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The K-12 Career Development

In Butler County, Ohio, the K-12 career development process is structured to promote success for students.

How do we motivate students in today's world to achieve high levels, make wise academic choices and prepare to compete in a global economy? In Butler County, Ohio, Butler Technology and Career Development Schools (Butler Tech) firmly believes that systematic delivery of career development theory and practice integrated with academic content standards will enable students to do all of the above.

Because of this, Butler Tech's Career Initiatives division delivers a countywide career development program in a thoughtful and structured way designed to promote success for all Butler County students, K-12. Career Initiatives at Butler Tech is supported by the Ohio Department of Education through Ohio's Career Development Program.

Behind the Theory

According to Kenneth Gray in *Getting Real*, seniors in high school should exhibit four characteristics upon graduation:

1. They should understand that career direction, even a tentative one, is as important to developing postsecondary success as good grades.
2. They should have made tentative career choices by the 10th grade.
3. They should have taken actions that would verify these choices during their final two years of high school.
4. They should use these decisions as one focus for postsecondary planning.

In his book, *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes*, Mel Levine identifies four growth processes that parents and educators are obliged to see nurtured in children:

1. Inner directions: Help students know

themselves and teach them to become goal-setters, and show them how to reach short- and long-term aims.

2. Interpretation: Help students get to know the outside world. They need to become proficient at on-the-job learning, interpreting new knowledge and integrating what can be gathered from day-to-day experience.
3. Instrumentation: Develop skills in students that foster high-quality thinking and productivity as illustrated in organizational skills, brainstorming power, creativity and sound decision-making in a systematic manner.
4. Interaction: Develop in students interpersonal skills that include communications skills, development of work-life relationships and sophisticated political behavior.

Butler Tech and Ohio's Career Development Program have worked hard to provide programming that addresses



Process

By Deborah Snyder and Sherry Jackson

these issues through the development of students' career maturity and thoughtful selection of coursework in developing an educational plan.

In Practice

Career development is a K–12 process that culminates with the eighth through 12th grade Individual Career Plan (ICP) and the 11th through 12th grade Career Passport exit document. Ohio's Career Development Program is the foundation for the work of Butler Tech. The process provides resources and support to give students in grades K–5 opportunities to increase awareness of careers; in grades 6–8 opportunities to explore careers; and in grades 9–12 opportunities for exploration and planning for careers. Key concepts that are a part of the career development process are emphasized in each grade level category.

Butler Tech has demonstrated a firm commitment to the career development of all students within the nine Butler

County associate school districts through an initiative that encourages districts to adopt K–12 career development board policy with identified performance measures. The purpose of the Butler Tech initiative is to provide financial support and resources to districts, helping them prepare students for their postsecondary career plans through awareness, exploration, planning and preparation.

By helping a student understand his/her interests, skills and aptitudes, and combining that with information about career clusters and careers, as well as current labor market information, the students can make informed decisions and bring relevance to educational plans, leading them to successful careers and lives.

Each year, performance measures are collected to evaluate the effectiveness of Butler Tech's Career Initiatives program. Miami University's Applied Research Center is hired to conduct interviews of an interval random sample of five percent of students in eighth, 10th and 12th grades.

Students in eighth and 10th grades are asked the following questions:

1. At this time, what is your career goal?
2. What courses or classes are you taking or will you take in high school to reach your goal?
3. What do you plan to do after high school to reach your goal?
4. Are there any other activities in or out of school that support your career goal?

Students in 12th grade are asked the following:

1. What is your career goal?
2. What do you plan to do after high school to achieve your goal? If the student indicates college, work, apprenticeship or military plans, he or

Key Concepts of Career Development

Grades K–5: Awareness

- Self-Awareness
- Community Involvement
- Decision-Making and Goal-Setting
- Reduction of Bias
- Employability Skills
- Economics
- Career Information

Grades 6–8: Exploration

- All concepts in K-5 and 9-12

Grades 9–12: Exploration and Planning

- Self-Assessment
- Exploration
- Future Trends
- Career-Technical Orientation
- Academic Planning



Future Fair

Fifth-grade students participate in science projects related to agriculture, chemistry and computer sciences.



she is asked what specific steps have been taken.

Students' responses are evaluated for their appropriateness. At no time is a student's career goal judged to be appropriate or inappropriate; it is the plans and actions that support a student's career goal that are deemed appropriate or inappropriate. The established standard is that at least 75 percent of

the students interviewed will be able to articulate appropriate career goals and plans.

Rubrics are used to evaluate two percent of 10th-grade students' ICP electronic career portfolios and 12th grade Career Passports. Career Initiatives staff review students' ICPs to evaluate each school's career development program to ensure that students have had the opportunity for documentation

of their thoughts and experiences in the development of their career maturity. Career Passports are reviewed to maintain the quality of the document, thereby making it more useful for students. The Career Passport is designed to be a living document; it is intended to be continuously developed as a student progresses through future education and work experiences.

Performance measure results are reported annually to the Butler Tech Board of Education as well as each associate school's board of education. The underlying philosophy is that those things that are measured and reported will improve.

Actions

Each school district in Butler County is unique; therefore, each district's approach to the career development process is unique. Activities, resources and services provided by Butler Tech are utilized according to each district's individual philosophy, student population and needs. The following activities, resources and services are provided.

Career Specialists Assigned to Districts: Career specialists work at all levels within the school districts they serve, from superintendents and principals to curriculum directors to teachers and students. They spend a major portion of their time in associate districts helping teachers with the infusion of career development concepts into lessons, activities and events. Additionally, career specialists plan and coordinate countywide events to further student opportunities for career awareness, exploration and planning.

