transcends excessive dependence on test scores as criteria for success. The team's efforts have led to the 2018 implementation of a comprehensive dashboard of commencement indicators (organized by academic/college, career, and life-ready categories). This holistic approach includes benchmarks for success, online programs, an integrated approach to personal dispositions, and multiple communication tools such as Life Ready Newsletters.

Finally, CACS has created multiple pathways for student learning, including an extensive variety of Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs (doubling the number of such courses and programs offered at the high school). These now include a major focus on advanced manufacturing, computer science, motor sports, within a Dream Fab facility that replicates industry settings filled with state-of-the-art manufacturing technology. The system also reinforces the importance of regional workforce partnerships as well as implementing a new Career Ambassador position and extensive use of Naviance and Nepris platforms to provide students and teachers with opportunities to explore career options.