

Central Kentucky Marketing Prep, commonly referred to as CK-Prep in Taylor County School District, is a liquidation and final sale school-based enterprise that serves approximately 97 Taylor County High School students. CK-Prep was established in the spring of 2019. It is a work-force development/vocational rehabilitation prep center that prepares students for business, marketing, and entrepreneurship. The mission of CK-Prep is to provide hands-on work experience to all students to better equip them for full time jobs, careers, and life after graduation.

The SBE provides students practical experience with each student having a job or skill that is vital to the daily operations at CK-Prep. Positions include store manager, team leaders, cashiers, greeters, social media specialists/online sales and advertising, furniture assembly engineers, stock and inventory personnel, and custodians. Each class period is considered a shift with student responsibilities dependent on the progress of the merchandise in the assembly line. Students, under the guidance and lessons taught by teachers, operate every aspect of the business.

Before joining CK-Prep, each potential employee submits an application and is interviewed before they are officially employed. In addition to the day-to-day tasks of operating the store, students complete and turn in a timesheet every two weeks. They are also challenged to set goals each month and have the opportunity to win gift certificates when reaching or going above projected sales goals. CK-Prep rewards their employees by giving them a 20% discount on items.

Students unload merchandise from transportation trucks into the storage area. The pieces are then transferred to the assembly line for production or they are placed in the pricing queue. Students research the item, compare its original cost, and use a special formula to determine the discounted price that will be used within CK-Prep. Once assembly, if needed, and pricing are complete, the stock team moves items into the store based on the merchandise layout determined by the store manager and assistant manager.

Social media is used for advertising and selling goods. Students who have been assigned the role of media specialist go to local radio stations for additional advertising and promotion of the store. Sharing videos on social media has been one of their most successful methods of marketing goods and promoting their mission.

CK-Prep has a strong partnership with local businesses regarding essential skills in the workplace. Businesses and community members relay the skills students need to obtain to become successful employees. In CK-Prep, students are held accountable on a daily basis in several areas, such as time management, communication, respect, proper dress code, teamwork, and problem solving.

In addition to equipping students with essential skills, CK-Prep works with the local Chamber of Commerce, Campbellsville University, and local officials and businesses to connect students

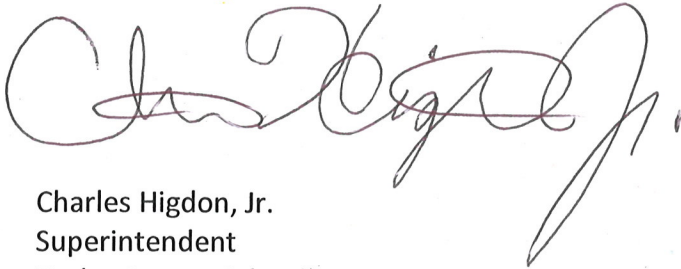
with possible job opportunities. Guest speakers are often invited to CK-Prep to meet students and present on their career or job pathway.

Another aspect of CK-Prep is community involvement. CK-Prep has donated toys to Toys for Tots, bedding to the local homeless shelter and foster homes, and baby items to the Hope Pregnancy Center in Campbellsville. CK-Prep teaches the importance of supporting these programs and those in need, along with bringing awareness to the services provided, if needed by our students.

Renovations to the old Taylor County Elementary School cafeteria, to create the store, and the first shipment of merchandise cost the Board of Education approximately \$8,000. Currently, CK-Prep is 100% self-sufficient bringing in on average \$17,000 per month. CK-Prep was able to launch with the support of Superintendent Charles Higdon, Jr. and all five board members: Board Chairman David Hall, Vice Chairperson Deanna Hunt, Bob Clark, Jason Cox, and TJ Raikes.

Upon graduation, several Taylor County High School students were hired to work full-time at CK-Prep over the summer. This school year, the experience and skills gained from working at CK-Prep has assisted students in procuring jobs at local businesses including, Murakami Manufacturing, Kroger, and the local fire department, just to name a few.

We are proud of the students, teachers, and staff who help make CK-Prep so successful. We look forward to what the future holds for our students who are employed at CK-Prep.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Charles Higdon, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Charles Higdon, Jr.  
Superintendent  
Taylor County Schools

CK-Prep is a school-based enterprise focused on teaching hands-on vocational skills for the workforce. As a teacher, the most rewarding experience is providing every student an opportunity to contribute to our mission, as well as preparing them for their future.

