# Counseling for Careers Can Connect Students to a Goal Beyond High School Graduation

## SREB

Counseling for careers can give students a picture of what is needed to succeed in education and life; counseling ensures students take the right courses to prepare for future studies and careers and teaches the habits of success essential for students to achieve their goals.

Providing opportunities to participate in work-based learning and community volunteer activities takes students behind the scenes in business and industry to learn what they will be expected to know and do in a chosen career. A growing number of students are learning about and are earning industry certifications to jump-start their careers.

## Counseling by Careers Enables Students to Consider Their Interests and Aptitudes for the Future

### Using Data to Develop an Effective Counseling for Careers Program

Counselor **Jocelyn Kraus** and colleagues at **Big Spring High School** in Newville, Pennsylvania, created a needs assessment to identify the concerns of teachers, students and parents relative to improving counseling and advisement services. They also sought information on time management, accountability, continuum of care and school improvement.

The needs assessment was given to teachers and parents of students in grades K-12 and students in grades three through 12 in the entire district, which enrolls 2,500 students. Larger districts may want to administer such a survey school by school instead of district-wide, Kraus observed.

"We wanted to conduct the assessment to measure current trends in school counseling related to personal, social, academic and career issues in our district," Kraus said. Information was sought to move forward with a career counseling and advisement team, she noted.

### Completing the Survey

Students completed the survey with pencil and paper, while teachers and parents used SurveyMonkey, a free online survey software and questionnaire tool. The response from teachers was 80 percent to 90 percent participation.

Students checked items that concerned them under four major headings: Career/College, Personal/Social/Wellness, Academic, and Home/Family.



The Academic heading asked students if they had concerns about exam taking, attendance, grades, future planning, study skills, decision-making skills, and transitions to the ninth grade and to college and careers.

"We emphasized that the information was anonymous and that the survey was designed to help the counseling department provide better services to students," Kraus said. "We also urged students whose concerns were urgent or needed immediate attention to speak with a counselor."

The surveys yielded three major findings:

- Parents wanted to increase study skills for students at all levels.

- Students felt exam anxiety, even in elementary school.

- Teachers thought students needed help with study skills.

Students in grades nine through 12 need assistance with college applications, financial aid and career information; stress, anger and peer drama; future planning, grades and exam taking; and stress/fighting, siblings, divorce and parent/child relationships.

School leaders are using the needs assessment to develop plans for students in grades eight through 12 concerning transitions, careers, college, stress and effective communication. "Our goal is student success through an effective counseling and advisement program," Kraus said.

In January 2013, the school began the gradual introduction of a program to address concerns identified in the needs assessment.

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## Designing a Counseling System to Ensure Students Take the Right Courses for Achieving Educational and Career Goals

### Teacher-Mentors Champion Students to Achieve Higher and Graduate

**P**aris Cooperative High School (PCHS) in Paris, Illinois, serves 500 students in a partnership between two school districts. Ninety-seven percent of students are white; 63 percent are from low-income families.

"The lack of opportunities in the community and the low level of support for education from many parents have resulted in a 'don't care' attitude toward grades by many of our students," said **Gary Doughan**, language arts chair and *High Schools That Work* (*HSTW*) site coordinator.

A mentoring program began in 2003 with teachers volunteering their participation in the first two years. In the beginning, students and teachers met over lunch to talk about issues of interest and importance. Currently, every teacher participates by mentoring a group of no more than 15 students through four years of high school. Students are grouped alphabetically. The groups meet in homeroom daily for 10 minutes and once a month for 30 minutes between third and fourth periods.

Teacher-mentors facilitate grade-specific lessons and arrange for guest speakers, especially for seniors. "The programs demonstrate to students that teachers want to work with them to get the most out of high school and to prepare for the future," Doughan said. The mentoring lessons for each grade level include the following topics:

**Freshmen Mentoring**

- A student council speaker and a handbook quiz
- How well do you know PCHS?
- Letter writing
- Non-verbal communication

**Sophomore Mentoring**

- Exam preparation
- Job applications and interview practices
- Work ethic
- Review of the handbook: "How Well Do You Plan?"

**Junior Mentoring**

- Brainstorming skills for the real world and job shadowing
- Grade Point Average (GPA), transcripts, scholarship information
- Stress and time management

**Senior Mentoring**

- Practice in preparing college and scholarship applications
- College countdown, college costs, GPA and transcript
- Identity theft, credit cards
- Job applications, résumés and an interview packet

Other programs have evolved from the mentoring program at PCHS:

**STAR** (Students and Teachers Advancing Relationships) leaders are juniors and seniors who have applied and been chosen to assist teachers in mentoring freshmen. STAR leaders learn their mentees' names, conduct the group when teachers are checking mentees' grades, help teachers plan and lead mentoring sessions and deliver a mini-activity for mentees once a week. "Students not only have adults they can look to for help, but they have peers as well," Doughan said.

