



**Waterloo Schools**  
**Career Interest Academies**  
*Engaged Learners-Ready for the Future*

- 1) What are Career Academies?
  - A. A small learning community of 300-400 students taking curriculum courses with a career theme.
  - B. Schools-within-schools.
  - C. A college-prep curriculum with a career theme.
  - D. Partnerships with employers, the community, and higher education.
  - E. Work-based learning opportunities for students are available
  - F. Students will prepare for postsecondary education and employment.
- 2) When did Career Academies start in the district?
  - A. 2010-11 school year at East and West High Schools.
- 3) Will students be able to change academies during their four years of high school?
  - A. Yes, students will have the option to enroll in a different career-themed academy. They are not “locked” into a career cluster for their high school years or the future. They may change at semester.
- 4) How do students choose a career theme?
  - A. Students work with parents and guidance counselors to identify their interest areas which align to possible careers.
- 5) How do smaller learning communities help my student?
  - A. Smaller learning communities positively affect:
    - grades
    - test scores
    - attendance rates
    - graduation rates
    - drug and alcohol use
    - school safety
- 6) What is a School-within-school?
  - A. A small learning community of 300-400 students within a large school. Schools-within-schools can more readily provide students with mentors, tutors, and advisors. They make learning more meaningful by linking it to life-experiences and community. They provide adequate time and support for mastery of knowledge and skills.
- 7) Why did we change the entire high school to smaller learning communities?
  - A. Teachers can more readily provide:
    - students with mentors, tutors, and advisors.
    - more meaningful learning by linking it to life-experiences and community.
    - adequate time and support for mastery of knowledge and skills.

- 8) What do the academies look like?
- A. A cohort of students and teachers, including an administrator and guidance counselor, that can stay together over the course of four years.
  - B. Groups of teachers from academic and career disciplines scheduled to have only or mostly academy students in their classes.
  - C. Staff meet with each other on a regular basis and share in decision-making related to curriculum content and instruction.
  - D. Staff teach employability skills, such as problem solving, good attendance, and customer service in the career courses and in academic courses.
  - E. Local employer partnerships have been created to provide program planning guidance, mentors, and work partnerships.
  - F. Career Interest Pathways aligned with programs at HCC and UNI
  - G. Students will be grouped in the same location in the building for most of their classes.
  - H. There will be increased opportunities for job shadows, internships and concurrent high school and college credit courses.
- 9) Will East and West offer the same academies?
- A. They will offer similar career pathways, with concurrent classes available with Hawkeye Community College. All ability levels will be offered in each career cluster, e.g. anywhere from a Doctor to a technician, in a medical career cluster.
- 10) Will the basic classes still be required?
- A. Yes. All the “traditional” high school courses will still be offered and required.
- 11) Will this save my student money in college courses?
- A. Yes, \$1000’s can be saved in college costs by eliminating switching majors once the student goes to college. On average, a college student will change majors up to six times. By focusing on an area of interest in high school, students will have more knowledge of their likes and dislikes in the job field, cutting down on the number of times they change majors in college.
- 12) Will my child feel forced to stay in the same career field they studied in high school if they go on to college?
- A. Absolutely not. The career academies are in place to help students find their likes and dislikes before they move on to college or a career, thus eliminating extra college costs from changing majors or switching jobs until they find one they like. This is a way for them to see what they are successful at and have a passion for.
- 13) What about high school courses with low enrollment? Will they be taught or dropped?
- A. The process has not changed. The administration at each high school makes the final determination which courses are taught.
- 14) How are students placed into academies? Parents don’t want them “thrown into” an academy the student doesn’t want to be in.
- A. Students will choose their academies- They are not arbitrarily assigned.

- 15) If a student wants to take classes in more than one academy in the same semester, is that possible? Do they have to commit to at least a semester within one academy? What can they take outside that academy?
- A. Students may take any of the electivesFAQ's, CTE classes outside of their academy. They will commit to an academy for at least one semester at a time.