

**House Education Committee
Testimony on Innovation and Excellence in Kansas' schools**



Presentation by:

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Blue Valley School District Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS) Overland Park, Kansas

What is CAPS?

Blue Valley School District's Center for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS), is a nationally recognized, innovative high school program created in partnership with seventy-four domestic and international business partners, hundreds of business mentors, six leading universities and education experts. Students fast forward into their future as if they already have a college degree and are fully immersed in a professional culture, solving real world problems, using industry standard tools and are mentored by real employers, which leads to substantial advanced contribution during the formative high school years. Students learn from global and local leaders, such as IBM, Black & Veatch, Cerner, Cisco, Sprint, Bayer, Garmin to name a few who have chosen to partner with CAPS and share the program's commitment to educate the future leaders of America. CAPS is an example of how business, community and public education can partner to produce personalized learning experiences that educate the needed workforce of tomorrow, especially in high skill, high demand jobs.

In 2005, the Blue Valley School District challenged itself to develop an innovative program that would increase the relevance of high school curriculum and propel students into high demand workforce areas like Engineering, Bioscience, Global Business, Technology, Human and Animal Health. The program is grounded in project-based learning with strong collaboration with business and industry and partnerships with post-secondary institutions. CAPS is focused on emerging economic markets and workforce development by engaging students in real project work for real businesses, all while receiving high school and college credit. Early career professional skills like project management, business ethics, time management, teamwork, creativity are instructed, role modeled and measured.

What types of courses are offered at CAPS?

CAPS is driven by the changing workforce needs of industry, therefore instructors and CAPS Business Partners co-author all coursework. CAPS curriculum is dynamic, constantly evolving to follow industry trends and market changes using a copyrighted rapid prototyping curriculum development process.

- **Bioscience** – Molecular Medicine and Bioengineering; Environmental Science and Animal Health; Bioscience Research/Internship
- **Business, Technology & Media** – Global Economics, Marketing and Business; Technology Solutions; iMedia; Filmmaking; Interactive Design
- **Engineering** – Civil Engineering and Architecture; Digital Electronics; Robotics; Aerospace Engineering; Computer Integrated Manufacturing; Design Process for Engineers
- **Human Services** – Teacher Education; Sports Medicine; Foundations of Medicine; Law and Public Safety
- **CAPS Accelerator for Entrepreneurs**- Featuring rapid prototyping labs where teams of students from all CAPS strands, innovate side-by-side with scientists, entrepreneurs and other business

partners. Ideation, rapid prototyping, proof of concept, marketing plans, patents pending, are generated from the CAPS Accelerator.

Who can participate in CAPS?

Junior and senior students of diverse academic achievement levels enroll in 2.5 hour college level courses from one of the four strands: Bioscience, Engineering, Business & Technology and Human Services. CAPS can serve 1,000 students over the course of the school year.

What are the early results?

Since the launch of CAPS in 2009-10 school year, enrollment increased from 250 students to 658 in 2011-12. Support of business partners continues to escalate; currently 360 active mentors and 240 business partner companies. Students completed 110 projects for real business clients and are currently working on 60 new projects this semester. Key business partners are: Garmin, Bayer, Cerner, Black & Veatch, Sprint, Cisco, IBM, American Century, H & R Block, Freedom Bank, DLR Group, Apple, Kauffman Foundation, Microsoft, General Electric, Edison Foundation, and Project Lead the Way. Now in the third year of operation, CAPS is receiving financial investment from business partners and corporate sponsors.

Many students are receiving external validation through paid college-level internships and provisional patents. Last year thirty-five students were awarded paid college-level internships, beating out college students. Last year, five students completed the provisional patent process for their inventions and 2 alumni students created their own web design company, making money while they are attending college.

The program has received national attention having been invited to make 12 national presentations and was the recipient of the prestigious Edison Gold Award in 2011 for most innovative product of the year. Six universities and 28 corporate partners have written letters of endorsement for the program.

Are other school districts showing interest in possible replication?

Over 30 school districts from all over the nation have benchmarked the Blue Valley CAPS program, with 4 districts in the early stages of replication. Blue Valley Superintendent, Dr. Tom Trigg states that districts should not try to duplicate the program, because it will not look the same in your community when you involve your community leaders and local businesses.

The most important step for a school district to take is to approach local, national and international executives and community leaders, and ask “What should we be teaching?” and “What are the skill sets that your companies and emerging markets of the future need to add value to your industry?” Treating the business world and community, as clients of public education will lead to the development of a long-term partnership between business, community and education. To emulate the real world environment, districts will need to model the culture of innovative companies to create a highly professional, entrepreneurial, innovative high school program.