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College and Career Ready: What's the Library Got to Do With It?

Abstract

College and Career Ready, Career Clusters, and Career Pathways are buzz words often heard but not always understood. These terms will be discussed as information about the collaborative activities between Emporia High School (EHS) and Flint Hills Technical College (FHTC) is shared. One responsibility of Emporia High School guidance counselors is to assist students in exploring and choosing career pathway courses. To support the counselors, the librarians at both institutions have created resources and activities that engage students in career exploration. The FHTC librarian created a LibGuide that includes online handbooks, reports, and crosswalks from FHTC programs to the six career fields and sixteen career clusters. Resources and activities created by the EHS librarian for the career fair, which helped students explore their learning styles and career interests, will be discussed. Although the activities are specific to these institutions they can be generalized for other settings.

Keywords

college and career readiness, collaboration

Introduction

Three educators had the common goal of helping students navigate the overwhelming number of career and college choices. Carmaine Ternes, Emporia High School (EHS) Librarian, Joy Haegert, Emporia High School (EHS) Guidance Counselor, and Janet Anderson-Story, Flint Hills Technical College (FHTC) Librarian, worked together to provide resources to help students at this critical point in their lives. The educators used the [Career Cluster Guidance Handbook](#), [The National Career Clusters Framework](#), [Kansas labor data](#) and [learning styles inventories](#) to prepare these materials.

Preparing Students to be College and Career Ready

Helping students find a career interest that is both fulfilling and a viable way to make a living is the goal of the College and Career Ready (CCR) program at EHS. The [Kansas Department of Education](#) (2013) has defined college and career ready to mean “an individual has the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, and employability skills to be successful in postsecondary education, in the attainment of an industry recognized certification or in the workforce, without the need for remediation” (p. 1).

On July 1, 2012, Kansas Governor’s [Career and Technical Education Senate Bill 155](#) was passed into law. Through secondary education targeted incentives this law endeavors to provide a Kansas workforce that is ready for high demand, high skill, high wage careers. Tuition reimbursement for designated in-demand careers was made available to provide a seamless transfer from secondary to post-secondary education. This collaboration encourages students to take post secondary classes while in high school and often leads to a one year technical certificate. One additional year of training may culminate in an associate of applied science degree. Each step in this educational pathway leads to higher wages than would otherwise be earned with just a high school diploma (Kansas Board of Regents, 2012, p. 1).

To help implement this seamless pathway to career development, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) used a modified version of [The National Career Clusters® Framework](#). The [Kansas model](#) begins with six career fields ranging from art to manufacturing. Grouped within each field are corresponding career clusters. For example, the Arts, Communication, and Information field has two clusters: Arts, Audio Visual Technology and Communications and Information Technology. Within the clusters are career pathways that include A/V communications or web and digital communications. [EHS has identified classes](#) that support specific pathways. These are groups of classes that provide introductory, technical, and application level classes related to a particular career pathway.

Pathway classes provide an opportunity for students to explore careers before they start postsecondary training/education. No school offers classes for all thirty-six pathways; however, all schools provide classes that relate to the sixteen more general career clusters. During the 2014-15 school year EHS offered courses corresponding to fourteen pathways. Post secondary institutions partnered with EHS to provide dual credit classes and/or programs thereby expanding career pathway choices. One of the partners, FHTC, allowed high school students to attend classes in fifteen of the nineteen available technical programs.

Table 1.

Career Cluster Pathway Classes and Programs available to EHS students at both EHS and FHTC

6 Career Fields	16 Career Clusters	Career Pathway	EHS Pathway Courses	FHTC Technical Programs
Arts, Communication, and Information	Arts, A/V Technology and Communication	Visual Arts	Yes	Graphic Arts Technology
		AV Communications	Yes	Interactive Multimedia Design
	Information Technology	Programming and Software Development	related only	Computer Program Design and Development
		Network Systems	related only	Network Tech
		Web and Digital Communications	related only	Interactive Multimedia Design
Business, Marketing, and Management	Business Management and Administration	Business Entrepreneurship and Management	related only	Business Administrative Technology
				Graphic Arts Technology
	Finance	Business Finance	Yes	
	Hospitality and Tourism	Restaurant & Event Management	Yes	Hospitality/Culinary Arts
		Travel and Tourism	Yes	Hospitality/Culinary Arts
	Marketing	Marketing	related only	Automotive Tech
			related only	Business Administrative Technology
Environmental and Agricultural Systems	Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources	Plant Systems	Yes	Power Plant Technology
Health Sciences	Health Sciences	Health Science	Yes	Dental Assisting
				Dental Hygiene
				Health Occupations Technology
				Practical Nursing
6 Career Fields	16 Career Clusters	Career Pathway	EHS Pathway Courses	FHTC Technical Programs

