

# The LEADER

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## Prepping for college: Prattsburgh to launch Franklin Academy this fall

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This fall, Prattsburgh Central School District will launch a program that will allow high school students to take college-level courses over four years, and graduate with up to 51 college credits.

It will be called the Franklin Academy, which is what Prattsburgh Central was called when it first opened in the early 19th century.

Built around 1824, Franklin Academy and Collegiate Institute served as a teaching and ministry college for children ages 14-18. By the late 1850s, the institution began serving a larger group of students as its transition to a public school.

The academy's original building burned down in 1924, and a new one was constructed in its place; it is still used as part of the school today.

When the Franklin Academy became a centralized public school in 1936, its name was changed to Prattsburgh Central School.

As a nod to the school's history, the new college preparatory program will take on the Franklin Academy name, said Prattsburgh Superintendent Jeff Black.

"We liked that name and wanted to keep it alive," Black said. "That's how we came up with the concept of what we were trying to do and bringing back the name of Franklin Academy."

Years in the making, the program started out like any other local school district's Accelerated College Education (ACE) program, offering an ACE English course in conjunction with Corning Community College.

"We started with just the English class and kids took it and they loved it," Black said. "Then we started to explore adding in more and more courses as other schools were doing it at the same time."

In a district of only 450 students and graduating classes around 35 students, Prattsburgh wasn't able to offer the Advanced Placement courses many other, larger schools were offering.

That eventually led to the creation the Franklin Academy.

"We had to start getting creative with how to give these kids some of the similar experiences and opportunities that kids in the bigger schools were having," Black said.

Over time, Prattsburgh developed working relationships with Finger Lakes Community College and Alfred State University, in addition to its standing relationship with CCC, to offer other college-level courses.

Prattsburgh also formed relationships with other, smaller school districts such as Avoca and Odessa-Montour.

"With Avoca, neither of us had enough kids to do the Spanish ACE courses alone, but combined we did. Same with biology," Black said. "We also share American history with Odessa-Montour and Avoca and that works out very well."

While students have been participating in the college-level courses for years, the four-year Franklin Academy program will officially begin next year for incoming freshmen who choose to participate.

The students will take two academy courses for their freshman and sophomore years, in addition to the district's regularly scheduled classes. Students can then take up to five academy courses during their junior year, and up to seven academy classes during senior year. The entire program amounts to 51 college credits at \$18 per credit.

Students who don't wish to participate in the full academy experience are able to pick and choose for-credit college courses throughout their four years at Prattsburgh, according to Assistant Superintendent Kory Bay.

"The whole academy is for a select few kids who can handle it but it will benefit all of the kids because they can pick and choose between credited courses," Bay said. "There's a high percentage of our kids who take something, even if they don't participate in the entire academy."

For Hannah Robins, 16, the academy changed her mind about future college plans.



PHOTO/ ERIC WENSEL/THE LEADER

Prattsburgh student Shana Egresi hands back tests to her classmates as teacher Skip Strobel looks on remotely from his Odessa-Montour classroom.

"I wanted to do something like sports medicine and now that I'm taking more business classes I feel like that's the route I want to go," said Robbins, a junior at Prattsburgh. "I think business is something I'd like to do more than something in the science field."

Junior Rebecca Heagy, 16, said the academy changed her mind about college altogether.

"I was second-guessing myself about whether I wanted to actually go to college, but now that I have all of these classes, I might as well," Heagy said. "After all of these credits, you might as well at least get your associate degree."

Along with classmate Allison Gilbert, 17, the girls are currently taking an ACE U.S. history course with other Franklin Academy juniors. According to Gilbert, the chance to take college courses in high school is good preparation for the future.

"I really like it because, since you're still in high school, they're not throwing you right into college," Gilbert said. "It's like, half-high school and half-college, so it's a good transition."

With a total of 37 students in grades 10-12 currently participating in the academy program, Black anticipates 56 students to enroll in the program next year when ninth-grade students can participate.

Regardless of how large the Franklin Academy grows, the program's primary goal is to recognize standout students for their achievements and to make a high school student's transition to college easier.

"We're hoping that the program leads to success for students," Black said. "We hope that they'll be ready when they get there."

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