

Program to bridge school-work gap

EXPLORE Project helps students identify career prospects

Daisy Xiong / Richmond News

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Students congratulate each other during the graduation ceremony of the initial EXPLORE Project in Richmond. Photo submitted

A new program called the EXPLORE Project will be launched in the fall, allowing students to connect what they have learned at school with workplace skills.

It comes after a successful initiative by the Richmond School District at Hugh Boyd secondary in April, when an eight-week class was held to help students explore their career goals and teach employable skills.

“We’ve heard many parents saying there are gaps between school and getting a job, and they need programs to help the kids transitioning from high school to the adulthood,” said Catherine Kwan, project lead and district consultant.

Different from career planning courses high schools usually offer, this project is a joint effort by three organizations – the school board, Avia Employment Services, and Developmental Disabilities Association. EXPLORE will provide students with as much career-related resources as possible.

Plus, the classes are small, so programs can be individually tailored. The first class in April had just six students.

“We wanted to make sure that everyone had a positive experience. We figured out each student’s needs. Some students don’t have an idea yet and we helped them explore their career interest; some students already knew what they were interested in and we went from there,” said Kwan.

Attending class twice a week, students received lectures from career experts, training in career-related skills, such as sociable skills, research and career preparation, and exploration of their strengths.

Students also went out for “job tasting” field trips to experience various job professions, ranging from Starbucks to the newsroom at CBC.

They had the chance to talk to people from the industry and get first-hand information and advice.

Kwan said one student discovered she wanted to pursue a career in graphic design and is now looking for a post-secondary program and work experience.

The program also offered workshops to the parents on how to support their kids during this transition time.

Kwan said the school board is going to launch another EXPLORE Project this fall.

Enrolment notices for the program will be sent out through schools and interested students can also contact the school board for more information.

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