

Kentucky High School Integrates CPT Training in Answer to Employer Needs

In 2016, Doss High School in Louisville, Kentucky became the first high school in the state to fully integrate the Certified Production Technician (CPT) program within one of the existing manufacturing pathways of study, Manufacturing Engineering Technology Technician. This came in response to regional employers' need for a pipeline of highly-skilled, entry-level production workers. Local employers such as GE Appliances, Louisville Ford Assembly Plant, Bigelow Tea, Universal Woods, KCC and others worked together to address their skill needs and seek solutions that would help their companies, and also the community at large. In April 2016, this group of regional employers released a report that targeted increasing CPT as goal #1 to address the shortage of qualified, highly-skilled production workers and to build a pipeline to meet their needs.

In response to this, administrators at Doss began planning for the new pathway in their school, but were unsure of the response they would get from the student body. They knew there was a need to offer something that would excite students who otherwise had a lack of interest in regular coursework, but they were surprised when over 80 students enrolled in the spring of 2016. As a result, they added this new pathway into the Tech & Design Academy that began in Fall 2016. Lightweight Innovations for Tomorrow, along with local manufacturing companies, committed both financial and in-kind support to develop and implement the program.

"Very few high school programs exist that are dedicated to preparing students with the variety of skills needed to directly enter manufacturing upon graduation, and even fewer high schools partner with local businesses to match learning with workforce needs," said Doss Principal Marty Pollio. "This project offers training and advancement opportunities for students who want to work, learn and earn in a manufacturing field."

Typically, the pathway begins in the sophomore year, with students engaging in four manufacturing courses in the pathway of study in which the CPT curriculum is also embedded: Foundations of Technology, Intro to Manufacturing and Manufacturing Systems, Material Process, and Production Technology. The goals for students upon graduation are to obtain their diploma, an industry-recognized certification (in this case CPT), their work-ethic certification and a job from a local employer.

Already employers are seeing the results of an excited and engaged student body and the potential for these students post-graduation – either in higher education or landing their first full-time job. Statewide, the CPT has been approved by the Kentucky Department of Education for inclusion as the foundational certification for six other manufacturing pathways of study in high schools throughout the state. Regionally, Louisville-area employers are seeking CPT inclusion at all Jefferson County (Louisville) high schools that offer a manufacturing pathway of study, with the hopes that other regions will see the value of high school graduates who possess full CPT and what they bring to the table as skilled, eager-to-learn-and-rise employees.

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