

Build *Your* Future

Connections
Magazine
Spring 2025



**GREAT RIVER
CONNECTIONS**
ACADEMY

**“EDUCATION DOES NOT
THE SAME FOR EVERYONE
AND EACH STUDENT
DIFFERENT ELEMENTS
SUCCEED....FIND
WHERE YOUR CHILD
FLOURISH AND
SCHOOL.” – KIM
PARENT OF CONNECTIONS
ACADEMY STUDENT**

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Welcome!



**Welcome to our inaugural
Connections Academy magazine!**

Welcome to a new year! We are excited to partner with our schools and families again in 2025 and look forward to helping students grow through engaging coursework, dynamic activities, and meaningful relationships.

We are also pleased to announce new efforts to ensure our students succeed beyond their K-12 years. To achieve this, we have been collaborating with a wide range of professionals, student-facing organizations, and businesses to help students build bright futures.

In that spirit, we are thrilled to introduce our new *Connections Magazine*. This inaugural issue aims to inform parents, students, teachers, and school leaders about a variety of education and career topics. We hope it inspires you, keeps you updated on the opportunities we're cultivating, and offers everything you need to stay connected!



Each quarter, we will deliver articles to deepen your understanding of essential learning and career topics, share student and teacher stories and insights, and announce details about new partnerships and opportunities.

This month, we will explore strategies for building stronger confidence in high school students to help them thrive academically and lay a firm foundation for the future. We will also spotlight successful partnerships from last year

that we're expanding this year, and provide practical steps for guiding teens toward a growth mindset and future career success.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. We look forward to enriching every moment of your child's academic experience and watching students flourish under our collaborative care. May this magazine serve as both a window into our school culture and a conversation starter for the many milestones ahead.

We're excited for the year ahead and look forward to sharing this journey with you!

