

History of Parkway West School

The vocational system in Allegheny County was conceived by Dr. Alfred Beattie, Superintendent of Allegheny County Schools in 1961. At that time, funding from the federal government under the Manpower Development Act was available to create vocational training facilities for adults. Forbes Trail, which was the first vocational school in the county, opened in Penn Hills School in 1961 and was later moved to an industrial park near Monroeville.

Vocational education in the western part of Allegheny County began with a Machine Shop course at North Braddock High School; however, the class only lasted one night before being moved to Schwab School in Homestead. The teachers at North Braddock and Schwab Schools were Mr. Lou Penisi and Mr. Frank Sanns.

In 1964, the program was moved to the former Pullman Garden Center on Campbells Run Road in Oakdale. The Machine Shop was outfitted with war surplus machinery donated by the federal government. Since there was a greenhouse available at the location, a horticulture program was also initiated. Machine Shop teachers at the Campbells Run location were Mr. Roy Brammel, Mr. Jerry Miller and Mr. Frank Sanns. Mr. Charles Ifft, Mr. Tony Rich, and Mr. Ben Smith taught horticulture.

In September of 1965, 26 secondary students from six area high schools were enrolled in the first machine shop class for public school students. Some of the local school districts at the time were:

Aleppo Township	Greentree	North Fayette
Bridgeville	Haysville	Oakdale
Carnegie	Heidelberg	Osborne
Castle Shannon	Ingram	Robinson Township
Coraopolis	Kennedy Township	Rosslyn Farms
Collier	Leetsdale	Scott Township
Crafton	Leet Township	Sewickley
Dormont	McKees Rocks	South Fayette
Edgeworth	Moon Union	Stowe
Findlay	Mount Lebanon	Thornburg
Glenfield	Neville	Upper St. Clair

Dr. Saul Danovitz became the Director of Area Vocational Schools in Allegheny County, and John Garlick, a plumbing teacher in the Pittsburgh Schools System, was hired as the first Executive Director of Parkway West Area Vocational Technical School.

As the school outgrew the facilities on Campbell's Run Road, plans for a new school building were developed. After considerable deliberation, a 58-acre site on Old Steubenville Pike was selected. The former farm property was surrounded by rolling hills and included orchards and Deep Valley Lake.

Construction on the new building started in 1966. In September of 1968 the Beth-El Congregation (church) of South Hills was used to house classes while construction on the new building was being completed. The first classes moved into the partially completed structure in October 1968. Initial enrollment was 820 students from both public and parochial schools. In 1970, Frank Sanns became the first Assistant Director of Parkway West Area Vocational Technical School. In 1971, Forbes Trail AVTS under the direction of Mr. Archie McSperrin, and Parkway West AVTS under the direction of Mr. John Garlick, seceded from Allegheny Intermediate Unit.

In 1972, there was a major fire in the east wing of the Parkway West Area Vocational Technical School, which destroyed a portion of the roof. In 1974, a building to house the administrative offices and a new program called Materials Management and Distribution was built. Much of the interior finish and utilities were completed by the students in the construction programs.

In the summer of 1978 a new Food Service building was added to the campus, and in September of 1978 the Joint Operating Committee fired the general contractor. The classrooms, hallways, and restaurant were finished over the next two years by the teachers and students in the Carpentry, Electrical Construction, Plumbing and Masonry programs. In 1982, a link building connecting the Food Service building with the Administrative/Warehousing building was completed, including a conference center accommodating 60 people on the second floor. Once again, most of the interior walls, floors and ceilings, as well as utilities and interior finish on the Link building were completed by the teachers and students in the Carpentry, Electrical Construction, Plumbing and Masonry programs.

At its peak in the early 1980's, Parkway West Area Vocational Technical School enrolled approximately 1600 students and offered 27 programs including: Small Gas Engines, Electronics Repair, TV Repair, Chemical Technology and Waiter/Waitress in addition to the current course offerings.

