



CASE STUDY

How Ohio uses YouScience® data to unlock career potential for students

Two educational service centers (ESCs) in Ohio use data collected from YouScience® Aptitude & Career Discovery to recruit students for career exploration opportunities and their career and technical education (CTE) programs. Using data from YouScience helps these ESCs increase the number of students landing internships while preparing them for future careers.



Challenge

Increasing career exposure for students

North Point Educational Service Center, located in Sandusky, Ohio, supports 26 mostly rural school districts and 38,000 students in north central Ohio. It helps teachers become more effective by training in new instructional strategies and providing coaching and support. North Point ESC has three main focus areas. The first is preparing students who are future-ready and deficit-free in math and reading. The second is placing effective educators and ambassadors of education at the helm of each classroom. Lastly, they believe in making student and staff wellness a priority.

Some of the major challenges North Point ESC faced in getting students ready for careers are a lack of understanding and exposure to certain careers and what skills are needed to fill those careers. Many students may have the knowledge or aptitudes that these careers require but either haven't been exposed to the career or don't even know such a career exists. As a result, they may miss out on some truly great career opportunities.

“One of our primary goals is building future-ready students,” said Andrea Smith, superintendent, North Point ESC. “We want them to know all of the possibilities that exist; we want them to find the ‘sweet spot’ between aptitudes and interests.”

“It’s our job in our region to help students understand what they can be. If they come from rural backgrounds, we want them to know what exists out there for them.”

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Boosting enrollment in CTE careers

Montgomery County Educational Service Center is the fourth-largest ESC in Ohio and provides educational services to 16 public school districts and more than 130 educational entities in counties across the Greater Dayton region. The districts are a mix of rural, suburban, and urban, with a diverse student population of just under 70,000 students.

Career awareness and exploration are a focus within the Montgomery County ESC. Many students—and even some teachers—may not know what types of careers are available and the skills necessary to fill them. In addition, this lack of exposure often causes a large population of students to not enroll in their school’s CTE programs, which, in turn, means that they’re missing out on developing the important skills they need to succeed.

Solution

Delivering useful data to help students map careers

Initially, just a handful of school districts in Ohio were using YouScience® Aptitude & Career Discovery. That changed as some administrators either tried it out themselves or learned about it through colleagues who had already been using it. Since 2017, however, the state has used YouScience to help students prepare for the future.

The key benefit of Aptitude & Career Discovery is the detailed data it generates about students’ aptitudes.



This trove of information proves valuable to students, teachers, administrators, and the business community alike. For students, YouScience data shows them where their abilities lie and what their strengths are, guiding them to the right careers.

“We give so many assessments to students, and they need to understand that YouScience isn’t something students have to study for and try to master,” commented Smith. “We approach it as we are really good at a lot of things, and this is your way to find what you’re naturally good at. If you discover work that you’re naturally wired to be good at, it’ll be much easier for you.”

“Why does every student need this? There’s such a demand in industries for employees. Not every student needs to go to college, but we must find a balance. Students need a leg up to understand what path to follow based on their aptitudes and interests. YouScience takes the guesswork out of it for students. So many students flounder after high school; why not give them a tool to take the anxiety out of it? Why not help them step forward into life with excitement and a positive experience?”

Transforming teaching methods based on data

The data available from YouScience helps schools and ESCs, like Montgomery County and North Point, recruit students to their CTE programs and helps educators better match students to critical job skills and careers. North Point ESC, for example, gathers and compiles data annually by school district and compiles it by county, then aligns that information to career clusters. It also uses the data to build career connections and teacher lesson plans. It even holds a week-long teacher

“boot camp” during the summer with six different companies in the top, in-demand industries in Ohio.

“So often, students are taught by people who have only been in the same silo of education,” said Ashley Spangler, workforce readiness coordinator, North Point ESC. “They have never stepped out of education into the business world, so to have students and teachers see the commonalities between them is huge.”

For Montgomery County ESC, YouScience data helps school districts better connect education with local industries and change how teachers teach and what classes and opportunities are offered to students.

“YouScience plays an important role in the mission of Montgomery County ESC,” stated Candice Sears, director of instructional services, Montgomery County ESC. “We want to ensure all of our students are future ready.”

“The data has transformed our teaching methods and helped teachers implement the data into their lessons,” Sears added.

Partnering with the local business community and leadership

Ohio state government regulations require that each school district has a business advisory council (BAC) in place. These councils form a bridge between schools and educators and local businesses and business leadership. BACs work with school administrators and teachers to foster career-connected learning opportunities across each district throughout the state. YouScience plays an important role in these partnerships. Some BACs help fund YouScience for ESCs and benefit from the data its assessments generate by helping students match aptitudes to jobs

and careers in the community. The ESCs and school administrators can show how many students took the tests and break down students who show aptitude versus ones with interest. In doing so, educators and businesses can find ways to close the gap.

“Business advisory councils and career connections work. We’re very intentional in partnering with business associations and sharing data with businesses,” Sears commented. “Meeting with these associations helps us reach even more businesses.”

