

For Immediate Release

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Long-Standing City Vo-Tech Slated for Extreme Makeover

Over the course of three years, Baltimore City's venerable Carver Vocational-Technical High School will undergo a full expansion and modernization designed to improve learning outcomes and establish the school as a community hub.

Baltimore, MD –Besieged by the attendance, attrition, and discipline issues faced by virtually all Baltimore City high schools, Carver is fighting back with a \$20 million modernization of its 232,000 square foot facility located in northwest Baltimore City.

Founded in 1925, the 81 year-old Carver Vocational-Technical High School is due for a facelift. Renovations to the facility, scheduled to be completed in 2008, will improve overall conditions of the building and its systems, but most notably call for restructuring the learning environment by clustering classrooms according to the sixteen career programs offered by the school. Core academic spaces will be centrally located for maximum functionality and to promote interaction among the disciplines.

Plans also call for administrative spaces, a media center, a dining facility, a gymnasium and an indoor pool.

Peter Winebrenner, AIA, regional director of BSA+A Baltimore heads up the architecture and engineering team overseeing the project. With a portfolio of public education projects under his belt, including the design of the new Worcester Career and Technology Center, Winebrenner sees first-hand clear trends in this specialized education arena. “For years, vocational-technical schools have struggled with their perception as a track for students with poor academic capabilities or behavioral problems. Over the last five years, however, career education has been given new prominence by increased federal emphasis on program performance and on high academic achievement for all students.”

As the role of vocational education at the secondary level is evolving, the movement in vo-tech design is toward smaller learning communities, which have been shown to increase student attendance, graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment while lowering dropout rates and disciplinary problems.¹

And both academic and career high schools are shifting towards the concept of clustering learning in a given subject area, similar to the idea of a college major. In Maryland, the State Department of Education worked with local business leaders to organize the state's Career Cluster system, which is organized around ten broad career areas that reflect

¹ “Smaller Learning Communities: Give Them A Little TLC” by Tara Jones. Published in NTPN's *Connections*, Volume 14, Number 4.

Maryland's key economic sectors. These Career Clusters work in conjunction with smaller learning communities to offer students more opportunity to explore career choices while still in high school.

When asked what this means for Carver, Winebrenner responds, "Our ultimate goal is to design a school that offers the best possible learning environment for its students. If more students graduate and go on to postsecondary schools as a result, we'll know we've done our job."

Renovations are slated to take place in phases while the school remains operational.

BSA+A, headquartered in Wilmington, DE, has completed over \$500 million worth of educational projects.

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