**Tiger Training** is orientation for students in grade eight. Incoming PCHS freshmen spend a day at the school to become familiar with the building and the curriculum. They meet the STAR leaders and are given opportunities to ask questions.

**Remediation and Acceleration** address the needs of students who have fallen behind and those who want to move ahead. An alternative school with alternative hours is available for students unsuccessful in a traditional high school setting, in danger of not graduating and behind in their credits. The remediation is offered from noon to 5:30 p.m. with students working at their own pace.

The sessions have an assistant principal, a guidance counselor and a classroom assistant who serve as proctors. Students wanting to get ahead can take online acceleration classes.

**Academies** have been established for students to study 16 career clusters. The academies are Academy of Commerce and Industry; Academy of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math; Academy of Health and Human Services; and Academy of the Humanities. The academies feature integrated academic and career/technical (CT) learning.

According to the *HSTW* Assessment, more PCHS students in 2012 than in 2010 completed the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum in English/language arts. More students experienced an intensive emphasis on the indices of high expectations, literacy, integrating academics into CT studies, quality CT studies, work-based learning and guidance. More students in 2012 than in 2010 scored at the advanced level on all three subject exams — reading, math and science.

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# Successful Schools Teach the Habits of Mind and Behaviors That Improve Student Success

## A Modern School Library Promotes Habits of Mind and Behavior

**K**arrie Davisson, library media specialist at **Pioneer Career and Technology Center** in Shelby, Ohio, has turned students' cries of "I don't read" into queries such as "Do you have this book?" After the school library was renovated in 2011 to update technology and content, Davisson met the challenge to convince students that libraries are friendly. Students are excited about reading in a technology-savvy environment where eBooks are readily available.

Davisson orders books that students suggest in addition to young adult book award winners and best sellers. "Students create the collection with their suggestions," she said. "The graphic novel section has grown tremendously through this approach."

The library has amassed an additional 1,368 printed books, 150 eBooks and many classroom sets of eBook novels, and has catalogued 3,532 textbooks. The center enrolls 911 students. "Students can access Pioneer's online library to check out books to read on their own technology devices," Davisson said.

### Buying New Books

The new books were purchased after extensive weeding of a very old collection and updating of books to meet the Common Core State Standards. "I decided to be proactive in creating a better nonfiction collection," Davisson said. "I wanted students to have access to the types of texts that they will encounter in college and careers."

Students operate a mobile library to bring the media center to other students in the hallways and the lunch area. Students can check out and return books through the mobile system, which is connected to the school's wireless network. "This operation empowers students who don't frequent the library," Davisson said. "They can suggest titles, talk about books and read to each other."

Davisson is working on an organizational system to replace the Dewey Decimal Classification, also known as the Dewey Decimal System, created in 1876. She is reorganizing the library by topic, like a bookstore, to make it quicker and easier for students to find books of interest.

### Flying Off the Shelves

"Books have been flying off the shelves," Davisson said. "Students feel involved with the library, because they are picking the books and creating displays as they develop good habits for the future."

**To support the concept of technology in learning, Davisson is teaching research and technology classes to enhance what students are learning in the classroom. She teaches lessons on how to use databases and other online resources to supplement the physical materials in the media center.**

Using the popular website Pinterest, which allows members to "pin" images, videos and other objects to their electronic pinboards, Davisson creates a pinboard for each content area. "Teachers can quickly access the boards to find lesson plans, videos and other



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**Karrie Davisson,**
Pioneer Career and Technology Center

resources I have identified for them," she said. The link to Davisson's math resource Pinterest page is http://pinterest.com/karriedavisson/math-resources-for-high-school/.

Davisson also implemented Lexile testing of every student. She makes a presentation showing students how to interpret their scores and emphasizes the importance of increasing their Lexile levels to be successful in college and careers. "The majority of America's incoming college freshmen read at a remedial level," Davisson said. **"The implementation of Lexile testing has made it possible for Pioneer Career and Technology Center to identify students who need intervention. Students have increased their Lexile levels an average of 50 points a year with the implementation of the Lexile testing."**

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## The Power of ICU: Helping Students Complete Every Assignment

According to Danny Hill and Jayson Nave, authors and consultants with The Power of ICU in Lebanon, Tennessee, their approach will rid schools of ineffective instructional practices and ensure students take responsibility for doing assigned work. "The Power of ICU — based on the concept of an intensive care unit in a hospital — provides a plan for defeating student apathy and low achievement," Hill said. "Apathetic students don't care about standards."

