Career and Education Fair and Teen Tech Week
A Collaborative Effort

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Each year, YALSA sponsors Teen Tech Week. This national initiative, begun in 2007, is aimed at teens, their parents, educators, and other concerned adults. Its purpose is to ensure that teens are competent and ethical users of technologies, especially those that are offered through libraries such as DVDs, databases, audio books, and video games.

Teen Tech Week may be celebrated in many different ways. Some schools and public libraries offer video competitions, scavenger hunts, and workshops and have even extended Teen Tech Week to Teen Tech Month. At Granby High School in Norfolk, Virginia, the Media Center and Computer Technology Education (CTE) Department partnered to create a career fair that was the perfect learning experience for students, school faculty, and invited guests. The objectives were to

1. provide students with a list of resources and options for planning their future education or career,
2. provide an opportunity to ask questions and talk with adults,
3. learn about the current job market and what careers are in demand,
4. inquire about prerequisites and skills necessary for acceptance into an education program or job,
5. promote CTE courses and student programs,
6. create partnerships with business and industry, and
7. provide an opportunity for members of the community and school administrators to visit our building and see teacher- and student-generated work.

As a result, students had an opportunity to show an improvement in self-confidence and student achievement by demonstrating various uses of technology. By venturing through each area, students had an opportunity to communicate with various professionals and discuss their career plans with peers, teachers, and invited guests, which included family members.

The CTE Fair is the brain child of CTE teacher Jennifer Lanz. As a Keyboarding, Business Management, Office Specialist, and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) advocate, she knows the importance of facilitating career awareness. She set up a meeting with Granby’s media specialists, Betsy and Lisa, and the instructional technology specialist, Deborah, about holding the 3rd annual career fair in the media center. At that meeting the partnership was formed, and it was decided that the career fair would be held during the instructional day in the heart of the school, the media center. Over the course of three months, many more meetings were held. During one of those meetings, the idea to incorporate Teen Tech Week’s 2010 theme, Learn, Create and Share @ your library, was born. Jennifer secured twenty-two vendors.
representing our local colleges, business, and industry, and the military. CTE teacher Kim Jordan assisted students with using a variety of computer software to create flyers, posters, and brochures for display at the fair. Betsy and Lisa prepared the media center for easy movement throughout the fair and worked with CTE teacher Theresa Boogades to coordinate FBLA students to monitor the sign-in table and assist vendors. Deborah worked with CTE teacher Brandon Bell to set up the Teen Tech Week “Learn, Create and Share” lab. This is a separate room located in the media center. It consists of a SmartBoard and twenty-four laptops, which were on loan from a mobile cart. Throughout the year, Brandon had been using video games in his business communications course to teach the importance of communication and teamwork. The “Learn, Create and Share” lab gave not only his but all CTE students a perfect place to share what they had learned through the use of technology.

On the day of the fair, as the first set of attendees began to arrive, sign in, and visit each area, we discovered that because of our preplanning things went very smoothly. Attendees were met at the sign-in table by an FBLA member. From there they were escorted to the vendors, obtained literature, and had the opportunity to speak with the representatives from the various local colleges, regional businesses, and recruiters from several branches of the military. After visiting the vendors, attendees went to the media center’s research and training lab, otherwise known as the Teen Tech Week “Learn, Create and Share” lab, where lessons and projects were displayed to show students and teachers ideas on how to present or incorporate technology in a variety of content areas. For example, a student could see the use of a program called Animoto and realize that it would be a good visual aid to use during the required report on a disease assigned in health class. The interactive lesson, “Gaming in the Classroom,” included a list of correlated learning standards and allowed CTE to showcase all the things that students are exposed to through playing video games and using other interactive technology. Several teachers made contacts with the vendors, and classroom visits were scheduled for presentations and lab demonstrations. Teachers also got an opportunity to share content information and course objectives with our vendors and discuss industry certification programs that our curriculum provides.

Using technology to support their research and communication, CTE students practiced their research skills before the fair. In the CTE classroom, students were asked to research possible career choices, appropriate dress, and questions for which they should be prepared. During the fair, students had opportunities to practice oral communication and reading analysis. They were expected to meet and introduce themselves to at least half (eleven) of the vendors and to inquire about programs and benefits at half of those (five or six). They received numerous printed materials to compare and contrast benefits, cost, and time. After the fair, students enhanced their writing. CTE students used the research to complete portions of their career portfolio and send e-mail communications to teachers or business/industry contacts. Throughout the event and follow-up activities, students were exposed to various computer operations and concepts as well as social and ethical issues, and students got to practice problem solving and decision-making. Many teachers asked about the equipment and software that is available in our media center and building. Betsy, Lisa, and Deborah were available to answer questions and set up training.

For some students, this was the first time that they had dressed up for school or had the opportunity to help a teacher set up or design print materials. The fair definitely generated a lot of interest in what CTE courses had to offer and what technologies were available through the library media center, and it demonstrated how students could get involved in the student organizations and have leadership positions.

The career fair is very important to the staff and students at our school. This idea is easy to adopt or replicate in other schools. It takes three to four months and the work of a team. It is important to plan ahead, gather as many contacts as possible, and coordinate the agenda, visitors, set-up, and clean-up of the fair. It is a great opportunity for students to get involved, use planning tasks as class projects, and have the fair support the employment unit. As part of this fair, we added the Teen Tech Week “Learn, Create and Share” lab to showcase teacher- and student-generated work. We are already planning a larger fair for next year. Because of the fair, our school and its staff have established a reputation for how much we care about our students and support them in planning for their future.

Overall, the fair enhanced instruction by providing a real event for which students could plan, prepare, attend, practice, and consume information. Check our www.ala.org/teentechweek for information about the next Teen Tech Week to be held March 6-12, 2011, with a theme of “Mix and Mash at your library.”