

Adairsville Chamber hears Bartow County College & Career Update



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The [Bartow County College and Career Academy](#) will open its doors this fall as the county's latest avenue for education and development, but the process to ready the academy for opening was advanced in part with help from multiple committees made up of business, industry and community leaders.

Committee members and stakeholders teamed up with school system employees Thursday to deliver a presentation to the Cartersville-Bartow County Chamber of Commerce Adairsville Committee Eggs & Issues breakfast raising awareness for the academy and urging business leaders to support the mission of equipping young adults.

"We're graduating about 70 percent of our students in general education in Bartow County. College and career academies across the nation graduate over 90 percent of their children," said Bartow County Schools Superintendent John Harper. "We've spent so many years in this country saying, 'You've got to go to college, you've got to go college, you've got to go to college.'

"We've done away with vocational schools. So now we're graduating children with a general-education diploma who can't make it in college, only about 30 percent of them do, but they have no skills to be able to contribute to Vista Metals and don't have the soft skills to work in the banking industry. So I've got 70 percent of the graduates that don't know what they're going to do. So I said, 'It's time we move the pendulum in the direction of training our children for a job in our community and give them the skills.'"

The Bartow County College and Career Academy will be located in the old Cass High School on Grassdale Road. The 187,000-square-foot school has been readied for use as a college and career academy with help from a \$3.5 million grant.

With the aim of meeting the needs of business and industry through vocational education as well as preparing college-bound students through joint-enrollment programs, the college and career academy is being steered with direction from educators and volunteers within the community.

"My goal and my aim was to create a facility inside our school system that is the most-used building in our school system that is going to graduate kids so they can grow up and go to work and serve this community rather than figure out what they're going to do. College and career academies do that," Harper said. "Superintendents come and go, board members come and go. So let's get a governing body involved with the college and career academy that will keep that driving force going.

"It's not a preponderance of educators on the board, it's movers and shakers in the community that are making it happen for us. Our goal is to graduate more than 90 percent of the children that are attending the college and career academy. We're going to start with 240. Our goal is 600 to 700 children in that building. That will help us not have to build a fourth high school in Bartow County in the near future."

Helping lead the steering committee, Georgia Power Plant Bowen Project Relocation Coordinator Janet Queen addressed guests Thursday about why she and her employer feels passionately about the Bartow County College and Career Academy and workforce development in general.

"We understand at Georgia Power Southern Co. that we have to develop this workforce rapidly," Queen said. "Today, Southern Co. has 46 to 48 percent of our workforce who is eligible for retirement either due to their age or years of service. That's pretty astounding if you think about it. So right now, we've got an objective to put our workforce development on fast-track because we'll be sitting here with jobs and no one to fill the positions.

"But as we surveyed all across the county, it was not unique to Georgia Power or Southern County. Every employer is facing this aging workforce. ... We've got quite a few challenges here in Bartow County, but there is nothing that we can't

handle. I am so confident that under Dr. Harper's leadership, Dr. [Paul] Sabin as CEO at our college and career academy, you're going to see big things. You're going to be so proud of what you see coming out of this Bartow County College and Career Academy, you are going to remember this day because you're going to remember you were a part of what the future will look like in Bartow County."

The college and career academy will function as a satellite campus available to students at any of Bartow County's high schools. Students will have to apply to attend the academy and upon acceptance would split their time between their high school and courses at the academy.

Article from [The Daily Tribune News](#) by Matt Shinall