ICU in education requires every student to complete every assignment in every class. Teachers no longer award zeros for missed assignments. Instead, students are required to turn in work, no matter how long it takes. "The golden rule of ICU is never to leave students alone," Nave said. "The way to defeat student apathy is not to let students off the hook for their work."

Four truths guide teachers in implementing ICU:

- **Grades are a reflection of learning.** "This first truth is according to Thomas Guskey, a respected assessment and grading specialist," Hill said. "He says grades fail to reflect student learning if teachers mix in responsibility and other behaviors." Ken O'Connor, known as the "Grade Doctor," warns against including student behavior in grades. "Include only achievement," he says in his book *A Repair Kit for Grading*.

- **Inaccurate feedback is counterproductive.** "Deducting and/or adding points to students' grades for anything other than learning will result in inaccurate feedback," Hill said.

- **Learning is not a race.** Teachers should avoid saying, "You didn't meet my deadline, so I won't let you learn."

- **Remember the rigorous standards.** Unless every student completes every assignment, the Common Core State Standards and other rigorous standards will mean nothing.

In addition to their book, *The Power of ICU*, Hill and Nave are now offering a database for managing an ICU list of students. The database automatically sends email notifications to students' parents about missing assignments. A completed assignment can be attached to the email and returned to the teacher. Automatic text messages are also available as part of the database.

A testimonial from a principal at a middle grades school in Texas is evidence that the ICU method is working at that school. "Within days of implementation, one student said the email notification reached his parents, who became very upset," the principal said. "The student said he would be doing all of his work in the future." **The principal said 100 percent of student assignments were completed at his school in 2011-2012 with the assistance of ICU database communication with parents.**

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## Making Greater Use of Work-Based, School-Based and Community Strategies to Help Students Explore Careers

### Work-Based Learning: A Model for Success

**W**ork-based learning at **Henderson County High School** (HCHS) in Henderson, Kentucky, provides a lifeline for many families and the promise of a better future for many students, according to **Brian Bailey**, student transition coordinator for the career/technical (CT) unit. Bailey offered this scenario:

*"Imagine that Dad is out of work and Mom is working part time. Their high school student — a senior — doesn't know how he or she will be able to afford to attend college. Now, imagine that this student has a part-time job, an offer of a full-time job with benefits after graduation, and the prospect of receiving support from the employer to help pay for college."*

This situation is a reality for many families in the Henderson community of 46,000 residents. More than 200 of the school's 1,998 students are engaged annually in work-based learning to prepare for jobs after graduation. These students are among the more than 75 percent of HCHS students who graduate with a CT major of three or more credits.

The definition of work-based learning at HCHS is "an educational experience that includes participation of educators, employees, students, parents and community representatives that allows students to apply knowledge acquired in the classroom in the real world."

Bailey describes the types of work-based learning available to HCHS students:

- Internships (non-paid)
  - Job shadowing
  - School-based enterprises such as a bank, a school store, a greenhouse, a café, an IT help desk and an advertising design agency
  - Service learning
  - Mentoring
- Cooperative education (paid)
  - Students work on the job and receive pay for their work.



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HCHS receives active support from the community. The career areas that employ the most students in work-based learning are health sciences, family and consumer sciences, and business.

A student's journey to work-based learning begins in **grade eight**, when students are made aware of career options and career pathways and are able to tour the CT unit. **Ninth-graders** are oriented to specific careers through a career exploration unit. They have the opportunity to enroll in one CT course. **Students in grades 10-11** prepare for a chosen career by taking additional courses in a career pathway, attending career fairs and interacting with guest speakers. **Seniors** participate in work-based learning or continue to study in the classroom.

Students apply for work-based learning at the end of their junior year and are required to search for a work-based learning position in the summer between their junior and senior years. They must meet certain criteria, including regular school attendance, at least a C average in all courses in grade 11, and two consecutive courses in a career pathway. Their discipline records must be acceptable. The application letter includes an updated résumé, a cover letter and a list of references.