Curriculum: One of the positive outcomes of Butler Tech's adopted board policy has been the work of aligning Ohio's Career Development Key Concepts to Ohio Academic Content Standards. Because Career Development Key Concepts easily lend themselves to infusion with academic standards, several Butler County districts are in the process of completing a K-12 cross-walk. Through this integration, career development concepts become a part of

Adopt-a-Class



Above: Seniors in the D. Russel Lee welding program help a fourth-grade student weld her name onto a piece of metal. Left: After the project, Fairfield North Elementary fourth grade students show off the results of their new welding skills.



Career Camp

Students learn about graphic design in the commercial arts lab and participate in a criminal justice driving simulation.



the school's academic calendar and are no longer considered "add-ons."

Adopt-A-Class: Career Initiatives offers programs that introduce elementary school children to the world of work. One program, Adopt-A-Class, was developed to give fourth-grade students exposure to various careers through the program labs at D. Russel Lee (DRL), Butler Tech's career-technical high school. Three DRL programs participate in Adopt-A-Class: welding technology, culinary arts and the digital media arts academy.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this program is the interaction between fourth-grade students and their high school mentors. This interaction is facilitated through a series of structured activities in the areas of math, language arts and social studies that increase students' awareness of careers and educational opportunities.

Future Fair: Future Fair is a special one-day, career-focused event that is offered to fifth-grade students in all Butler County schools each school year. On the day of Future Fair, 700–800 students attend three hands-on workshops at the Miami University Hamilton campus. These workshops are presented by Miami college professors, area business and service organization employees, and area public school personnel.

The goal is that, through hands-on experiences, students will understand that the academics they are learning in their classrooms are crucial for their future careers, whatever they may be. For many students, this is their first exposure to a college campus, and they come away with a feeling of excitement for the careers to which they have been exposed, and for the possibility of one day returning to a college campus as a student.

Family and Consumer Sciences: Districts throughout the county have made the decision to offer comprehensive career exploration courses as electives or requirements through work and family studies classes at the middle and high school levels. Students receive instruction to help them develop a life-management plan, develop strategies for lifelong career planning, build and maintain constructive interpersonal relationships, and coordinate personal and career responsibilities for well-being of self and others.

Career Camp: Career Camp is a special event offered to students at the end of their eighth-grade year. This three-day event gives students opportunities to explore their individual interests and engage in activities, from hands-on exploration in career-technical labs to visits to a business and a college

campus. On the first day, students take an interest assessment that helps them determine the career-technical programs they will visit. Data collected at DRL shows that 32 percent of students who attended Career Camp have returned to Butler Tech as students.

Electronic Individual Career

Plan: In Ohio, eighth-grade students begin the development of an (ICP). Through this process, students actively work to establish a career goal by gathering information from career research, a variety of career-development activities and projects, and the results from a combination of interest, skills and values assessments. The ICP process culminates in the creation of the Career Passport, an exit document required of Butler County graduates.

The need to overcome difficulties presented by the school-to-school movement, and sometimes loss, of the traditional ICP folder motivated the Career Initiatives staff to research the possible implementation of an electronic ICP. To that end, the staff began to work with National Career Assessment Services, Inc. (NCASI), which operates the Kuder Career Planning System (www.kuder.com). In conjunction with NCASI, an electronic ICP was developed. The resulting system includes three assessments: Kuder Career Search with Person Match (interest), Kuder Skills Assessment and the Super's Work Values Inventory.

More importantly, the system provides a lifetime electronic portfolio for students where they can document career experiences, create educational plans and develop a working resume. The resulting program encompasses all aspects of Ohio's Career Development Program, grades 8–12, and gives students a vehicle to complete the three student-generated pieces for the Career Passport.

Career Passport: The Career Passport is a part of the career development process that prepares juniors and seniors for their next steps after high school. It also provides employers and higher education personnel with clearer



information about the student.

The contents of the Career Passport include three student-generated pieces: resume, career narrative and verification of employability skills (SCANS). To complete these three documents, students use skills that are addressed in the Ohio Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts. For this reason, the Career Passport pieces are usually completed in students' junior and senior years as a part of the English curriculum.

Ohio's Career Development Program provides teachers and students with a variety of resources for understanding and completing the Career Passport. The staff of Career Initiatives adds to this support by offering training to teachers. They also provide standards-based Career Passport lesson plans and other staff-generated resources. To promote the quality of the Career Passport, Career Initiatives sponsors

a Career Passport Competition each spring. Judging and prizes for this event are provided through donations from area businesses and colleges.

OCIS: The Ohio Career Information System (OCIS, <http://ocis.ode.state.oh.us>) is a career-exploration system made available to Ohio districts through the Ohio Department of Education. Career Initiatives purchases OCIS site licenses for Butler County schools. Within this system, students have access to career interest and skills assessments, as well as a wealth of career exploration, college exploration and scholarship search information. OCIS provides additional valuable career information for use with the ICP/Career Passport process.

Conclusion

Through Butler Tech's career development programs and monetary support, the systematic implementation of a variety of career development experiences,

including awareness and exploration of careers and planning for career success, have been incorporated into daily learning through integration of career development key concepts with academic content standards. Performance measures show that the number of students with the ability to articulate an appropriate career goal is increasing. We believe that we are successfully achieving our goal of motivating students in today's world to achieve high levels, make wise academic choices, and be positioned to prepare to compete in a global economy. ■

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