

# Akron Beacon Journal

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## EDUCATION

# Welded partnership: Stark State named a 'sister college' to Akron's East CLC

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As a senior in the welding pathway at East Community Learning Center, Dominic Wyne had the opportunity to tour the new welding facility at Stark State College earlier this year.

The community college had, he said, "all the fun toys."

Wyne fell in love with the process of welding, and with the idea of making something he could see out in the world. He has since applied and been accepted to Stark State's welding program.

It's that kind of a pipeline that Akron Public Schools hopes to continue to build through its College and Career Academies, which put every high school student on a path to explore careers. In addition to dozens of business partners, Akron is working to partner each high school with a "sister" college or university.

Friday, the district and Stark State announced the college will be the sister college for East, in addition to already being the sister college for Garfield CLC. The college partnerships are designed to boost academics and to encourage students to consider continuing their education after high school, but Stark State's offerings in technical education also align well with some of the more hands-on career pathways at East.

East already offers college credit classes through Stark State at the high school, but the partnership formalizes the relationship and grows it significantly. Stark State is committing 2,500 hours of support over the next three years. That support includes increased class offerings at the high school, access for students to the college campuses in Canton and Akron, helping students fill out financial aid forms, and supporting teachers in developing their curriculum to ready students for post-secondary work or a career.

"Thank you for demonstrating yet again your commitment to the students of Akron Public Schools," Superintendent Christine Fowler Mack, a graduate of East, said in an event on

Stark State's Akron campus Friday morning.

The vision of the academies, she said, is for students to be "engaged learners with goals for their future" and to be more competitive for scholarships and jobs.

"As an Akron native, it's heartwarming to see the ways that so many community organizations and the business community continue to partner with our schools," she said.

Lada Gibson-Shreve, Stark State's provost and chief academic officer, said the college was proud to deepen its partnership with the Akron schools.

"We want to be a part of helping every student that is here with your future, regardless of what that might be," she said.

The partnerships between community entities, whether they are businesses, non-profits or colleges, are forged with the help of United Way of Summit and Medina Counties.

Each high school has at least two academies, which serve as the umbrella for several career pathways. The district structured each academy to have a named partner, which is the highest level of partnership in the academies.

Building out that structure has taken time. After the announcement of East partnering with Stark State, every high school except for Buchtel will have a sister college or university, and every academy except one at North High will have named academy partners.

Jim Mullen, president and CEO of United Way of Summit and Medina, said the team is working to secure a college partnership for Buchtel, and an announcement will be made soon about the last named partner at North.

The other college partners are University of Akron, Kent State University and University of Mount Union.

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