
National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION SINCE 1982

Lorenzo Walker Technical High School
Collier County Public Schools
Naples, Florida

Transcript: Bringing High School to College

Narrator: Lorenzo Walker Technical High School offers students the opportunity to take academically rigorous classes while also receiving professional training at Lorenzo Walker Technical College in 25 career programs. Yolanda Flores, the College's Administrative Director, explains how the high school came about.

Yolanda Flores, Administrative Director, Lorenzo Walker Technical College: So Lorenzo Walker technical college was first established in 1974. the high school came around in, it started in 2004 with a career planning committee under the auspices of Collier County School Board as well as the workforce development board and some business partners. And they were forward thinking in trying to identify what are the needs here in Collier County and how can we expose students at a younger age to career opportunities so that by the time they graduate from high school they're able to graduate with a high school diploma, as well as with the training necessary to enter the workforce if that's what they choose, to or to continue on to higher education.

Abby Lambley, Director, School Counseling: All of our students will attend Lorenzo Walker High School but they will also attend Lorenzo Walker Technical College which means that they will complete their high school diploma. They will also complete a technical certification when they walk across the stage they are handed two diplomas one from the college one from the high school.

Jeff Rexford, Principal, Lorenzo Walker Technical High School: Half of our students who are juniors and seniors are also tri-enrolled, so they not only are taking classes for Lorenzo Walker Technical High Schools, they're taking their CTE courses at Lorenzo Walker technical college, post-secondary, and then academic dual enrollment at Florida Southwestern, which is a local state college, earning college credits.

Narrator: Reaching their current level of success took time and a commitment to preparing students professionally and academically.

Abby Lambley: So in the beginning in our community people really didn't embrace the whole career/college ready concept. I think that parents think every student needs to go to university and doesn't understand that the technical college can also prepare them with lifelong skills. So we had a lot of students apply but then they were afraid to come. They weren't sure if we would succeed. They weren't sure if they could embrace our concept. So it was very difficult at first, but we were determined.

Yolanda Flores: So we had to do a lot of work over two or three years to get them to change that perception. And so part of that work is really focusing on the academics and ensuring that the students were prepared academically. So when it came time to enter their career programs in junior they were on target. And then all of a sudden the perception starts changing. Our student body didn't change it just, now that we really became laser focused on academics their first two years, get them ready for that transition into the career programs.

Joel, Lorenzo Walker Student: The academic expectations are higher. It is definitely a high caliber school. They're going to encourage success. They're not going to kick you out if you fail. They're going to encourage you to be successful and the same culture continues over to the college side.

Narrator: Educators embrace this culture of support and success. They collaborate across the high school and technical college to improve their instruction and build community.

Paul Holman, Instructional Coach, Lorenzo Walker Technical College: So coaching here at the college is a little bit different than a traditional school, because almost every one of our instructors doesn't have any education background. They have lots of experience in their industry, and they need someone to show them and to model different strategies so that they can find out what works for their students.

Andy Retz, Automotive Collision and Repair Instructor: I came straight from industry into teaching here at Lorenzo Walker. I spent 35 years in the auto body industry running body shops. So when I came, I was really comfortable working out in the shop. Coming into the classroom environment was very challenging. The instructional coach was a huge, huge help to me becoming comfortable in the classroom.

Lianne Elliot, Reading Coach, Lorenzo Walker Technical High School: As coaches on the high school side, we work closely with our instructional coach on the college side to make sure our instructors are prepared and the instruction we provide is seamless between the two buildings. We've done instructional rounds in both buildings overlapping where instructors from the college side are able to come over to the high school site and vice versa. We do professional development together. We have lunches and faculty events together. So we work as one.

Narrator: It all comes together to create an environment that prepares students for whatever path they choose after high school.

Jeff Rexford: Sometimes people have the perception, that if you come to a career and technical education school that those students are not going to college afterwards. That's no longer the case. They know that it's not an either/or; a lot of times it's an and. You come to Lorenzo Walker Technical College which is a post-secondary institution, and you can continue on to the local state college, universities in the state or around the country. And I believe that is due to really getting the word out to the community about what we do and what we offer.

Prisca, Lorenzo Walker Student: The reason why I wanted to come to Lorenzo Walker started with the fifth-grade tour. I remember seeing kids who were my age doing this really cool thing that most adults would do. We have a class called critical thinking where we are able to figure out what we want to do in life. today in critical thinking and career research we're learning how to plan our future. So today I started thinking about what colleges I want to go to.

Joel, Lorenzo Walker Student: If you were an eighth grader and you were thinking about coming here I would tell you it's a wonderful new opportunity. Lots of doors are going to open. With the career skills you're going to learn here, the family environment and the tools to equip you to make you successful. There's no reason you shouldn't be here.