We work very hard creating great relationships with local companies, factories and business owners to secure jobs for our CK-Prep students. CK-Prep invites our local businesses to visit and share their vision of what they are looking for in an employee. We, in turn, focus on and work diligently with students keeping those essential career skills as our focus.

My class is conducted like a business instead of a typical classroom setting. For example, students clock in and out of class and report to their managers for assistance prior to seeking the teacher's help. My discipline problems are very limited because students are engaged and busy with hands-on projects. Each student takes ownership of our store and has a sense of belonging and accomplishment.

I encourage my students to utilize all resources available and to collaborate with other school-based enterprises within our school to find solutions to problems presented in our store environment. Recently, students were assembling a table and discovered damage to the product. Since we have a wonderful pre-engineering wood shop, students from both programs worked together to repair the damage and created a functional product for our customers. Students have quickly become independent when having to think outside the box to replace or repair broken pieces in order to have a quality product to sell.

Since CK-Prep's inception one year ago, we have employed five seniors full-time over the summer. Three of those seniors are attending college and working part time. One has obtained full-time employment and the other has joined the United States Army. This school year, we have assisted students in obtaining jobs at a local radio station, Lowes, JC Penny's, Murakami Manufacturing, Taylor County Schools, Five Star, Dairy Queen, Kroger, Corbin's Mowing, and the Taylor County/Campbellsville Fire Department. We have five students who work after school to gain skills and work for incentives to earn credit toward in store merchandise.

We encourage daily attendance, respect, collaboration, passing grades, and teamwork. The student grading scale is based on attendance, communication, and effort on a weekly basis, as well as various classroom assignments.

Although we live in a rural community, we are genuinely providing our students with advantages and experiences for their future employment. The key to our success is an open door policy and continuous communication between the school district and local businesses and industries.

Many of our students will not attend college or pursue postsecondary training; however, they have the ability to live independently and will benefit immensely from the skills and experiences obtained while working in this program. Part of our mission is to provide students



with resources and to educate them on when and where to seek assistance. CK-Prep is part of the village it takes to raise our students!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Loria Cox Christie". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed contact information.

Loria Cox Christie

CK-Prep Coordinator

ECE/Business Teacher

Taylor County Schools / Campbellsville, KY 42718

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My name is Amy Gupton and I am fortunate enough to have a child who gets to participate in the Taylor County Ck-Prep program through his school.

The Ck-Prep program has been nothing short of amazing for both the students who attend, and our community. This program has been developed so that students are able to learn valuable life skills that they can use outside of school. They get to work alongside their fellow peers in a place that shows them what it's like to be in an actual job environment and it also allows the people in the community, to be able to interact with students in this environment.

My son has only been a part of this program for a short time, but he has gained valuable skills that have crossed over into other areas of his life. He has a better understanding of work ethic, he has learned to be more sociable with his peers, and he's become more confident in himself and who he is and what he's capable of.

His academics have also improved, and I think a lot of that has to do with this program as well. The teachers who run this program not only teach the entrepreneurship curriculum to the students, but they help within other areas that students need as well. Social skills are something my son has always struggled with and the teachers recognized it immediately, so they put him in a position that would help with this issue. Overall, this has led to more confidence and pride in himself which spills over into his other classes. Things he once thought he couldn't accomplish he now tackles and succeeds at. His grades across the board have improved and as a parent, I couldn't be happier. My son actually enjoys this program as well which makes it all the better. He looks forward to going there and assembling items and interacting with people in this community. He's found a new passion for building that he never knew he had as well, something that wouldn't have been known had it not been for this program.

Overall, Taylor County doing this type of program for the students and the community has been a huge blessing to everyone here. Students are able to learn skills they wouldn't otherwise be able to get in a school environment and ultimately that helps the community as a whole. It's an amazing program and we are fortunate to have it and the wonderful staff who operate it.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Amy Gupton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

CK-Prep is not a solution for problem students. It is not a place for underachievers to get out of class. It is not the be all, end all, panacea for unconventional learners. It is however, the first four results on a Google search using those letters. Why does it come in ahead of websites with marketing teams deploying heuristic algorithms to stand out in search engines? Why is it ahead of behemoths that tout mnemonics classes to medical professionals located in all major cities? What does a small town in Central Kentucky have that they don't have? Just luck? No, it is our team of CK-Prep students; not just the student marketing specialists mastering the whims of social media, all while piquing the interest of grade-schoolers and grandmas to click through and come in but a TEAM of coaches, classmates, and cohorts acting in concert and collaboration as "coworkers." Vince Lombardi said about teamwork: "Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work."

