



SUCCESS STORY

C I S C O A C K N O W L E D G E S S U C C E S S A N D A C C O M P L I S H M E N T S

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Breaking Myths, Changing Education – Mariemont High Wins The Blue Ribbon Award, Again!

Located in a white collar school district in Cincinnati, Ohio, Mariemont High School has a reputation for leading its students to the doorsteps of top post-secondary institutions. Mariemont is a comprehensive high school, which has a strong focus on college preparatory programs. “Nearly 90 percent of our students go on to attend college or universities like the University of Virginia, Harvard and Stanford,” says Jim Renner, Principal, Mariemont High.

However, there is one more thing about Mariemont High School that may come as surprise, and a pleasant one. The school received its third Blue Ribbon award in the school year 2001-2002, giving it the distinction of being the only high school in Ohio to have won the award three times. The award is presented to successful high schools that are considered national models. The site visitation committee applauded the sound implementation of the Cisco Networking Academy Program and the associated sponsored curricula, which allowed the school to stand out among other outstanding high schools in the state. Mariemont City School District was selected as a Cisco Regional Academy in the spring of 2000.

Jim Renner, the school’s principal has had strong support from the school superintendent, parents and students in implementing the Academy program. The professional members of the school community realize the long-term impact of the Academy program on the future of the students participating in it. “Gerald Harris, the superintendent is a visionary. He saw right away, the benefit this would have for the school and the community,” says Renner.

The students and parents also realize the advantages of technical knowledge and expertise when pursuing a career in any major discipline, be it business, medicine, law or technology. “The parents were on board from the start. They knew that we were offering their children an experience that would cost them thousands of dollars outside of the high school environment.”

The Networking Academy program at Mariemont High School has encountered its own share of skeptics. There were concerns about implementation of the curriculum among those who felt that the Academy program and similar courses are not appropriately designed for a white-collar school district and would not be readily accepted. Others had an



*Students working in the lab
at the Mariemont High
Regional Academy*



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opinion that the program was for students looking for a blue-collar experience. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Principal Jim Renner remembers, "In our first year of implementation, over 25 percent of our junior class expressed interest in taking our Cisco Networking Academy course. We've had similar interest in the sponsored curricula we've chosen to offer through Cisco Systems. Students, parents and community members are thrilled that we offer such a quality experience to our college preparatory students. A majority of the members of our Academy have been members of National Honor Society, and others who have performed quite well academically." Academy graduates have gone on to colleges like Purdue and William and Mary to pursue careers in law, business and engineering.

Mariemont became a Regional Academy in 2000 and has been fortunate enough to recruit several Local Academies with outstanding academic reputations and similar demographics. They, too, are finding strong support for this type of curriculum in their schools from students and parents and have had several businesses volunteer to help them with the myriad costs that are associated with the Academy. Three of the Local Academies have received the highest rating in the state of Ohio as judged by the state report card. The Milford High School, Loveland High School and Forest Hills High School along with Mariemont, have shown that the Cisco Networking Academy Program can play a valuable role in educating high achieving college prep students with those students following a more traditional tech prep curriculum.

Mariemont has broken the myth about the Academy program being more applicable to a class of students with blue-collar ambitions. As more and more schools enroll to become Local Academies, the Cisco Networking Academy Program is changing the face of education, one school at a time.