

# Leveraging Our Future

## The City of Cleveland's MLK Firefighter Academy Career Path



**VANGUARDS OF CLEVELAND, INC.**

July 7, 2008

# Leveraging Our Future

---

## The City of Cleveland's MLK Firefighter Academy Career Path

### Proposal

The Vanguard of Cleveland, in conjunction with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Cuyahoga Community College, would like to propose a City of Cleveland charter amendment that creates a defined school-to-career pathway for students successfully graduating from the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's (CMSD) MLK Firefighter Academy that leads to direct employment by the City of Cleveland as a FireMedic within the Division of Fire.

### Background

The CMSD's MLK Firefighter Academy began operation during the 2003-2004 school year. With the assistance of the Vanguard of Cleveland and Cuyahoga Community College the CMSD was able to develop and implement a vocational training program that has since been adopted by the Ohio Department of Education as the model for any future high school firefighter vocational programs within the state and was selected as an industry "Best Practice" by the National Conference on Accreditation of Public Postsecondary Occupational Education in 2005. The program is based on a four-year model during grades 9 thru 12. Students are immersed in classroom and field instruction on life and career skills such as resume writing, interview techniques, principles of diversity, and management practices. In their final year students receive core skills training in their chosen career path within the Public Safety Academy: Fire Technology, Emergency Medical Technology or Peace Officer/Private Security. This training is identical to the training required of professionals currently working in each career field. For Fire Technology, this is the State of Ohio's 240-hour Firefighter II Certification Course after which students must successfully pass a written test proctored by the State of Ohio's Department of Public Safety to receive their professional credentials. Firefighter students must also successfully



pass the Physical Agility Test proctored by Cuyahoga Community College at the start of their senior year to be admitted into the core professional training portion of the program.

## Current Success & Challenges

Students in the MLK Firefighter Academy have a high school graduation rate of over 90% compared to a roughly 50% graduation rate for the school district overall. The academy itself has a success rate of approximately 60% which represents the students who successfully complete the entire curriculum and obtain a professional certification from the state of Ohio. In June of this year we graduated our fifth academy class with 100% of our students successfully passing the state's certification examination. Of our past students several have gained part-time employment in suburban departments (Warrensville Heights, Woodmere Village, North Randall, East Cleveland), one was accepted into the United States Air Force as a military firefighter, and another obtained full-time employment with the City of East Cleveland. Several of our students have been recruited by out of town fire departments such as from the cities of Dayton/Ohio, Atlanta/Georgia and Toledo/Ohio. One "problem" that we did not foresee during program development is that over 90% of our graduates choose to enroll in college to continue their education. This is a "problem"



that we love to have. The instruction and mentoring that we are providing them is building highly successful citizens of society that have a drive to succeed. We are discovering though, as our first students complete their four year college education cycle that the seed that was planted during their secondary education took deep roots in that many still desire to articulate into the fire service. This year we have a student returning from Morehouse University that strongly desires to enter into the fire service in his hometown. Another returned from the University of Toledo to complete his degree locally so that he could take part in the next entry level hiring process given by the City of Cleveland. Our challenge is to continually entice highly motivated and capable students into the program by creating a direct pathway to high paying and rewarding jobs in the fire service career field.

that we love to have. The instruction and mentoring that we are providing them is building highly successful citizens of society that have a drive to succeed. We are discovering though, as our first students complete their four year college education cycle that the seed that was planted during their secondary education took deep roots in that many still desire to articulate into the fire service. This year we have a student

## Quality Candidates

Whenever the subject of how individuals are chosen by the city to be employed by the division of fire is spoken about the question of qualifications is the first to arise. As professional firefighters ourselves currently employed with the city we want qualified individuals that can perform all of the job functions required without modification because our lives and the lives of countless citizens will depend on their actions. In this area the firefighters that are products of the MLK Firefighter Academy equal and/or exceeds any entry-level firefighter candidate trained anywhere in the State of Ohio. All of the testing and certification of our students is done by the same state and/or national accrediting agencies that all firefighters for the City of Cleveland have to be tested by. The Firefighter 240-hour state certification course is administered by Cuyahoga Community College's Fire Training Academy (CCC). CCC trains and certifies more firefighters than any other educational institution in the area. CCC firefighter graduates are utilized by all area suburban municipalities and many larger municipalities outside of the Northeast Ohio area. CCC is recognized as the premiere firefighter training facility in the area and all of CCC's rigorous training curriculum and standards are implemented fully within the MLK Firefighter Academy. CCC's reputation depends on producing highly qualified firefighters and that is exactly what we have produced in our students up to this point and plan on continuing to do so. Below is a chart comparing the qualifications of students graduating from the MLK Firefighter Academy with cadets graduating from the Cleveland Fire Training Academy.