The early 1980's also brought a program called General Vocational Skills (GVS) to Parkway. Tenth grade students who were deemed to be at risk of not completing their high school program of studies could enroll in an exploratory course in GVS Construction or GVS Mechanical Trades, and had the opportunity to visit the other programs to try to develop an interest in a vocation. The program's name was changed to Industrial Productive Maintenance program (IPM) in the second or third year of operation, and then was phased out due to a change in the federal funding.

In 1983, a new program was started in partnership with U.S. Air. Originally called the Airlines Occupations program, the course was later known as Travel and Hospitality, and includes training for employment in a variety of positions in hotels, travel and car rental agencies, as well as jobs in the airline industry.

A new building to house the Auto Body Repair program replaced the old greenhouse in 1984. A program called Vocational Instruction Program (VIP) was started by the AIU in 1985 for students with learning disabilities who were chosen by a panel of home school representatives and Parkway staff. The program was transferred to Parkway West Area Vocational Technical School in the late 1980's.

In 1985, Dr. Tom Turnbaugh was appointed Executive Director succeeding Mr. John Garlick.

The Alternative Center for Education (ACE), an academic program for students in grades nine through twelve, was started in 1989. The Alternative Center provided secondary students who are at risk of not graduating for a variety of reasons with an alternative setting in which to pursue graduation.

A Summer Technology program was initiated in 1992 in partnership with several Pittsburgh corporations including Bayer, Calgon Carbon, OK Grocery and Mellon Bank. That program was supplanted in 2002 by a summer technology program called the Manufacturing Pathways Initiative operated by the Pittsburgh Technology Council and the Southwest Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Council.

In 1992, Dr. Mary Ravita was appointed Executive Director succeeding Dr. Tom Turnbaugh.

In 1993, the school received approval to offer three-year programs and began accepting 10th graders into the regular vocational programs.

In 1994, Mr. Dean Karns was appointed as Executive Director succeeding Dr. Mary Ravita.

In 1995, a new Protective Services Program which offers students the opportunity to train in the fields of EMT, firefighter, and Law Enforcement was offered.

In 1996 the Commercial Baking, Culinary Arts and Meat cutting programs were merged into the Food Production Management program.

In January 2004, Mr. Jack Highfield was appointed Executive Director succeeding Dean Karns.

In August 2005, the Joint Operating Committee approved a motion to begin the process of changing the name from Area Vocational Technical School to Career and Technology Center.

In 2006 the Joint Operating Committee closed the Travel & Hospitality program due to low enrollment.

In 2006, a new program titled Information Technology Essentials was begun with 20 students enrolled.

In 2007, a new program titled Digital Multimedia Technology was begun with 14 students enrolled.

In 2008, a new program titled Welding Technology was begun with 23 students enrolled.

In 2010, the school received approval to offer four-year programs, and began accepting 9th graders.

In 2012, a new program called Precision Machining and Robotics was begun with 5 students.

In spring 2013, the Joint Operating Committee voted to close the Alternative Center for Education due to low enrollment. The Committee also voted to curtail the Business Technology, Drafting & Design and Precision Machining & Robotics Programs due to low enrollment.

In May 2013, Dr. Darby Copeland was appointed Executive Director succeeding Mr. Jack Highfield.

In 2013, new programs called Veterinary Technology and Electrical Systems Technology were started with 31 and 22 students enrolled respectively. Dual enrolment collaborations were established with the Community College of Allegheny College (CCAC), Rosedale Technical College (RTC) for students enrolled in the Health Assistant, Public Safety Technology, Auto Body Repair, and Automotive Technology Programs.

In 2014, the HVAC/R program was closed due to low enrollment and the Building Construction Technology program was opened. A new dual enrolment collaborative with Pittsburgh Technical Institute (PTI) was establish for students enrolled in the Building Construction Technology, Electrical Systems Technology, Masonry and Welding Technology Programs.

In 2015, a partnership with Pittsburgh Gateways Energy Innovation Center (EIC) was established to create the Energy Innovation Center West at Parkway West. The program paired students from Parkway's sending school districts with the business and industry community to solve real-world problems.

In 2016, a new program called Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Therapy Technology (SMARTT) was opened with 18 students.

In 2017, a new program called Heating Ventilation, Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVAC/R) was opened with 12 students.

In 2019, a new program called Diesel Technology was open with 15 students.