

WORKPLACE MATTERS

New Web site will help high schools and businesses connect

The Oregon Department of Education recently included more rigorous mandates for career-related learning experiences in state high school diploma requirements.

In Lane County, that equates to about 15,000 high school students who need to have some form of direct contact with area businesses.

This allows students to begin to see classroom learning in the context of the realities of working and living in the community.



Robin Onaclea

The timing is good.

Businesses are more concerned than ever about students' work force readiness, and they want to keep talented young people here rather than have them move out of the area for employment.

Farwest Steel's Human Resource Manager Kevin Peterson believes that businesses can play an important role in better preparing these future workers.

"It is one of Farwest Steel's priorities to strengthen our pipeline of workers. Reaching out to high school students and offering them opportunities to sample the real world of work can significantly improve their work force readiness," Peterson said.

CIS Connection, a new Web-based tool, will make more of these business-to-student connections possible.

Developed and implemented through a partnership between the Lane Workforce Partnership, University of Oregon's Career Information System and the Lane Education Service District, CIS Connection is an Internet-based matching service that connects employers, students and educators to enhance students' understanding of career opportunities and job experiences.

A database of local businesses is currently being created. It will make it easy for educators and students to search for and learn more about companies and jobs available in the local area.

Beyond basic information, businesses can also list specific educational activities that are of interest to them. Businesses can register by going to or.cis-connection.org. Each participating employer gets a CIS Connection Web page to post information about the business or organization, including:

- ◆ A link to the company Web site;
- ◆ A description of the business and its mission;
- ◆ A list of positions within the company;
- ◆ The skills most desired in employees;
- ◆ The company's logo.

Through career learning activities in area schools, students are made aware of these pages and how best to use them.

A second part of CIS Connection is the chance for local employers to give students a first-hand look at occupations and the working world.

If a business or organization chooses, it can join a volunteer data-

base that school staff consult to arrange guest speakers, job shadows, mock job interviews and other career learning opportunities. The employer can indicate its preferred activities, which makes it easy for schools and businesses to connect.

Becoming more involved with local schools can benefit businesses in many ways.

"Students and parents don't realize what career opportunities there are right here in this region," said Gary Wildish of Chambers Construction. "CIS Connection lets companies be seen by students. Signing up on the business registry is easy. We're looking forward to using this tool to better connect with the schools."

Mark Wreath, coordinator of the CIS Connection project at Lane ESD said, "If the majority of Lane County businesses registered on the site, the students would be amazed at the diversity of options right here."

For more information about CIS Connection or to get help with the registration process, contact Mark Wreath, Community Business Liaison for Lane ESD at mwreath@lesd.k12.or.us or call 461-8253.

A similar database is being created for the Corvallis area. For more information about Corvallis CIS Connections, contact Donna Keim, Career Learning Assistant: donna.keim@corvallis.k12.or.us or (541) 757-5799.

If you have questions about training your work force, contact Robin Onaclea, business service coordinator at Lane Workforce Partnership, at robino@laneworkforce.org or (541) 682-7224.