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Finding a path to success

Friday, September 19, 2008

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Graham
High
School
teachers
and
students

will **Charly Simmons, field manager for Kuder, trains career and technology teachers from Graham High School on using and implementing the data received from assessments as part of the Achieve Texas education initiative to prepare students for success. (Photo b**

soon be using a new tool in an effort to help kids understand their career goals sooner.

In partnership with Kuder, a standard in career planning, the Texas Business and Education Coalition has formed a research based education and career planning system called Achieve Texas.

With Achieve Texas, students can take three different online assessments: career search, skills assessment and work values inventory.

The career search assessment determines interests to narrow down prospective paths to a few of the 16 federally defined career clusters or occupational groups by asking to rate a series of three different activities in order of preference.

When the assessment is complete, the results rate each of the clusters in order of preference corresponding to interests.

Some of the clusters include agriculture, food and natural resources, human services, information technology, manufacturing, education and training, health science, finance and government and public administration.

In addition to coordinating interests with careers, the assessment also provides a feature known as Person Match. According to the Kuder Web site, Person Match compares an individual's results will nearly 2,000 people in satisfying careers representing nearly 90 percent of the occupations currently available in the United States.

Profiles written by actual people from all walks of life with interests most closely matching those assessed are made available within the top five career clusters to lend a greater understanding to the types of people who find happiness and success in all sorts of positions.

When combined with the skills assessment results, a person's interests and aptitudes help to further narrow the seemingly limitless choices.



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Also worked into the program is an option to explore occupations and even locate employers in the area that have positions matching those occupations. The idea is that young people can research prospective employers and make connections for internships or job shadowing and provide them with a chance to experience a job to see if that is something they want to do.

GHS Student Counselor Shannon Bozeman said the goal is not to direct students to any one occupation.

"Essentially, we're helping kids to find a focus or a concentration for college," he said.

He added that this program stems from a desire among schools, parents and employers to try and prepare kids to know what they want to do or are equipped to do.

"We're not trying to drive a kid into a career but help them find a career cluster," said Bozeman.

Bozeman feels giving students an occupational group to focus on greatly narrows their course of study when arriving at college or gives them an edge on taking relevant classes in high school but still leaves a number of options as to actual job position. There are more than 100 jobs within the human services cluster alone and health sciences has many more.

One of the goals according to information from the Achieve Texas Web site is to promote career understanding in elementary school, then to transition into career exploration in middle school with the hope that concentration on a specific career cluster in high school will better transition into career preparation in postsecondary schooling.

The assessment and research tools will soon be available to all Graham Junior High and Graham High School students.

Career and technology teachers received training on the program last week and have made it available to all of their students which include most sophomores. The rest of the high school teachers received their training this week.

The plan is for students from sixth through 12th grade to take the assessment every year or multiple times a year, said Bozeman, but it will be available to them at anytime for the rest of their lives.

He said he knows that their interests will change but by keeping reports they can track trends.

Students and parents may receive registration and login instructions from Bozeman at the high school campus.