

**NORTH CAROLINA
NEW SCHOOLS PROJECT**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Reynolds American Foundation donates \$250,000 for new career academy
aimed at promoting economic development in Yadkin Valley**

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. – Dec. 20, 2011 – The North Carolina New Schools Project (NCNSP) announced today that Reynolds American Foundation has donated \$250,000 towards the development of the Yadkin Valley Regional Career Academy, an innovative new regional school that aims to expand opportunities for students and bring needed skills to the workforce.

The public school, which is slated to open in the fall of 2012, is envisioned as a win-win both for students and the regional economy of the Yadkin Valley. The academy is intended to offer a new option for students with career-focused preparation in the areas of the health and life sciences and also aerospace and advanced manufacturing. Additionally, the school will teach students life skills to make good decisions.

The mission of the school is to graduate all students ready for college, careers and civic contributions to the region, with a head start on postsecondary preparation for one of the area's emerging career fields as well as job-ready credentials.

The school, proposed by area business leaders, is being developed under a broad-based partnership that includes four local school districts, two community colleges, local and regional businesses, the North Carolina New Schools Project, Piedmont Triad Partnership, the State Board of Education, and the N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

“The Reynolds American Foundation is proud to help bring transformation to the Yadkin Valley region by supporting the improved educational outcomes this project will deliver,” said Steve Strawsburg, president of the Reynolds American Foundation. “It has long been the foundation's mission to help improve the communities where employees of Reynolds American live and work, and this school will do that by improving graduation rates and helping kids make good decisions, including the decision to not use tobacco.”

Tony Habit, president of NCNSP, added: “The NC New Schools Project looks forward to partnering with this new regional school and the Reynolds American Foundation on this groundbreaking effort that promises to expand opportunities for students and support economic development in the region. This broad-based partnership will establish a replicable model of

secondary education that graduates all students from high school with the knowledge and skills needed for success in our emerging economy.”

In its first phase, the regional school will open on a southern campus in Davidson County in the fall of 2012, followed by a northern campus in Surry County in 2013. The combined campuses will eventually also be an option for students in other nearby districts. The school seeks to attract students who would be the first in their families to attend college.

“This is an innovative concept of high school education in support of regional economic development,” said Barry Sink, president of Old Lexington Products, Inc., who spearheaded planning for the school. “This initiative is about jobs and economic development for North Carolina. This new education model will build the technologically skilled workforce that will support the growth industries of our region, and attract new business development into the rural communities of our region and state.”

State Superintendent June Atkinson said the regional academy reflects the latest thinking about effectively merging career and technical education with a strong focus on college readiness.

“This school holds real promise to be a model for the state in meeting the critical goals both for college and workplace readiness and economic development,” Atkinson said.

Fred Mock, superintendent of Davidson County Schools, said the school will help expand opportunities for students across the region.

“It is important that we offer opportunities outside the traditional high school model to provide students with specialized career needs and interests,” Mock said. “The Davidson County school system is excited about opportunities for involvement in this project and to serve as the host school district.”

Through its partnership with NCNSP, the Yadkin Valley Regional Career Academy will join a network of innovative schools statewide with a focus on careers in science, technology, engineering and math – STEM in shorthand. NCNSP will provide extensive training, coaching and curriculum support to the school during the next three years.

As in other NCNSP-partner schools across the state, the Yadkin Valley school will use inquiry and project-based approaches to learning that incorporate real-world issues and problems and an emphasis on critical thinking. Tobacco prevention scenarios will be used to teach not only health and science but also will be integrated with math, history, engineering and technology.

Students graduating from the academy will be able to choose from among several post-secondary alternatives, each designed to maximize their options. All students will earn an industry credential in their specific field, if available, and then will enter a training or apprenticeship program or alternatively apply the college credits they earn to pursuing an associate or bachelor’s degree at a partner university. The curriculum will be designed to offer a rigorous program to prepare all students for success in college and career.

The Reynolds American Foundation is a non-profit corporation, established as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt private foundation, that administers certain charitable and educational giving programs on behalf of

Reynolds American Inc., its operating companies and their employees. The Foundation primarily focuses contributions on educational, arts, and human-service programs in communities where significant numbers of employees of Reynolds American and its operating companies live and work.

*The **North Carolina New Schools Project** is a statewide public-private partnership that accelerates systemic, sustainable innovation in North Carolina secondary schools. Its goal is to ensure every student graduates ready for college, careers and life. The NC New Schools Project partners with school districts, businesses and higher education to link innovation in education to the emerging economy.*

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