



Polaris Tech

CHARTER SCHOOL

News Release

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‘They said it couldn’t be done’: Polaris Tech Charter School opens on time, boosts student learning

Skeptics across the Lowcountry raised eyebrows when the Polaris Tech Charter School Board of Directors broke ground for the state charter school in January – and announced the school would open in late August.

Opening day arrived, the school flung open its doors to almost 300 students, and it’s been off to the races ever since, said Dr. Melissa Crosby, executive director of the state charter school.

“The entire Lowcountry community has been amazingly supportive of Polaris Tech,” she said. “We have students from Jasper, Colleton, Hampton and Beaufort counties, and for the upcoming school year we’ll be adding the Aerospace career path and two Project Lead the Way majors, biomedical science and computer programming.

“Like any first-year school we have had some bumps in the road, but nothing knocked us off track and we have pushed ahead even more determined,” Crosby said. “Even as we start our final month of classes for this year, students and staff are already talking about what’s ahead in the next school year.”

Polaris Tech is a state-approved charter school serving middle and high school students from Jasper County and the Lowcountry. It is a free school (no tuition), that focuses on preparing young people for successful work and college. For the upcoming school year it will teach students in grades 6-11, with the first Polaris Tech graduates with state diplomas scheduled for June 2021.

The Polaris Tech academic emphasis is on six career areas, starting with Aerospace, Health Sciences and Business Management. For next school year, Polaris Tech students also will be able to select Project Lead the Way Biomedical Science or Project Lead the Way Computer Programming as career majors.

Polaris Tech continues to accept student applications for the 2019-2020 school year for students who will be in grades 6-11. Applications are available online at www.polaristech.org.

“I remember meeting with folks in the community to talk about this dream several of us had to offer a charter school in Jasper County that would provide strong academics and a career pathway, and I remember people saying it was a great idea but it couldn’t be done on our timeline,” said retired four-star Air Force Gen. Lloyd “Fig” Newton, one of the school’s founders and a Jasper County native.

“And then we broke ground and pointed to this pile of dirt and said, ‘In six months this will be a new school ready for 300 students,’ and you know that got some chuckles,” Newton said.

“Well here we are, 16 months later and the school opened on time, our students and teachers are doing amazing things, we have created some terrific community and business partnerships, and we’re setting the stage for an even greater second year.”

Earlier this spring a team from Boeing visited Polaris Tech, coming away impressed by the school’s career pathways and first-year robotics teams.

Other high points so far for the 2018-2019 school year include:

- Establishing a partnership with Jasper County Parks & Recreation for students to use nearby athletic fields
- The school fielding three robotics teams, two for middle school students and one for high school, and hosting a regional robotics competition that drew more than 30 teams
- Implementing a health and wellness program that includes 70 minutes of activity and instruction per day; a student running club that has participated in 5K runs across the Lowcountry; and bimonthly nutrition classes from a licensed nutritionist through a Beaufort Fund grant
- Starting a Student Government organization that supported “See Something, Say Something” anti-bullying efforts, Unity Day, Month of the Military Child, Angel Tree and other efforts
- And, as a school, exploring academic opportunities in and out of the community; tenth graders took an exploratory field trip to Sea World and seventh graders participated in Kids in Kayaks.

The school is located on Grays Highway across from the Ridgeland Airport.

To keep updated about Polaris Tech Charter School, follow them on Facebook and at www.polaristech.org. For specific questions, email info@polaristech.org or call 843-645-0605.

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