



SUCCESS STORY

Aptitudes, interests and certifications help career prep for high school students

In the past, California's Lucia Mar Unified School District used interest-only inventories to help students explore career options. That meant career possibilities were based only on what students self-reported.

Switching to YouScience solutions showed the district how critical aptitudes are in helping students understand what they're good at and matching them with best-fit careers. That, in turn, helps them decide on which career and technical education (CTE) classes to take to earn certifications to help better prepare for a career.

What was lacking in career prep for high school students?

Before implementing YouScience, Lucia Mar Unified School District used general interest inventories for college and career guidance. Interest-only inventories focus solely on students' self-reported interests to guide them towards careers.

With interest-only inventories, students only see occupations they've already been exposed to. They choose career pathways based on their environment and experiences. For example, they choose careers that their parents, siblings, or people close to them do. That can mislead students, because interests (and experiences) don't translate to ability. Too many students lack the aptitudes to do the jobs they're interested in, but have them for jobs they haven't been exposed to.

Case in point: a major factor influencing career guidance in the Lucia Mar Unified School District is California's state agriculture program. As part of the program, some students begin preparing for agricultural careers as early as kindergarten. And because of the agriculture prevalence in the area, these students never think to look outside the agriculture industry for career options.

District

- Lucia Mar Unified School District

Location

- San Luis Obispo County, CA (largest district in the county; covers 550 square miles)

Challenges

- Aligning students with career options outside of those they already know about or are expected to pursue due to personal, social, or familial biases
- Difficulty in helping students uncover what they can do in a career setting, helping them to break through their innate biases and discover what they're good at
- Lacking a good way to help students map out an education and career pathway that they feel good about

Solution

- YouScience

Results

- Students can discover what they do well, potentially opening up a whole new world of in-demand career opportunities
- Once students learn about career options suited to their natural talents, they can map career pathways and begin earning certifications in high school that prepare them for future careers

Basing career choices on interests or experiences alone can waste time, money, energy and success in the long run. Lack of career exposure is one problem. Not knowing how aptitudes relate to best-fit careers is another.

Validating career choices with YouScience Discovery

Career prep has transformed for the Lucia Mar Unified School District since it implemented YouScience. That's because now, it's using more than interest-only inventories for career guidance.

Now, students uncover their aptitudes with **YouScience Discovery** — an aptitude-based career guidance assessment that matches students to best-fit careers that align with their natural talents as well as their interests.

“When I started my job, I learned about general interest inventories,” said Trisha Oksner, career center technician, **Nipomo High** and **Central Coast New Tech High**. “The same ones that are used across the board where they find out what a student is interested in. Are you interested in building kitchen cabinets? Are you interested in learning about meteorology? Are you interested in... And they do the 60 questions and then it comes up with careers. So I thought, ok, I'm doing my job. I'm giving these interest inventories.

“Then I learned about YouScience and thought, that's good. I had a kid who came to me before YouScience who desperately wanted to be a brain surgeon. And when we sat down, he said, ‘I'm really not good at math or science.’ And that's my benchmark example of saying, ‘You like to do something but that doesn't mean you're any good at it.’ It's where interest meets aptitudes to help map out a future.”

The district first chose YouScience Discovery to help with career guidance for the CTE program. But it soon realized that it needed to make Discovery available to all students, “Originally that's how the district invested, to help our CTE students with the realization that every student can benefit and needs to benefit from understanding where their interests and aptitudes meet,” Trisha shared.

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— Trisha Oksner, career center technician, Nipomo High and Central Coast New Tech High, California

The district also provides certification options with **Precision Exams**. As part of YouScience solutions, Precision Exams gives educators access to more than 200 industry-recognized career certification exams.

The YouScience Platform delivers aptitude-based career guidance for career prep

A student knowing their aptitudes is important for career guidance because it shows students what they're capable of. YouScience aptitude-based guidance exposes students to career options they may have never considered. Career options they're naturally wired to be successful at and find satisfaction in doing.

One mom reached out and asked Trisha to meet with her son. He had a 4.4 GPA, was a scholar athlete, and taking all AP and honors classes. But he'd lost his motivation.

Trisha said, “I don't know if he did it [Discovery] a while before or didn't have an interpretation of the results that was helpful enough. But we sat down and radiologist came up [in his career matches] and we started researching radiology and talking about a career in radiology tech and he was interested. Then we talked about radiology as an MD program,

and that kid was so fired up in a way that he hadn't been fired up and he walked out of here like, 'I'm going to med school. I'm going to be a radiologist.' And I got the chills."

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Once students are aware of career options that suit their natural talents they can map out pathways and begin earning certifications in high school that prepare them for future jobs.

And for the students at Nipomo High and Central Coast New Tech High, seeing how their aptitudes and interests relate to different careers pushes them to explore possibilities and gets them excited about their future. According to Trisha, a lot of the seniors find their Discovery results "scary accurate."

Trisha sums it up by saying, "I took a class this summer through UCI [University of California, Irvine] on independent educational consulting to do college and career counseling. And they said YouScience is the benchmark standard. So the fact that my district invested in it already was a point of pride. We're already doing the benchmark standard. That was a cool feeling."

Better helping students

YouScience gives Lucia Mar Unified School District's school counselors a deeper understanding of where student interests and aptitudes meet. Now they can help students better

map out their general and CTE courses as well as their college and career pathways.

District at a glance

Lucia Mar Unified School District

10,700

students

~50

teachers

Central Coast New Tech High, Nipomo, CA

~300

students

9th–12th

grade

Nipomo High School, Nipomo, CA

~900

students

9th–12th

grade