Warm regards,

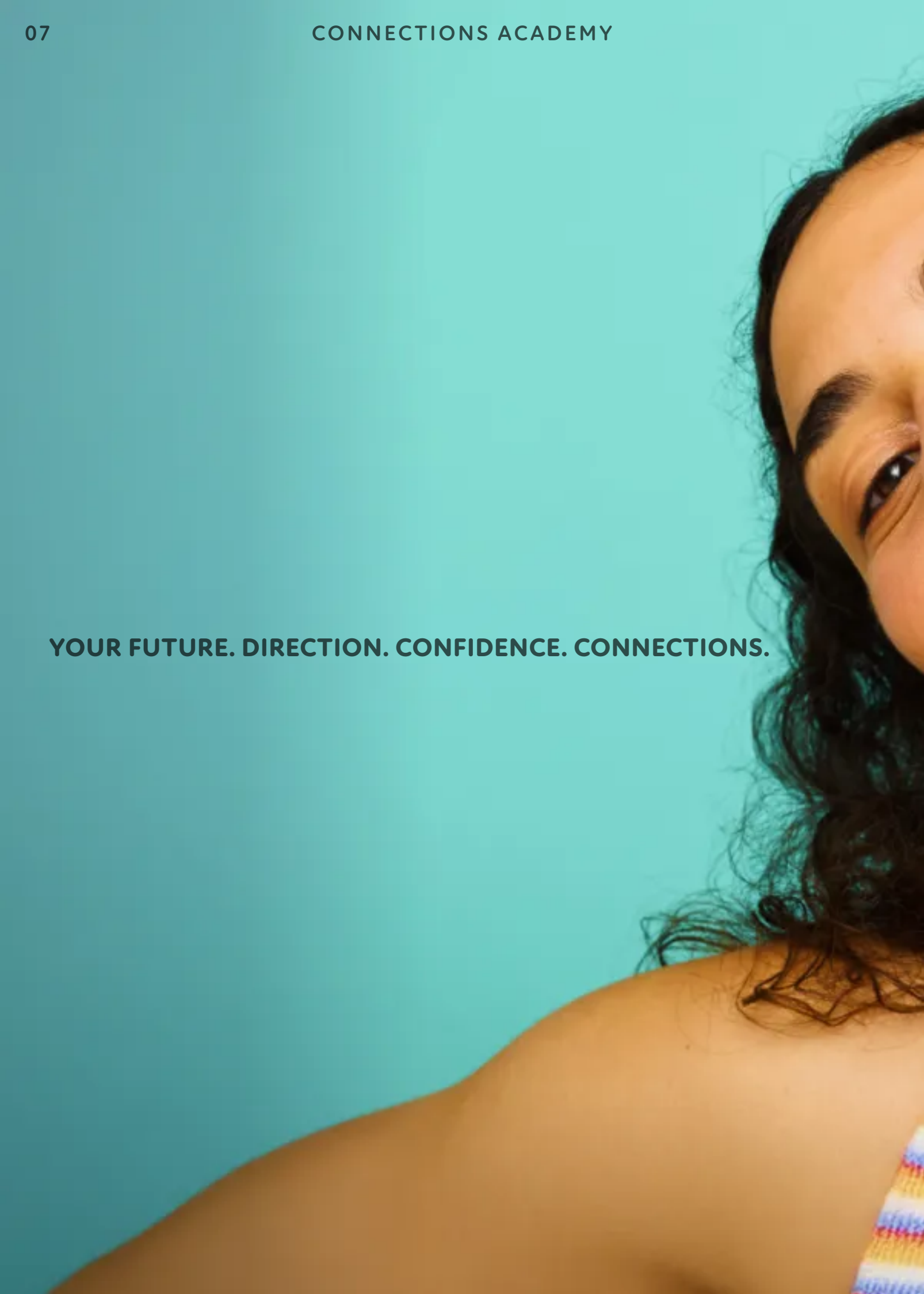
Jason Swinehart



Jason Swinehart

Executive Director, Great
River Connections Academy

YOUR FUTURE. DIRECTION. CONFIDENCE. CONNECTIONS.





COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

A program to help students build skills, gain real-world experience, and earn certifications to prepare for success in education or the workforce.

Our expanded College and Career Readiness offering combines traditional courses with industry-leading, career-focused options to help students develop applicable skills, gain real-world experiences, and make industry connections to feel confident and prepared for their unique future.

Our offering is designed to help all students discover their desired career path and map out a plan to get there, whether that involves entering the workforce immediately, pursuing additional training/certifications, enrolling in college, or joining the military. We help students:





1

FIND THEIR UNIQUE DIRECTION

It's common for students to be unsure about what to do after high school. We encourage our students to explore a variety of career options to find what excites and inspires them most. We partner with best-in-class organizations and industries to expose our students to the most in-demand opportunities, including those in the trades, healthcare, business, and technology.

Our career pathway curriculum delivers curated learning experiences that can include connections to employers, internships, and specialized classes from e-Dynamic. Many of our career pathways also give students the specific knowledge and skills they need to pursue industry-recognized certifications in their chosen field.

Through this offering, we help students envision their future as a whole and consider not just how they'll make their living, but what kind of life they want to lead. Beyond providing academic and technical courses or certification pathways, we empower students to identify, boost, and promote earned skills by engaging in activities they enjoy beyond the curriculum, including volunteering, playing sports, joining clubs, holding part-time jobs, and more.

**LEARN MORE FROM
PEARSON'S HEAD OF
CAREER SOLUTIONS**

SCAN TO



LEARN MORE

2

BUILD SKILLS, GAIN CONFIDENCE

We help students build confidence and develop in-demand skills such as leadership, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and character development. Through our partnerships with organizations like Coursera and Credly, we help students gain and display the in-demand skills employers are looking for.

3

MAKE CONNECTIONS & BUILD A NETWORK

Relationships and connections are important at any stage of a career, including at entry-level. We partner with best-in-class companies, organizations, and higher education institutions to bring relevant opportunities, experiences, and meaningful engagement to our students.

Through these opportunities, students learn the interpersonal skills they need to establish connections and build their own professional network—all before graduation.

**CHECK OUT SOME
OF YOUR SCHOOL'S
COLLEGE AND
CAREER PARTNERS**

SCAN TO



LEARN MORE

4

TRI-CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

Through our unique partnership with Coursera (the global online learning platform) and several college/university partners, learners will have access to tri-credit opportunities (high school + industry certification + college credit). Students who complete a course and earn their certificate through Coursera will be able to receive Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) from a partner college or university.

Depending on the certification and college, a student could earn anywhere between 6-12 college credits. This offering is a college and career "connector" in the truest sense as it will help bring career experiences to students, connecting them to both college and employment opportunities immediately upon graduation and helping them avoid the debt of previous generations.



Path to Pro Spotlight



Certifications for turning pro

Looking for a hands-on, high-demand career without the burden of college debt? Home Depot's ***Path to Pro*** program offers free training and direct connections to employers in the skilled trades, from electrical and carpentry to plumbing and masonry.

With over *640,000 job openings in construction each year, this program helps students (16+) gain essential skills, access apprenticeships, and jumpstart rewarding careers. Whether you're looking to earn while you learn or even start your own business one day, Path to Pro is your gateway to success.

Start building your future today!

Path to Pro - Build Real Skills for In-Demand Careers

1

Discover exciting careers in the skilled trades.

2

Build the soft skills that'll help you get ahead.

3

Learn how to use materials and job-site tools safely and correctly.

4

Receive career-focused guidance to kick-start your career.

SCAN TO



LEARN MORE

400,000

SKILLED TRADE JOBS
AVAILABLE TODAY

Source: Home Depot: Bureau of
Labor Statistics Occupational
Employment Projections, 2023–2033

**WE'RE EXCITED TO HIGHLIGHT CAREERS IN
THE SKILLED TRADES WITH OUR PARTNER,
THE HOME DEPOT, AS THIS GROWING
INDUSTRY PROVIDES OUR STUDENTS
WITH EXCELLENT EARNING POTENTIAL
AND THE CHANCE TO EXPLORE
ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES."**

COLETTE VERDES
MANAGER OF SCHOOL COUNSELING,
CONNECTIONS ACADEMY

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

You don't need a crystal ball to know that high school students entering the workforce over the next few years are facing an uphill battle.

