



*BE FUTURE  
READY*



# NAF Academy Standards

2020-2021

NAF worked collaboratively with the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC), ConnectED, and the Career Academy Support Network (CASN) to create the Academy Standards that align with current Career and Technical Education policy. NAF's educational design ignites students' passion for learning, and it allows businesses to shape America's future workforce by transforming the learning environment with industry-specific curricula and work-based learning experiences, including internships.

NAF's educational design embodies four essential elements of practice: Academy Development & Structure, Advisory Board, Curriculum & Instruction, and Work-Based Learning. Each element has standards that articulate the vital aspects of the design and represent the cornerstones of the Quality Process used to determine an academy's level of fidelity to the implementation of NAF's educational design.

The first step in the Quality Process is the Academy Assessment that involves the academy team in a comprehensive self-analysis of academy quality. The second step is the Quality Review for academies that meet specific thresholds on the Academy Assessment. Designated standards have thresholds that academies must meet to be eligible for a Quality Review. A checkmark and a star indicate Model and Distinguished thresholds, respectively. Note, an academy must meet all Model thresholds to be eligible for the Distinguished level.

A Quality Review determines if the academy "lives" NAF's educational design. NAF staff and trained consultants visit the school to evaluate if the school community can demonstrate how they implement NAF's educational design. Model and Distinguished academies serve as exemplars in NAF's network, and the Quality Process identifies academy strengths and challenges to guide the development of action plans that increase academy quality.

The Academy Standards are a valuable guide for creating productive NAF academies that improve student achievement and graduation rates. Thank you for your commitment to developing future-ready students.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JD Hoyer', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

JD Hoyer  
CEO  
NAF

# ELEMENT 1:

## Academy Development & Structure

The academy has an open, choice-based student enrollment process that produces a student body that reflects the demographics of its community. The students collaborate in program design and decision making, and the academy team participates in regularly scheduled, professional learning activities. School and district leaders perform the critical tasks and functions required to support, maintain, and sustain fidelity to NAF's educational design at the highest level.

### STANDARD 1: STUDENT RECRUITMENT & ENROLLMENT

An open, choice-based enrollment process, with focused outreach to underserved student populations, results in enrollment that reflects the demographics of the school.

#### Strategic Actions

1.1.a. An open, choice-based enrollment process, with focused outreach to underserved student populations, results in enrollment that reflects the demographics of the school.



1.1.b. Recruitment efforts result in student enrollment numbers that increase each year until threshold criteria are met.

### STANDARD 2: PERSONALIZED ENVIRONMENT

A personalized environment is created in the academy.

#### Strategic Action

1.2.a. The academy fosters a personalized environment that promotes student success and attainment of college and career goals.

### STANDARD 3: DATA COLLECTION & REVIEW

Ongoing review of academy data is used for program improvement and to benchmark student progress.

#### Strategic Actions

1.3.a. The academy collects, analyzes, and reports academy and student data, including characteristics (graduation year, gender, and race/ethnicity) and performance on a variety of outcome measures.

1.3.b. The academy uses data from various sources to develop an action plan for continuous improvement.

### STANDARD 4: ACADEMY LEADERSHIP

Academy leadership is broad-based, strategic, and sufficiently staffed.

#### Strategic Actions

1.4.a. The academy has a designated academy site coordinator with release time or an academy team with clearly defined responsibilities for managing all aspects of the academy program.

1.4.b. The academy has a designated staff member to oversee college and career readiness activities.

1.4.c. District/school/academy leaders are ambassadors for the academy. In alignment with NAF's expectations, NAF leaders complete data requests on time, use social media to promote academy practices and events, and present at conferences where college and career readiness topics are the focus.

## **STANDARD 5: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

District, school, academy leaders, and advisory board members participate in regularly scheduled professional learning sessions and collaboration meetings.

### **Strategic Actions**

1.5.a. The academy team (of more than three members) participates in common planning time or other formal collaboration time to prepare for career-themed integration, student support systems or interventions, and college and career activities across the curriculum and grade levels.

1.5.b. The academy participates in NAF sponsored or other Career Technical Education (CTE) professional learning sessions.

