

APS students explore their future

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Alamogordo 10th-graders had an opportunity to explore potential careers firsthand last Thursday. Sophomores in the school system rode buses and were treated to a day of visiting job sites and listening to presentations about careers related to their personal fields of interest.

The first career technical education business and industry tour was developed to give sophomores a taste of what is out there in their chosen fields, said Joe Jaramillo, director of career and technical education for Alamogordo Public Schools.

Six buses took students into the community on various career track tours.

The medical tour visited New Mexico State University-Alamogordo's nursing program, Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center and Alamogordo Physical Therapy Center.

Other tours looked at the business community, government services, hospitality and banking industry, industrial engineering opportunities and science engineering.

The engineering tours took students as far as White Sands Missile Range and the Holloman Air Force Base Test Track.

"It's amazing what we can accomplish when nobody cares who gets the credit," Jaramillo said of numerous participants in the project, which brought

the schools, businesses and college together to forward the cause of inspiring students.

Ninety students participated in the tours Thursday. Students who had taken the Kuder career assessment and had appropriate permission from their parents were able to join the tours.

"One of the things we are asking kids to do is a career interest assessment," Jaramillo said.

Students were assigned to tours according to what their assessment results indicated, he said.

"We chose sophomores for a variety of reasons," Jaramillo said. "For one thing, most kids who drop out do it between their sophomore and junior years. Also, there is an increased need for planning for the future as they go into the higher grades."

One of the messages APS is trying to send students is that learning does not stop with high school, Jaramillo said.

"Twenty-first century jobs are going to require the ability to retrain," he said. "We are serious about making sure the kids are workplace ready."

Student response to the tour was mostly positive. Assessments from participants said the students would recommend the tours for other students and they gained valuable experience from the presentations.

The tour "helps to decide what jobs I want to do," wrote Alyssa Lawson in her assessment on the medical tour. She is fairly certain she wants to be a labor and delivery nurse, she said.

On the business tour, Jackie Ryson said she was surprised by what she learned at the radio station.

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"This was a great experience," Ryson wrote in her assessment.

Trey Kaehler wrote, "I didn't know that many different kinds of engineering went into rockets and missiles." He was on the science engineering tour.

The Career Technical Education Committee is an APS program backed by the Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce and NMSU-A, said the group's publicity chairman, Allen Stenger.

CTE not only is involved in getting students on the learning tours, but also in bringing the career information to the students, Stenger said. One of the things CTE is doing is getting career displays up in various schools in the district. The group also had a booth at the Holloman Air Force Base Open House Oct. 24, manned by teachers, parents and students to let the community know about CTE.

The next project, Stenger said, is to have a career fair that will be Feb. 26 from 1 to 6 p.m. at the high school. The event is not a job fair where businesses are recruiting employees, Stenger said. Rather, it is an opportunity for students and the public to see what is out there in the basin in terms of jobs.

Kim Robinson, of NMSU-A, is organizing the event.

"Anyone in the community is welcome," Robinson said. "This will be like a showcase of careers. We encourage the public to come between 4 and 6 p.m. after the students are out of school."

Businesses interested in participating in the event should contact Lisa Patterson at 812-6004, Robinson said.

Break-out sessions for "soft skills" will also be offered during the fair, Robinson said. Resume

writing and other issues will be addressed in mini-classes.

Kuder available online

The Kuder Assessment is a tool for helping students determine their interests and pursue a career pathway into something they would be happy doing.

Results of the Kuder can travel with students even beyond high school. The information saved on the Kuder Web site can be kept and shared. Up to four resumes can be developed and saved as well.

Parents have the opportunity to find out what their children are interested in because the Kuder results are available, by computer, to students and their families. School schedules can be adjusted early, before freshmen are lost in the hallways, if parents will work with them and use the assessment as a tool.

Parents can call Joe Jaramillo's office at 812-6005 for more information on their children's Kuder results.

Contact Elva K. Österreich at eosterreich@alamogordonews.com.

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