

DISTRICT PROFILE

Jasper, Tennessee

3,960 Students

12 Rural Schools

Overview

Career and technical education (CTE) is well-established throughout the state of Tennessee as an exceptional method for preparing students for post-secondary success after high school in both college and career. These programs offer invaluable opportunities for students to explore their occupational interests while also gaining new skills that will give them a competitive advantage in the job market. This is no different at **Marion County Schools in Jasper, Tennessee**, where approximately 88% of all students actively participate in a CTE concentration program prior to graduation.

As CTE has evolved over the years, leaders at Marion County Schools (MCS) have been eager to advance their programs by targeting new goals aimed at preparing students with the skills they'll need to succeed in today's workforce.

More specifically, district counselors needed a solution to identify career interests among students in 6-8th grade and guide enrollment within relevant courses of study to nurture each young learner's passion for a fulfilling career throughout their years in the Marion County School system. A monumental factor in reaching these goals was the district's decision to select Kuder Navigator (Navigator) as their preferred college and career readiness platform for all middle school students.

The Kuder Solution

In the fall of 2023, MCS partnered with Kuder and began implementing Navigator into their career and technical education curriculum. However, the district had actually utilized the award-winning career planning system many years earlier when it was provided to all public schools across the state of Tennessee via Edsouth.



We used Kuder for several years, and went through a few others. When we were considering which vendor to select in 2023, our team was focused on choosing the system that best fit the goals of our five-year CTE curriculum plan. We unanimously chose Kuder. The platform didn't look like what we remembered; it was much better and clear that Kuder was changing with the times to provide a system that could align to our district's vision for the future.

SHERRY PRINCE
CTE Director, Marion County Schools



Research-Based Assessments

Although Navigator featured a refreshed user interface, Prince noted that the accuracy of the system had not changed over the years as she stated, “My daughter is 30 now, but when she first got her [Kuder Career Interests Assessment](#) results we giggled because her top job was listed as brain surgeon and that was something she never envisioned for herself. Students taking that assessment used to receive a list of their top five jobs instead of programs of study. Back then, her top jobs all aligned to health sciences, which makes complete sense now that she’s a physical therapist!”

Progressing Toward Postsecondary Success

The Kuder assessments will continue to be a cornerstone of MCS’ five-year CTE curriculum plan as counselors at every school within the district strategically utilize Navigator to tackle grade-specific goals for middle school students:



6TH GRADE

What is a Career?



7TH GRADE

What am I good at?



8TH GRADE

What Program Should I Pursue in High School?

Among these younger grades, MCS is leveraging Navigator’s various college and career exploration tools to establish a solid foundation for career awareness by providing equitable exposure to a variety of career clusters. As they transition into high school, students will expand on this foundation by selecting from different CTE programs of study and dual-enrollment courses tailored to individual career clusters such as Agriculture Veterinary Science, Welding, Human Services, and more.

We see too many students changing their program of study in their first or second year of high school. After looking at the data, we noticed most students were pursuing courses of study that matched their parent’s profession. Navigator changes everything by helping them understand what other career options are out there and identify what they’re interested in right away to eliminate that doubt and uncertainty later on. Our counselors are then reinforcing those interests by engaging them in activities like career fairs, individual evaluations, field trips, and resume building workshops to get these students and their families truly committed to pursuing a relevant career pathway all the way through graduation.

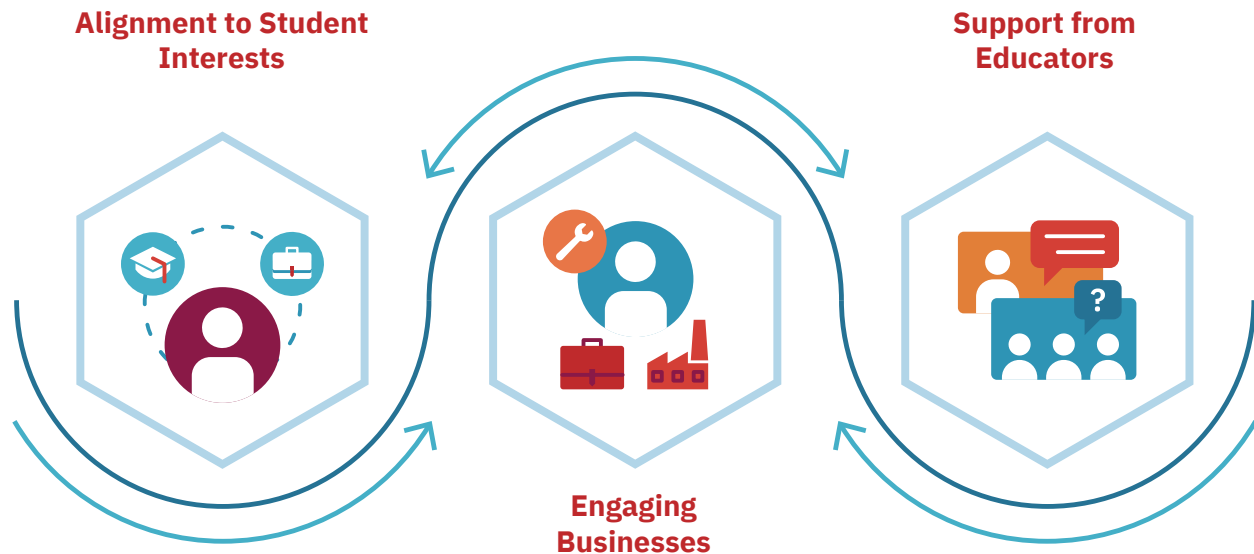
SHERRY PRINCE

CTE Director, Marion County Schools



Work-Based Learning Acceleration

Work-based learning (WBL) has been an excellent way for Marion County Schools to get upperclassmen involved in career planning beyond the classroom by **providing 11th- and 12th-grade students with hands-on learning experiences** across multiple different industries that bring the career exploration process to a whole new level.



The district’s rapidly growing WBL program has further **improved drop-out rates** for its CTE course as students are given the opportunity to immerse themselves in a career of interest to determine if it’s truly the right fit for them. Work-based learning also benefits students by developing valuable skills and transferrable credit hours that put them a step ahead in entering today’s workforce.

A Vision for the Future

Marion County Schools has already begun rolling out their five-year CTE curriculum plan that breaks down each component of the career planning process into critical stages with associated activities and requirements to achieve their primary goal of **getting 90% of all students to complete their chosen program of study**. Although MCS counselors and administrators clearly recognize that change is not easy, they have been excited to see the initial effects of implementing Kuder Navigator within their district, and fully intend to integrate more features of the college and career readiness platform into their curriculum to further improve CTE course enrollment and postsecondary transition success rates.