

Search
 This Site Web Search powered by **YAHOO! SEARCH**



Print Email Font Resize

Schools prepare students for the future

By DAN BARKER, Times Staff Writer
Posted: 11/20/2009 03:42:51 PM MST

Fort Morgan schools at every level are trying to turn students' minds to the future.

Beginning at the elementary level, on to middle school and into high school, counselors are asking students to think about what they might want to do once they graduate or are no longer in school. That's a big task, because there are many paths to take, they say.

"Each student is unique," said Becky Gibbs, a Fort Morgan High School counselor.

They have their own dreams and aspirations, she said. For some, the goal is college. For others, the goal is vocational school or a career of a different kind.



Students from Fort Morgan Middle School wore matching T-shirts during a visit to the University of Northern Colorado recently, and some still wear them to school. (Special to The Times)

Counselors cannot treat them all like a cookie cutter would a lump of dough, Gibbs said.



Fort Morgan Middle School students had a chance to do some creative handcrafts as part of their visit to the University of Northern Colorado. (Special to The Times)

Elementary Elementary school counselors have done a variety of things to help children start thinking about the future, in ways which are developmentally appropriate.

For instance, kindergarten children at the Sherman Early Childhood Center are given handouts which feature people in occupations they are familiar with, such as doctors, nurses, farmers, firefighters, police officers, teachers and secretaries, said Jean Renshaw-Fritzler, counselor at Green Acres Elementary School and the Sherman center.

At that early age, the main thing is to help them think about different ideas, but it is far too early to really start thinking about the future, she said.

However, by fourth grade students are thinking about actually doing work like babysitting and delivering newspapers, Renshaw-Fritzler said. They see videos which talk about professions in more detail to make them more aware of what work is out there.

Recently, the elementary school and Baker Central School counselors came together to start a new computer-based career program, said Amy Prouty, counselor at Pioneer Elementary School and Lincoln High School.

This program called Kuder Galaxy is age and developmentally appropriate as it exposes

more news

- Community garden resource for many
- Many to close for holiday
- St. Charles vols spearhead FM
- Brush family offers free dinners Thursday
- Schools prepare students for the future

Most Viewed Most E-Mailed

(From the last 12 hours)

1. On the beat _ Fort Morgan police
2. Covelli to wed Unrein
3. Morgan County Court
4. Patty Wickstrom, 46
5. 'Digger comeback grabs some Denver attention
6. In the courts - County court Nov. 19
7. Brush family offers free dinners Thursday
8. In the courts - County court Nov. 18
9. Cheryl Hay, 59
10. Schools prepare students for the future

children to a range of interests and jobs they might enjoy, she said.

The software is meant for kids from kindergarten to fifth grade and will be used in all the elementary schools, said Matthew McClain, counselor at Baker Central.

Kuder is an online early career awareness program which shows children the world of work while also giving them tools to achieve self-understanding and enhance skills. It has a flexible framework of activities allowing kids to play, watch, do and explore career possibilities. It is entertaining, but also offers feedback to parents and teachers.



Fort Morgan Middle School students were surprised that the University of Northern Colorado student center had a food court. (Special to The Times)

This system is just now getting started, but kids at Baker Central have always had chances to explore careers, McClain said.

Last year, he organized a college and career fair —bringing representatives from Morgan Community College, Northeastern Junior College, the University of Northern Colorado and the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design — to give the fifth- and sixth-grade students a look at possibilities, he said.

The Baker kids loved it and said their eyes were opened to what they need to do, McClain said. They also learned about options such as nursing, massage therapy and mechanic programs offered nearby, which they said they did not know were available. He plans to do another fair this year.

He talks with classes about how they have to be prepared with the necessary background to be able to make the choices they want, whether they want to become physicians or mechanics, McClain said.

This early emphasis on career is pretty new, but national standards recommend such an early focus on work, and that is a big push now, he said.

The goal is for children to become prepared for what they want to do, McClain said.

Even at early ages, counselors are aware that not all kids will go to college, which means exposing them to the idea of jobs such as work in construction and oil fields, Renshaw-Frintzler said.

