

Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, Case Study Summer 2022

Districts in Tennessee that received funding through the Innovative High School Models Grant have shared summaries of their work along with lessons learned along the way.

The Innovation

The Clarksville-Montgomery County School System (CMCSS) started an Early Technical College (ETC) at the Clarksville campus of TCAT-Dickson four years ago. At the time, the TCAT campus was primarily serving adult learners and its facilities were underutilized during a large portion of the day. The ETC provides students with personalized, hands-on learning opportunities that can lead to the attainment of both college credit and a high school diploma, technical and professional skill development, and industry certifications.

CMCSS used funds from the Innovative Schools Model grant to bolster and expand their Early Technical College programming.

- **Time And Space:** Students take courses on the Clarksville campus of TCAT-Dickson to meet the requirements for high school graduation and to earn dual enrollment credits in one of five pathways (diesel-powered equipment technology, HVAC/refrigeration, industrial electrical maintenance, pharmacy technology, or prepractical nursing). Students attend classes from 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. each day. The 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. time slot is set aside for CMCSS coursework, professional skill development, and lunch. During the 2:30-5:30 p.m. time slot, students participate in TCAT coursework for their chosen pathway. Students who have finished necessary coursework are permitted to participate in paid internship experiences off-site until 1:30 p.m. CMCSS provides students with transportation to the TCAT campus.
- **Partnerships:** Leaders from CMCSS and the Clarksville campus of TCAT-Dickson coordinate closely to ensure students are successful. TCAT uses dual enrollment funding to hire instructors for each program. CMCSS provides additional funds to cover any remaining instructor costs. A formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) is in place to ensure students can seamlessly enroll in TCAT as adult learners after graduation. The CMCSS operations department, A&G Diesel, and the City of Clarksville also partner with the CMCSS instruction department to host ETC students in aligned internship and job-shadowing experiences.

- **Modes Of Learning:** Students use an online platform to complete the courses needed to fulfill the Tennessee graduation requirements. Learning lab teachers supplement on-line learning through in-person instruction and extra help or study sessions. Students may participate in on-the-job work-based learning experiences with local employers.

The Grant

CMCSS received \$1.5 million for this innovation. The district has allocated funds to:

- Update five portable buildings. Four to serve as learning labs for English, math, science and social studies courses, and the fifth to serve as an office and collaborative space for the ETC administrator, success coach, and teachers
- Add a restroom portable to ensure access when the TCAT main campus buildings are closed
- Hire additional learning lab teachers
- Hire a year-round success coach who developed a success skills curriculum and serves as a liaison with businesses
- Make the ETC administrator position full-time rather than half-time, as it was previously
- Purchase a van to transport students to and from work experiences, as needed

Lessons Learned

CMCSS learned several key lessons as they have expanded their ETC programming. These lessons include the importance of ensuring adequate staff capacity, maintaining strong partnerships, identifying the students who will benefit most from ETC programming, and starting career exploration and planning in middle school.

- **Allocate staff to own key program responsibilities and prepare for challenges hiring qualified CTE instructors.** Staffing is critical to the success of the program. CMCSS's addition of in-person core-content area learning lab teachers has improved the quality of core-content instruction, student mastery of core-content standards, and buy-in to online coursework. CMCSS also hired a year-round success coach who developed a success skills curriculum and serves as a liaison with businesses. This person has been critical for ramping up work-based learning experiences for students. Recruiting and hiring qualified CTE instructors is a challenge, especially given the impact of COVID-19 over the last two years.
- **Build strong partnerships with your local TCAT by establishing formal agreements and scheduling regular times to communicate and collaborate.** An MOU between CMCSS and the Clarksville campus of TCAT-Dickson permits Early Technical College students to seamlessly enroll as adult students at TCAT after graduation.
- **Use data to identify students who will benefit the most from programming and find multiple ways to communicate the value of the program to families.** Identifying the students who may benefit the most from the Early Technical College and communicating the opportunity in a compelling manner is important. Despite significant outreach to 10th grade students and families during the school year, CMCSS is not getting as many students as they would like to apply to the early technical high school. Some parents think it is a good option, *but not for their child*. Although CMCSS permits students to return to their home high school for senior activities and graduation, the prospect of missing out on sports and other traditional high school experiences could be preventing some students



from applying. Moving forward, CMCSS will use YouScience assessment data to help target students for the program and continue to find ways to market the program effectively to families.

- **Start career exploration and postsecondary planning in middle school.** Middle school students need meaningful experiences to start unpacking their interests and exploring their “why.” As CMCSS continues to strengthen the programming at their Early Technical College, they are also finding more opportunities for middle school students to engage in exploring career opportunities that match their aptitudes and interests.

Sustaining The Work

CMCSS is well on its way to sustaining expanded ETC programming beyond the life of the Innovative Schools Model grant. They have developed curricular resources that will only require minor adjustments moving forward. All classrooms, the office, and the restroom will be fully functional and furnished when the grant expires, and these should not be recurring costs. The funds for half of the teacher salaries and half of the administrator salary have been moved into the general-purpose school fund budget. The funds for the other half of each of these positions, in addition to the success coach position, will need to be moved into the general-purpose budget next school year.

Learn More

To learn more, visit [Early Technical College at TCAT](#) or contact [Dayna Paine](#).

