



Characteristics of career academies in 12 Florida school districts





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Summary

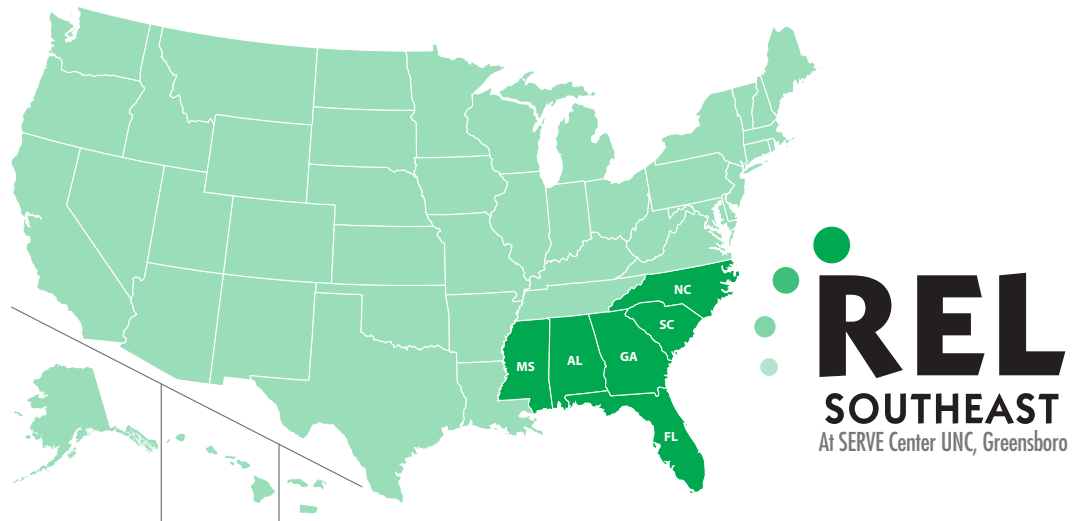
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Characteristics of career academies in 12 Florida school districts

This report describes career academies in 12 Florida school districts in the 2006/07 school year. It examines their structure and career clusters, the high schools offering them, and the students enrolled.

Career academies are a leading high school reform designed to engage students and better prepare them for college and the workplace. They offer small, more personalized learning environments; integrated academic and technical courses organized around career themes; and work-based learning opportunities.

This report responds to a Florida Department of Education request for information on Florida career academies prior to enactment of the 2007 Career and Professional Education Act, requiring each school district to open at least one career academy (Florida Legislature 2007a) and establishing benchmarks and procedures to support high-quality career academies (Florida Legislature 2007b).

The Florida Department of Education chose for this study the 12 school districts most consistently reporting career academy data. Student data were drawn from files provided by the state's PK–20 Education Data Warehouse (Florida Department of Education 2007a). School data were drawn from the state's Master School Identification file (Florida

Department of Education 2007b) and the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data (U.S. Department of Education 2007).

This study is one of the first to investigate both career academy structure and clusters using multiple data sources. It provides state education leaders and other stakeholders with baseline trends and patterns to use in tracking and evaluating Florida career academy development.

This study is driven by three research questions on career academies in the 12 Florida school districts in 2006/07:

- How many career academies were there, and of what types?
- What were the characteristics of high schools offering career academies?
- How many students were enrolled in career academies, and what were their characteristics?

The findings indicate that:

- Seventy-nine percent of high schools (145 of 183) offered career academies in 2006/07, for a total of 596 career academies.

- Of the 145 high schools offering career academies, 70 (48 percent) used a school-within-a-school structure (career academies embedded in an existing high school), and 45 (31 percent) used a wall-to-wall career academy structure (an entire school organized around multiple career academies). Information on school structure was missing for the remaining 30 high schools (21 percent).
- Most schools with wall-to-wall career academies (40 of 45; 89 percent) were in the Miami-Dade district.
- In school-within-a-school career academy structures, the most common career cluster (the field around which a career academy curriculum is organized) was hospitality and tourism (27 of 230; 12 percent). In wall-to-wall structures, the most common was arts, audiovisual technology, and communication (38 of 266; 14 percent).
- Schools configured as wall-to-wall career academies had larger average enrollment (2,356) than did schools organized as school-within-a-school career academies (1,968).
- On average, high schools offering wall-to-wall career academies had higher rates of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (42 percent compared with 37 percent), of racial/ethnic minority students (84 percent and 53 percent), and of students receiving special education services (25 percent and 13 percent) than their school-within-a-school counterparts.
- Of the 332,010 students enrolled across the 12 school districts, 49,795 (15 percent) were enrolled in a career academy.
- More girls (54 percent) than boys (46 percent) enrolled in career academies.
- More students were enrolled in school-within-a-school career academies (25,587; 8 percent) than in wall-to-wall career academies (20,818; 6 percent).
- A higher percentage of students enrolled in wall-to-wall career academies were Hispanic (45 percent compared with 16 percent) and received special education services (25 percent compared with 13 percent) than their school-within-a-school counterparts.
- The transportation, distribution, and logistics cluster had the smallest percentage of female students (8 percent), and education and training had the largest (84 percent).

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