

## Focus on the Future Showcase

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*Allegany County Public Schools  
Cumberland, Maryland*

**H**ow do you give ninth graders a taste of the real world of work? Try a science and technology showcase that highlights students' achievements while putting them into contact with future employers.

The first countywide Focus on the Future Showcase in Allegany County took place in April. Hosted by the 23 county public schools, in partnership with the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce Education Committee, the four-day event featured exhibits in science, social studies, acceleration and enrichment programs and career connections. There were business promotion exhibits and career-connected student displays.

Students in grades 3-12 participated, using their exhibits to show how much career education is part of their everyday lessons. As part of the showcase, every ninth-grade student toured the showcase, which afforded them hands-on experience and an introduction to various workplace skills.

The event "was a collective effort to showcase how curriculum prepares students for the future," said the Allegany County's Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. "During the showcase, students were involved in job shadowing. This involved giving ninth graders exposure to trades before they make decisions between college and technical schools," he added.

The idea arose from a need for economic development in Allegany County. "To see Allegany County continue to grow and prosper ... means offering more jobs and keeping graduates locally employed," organizers said.

Through its focus on student achievement, this showcase reflected all six types of involvement. Parents, teachers, administrators and community volunteers came together to help prepare students for a successful future.

The event provided an important opportunity for parents to get involved in thinking and talking about their children's career paths, as they attended the showcase and helped out with student exhibits.

Businesses contributed in another big way by making donations that covered the cost of the showcase. Area business provided about \$7,500.

Nearly 1,000 students participated, and another 800 had the opportunity to tour the exhibits. Hundreds of adults were involved in planning and during the actual showcase. At least 100 school personnel, 100 district colleagues and 75 business people worked together to make the showcase successful.

It was a win-win situation for the school system and for the local business partners. It allowed students to make public presentations, which developed their interpersonal skills and helped them get acquainted with businesses. The business partners in turn were able to meet future employees.

The showcase exposed students to positive and realistic images of the world of work. It also provided a perfect opportunity for the community to come together to celebrate student achievement.

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