<b>Certification</b>	<b>MLK Firefighter Academy</b>	<b>Cleveland Fire Training Academy</b>
Firefighter II 240-hour (ODPS)	YES	YES
Emergency Medical Technician – Basic (NREMT)	YES	YES
Hazardous Materials Technician (HazMat)	YES	YES
Emergency Radio Dispatcher (NAED)	YES	NO

The Cleveland Fire Training Academy (CFTA) turns out some of the best firefighters in the country without a doubt. The advantage that we have over the CFTA is that we have our students for a four year period while the CFTA has its students for only sixteen weeks. We have the advantage of intimately knowing our student's character, strengths and weaknesses, motivation, and ability and then being able to shape these characteristics to give them the best chance for success in life in whatever they choose to do.

## Implementation

A direct career pathway should be created by City Charter to allow MLK Firefighter Academy graduates direct entry into the Cleveland Fire Training Academy. The current practice within the city is that even in cases where an individual has already obtained his or her Firefighter and EMS certification prior to being hired by the city they must go through the full fire training academy curriculum. Even in cases where firefighters from other municipalities are hired they must complete this training program and we see no reason to change that. Our students would enter the CFTA to undergo the identical State of Ohio training curriculum that they already successfully completed and could easily display that they have the required knowledge, skills and abilities needed to function as a firefighter within the City of Cleveland. In light of the fact that the citizens of the city invest four years of their tax dollars in training these students we believe that this would be a way to leverage those tax dollars by allowing the citizens to benefit directly from our students service to the city as they enter the workforce as Cleveland firefighters. Providing a career pathway for City of Cleveland high school graduates to obtain entry level jobs paying approximately \$50,000.00 annually would go a long way towards validating our school system and participating in its rejuvenation. The city gains by obtaining quality employees that have already shown strong ties to the city and the community while the students and their families gain by obtaining potentially lifelong well paying employment that will improve their lives and those of their immediate families. This is too important of an opportunity to pass up. Our future depends on it.



# MLK Public Safety Academy Curriculum

## 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

Resumes; What they consist of and how to construct one properly.

Interviewing Skills: Do's and don'ts of the interview process.

Law and Public Safety career overview.

## 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

Foundations of Public Safety.

Introduction to Public Safety.

Overview of 11<sup>th</sup> Grade courses.

## 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

Emergency Medical Technology (EMT-B)

Unarmed Self Defense

Criminal Justice

- Forensics

- Crime Scene Investigation

- Policing

Adult Parole Authority-Mentoring Program

## 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Private Security**

- 132 hr Certification course thru OPOTA

### **Dispatching**

- 40 hr Certification course thru NAED (National Academy of Emergency Dispatchers)

### **Certified Firefighters Course**

- 240 hr State of Ohio certification course through Department of Public Safety



## Contact Information

### *Vanguards of Cleveland, Inc.*

Anthony Luke, President  
(216) 820-1370 – Direct  
tluke@vanguardsofcleveland.org  
www.vanguardsofcleveland.org

### *MLK Firefighter Academy*

Martin Luther King, Jr. School of  
Law & Municipal Careers  
Terrence Watson, Program Director  
(216) 410-0052 – Direct  
twatson@vanguardsofcleveland.org

### *Cuyahoga Community College*

#### *Fire Training Academy*

Ted Huffman, Commander  
(216) 987-5063 – Office  
Teddie.Huffman@tri-c.edu

### *Cleveland Metropolitan School District*

Katrina S. Myers, Interim Manager  
Career & Technical Education and Workforce Development  
Department of Post-Secondary Education  
Phone: (216) 858-1224  
Cell: (216) 701-5727  
Fax: (216) 774-7669  
Katrina.Myers@cmsdnet.net