## **ELEMENT 2: Advisory Board**

NAF advisory boards provide an essential bridge between schools, the workplace, and the civic community. Business, higher education, and community leaders volunteer on local advisory boards to help students prepare for college and career. Advisory board members collaborate with educators to inform curricula, help organize work-based learning activities, and become NAF academy advocates in the community. Through advisory boards, students build relationships with mentors and learn from successful adults.

## **STANDARD 1: ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERSHIP & OPERATIONS**

A formally organized advisory board operates with broad-based community representation.

### **Strategic Actions**

2.1.a. Advisory board membership includes at least ten (10) members representing business, industry, government, community, and postsecondary education leaders.

2.1.b. The advisory board created operational documents, including a strategic plan with clear annual outcomes informed by academy data and by-laws to help the academy to grow and sustain academy needs.

## **STANDARD 2: SUPPORT FOR LEARNING**

Advisory board members actively support work-based learning activities, the program of study, and academy program design.

### **Strategic Action**

2.2.a. Advisory board members actively support the implementation of the work-based learning (WBL) program by coordinating and securing presenters and businesses to execute the WBL calendar.

## **STANDARD 3: SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

Increasing public awareness and civic engagement are vital to long-term academy sustainability. The advisory board increases public awareness and civic understanding of the need for workforce development systems by engaging the K-12 school system in discussions with postsecondary education and civic leaders. These discussions focus on building talent pipelines through the development of career academies in high schools.

### **Strategic Action**

2.3.a. The advisory board works to engage the civic community to enact policies that promote and sustain academies as an integral part of the local workforce and economic development systems.

## ELEMENT 3:

### Curriculum & Instruction

The academy offers a program of study that includes any combination of NAFTrack Certified approved courses - within the designated career cluster - and incorporates performance-based assessments. The career-themed content is fully integrated into core courses to assist students in making connections across the curriculum. Teachers receive high-quality, professional learning opportunities to ensure their ability to engage all learners.

#### STANDARD 1: PROGRAM OF STUDY/INTEGRATION

The academy's program of study offers approved NAFTrack Certified courses that require career-themed integration into core subjects and a performance-based assessment. Academy course content includes project-based and work-based learning activities as well as opportunities to build college and career readiness.

##### Strategic Actions

3.1.a. Academy students met NAF's Program of Study requirements in at least one approved course.

3.1.b. The academy is preparing students to meet all NAF's Program of Study requirements to achieve NAFTrack Certification.

3.1.c. Career-Themed Integration is a learning strategy used to integrate the academy's career theme into designated core subjects or other disciplines. An interdisciplinary project is the primary Project-Based Learning (PBL) strategy used to incorporate authentic, real-life, and career-related issues in non-academy courses.

#### STANDARD 2: COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

Academy coursework with performance-based assessments and integrated project-based and work-based learning activities prepare students to be college and career ready.

##### Strategic Actions

3.2.a. The academy intentionally builds students' college knowledge by helping them understand the postsecondary system and culture, research college options, visit college campuses, and navigate issues such as testing, applications, and financial aid.

3.2.b. The academy students experience advanced academics by participating in Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge, or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and enroll in postsecondary education options through industry certifications and dual enrollment.



3.2.c. Academy students must achieve NAFTrack Certification to enhance their college and career readiness.



## ELEMENT 4: Work-Based Learning

NAF students experience three phases of work-based learning, beginning with career awareness, progressing to career exploration, and culminating in career preparation activities that include an 80+ hour internship. The advisory board develops partnerships with employers and community leaders to support work-based learning activities.

### STANDARD 1: WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAM

All academy students complete a sequenced set of work-based learning experiences that culminate with paid internships and NAFTrack Certification.

#### Strategic Actions

4.1.a. The academy provides a work-based learning program for all academy students in each operating grade.



4.1.b. Work-based learning experiences implemented in the academy include career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities that build in sophistication, duration, and intensity.

### STANDARD 2: INTERNSHIP COMPLETION

The academy develops and sustains a program of high-quality internship (80+ hours) experiences for all students.

#### Strategic Actions

4.2.a Academy students complete a paid or unpaid internship experience (with or without meeting the NAFTrack Certification internship requirements).



4.2.b. A proportion of last school year's seniors met the NAFTrack Certification internship requirement.

#### KEY:



*Threshold required for Model and Distinguished Levels*



*Higher Threshold required for Distinguished Level*