



GEORGIA'S

COLLEGE & CAREER ACADEMIES

Established by legislation in 2007, Georgia College and Career Academies (GCCAs) are specialized schools established as charter schools or within school systems to tailor education to meet the needs of the local community. GCCAs are a model for blending education with workforce opportunities, driven by robust partnerships between secondary schools, higher education institutions, and local industries.

The state currently has 58 recognized academies, serving approximately 47,000 students in the 2024-25 school year. Each academy selects industry sectors relevant to the specific needs of their regional economy. All GCCAs provide students with career-connected learning experiences, but the emphasis within each school varies; high percentages of students at some academies earn an industry-based technical certificate, while others focus more on work-based learning opportunities or career-relevant dual enrollment.



Catalyst for Career-Connected Learning

GCCAs directly connect high school students with the workforce through partnerships with local businesses and higher education institutions. Each academy tailors its programs to meet the specific workforce demands of its region, offering students hands-on experience in fields such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and technology. The academies offer students career-relevant dual enrollment opportunities and seamlessly integrate high school and college programs. GCCAs are typically located within, or in close proximity to, high schools or technical colleges.



Local Governance and State Oversight

Georgia law outlines multiple pathways for local governance and with partnerships roles for local school districts, businesses, and postsecondary institutions. The two distinct governance models are charter contracts and state waiver agreements:

- ❑ **Charter School Contracts:** Many College and Career Academies operate as independent charter schools through performance-based contracts approved by the State Board of Education. These academies follow the regulatory framework outlined in state law requiring annual reporting to the General Assembly on their status and effectiveness.
- ❑ **Strategic Waivers School System and Charter System Contracts:** Some academies are incorporated into district-level strategic waivers school system agreements or “charter system” contracts. These models allow districts to operate academies with flexibility in meeting state education requirements while aligning with local workforce needs.

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), in partnership with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the State Board of Education, oversees the initial certification process for the Georgia College and Career Academies. Certification requirements include:

- ❑ Compliance with workforce-aligned program standards.
- ❑ Submission of annual performance reports to TCSG via the Department of Education.
- ❑ Participation in statewide articulation agreements allowing students to earn TCSG college credits for certain Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education courses.

To minimize redundancy and burden on schools, certification renewals were incorporated into the standard 5-year school accreditation cycle that most schools go through with the independent school accreditor Cognia (previously known as AdvancED). Schools complete a specific College and Career Academy self-assessment that is the basis for the external evaluation. The Cognia team includes its evaluation of how the school demonstrates adherence to the College and Career Academy criteria, and reports its evaluation to TCSG to make its certification determination.

An update to state law in 2011 reinforced the role of College and Career Academies as specialized institutions designed to advance workforce development through partnerships between school districts, businesses, and postsecondary institutions. The legislation also formalized the Office of College and Career Transitions within TCSG to oversee academy certification and support. By integrating flexibility with structured state oversight, Georgia's College and Career Academies remain highly adaptable to regional workforce needs while maintaining rigorous educational standards.



State Funding Support

GCCAs are supported by a combination of state and local funding, with a focus on fostering sustainability and growth. The state provides one-time grants of up to \$3 million to newly-established academies (over \$150 million to date) for planning, capital investments, and operational expenses. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis, with applicants preparing proposals and presenting to a committee, demonstrating both community support and alignment with workforce needs. Over the years, GCCA has received consistent financial backing, including local bond funding and state budget allocations. Established schools receive state per pupil funding allocated to full-time equivalent students, as well as additional Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education per-pupil funding. These funds are generated directly for schools with their own school code, or apportioned if the academy is coded as a program within a district. Some academies supplement government funding with contributions from philanthropy and employers.



Unique Program Components

Each College and Career Academy in Georgia is tailored to the needs of its local community. The flexibility provided through charter contracts allows academies to implement creative solutions, such as hiring industry professionals as instructors and customizing curriculum to fit the skills needed in high-demand sectors. Many academies offer students opportunities to engage in hands-on learning experiences, internships, and apprenticeships in industries that are vital to the local economy.

The GCCAs have provided a platform for implementing new state policy and initiatives at scale. Georgia recently launched an Accelerated Career Diploma, which enables a student to graduate high school after completing only two years of high school core academic courses if they also earn an associate degree, a technical diploma (37-59 credit hours), or two college-issued technical certificates in a specific career pathway. Students can tap into state dual enrollment financial aid to cover college tuition. The College and Career Academies have served as a test-bed for student enrollment in the Accelerated Career Diploma program, given their existing higher education partnerships that enable students to earn the Diploma.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

- ▣ [Technical College System of Georgia College and Career Academies](#)
- ▣ [Technical College System of Georgia Annual Report and Fast Facts](#)
- ▣ [Central Educational Center](#)
- ▣ [Strengthening Education to Drive Economic Development: A Manual for Replicating “The CEC Experience” in Your Community, Academy for Educational Development](#)

SPOTLIGHT

How Innovation in One Community Spread Statewide in Georgia

In 1997, a group of county leaders in Coweta County southwest of Atlanta convened to examine educational and workforce issues, recognizing the vitality of their community and future economic development was inextricably connected to the quality of education and training. Education and government leaders heard from local business and industry leaders who believed that area high school graduates were not adequately prepared for the Atlanta-area labor market. The resulting Coweta County Central Educational Center (CEC) was launched by the district with a goal for students to earn technical college certificates or industry recognized credentials in addition to a high school diploma in a unique school setting.

Open to any high school student in the county, CEC partners with West Georgia Technical College to offer dual enrollment in academic, technical, and occupational subjects. CEC partners with over 300 business and industry partners, who provide job shadowing, mentoring, and work-based learning opportunities in a wide range of fields, including aviation, computer science, construction, education, engineering, graphic arts, healthcare, manufacturing, and robotics.

Local employers also participate in curriculum development to adapt to changing industry needs. For example, CEC worked with local manufacturing firms in 2015 to launch an Accelerated Career Diploma Program in manufacturing engineering technology and the state's first German-certified A-level Apprenticeship Program that starts at age 15.

CEC's approach to workforce development has benefited local industry, strengthening partnerships with existing employers, including Piedmont Newnan Hospital and City of Hope (formerly Cancer Treatment Center of America), and supporting local economic growth through recruitment of investment by major companies, including Yamaha Motor Manufacturing Corporation. As a locally and state-approved, locally-operated charter school, the administrators and teachers at CEC have more flexibility in operating the school, selecting courses, and developing curriculum than they would have at a traditional high school. After twenty-five years of operation, CEC now enrolls approximately 21 percent of all high school age students in Coweta County, and includes an eighth-grade academy program. By the time students graduate from Coweta County high schools, approximately 50 percent have taken part in CEC programs and courses.

CEC's early success led to it becoming the model for the Georgia College and Career Academies, with grants from the state supporting replication in three districts across the state during the 2003–2006 period. This set the foundation for the statewide legislation and approach to scaling the college and career academy model.