“Collaboration has led to a beneficial partnership. Sometimes, they see a big difference in interest and aptitude,” Sears noted.

“YouScience has strengthened our relationships with institutions and industry leaders. They’re interested in the data, and it helps them connect with students who have aptitudes for careers in those fields.”

— Candice Sears, director of instructional services,
Montgomery County ESC



Impact

Increasing CTE enrollment and internships

The use of Aptitude & Career Discovery is driving more career-oriented discussions as students and educators meet to discuss assessment data. The data shows where students’ aptitudes lie and what they’re good at, and then educators can direct them to the right CTE classes to learn skills and explore careers based on those aptitudes.

In addition, the rise of CTE enrollment leads to other opportunities for students as well. For example, North Point ESC started skills academies and business career camps, where students gain hands-on skill development and are exposed to businesses and careers that match their aptitudes. These career camps segue into job “shadows,” where students shadow workers in positions and industries that also fit their aptitudes. North Point ESC surveys students before and after the experiences to find out if they want to fulfill a longer internship experience—all to further career exploration. Plus, businesses love it.

“We see YouScience at the top, then we look at career camps, job shadows, and internships,” Smith stated. “We get students with the right aptitudes out in the businesses to expose them, and then they figure out what they like in that career cluster. If they don’t like it, they can explore something else.”

“For students to see what’s out there with local businesses—every business is starving for employees, so we have a chance to keep kids here in our local communities.”

Businesses also benefit from having students participate in job shadows and internships. “Businesses are hungry because they’re looking for this workforce,” Smith said. “When they see students who show aptitude, they get excited. Now, they’re more interested in helping to get experiences arranged with students.”

Helping students discover themselves

Sometimes, students may experience challenges navigating traditional high school educational programs. They feel like they're not for them. Data from Aptitude & Career Discovery helps them figure out what they're good at while helping them find an educational pathway that works for them.

Sears recalled a student in the Montgomery County ESC who fit this situation. He was very bright but didn't feel connected to school or the classes he was taking. He'd been expelled previously and was in danger of being expelled again. His school administered Aptitude & Career Discovery, analyzed the data, and compared it against other data points to find out what he was passionate about and how to use this information to make career connections. The student was offered a job-shadowing experience in a field based on his aptitudes, plus interviews. He's still in school and has been invited to summer camps and other career-related opportunities. He's even been invited to speak on an AI panel.

"Through YouScience and other resources, this student was able to have a better vision of themselves," Sears said. "We reflected on changes the student needed to make now to support his vision. He was able to learn essential skills to support his long-term goals."

"Rather than students feeling as though one bad choice leaves them with no future opportunities, we've utilized the data to give them hope and show them the skills they need to learn to be more successful both in school and out of school. In this case, the student was being considered for expulsion and now he is being amplified on a stage with his computing skills," Sears stated.

Using YouScience pays off for rural school district

Danbury Local Schools is a small, rural school district within the service area for North Point ESC. Being in a rural area means that students may not have the same career exposure as students in a more urban or suburban school district. Typically, the district graduates about 40 students per year, with just a handful having filled an internship. That's all changed thanks to the data available from Aptitude & Career Discovery.

The district tests students in the seventh grade and again in their freshman years of high school. It takes the data from these assessments and applies it to the classroom, initially matching data against the top three career clusters (business, healthcare, and technology), and then adds new classes in these clusters. The district also now offers enhanced business technology courses, featuring three-to-four new electives, plus courses in robotics, business foundations, and marketing courses. It revisits clusters each year to make sure they're the top areas that align with students' assessment data.

"The feedback from students is very positive. For them, it's a break from the traditional bookwork in a traditional classroom setting," observed Koree Hodgkinson, college and career readiness coordinator, Danbury Local Schools.

“YouScience gives students a different kind of vibe in the classroom. It helps them understand themselves better and dig a little deeper with the new careers they're being exposed to and learning about new jobs.”

—Koree Hodgkinson, college and career readiness coordinator, Danbury Local Schools

The detailed data available from YouScience also helps Danbury Local Schools open up additional internships and other career-related experiences for its students. The district works with high school juniors and seniors to find them internships in businesses and positions that best match their aptitudes.

"We started off having only a few students each year completing an internship because many students didn't know what or how to select their places of interest," said Victoria Hegsted, school counselor, Danbury Local Schools. "Now that we have YouScience data to drive the conversations, we are more intentional about their placements and the data assists us in placing many more students."

With the help of YouScience, Danbury Local Schools has placed all 40 graduating seniors in internships.

Summary

Challenges

- Increasing the number of student boot camps to roughly 20 in 2024, with 400 students completing them
- Holding career conversations with students earlier and more frequently

Solution

YouScience® Aptitude & Career Discovery

Results

- Growing the number of internships available and the number of students filling them
- Adding many new career pathways based on YouScience results

Organizations at a glance

North Point Educational Service Center
Sandusky, OH

26 school districts

38,000 students

Montgomery County Educational Service Center
Dayton, OH

16 school districts

66,000+ students

Danbury Local Schools
Lakeside Marblehead, OH

Grades K-12

563 students

