



Case Study: Futures for Kids

Students across North Carolina are using Career Cruising Network to communicate with mentors, connect with local and statewide businesses, and develop career plans, thanks to a partnership between Career Cruising and Futures for Kids.

Futures for Kids (F4K) uses Career Cruising Network to connect 75,000 students with 700 volunteer Career Coaches and 250 employers across the state. F4K's mission is to bridge the gap between the hopes and dreams of students and the workforce development needs of communities throughout North Carolina. The program began in 2001 as a student's Social Entrepreneurship assignment at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and has become a model for how businesses can encourage and grow their future workforce locally.

In 2008, F4K partnered with Career Cruising to integrate their software program into Career Cruising's user-friendly career exploration system. Career Cruising Network is the result of this partnership—a web-based platform that brings together students, educators, Career Coaches, and local area businesses in one space, enhancing the career planning process and benefitting communities.

Real voices from the working world

F4K works with over 700 volunteer Career Coaches—real working people representing hundreds of different occupations across all industries—to answer students' questions share their experiences. These Career Coaches communicate at their leisure and for a few minutes each week with students through online message boards. The message boards are part of each occupation profile within Career Cruising. Students can ask questions about how that Career Coach got to where they are today or any question not answered in the detailed occupation overview. Questions to Career Coaches, who are vetted by F4K, are posted publicly so all students can benefit from the coaches' responses.

"What's really exciting is how our Career Coaches are leveling the playing field for students," says Susan Milliken, F4K's Executive Director. "Every student using the program, regardless of their background or location, can talk with someone at IBM, John Deere, Cisco or any company involved to get encouragement and advice about their future."

Students can also connect with representatives from the over 250 companies included in F4K's growing database. Companies can send targeted messages to students who have expressed an interest in the company or the careers in which it employs people, sharing news about career development opportunities

such as internships or summer positions. For example, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program uses this feature to send scholarship messages directly to students interested in teaching. BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina has also communicated with and later hired bilingual students with an interest in customer service and finance careers. It's a win-win for the business and the former students, as the company also offers on-site college classes and 100% tuition reimbursement.

"F4K's technology platform helps students communicate with mentors and businesses as they develop a plan for their future, and offers the opportunity for students to collaborate with mentors and each other."

Kirsten Weeks, Community Relations Manager, Cisco Systems

Impacting students and the community

"In my 30 plus years working with Chambers of Commerce, I have never seen a more dynamic and promising workforce development initiative." Harvey A. Schmitt, President and CEO, Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, on F4K.

Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy found that 91% of students surveyed agreed that "F4K helped me realize I need to do well in school to get the kind of job I want", and 88% were more excited about graduating from high school after working with F4K.*

The organization's work also has tremendous impact on the local business community. According to former NC governor James B. Hunt, Jr., "enabling businesses to connect directly with their future workforce and build a steady pipeline of talented, local labor is more important than any incentive that other states can offer."

About Futures for Kids

Futures for Kids is a non-profit organization based in Raleigh, NC, that provides career exploration and workforce development to students state-wide. F4K partners with the NC Department of Public Instruction and is endorsed by the North Carolina State Board of Education and the NC Chamber. Learn more at www.f4k.org.

**Download the full evaluation report by Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy at <http://f4k.org/About/pdf/FinalReport.pdf>*