“We’d love for everybody to go to college, but that is perhaps unrealistic,” McClain said.

The overall plan is for the elementary school career focus to carry the same messages students will hear as they go on to later grades, Prouty said.

FMMS

Recently, every eighth-grader at Fort Morgan Middle School went on a trip to the University of Northern Colorado to learn about what college is really like, said Carolyn Helget, FMMS counselor.

Fortunately, UNC paid for the transportation and food as a way to reach out to students on the plains, she said.

They had a chance to explore art, lifetime sports, the chances of college for immigrants and minorities and what it is like at college, Helget said.

Many students said they were impressed by what they saw and did, she said.

One mother said college is all her daughter talks about any more, and she would be the first generation in her family to go to higher education, Helget said.

None of the kids said they thought it was a waste of time and most were impressed by how the college students who worked with them acted as if the middle school kids were important, she said.

They were struck by the message that they could go to college no matter what their circumstances, Helget said, realizing that if they could get the grades they could find the money through various programs.

This was only one of the efforts at FMMS to interest students in college and other training, she said.

This is important, because early ACT data shows less than 20 percent of eighth graders are on target to be ready for college-level work by the time they graduate from high school, Helget said.

Many also do not have the knowledge and skills they will need for high school, which

means the door to their futures may already be closed, according to an ACT report on "The Forgotten Middle."

That means middle school students must begin to prepare for high school and college early, Helget said.

Otherwise, they may not be able to take advantage of their opportunities.

Educators must intervene before high school, she said.

The ACT Explore Test that is given to middle school students has a section which is an interest inventory, and the results show the careers which fit each student's interests, Helget said.

This gives educators a chance to sit down with students and compare what they are doing academically with what they would like to do in their careers, she said.

Students learn where they need to improve or continue their progress, and this data also gives the school knowledge of how to guide them, Helget said.

It is important to help middle school kids to understand that what they are doing at that time of their lives could impact their futures, she said.

Each year, middle-school students also have representatives of higher education come to their school, and this year it will be in the form of a fair on Dec. 8, Helget said.

They hear about the advantages of college education and the possibilities for financial aid, she said.

Part of that is signing up with College Invest, a program which offers scholarships to students who achieve a certain grade point average and who have not been expelled from school.

A pilot class called Success 101 has also begun at both FMMS and Fort Morgan High School, Helget said.

Two classes of middle school kids are taking this class, which introduces them to the reality of school, life and adulthood, she said.

One aspect of the class is showing kids how much money it would take to live the lifestyle they would like to have, and what it would take to earn that kind of income, Helget said.

Students then draw up a 10-year plan of how to reach their goals, she said.

This class is not just about wild-eyed dreams, but how they can make their goals happen, Helget said. It puts the students' feet firmly on the ground.

They asked themselves who they are, what they want and how they can get it, she said.

FMHS

Every freshman coming into FMHS must take Success 101, and that is only the beginning of many programs meant to guide students to success careers, Gibbs said.

During freshmen orientation, educators and peers emphasize the need to succeed in their classes, she said.

Not only do they hear about rules and expectations, they are impressed with the need to work hard.

Counselors sit down with each student at least once a year to talk about what they want to do and what they need to do to make that happen, Gibbs said. That may mean mapping out a series of classes that are required for a field.

Those who may not know what they want to do can take the career exploration class the business department offers, she said.

Once a month during their senior year, students must come to hear "senior presentations," which inform them about college admissions policies, how to apply to schools, how to access scholarships and financial aid, how to write college essays for admission and when they can take college admission tests, she said.

Counselors want to get the seniors moving on their plans, because college deadlines for admission and financial aid are moving to earlier in the year, Gibbs said.

Parents nights offer the families the same kinds of information, she said.

People need to be aware of these programs, and to make sure their children use the information productively, Gibbs said.

Senior newsletters go out every two weeks, letting them know about the most current

information on lists of scholarships, complete with eligibility requirements, especially for local scholarships, she said. At the same time, counselors help students apply for things like the Boettcher Foundation Scholarships.