Human Resources and Services	Education and Training	Teaching/Training	Yes	
	Governmental and Public Administration	Government and Public Administration	related only	Business Administrative Technology
	Human Services	Consumer Services	Yes	Business Administrative Technology
		Early Childhood Development & Services	Yes	
		Family and Community Services	Yes	Health Occupations Technology
	Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security	Corrections, Security, Law, and Law Enforcement Services	Yes	Emergency Medical Services
				Dispatcher
Industrial, Manufacturing, and Engineering Systems	Architecture and Construction	Construction	related only	Construction
	Manufacturing	Production	Yes	Computerized Machine Tool Engineering
				Industrial Engineering Technology
				Welding Technology
	Science, Tech, Engineering, and Math (STEM)	Engineering and Applied Mathematics	Yes	Power Plant Technology
				Computerized Machine Tool Engineering
				Industrial Engineering Technology
Transportation, Distribution and Logistics	Mobile Equipment/Maintenance	related only	Automotive Technology	

Emporia High School Counseling

The college and career program at EHS is implemented at several levels. Spartan Success is a College and Career Ready (CCR) class to help all freshmen improve study habits, organization, and financial literacy. One activity involves students projecting themselves ten years into the future. They identify how they want to be living and how to plan for the career that supports

that lifestyle. To help them attain these goals, students open an account on the [Kansas Career Pipeline](#) (KCP), a subscription website provided by the district. Various KCP activities guide users to explore personal interests and match those interests to potentially satisfying careers. As part of these activities, students create a four to six year education plan and begin a personal e-portfolio. College and Career Ready activities are also embedded in the regular curriculum. Examples include students creating a resume in English composition class; participating in mock interviews in speech class; or creating videos or projects in art or music classes. Students upload artifacts to their KCP accounts enhancing their e-portfolio.

Career and Academic Planning Conferences

During the 2014-2015 school year, EHS reformatted the parent teacher conference days to a student led [Career and Academic Planning \(CAP\) Conference](#). The conference was changed for three reasons: to increase parental involvement and attendance, build a positive relationship with one educator in the student's life and facilitate a college and career conversation between students and their parents.

The CAP Conference allows time to review current grades and progress toward graduation. Students share their career interests, class options, and rate their competencies on a variety of employability skills. The teacher serves as conference facilitator promoting dialogue that leads to proactive steps for creating and reaching academic and career goals. The CAP Conference also includes time for parents to visit teachers, guidance counselors, college representatives, and/or community agencies.

Web-based Resources

Another component of the CCR program utilizes web based resources. These are very effective tools for linking occupational interests to the appropriate pathway classes. The students are first referred to their KCP accounts to review their interest inventory results which show their top five pathway recommendations. They then explore suggested career interests by reviewing the tasks, expected wages, and educational preparation requirements.

The [Career Clusters and Labor Data LibGuide](#) on the FHTC Library website has several resources connecting the student's career interest to a FHTC program or class. The guide provides information on current and projected job availability as well as salary projections at the entry, mid, and experienced levels. Job titles aligned with the nineteen FHTC programs are available. Each Cluster has a chart illustrating the career pathway, the corresponding FHTC Program, job titles relevant to that program/cluster, projected Kansas job openings for 2012-2022, and the average annual wage for someone in that particular job. There are also charts arranged by type of activity, such as art, business, cars, computers, etc., with the corresponding FHTC program and occupation. The LibGuide also provides links to reports, handbooks, and video clips to help counselors and teachers when guiding students. It also links to the [Technical Education Pays](#) brochure that is widely distributed to parents, students, and educators locally and statewide. It is designed to help parents make informed decisions about the type of post-secondary education that is best suited for their children's interests and aspirations.

Closing the Loop

Once careers are identified, the counselor and student meet regularly to review and revise the dynamic [education plan](#) ensuring all core and career pathway requirements are met. Issues such as the amount or type of training/education required, college admission test requirements, financial aid, and the college or career application process are discussed. If students are interested in postsecondary dual credit classes or programs, the counselor shares information about the EHS partnership with FHTC, Emporia State University (ESU), or other post secondary institutions. Assistance is provided at each step of the process as students progress toward high school graduation.

In addition to academic preparation, students are encouraged to be involved in career-related activities and clubs as well as service projects. Typically, students benefit from an opportunity to connect to the community, explore leadership opportunities, and participate in activities outside the classroom.

Library Facilitated College and Career Ready Activities

EHS has developed a College and Career Ready exploration day. Activities for students planning to continue their education could attend a college fair, tour area post secondary institutions, or learn about admissions test strategies. Those considering employment could attend a career fair, participate in job shadowing, or learn from professionals about opportunities in the 16 career clusters. Students also participated in three interactive lessons led by the librarian. A set of playing cards had been designed defining and illustrating each of the eight learning styles identified by Howard Gardner. Students reviewed these cards and chose three styles that seemed most familiar. They then compared their findings to a summary of the [Multiple Intelligences](#) provided by the librarian and discussed their talents with fellow students.

Students completed two online learning styles assessments. The [first](#), using Howard Gardner's work was text based while the [second](#) provided the results graphically. These tools analyzed the answers and recommended careers. From these results students chose a career to research using the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#). A third activity provided a [bibliography](#) which linked learning styles and career interests; allowing students to find books and "try on" occupations through fictional or non fictional accounts. These activities gave students new skills and knowledge to continue planning successful futures.

Conclusion

These integrated activities and materials help students match their interests with occupational opportunities. In utilizing and recommending librarian created resources, counselors assist students in identifying their academic and career aspirations both short and long term. The intention is to engage today's digital natives and improve their attitudes toward high school, college, and the workplace.

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