How many training sessions and discussions do we attend as supporters of public education about the needs of students, the needs of teachers, administrators, etc. in support of students, the needs of employers and industries for students trained as future employees? Each need of those listed is as diverse and unique as the snowflakes. Daunting it is to arrive at the realizations that perhaps all our axioms come with an "if," "but," "except for," or another qualifier. We discover ironies in simple things like "soft skills" that are hard to impart, of that a "can do attitude" could be impossible to teach. Courtesy, eye contact, confidence, body language; what is required and impartible. What is desirable and beneficial but only absorbed by osmotic interaction or primal imitation? In any event, we as a board with our Superintendent as his team, followed Walt Disney's advice when he said, "the way to get started is to quit talking and start doing."

CK-Prep is not the first or last incarnation of ideas in action for our district but it is a perfect example of a village teaching its own. Our community lost a major regional employer decades ago in a cataclysm of worldviews played out in this one company town. It still reverberates to this day in the mixed messages of virtuous hard work and sacrifice along with blind trust, poor planning, and where it all left us. We, as a small town, saw the promise of furthering education and retraining grants and even perpetually higher graduation rates still supporting a remaining stagnant local wage. We see as a nation the skills needed for infrastructure lag and no pool of willing bodies prepared to benefit. We believe we do not see either as "unskilled" or "unwilling" workforce but an "uncertain" and "unconfident" one. Just as manufacturing companies decried the benefits of the just-in-time inventory model, we are evolving as a society to have a need for "Spartan students" with an as-needed skill set. A skill set that enables them to see and seize opportunity rather than apply for wait and see jobs. Over 250 years ago, Thomas Jefferson said, "I find that the harder I work, the more LUCK I seem to have."

CK-Prep is not a wait and learn but a work and learn environment. How many of us couldn't focus in a class because we couldn't see the need to know "this-or-that" then? How many wish we had some of that seat time back now to have made progress farther or faster in academic or professional pursuits or even weekend projects? In a business-based, public exposed,



educational enterprise the incubator lessons are dynamic, the observations prescient, and the feedback can be immediate. This lesson plan is an outline for life as the greatest teacher.

When you unbox a chair you know the parts of the chair and you see the instructions first (maybe this is one of the first times someone trusted you with a valuable object). Once you put the chair together you have more knowledge if not confidence in the chair's construction and you saw its transformation from a series of parts and pieces to a completed unit of form and function. You now know more about something in this store than anybody else who wasn't working beside you. You can place it on display and see people express interest and know you made something with your hands that a stranger admires. You can interact with a customer from a position of passion and product knowledge and focus on a genteel courtesy rather than instructed accuracy. You know its weight and how to wield it safely into a car if asked and potentially receive praise, appreciation, and compliments from someone unrelated. You may make a connection and at least may add a face in mutual recognition. You have made a step towards "adulthood" and see some of the blessings of your community. You did this in a class. You did this in school. "People who succeed have momentum. The more they succeed the more they want to succeed, and the more they find a way to succeed. Similarly, when someone is failing, the tendency is to get on a downward spiral that can even become a self-fulfilling prophecy." – Tony Robbins

If you were a teacher reading above you would have used words like student, rubric, discipline, and accountability. If you were a counselor, you may have seen life lessons, feelings, actions, empowerment, etc. If you are a patron at CK-Prep, you will see nice young men and women, exhibiting good service, in a comfortable atmosphere. Perhaps an HR Manager would see benefits of team skills, good attitude, self-reliance and initiative. As a school board, we see committed leaders with unique skills brought to benefit students with options and opportunity. We see the efforts of an administration team excited by the success of this unconventional class and settings that motivate staff and students alike empowered now not to just tweak the margins of risk, but break other barriers to learning.

For that, we say thank you to the students of CK-Prep because each year they are a new class of astronauts and explorers; a perpetual living proof of concept that working is learning and the art of learning is for life. For we see and agree that "he who works with his hands is a laborer. He who works with his hands and head is a craftsman. He who works with his hands, his head, and his heart is an art." – St. Francis of Assisi



David K. Hall  
Taylor County Schools Board Chairman