

Local students earn record number of national career certifications

Alachua County Public School middle and high school students earned more than 4300 national industry certifications during the 2022-23 school year, a record number for the district and well above last year's record of more than 3500.

Earning an industry certification means that a student's knowledge and skills in a particular career field have been rigorously assessed and certified by an outside organization. ACPS students earned national certification in subjects ranging from information technology to healthcare to agriculture.

"Having that certification tells employers that the student already has what it takes to work in that field," said Shannon Ritter, the district's director of career and technical education. "It really gives them a head start on their careers."

Certifications also give students an advantage when applying for college and other post-secondary programs and can qualify them for credits and scholarships.



Lily Crummer, who just graduated from the Academy of Automotive Technology at the Professional Academies Magnet (PAM) @ Loften High School, earned a total of 11 industry certificates while enrolled in the program. She's already been accepted into the University of Northwestern Ohio's High Performance Motorsports program, and would ultimately like to become a race car driver.

"The automotive program at Loften helped kickstart everything for me," she said. "It's helped prepare me for jobs in the automotive industry because with the certifications, I've already proven my worth."

Travis Coe, who just finished his junior year in the Institute of Culinary Arts (ICA) at Eastside High School with two industry certifications and is spending the summer working in a local confectioner's shop, says the ICA program is giving him the tools he needs to succeed in college and his future career.



"It's preparing me so well," he said. "The certifications will qualify me for higher-level jobs because they tell people that you know how to work in the food industry and that you're managerial material."

During the 2022-23 school year, about 5500 middle and high school students were enrolled in a career-tech program. That includes the district's 15 career tech academies, multi-year programs of study located at high schools and open to all students regardless of where they live. Besides opportunities to earn certification and college credits and scholarships, the programs also offer a rigorous, career-related curriculum, a pathway to post-secondary education, hands-on work experiences, participation in career-related competitions and other benefits.

Next year the district will be adding a new Academy of Media Production Technology at PAM@Loften High School.

"We're always looking for new opportunities for our students, new ways for them to pursue their career goals," said Ritter.

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