HCHS has identified actions to build a strong work-based learning program:

- **Community support —** Work with the local chamber of commerce and economic development organizations.
- **Communication —** Publicize the program and the need for support. Visit current and potential employers. Work with employers to align what students are learning in the classroom with what they need on the job.
- **Accountability —** Students must be accountable for their work-based learning experiences and school staff members must ensure that work-based learning is a positive learning experience. School administrators should allow time for staff to visit work-based learning sites. Documentation such as agreements or contracts, students' time sheets, and coordinators' site visit logs are crucial to program success.
- **Certification —** "Employers value students with credentials or industry certifications," Bailey said.
- **Sustainability —** Nurture relationships with local employers. Market the program to the students; make it competitive, and always be on the lookout for new opportunities for students.

Bailey cited challenges to overcome in a work-based learning program. They include the legal issues of labor laws, age restrictions, individuals with disabilities, liability insurance and student transportation to the job.

**"We have a 100 percent placement rate in our program," Bailey said. "This makes it possible for the more than 200 students in the program to earn more than $200,000 annually."**

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## Industry Certification Guides Students to Career Readiness

Industry certification is an excellent way to jump-start a career. It signals to employers that the individual has the qualifications, skills and training to be successful in the workplace.

**"Certified graduates are more likely than uncertified graduates to obtain employment right out of high school," said Brian Bailey, student transition coordinator for the career/technical (CT) unit at Henderson County High School (HCHS) in Henderson, Kentucky. "If graduates go directly to college, they can use industry certification to ask for higher wages in college jobs."**

**Of 1,998 students at HCHS, 1,776 students took CT courses in 2012. Students earned 111 industry certifications, including 36 medication nursing assistant certificates.**

The CT unit at HCHS prepares students for college and careers in high-tech, high-demand fields such as health sciences, information technology and business. The nursing program at HCHS is very successful. In fact, 100 percent of its students passed pre-nursing certification from 2010 to 2012.

**Ashley Bailey,** health sciences educator in the CT unit, gives a lot of credit to the instructors. "They are licensed nurses or medical personnel with clinical experience," she said. "They give formative assessments that are similar to certification exams. Students are tested on the written portions of exams in the same way they will be tested on industry certification exams." For example, if the certification exam uses multiple-choice questions, the nursing program instructors do the same.

Many factors contribute to the success of nursing students at HCHS:

- Students use classroom labs, real-life scenarios and case studies.
- Each teacher has no more than 15 students.
- The courses have clearly defined learning goals.
- Students receive additional instruction time. They have the opportunity and are encouraged to participate on specific Saturdays, after school and during school as part of a new Response to Intervention (RTI) initiative known as Personalized Learning Time (PLT).
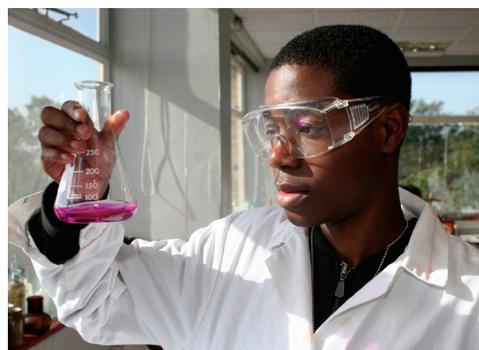
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**Gene Bottoms,** Southern Regional Education Board

- Students participate in work-based learning. Health sciences students complete at least 16 hours of direct patient care at a long-term care facility (a state requirement). Seniors may participate in a clinical or co-op program. The clinical program allows students to observe (and sometimes perform) hands-on services in healthcare settings of their choice during a series of rotations four days a week for two and a half hours per day. The co-op program allows selected students to work (and even get paid) in various healthcare settings five days per week.

- Instructors follow a state-approved curriculum that is closely aligned to certification exam objectives.

- Students are assisted in taking a strong sequence of math and science courses that enable them to pursue advanced studies in health care fields.

**"When students couple health science studies in high school with a strong sequence of math and science courses, they prepare themselves not only to pass industry certification exams, but they also equip themselves to go on to further studies," stated Gene Bottoms, SREB senior vice president. "This will prepare them to climb up the health career ladder to higher paying, more responsible jobs."**

HCHS has a good working relationship with a local community college. "The college donated mannequins so students could get hands-on experience in giving injections and taking blood pressure," Brian Bailey said. In addition to working with the mannequins, HCHS students complete 16 to 18 hours per year of direct patient care.

If students fall behind in their course work, they have access to remediation during their senior year. They are also allowed to retest up to three times on the industry exam in nursing.

Ashley Bailey tells why health care is such a good field for students to seek industry certification. "Some of the fastest growing occupations are personal care aides, where 607,000 jobs are projected to be available nationally in the next eight years, and home health care aides, where 706,000 jobs will open up in the same period of time."

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