

HARFORD COUNTY
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION
MINUTES OF MEETING

March 17, 2026

8:00-9:45 AM

Attendees: Joe Connolly, Jeanne Donlick, Katie Eckstein, Savannah Feist, Rajiv Goel, Matthew Gullion, Matt Johnstone, Shawn Krout, Erin Mock, Becky Pensero, Joni Poust, Sara Saacks, and Wade Sewell, and Terrell Williams

Mr. Connolly began the meeting at 8:04 AM and provided positive CTE updates (students competing and placing in the FBLA competition, teachers receiving/being nominated for awards).

HTHS Updates: Ms. Mock said that the restaurant is ready, open to school-only staff until a Point-of-Sale system is set up. The administrative suite should be finished by the end of May.

Ms. Donlick shared that the school is piloting Career-Connected Learning in the Printing & Graphics program; students will host a school-based enterprise (they are currently running a teacher-led program, which will be student-led starting next year). The goal is for 13 of the school's 15 programs to begin hosting SBEs over the next few years.

Motion to approve agenda: Ms. Feist, seconded by Mr. Gullion. Motion to approve prior meeting minutes: Ms. Feist, seconded by Mrs. Saacks.

Mr. Connolly shared that MSDE is stressing a 6-year plan to ensure each student creates an education and career plan before beginning high school and updates it annually with their counselor. This provides students with choices, motivates them to take ownership of their path, and creates continuity in their education and career plan.

Ms. Pensero and Ms. Brown from School Counseling have worked on a program called Launch, where students in grades 7-12 meet with their counselors twice per year as they set, monitor, and achieve academic and college and career ready goals. This began with high school students only, and since then, have added middle school students, with 7th graders creating their goals. The hope is to expand this further to have it begin in 5th grade. Our programmers created the platform, which is connected to OSCAR, so that parents receive an email with their student's goals and can support their students in achieving these.

One early benefit is that counselors appreciate being able to connect with students on their caseload whom they hadn't previously talked to. Teachers don't currently have access to the platform; career navigators, principals, assistant principals, and counselors do. Other benefits of Launch include enhancing self-awareness, improving academic performance (staying focused and motivated), promoting informed decision-making with a counselor's help, and fostering equity and access (all students receive one-on-one mentoring). Counselors first met with students in the early fall to set goals; mid-year check-ins took place between January 7th and March 18th to review goals and determine whether students are achieving or working toward them.

In the Student Planner, students can enter Launch and view graduation-required courses completed, Career & Tech completers, their current schedule, rank, testing scores, etc. Each year's data is uploaded to the platform once the year is fully completed.

All goal options are currently chosen from the Blueprint and College and Career Readiness initiatives and are age appropriate (these are different at each grade). In the future, we would like to have a place where students can write their own goals. Students should select action items that correlate with their goals (check course grade in HAC regularly if they want to maintain a C or better). During the midyear meetings, the counselor can choose 'On target or progressing toward goal,' which sends an update email to parents; or 'Revisit action plan to accomplish goal,' which means the student has not made progress toward achieving the goal, and more action steps open up for selection.

Under the North Star tab, students can select two options of interest in Workforce Development, they can select Dual Enrollment, then an action plan. This lets the navigator know their interests and how to help them.

Mr. Goel asked if the platform has information provided to guide students on action items, like providing contact information if the student chose the action item, 'Contact military recruiter,' as this would alleviate some of the work on our career navigators. He also asked how effective we believe the platform is. Mr. Connolly said a mid-year review was just completed, but more analysis will be needed to determine the number of students serviced.

Ms. Feist asked if earned IRCs will be on Launch; Ms. Pensero is hopeful they will, in time. Ms. Feist then asked if the teacher is responsible for uploading information on IRCs; Mr. Johnstone clarified that CTE teachers input this data into the TSA app; IRCs earned outside of the CTE field are sent to the CTE office to upload.

As we progress to Year 2, Ms. Pensero and Ms. Brown will work on how teachers can support students in these initiatives, in a manageable way. Given the volume of students each teacher works with, Mr. Renzulli suggested holding 2 extended homerooms per month to allow time to work on students' goals with them. They are working to come up with suggestions on how to include teachers in this in a manageable way.

Mrs. Saacks expressed that we are receiving excellent feedback after a successful start, which took great effort to get started for Year 1.

Ms. Pensero shared that Bel Air High met with 82.5% of students for Round 1; Magnolia Middle met with 100% of their students. HCPS data specialists created a report that shows Launch data for all middle and high schools; appropriate Central Office staff can access this and filter by school, grade, and specific pathways to determine which students need to meet with a career navigator, counselor, etc. Overall, counselors met with 90.89% of all students.

Mr. Connolly said we essentially have one IRC matched to each CTE program. He met with JROTC who will work with Jennifer Chandler and Dr. Ryan Bayne to give the Six Sigma certification training to the students in that program.

Mr. Johnstone explained that new program of study guides will come out for the 2027-2028 school year, with a focus on Career-Connected Learning (CCL). Six local education agencies (LEAs) were chosen to pilot this initiative, and HCPS was one of them. CCL's goal is to give students more choice in their pathway within their educational plan. The students take Core 1 & 2 courses, then choose what they want to do next: Course 3-keep taking the standard course path,

Dual Enrollment, or CCL options (apprenticeship, capstone project, internship, school-based enterprise). The pilot will include the Printing & Graphics department work at Harford Tech; also, North Harford's greenhouse and dog grooming businesses will have more hours where they are open to the public. Potentially, another HCPS school will participate as well. School-based enterprises allow students to get work experience while remaining at their school and with their classmates; this also removes the transportation barrier for students. Given the volume of work, we would like to have one career navigator per high school in the coming years.

We are currently working with APG to create internships for Harford Tech students in Computer Science and Welding programs. Within HCPS, the CTE team is working with the Athletics department to create an athletic administration internship to give students experience with all aspects of that role, including facility security, transportation, referee management, etc.

Mr. Connolly shared that MSDE has moved from 10 to 14 career clusters to follow the national model presented by Advanced CTE. In 2025, 71% of our graduates participated in AP, IB, or dual enrollment courses, earned an IRC, or passed an ASVAB exam. HCPS's Board approved AP Business with Personal Finance; 327 students have signed up for the course as of March 13th. The course will involve two simulations in real-world, hands-on projects. In a recent meeting, department chairs were asked to review the new program of study guides and begin building the scope and sequence for their Core 1 courses.

Mrs. Eckstein explained that MSDE requires us to complete a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment every few years to confirm that we are analyzing data and aligning our SMARTIE goals to the needs of our community. She then asked the committee members to work on a root cause analysis on why female students do not remain in a Tech Ed concentrator after taking Foundations of Technology.

Mr. Gullion asked if Launch would help with this issue, to decipher their goals. Mrs. Eckstein responded that it is possible, and had pairs of members work together to consider if people, processes, equipment and materials, environment, or policies had an affect on this.

Mrs. Eckstein asked pairs to make a list of possible causes and checkmark any that could be addressed by the CTE office. She also shared that another Maryland county divided up males and females to promote CTE course offerings, each marketing specifically to that gender (for example, when discussing construction, teachers emphasized to females that in construction, families would live in the houses they built).

After collecting materials, Mr. Connolly closed the meeting at 9:45 AM.