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Cabarrus County Schools and The Pearl Innovation District Announce Partnership to Launch Workforce-Aligned, Health Care Innovation Microschool

Concord, N.C., October 30, 2025 — Cabarrus County Schools (CCS), Atrium Health and Charlotte’s new innovation district, The Pearl, have announced a first-of-its-kind partnership to create a health care innovation academy – a pioneering microschool designed to prepare high school students for emerging careers in health care and technology. Scheduled to launch in fall 2026 at Jay M. Robinson High School with an initial cohort of 30 freshmen and 30 sophomores, the academy will be part of CCS’ Program Choice offerings.

Modeled after the early college concept, the health care innovation academy at Robinson, in partnership with Atrium Health and The Pearl, will operate as a four-year microschool blending traditional academic coursework with hands-on, real-world learning. The program’s initial focus will center on artificial intelligence in health care with plans to expand into prototyping technologies – two rapidly growing fields in the health care industry.

Students will complete core high school courses such as Math I, English I and Civics through a health care lens, while also participating in Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes in data analytics and artificial intelligence. Each component of the curriculum will be co-designed with industry experts at Advocate Health – which Atrium Health is a part – as well as other health science tenants at The Pearl to ensure direct alignment with workforce needs and post-secondary opportunities.

In addition to classroom learning, students will participate in weekly field experiences at The Pearl innovation district, collaborating with professionals from leading health care innovation companies. These experiences will emphasize problem-based learning, allowing students to tackle authentic health care challenges while developing the technical and collaborative skills necessary for future success.



This innovative partnership responds to three converging needs in our area: industry demand for skilled professionals trained at the intersection of health care and technology, commitment from The Pearl and its workforce partners to co-develop cutting-edge coursework and apprenticeship opportunities, and strong student demand within CCS.

“The health care innovation academy at Robinson in partnership with The Pearl represents the next evolution of public education in Cabarrus County,” said Dr. John Kopicki, superintendent of Cabarrus County Schools. “By connecting our students directly with industry experts and real-world problem solving, we’re ensuring they graduate not only ready for college but for the careers shaping our community and our future.”

The Pearl innovation district will also provide support for curriculum development, industry credentialing and an on-site coordinator to oversee pre-apprenticeships and workplace learning. This partnership represents one of many initiatives originating from The Pearl’s STEM Lab – a place-based, community-focused program to ignite curiosity and inspire K–12 students to pursue careers in health and science.

“By connecting young people with health and science careers they might not have known existed, we’re building a future where students are not only prepared for the workforce of tomorrow but are also inspired to lead it,” said Dr. Richard Cox, STEM program coordinator at The Pearl. “The partnership with Cabarrus County Schools and The Pearl serves as a powerful opportunity to expand our STEM educational impact beyond our district walls and maximize high school student engagement. This positions us in a way that no one else is – at the forefront of innovative educational transformation.”

To learn more about the health care innovation academy at Robinson in partnership with The Pearl, visit www.cabarrus.k12.nc.us/programchoice or <https://www.thepearlclt.com>.

About Cabarrus County Schools

Cabarrus County Schools is one of North Carolina’s largest and fastest-growing public school districts, serving more than 35,000 students across 44 schools. The district employs nearly 4,300 staff members and is recognized statewide for its commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and community partnerships that prepare students for success in college, careers, the military, and life. Guided by its strategic plan, *Destination 27*, Cabarrus County Schools continues its vision of Inspiring Minds, Engaging Hearts, and Shaping Futures.



About Atrium Health

[Atrium Health](#) is a nationally recognized leader in shaping health outcomes through innovative research, education and compassionate patient care. Based in Charlotte, North Carolina, Atrium Health is part of [Advocate Health](#), the third-largest nonprofit health system in the United States. A recognized leader in experiential medical education and groundbreaking research, [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](#) is the health system’s academic core. Atrium Health is renowned for its top-ranked pediatric, cancer and heart care, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Atrium Health is also a leading-edge innovator in virtual care and mobile medicine, providing care close to home and in the home. It is ranked nationally among U.S. News & World Report’s Best Hospitals in nine pediatric specialties and for rehabilitation. With a commitment to redefine care for every community it serves, Atrium Health provides nearly \$3 billion in free and uncompensated care and other community benefits.

What They’re Saying

Sarah Reeves, Chief Academic Officer for Cabarrus County Schools: “We’re thrilled to launch this first-of-its-kind partnership that brings high school students and industry leaders together to explore the power of artificial intelligence in healthcare. By combining real-world data analytics with hands-on learning in our microschoo environment, we’re not only preparing students for today’s opportunities — we’re equipping them for the jobs and technologies of tomorrow, many of which don’t even exist yet. This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to innovation, impact in our community and the future of work.”

Erin Milam, Principal, Jay M. Robinson High School: “At Jay M. Robinson High School, our microschoo in collaboration with The Pearl reflects our belief that every student deserves a learning experience as unique as they are. Together, we’re reimagining education through innovation, connection and opportunity—because at Robinson, #BulldogsBelong.”