Students can also look on various Web sites to find available scholarships, or search the Web for a specific topic like "woman engineer scholarship" to find possibilities, Gibbs said.

The all-day Path to Scholarship program helps migrant and low-income students to understand their options as representatives come to talk specifically to them, she said.

This gives this special group of students a chance to set goals and begin applications for schools, Gibbs said.

Students also have the chance to check out options at the annual College Day, when 30-40 colleges from Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska and Wyoming come to town to show kids what they have to offer, she said.

More local colleges make specific visits, too.

Some of those colleges include vocational training for those who are not interested in traditional college, Gibbs said. They also need to learn about the options out there.

Financial Aid Night and the FAFSA Night are particularly important, she said.

Financial aid night offers parents and students an overview of the process of accessing grants and loans for college or vocational schools, Gibbs said.

A prerequisite for most financial aid is the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). FAFSA night is a time when parents can bring their tax information in and actually fill out this important application while experts are on hand to answer questions, she said.

The FAFSA can seem overwhelming, and unless the family is rich, it is something that must be filled out each year, Gibbs said.

There is also an NCAA Night to help families register with the organization if the student will be playing college sports, as well as making sure the required courses for NCAA approval are completed, she said.

Some students may want to begin college early by taking classes which are offered in the building, but which offer credit through MCC in subjects like algebra and trigonometry, Gibbs said.

Others may want to take MCC's career and technical education classes like auto technology, health science, collision repair or multi-media production, she said.

All of those options are important, because not everyone will go to college, Gibbs said. But they may be successful in other ways.

— Contact Dan Barker at business@fntimes.com.



Font Resize



POST YOUR COMMENTS:

Type in your comments to post to the forum

Name
(appears
on your
post)

Comments

Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:

Post Comment



Please note by clicking on "Post Comment" you acknowledge that you have read the [Terms of Service](#) and the comment you are posting is in compliance with such terms. **Be polite.** Inappropriate posts may be removed by the moderator. Send us your feedback.

[Super Cheap Car Insurance Quotes](#)

Get Discount Auto Insurance Quotes
Online - Rates from \$15
USInsuranceOnline.com



[Refinance and Save \\$1,000's](#)

\$200K Mortgage for \$917/month. No
Obligation.
www.pickAmortgage.com

[Obama Urges Homeowners to Refinance](#)

\$90,000 Refinance \$489/mo.
www.LowerMyBills.com

Ads by Yahoo!

Fort Morgan Times & FortMorganTimes.com | 329 Main Street, Fort Morgan, CO 80751 | (970) 867-5651 | About Us | Contact Us
Copyright Notice | Privacy Policy | Subscriber Services | Site Map | RSS  

Copyright © 2009
MediaNews Group

Visit our other websites: DailyCamera.com | ColoradoDaily.com | BroomfieldEnterprise.com | DenverPost.com | EPTrail.com
LamarLedger.com | FortMorganTimes.com | BrushTribune.com | Journal-Advocate.com | Women's Magazine |
WheelsColorado.com
Buffzone.com | MyTownColorado.com | Boulder Hotels | CameraHomes.com

Visit our other websites: DailyCamera.com (Boulder, CO) | ColoradoDaily.com (Boulder, CO) | LongmontLedger.com (Longmont, CO) | BroomfieldEnterprise.com (Broomfield, CO) |
DenverPost.com (Denver, CO) | EPTrail.com (Estes Park, CO) | LamarLedger.com (Lamar, CO) | FortMorganTimes.com (Fort Morgan, CO) | BrushTribune.com (Brush, CO) |
AkronNewsReporter.com (Akron, CO) | JulesburgAdvocate.com (Julesburg, CO) | Burlington-Record.com (Burlington, CO) | Journal-Advocate.com (Sterling, CO) | Women's Magazine |
WheelsColorado.com | Buffzone.com | MyTownColorado.com | BigGreenBoulder.com | CameraHomes.com | BoulderCountyGold.com - View all Media News Group websites