Students today are experiencing many changes in their world—changes coming from technology, new generations, and different economic, political, and cultural forces that can be challenging even for adults to understand.

When you add the internet to this mix, everything gets amplified—the helpful, the harmful, and the puzzling parts. Students now have more options than ever before, along with many different opinions. This can sometimes make it difficult to make decisions or know which path to take.

To better understand how high school students are handling these challenges, we asked them about the biggest obstacles they face. Their answers were interesting and showed us an area where we could help make things better.

What challenges do young people face?

Here are the main challenges students mentioned when thinking about finding a good career.





Here are the top roadblocks that students have when it comes to finding a good career.

CONFIDENCE

42% SAID THEY DIDN'T HAVE A LOT TO OFFER

Lurking behind all of these roadblock is a range of concerns that all share the same root cause—confidence. Some 42% of the students we asked think that they don't have a lot to offer. That's a sad statistic. Starting a journey with a lack of confidence can be a barrier to success. Gen Z's lack of confidence also reveals they don't know how much need there is for talent and how much they do have to offer. We'll address that misunderstanding later on, but for now, just note that one of the biggest problems the next generation faces is their own perceived lack of value. The next several concerns are worth tackling together because, we would argue, they're all symptoms of the same problem.

AFFORDABILITY

52% SAID THAT AFFORDING COLLEGE WAS A MAJOR CONCERN

Money is at the top of this list, which isn't surprising. The high cost of education has become a common concern. Rising education and living expenses make finances a major factor in life decisions. Fortunately, solutions exist. As education costs have increased, scholarships have grown too. Many companies now offer programs to help pay for employee education.

In the past 20 years, many affordable, efficient education alternatives have emerged. If traditional education is too expensive, students have more ways to work around it. At Connections Academy, we aim to help families learn about these options and find good opportunities.

AWARENESS**42% SAID THAT THEY DIDN'T EVEN
KNOW WHERE TO START**

When 42% of students say that they don't know how to figure out what they want to do, we think this also relates to the confidence problem.

How so? First, a lack of awareness indicates that students are ill equipped to do basic exploration. Where should they look? Who is telling them what the future holds? How can they discover what they like? This is a huge hurdle. But more importantly, if you don't believe you have a lot of value, it will be virtually impossible for you to see opportunities, even the ones right in front of you. If a student doesn't believe they have what it takes to be a hero, well... why start the journey?

FEAR**36% SAID THEY DIDN'T WANT TO TRY
NEW THINGS OR TAKE THE RISK**

The same can be said for the 36% of students who were simply afraid of meeting new people, trying new things, and taking the risk that goes along with uncharted territory. If you think you have a valuable skill—that the world wants you—then those fears are a lot easier to overcome. If you don't, that discouraging voice in your head is harder to ignore.

The good news is there's a way through. With the right help and the right tools, we can see a path towards changing these students' outlooks and setting them up for success.

Scan to learn more about C.A. College and Career options:



Some Practical Areas Where Students Need Help



To better understand how to help students we asked them to identify what they wish they knew about finding their dream job. Like we wrote about here, students have a good general sense of what they need in order to prepare for their future. In other words, they know where they need help.

1**TOPPING OFF THE LIST IS SKILLS**

Students know that employers value skills first and foremost, and are eager to identify what skills are necessary to land their dream job.

2**THEY KNOW EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT**

For all the uncertainty around the future and the challenges that come with pursuing a traditional degree, students still recognize the value of education. They just need to know specifics, whether it's a particular degree, or a certification, or general field of study.

3**INTERSHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS ARE KEY**

You likely started your career through a mentorship, internship, or apprenticeship.

At Futures, we call these 'SHIPS,' and they remain crucial for today's students. These opportunities to try out industries build confidence and point students in the right direction.

4**THEY NEED HELP NETWORKING**

human interaction, and the opportunity to start building a personal relationship. Whether that translates to a recommendation, a hire, or simply advice, networking is an essential, time-tested facet of finding success.

5**EXPERIENCES MATTER**

Finally, students know learning by doing is most effective. Experiences give them deeper insight into their interests, skills, and desires. This also makes them attractive to employers who value real-world knowledge and lessons gained through action.

The Big Picture When it Comes to Creating Student Confidence



Despite the myriad of challenges they face, today's students are facing a unique opportunity.

Our goal is to get students to see opportunity and show them how to take advantage of it. This comes down to two fundamental things.

The world is starving for solid talent. Nothing will help a student's confidence more than knowing how much the world needs them. Many industries, like healthcare, logistics, construction, manufacturing, and education are currently facing unprecedented talent shortages, which show no signs of letting up. This means that employers are going to greater and greater lengths to find and attract talent. So, as high school students looking to enter the workforce, they are very much in demand. That simple realization, in and of itself, can transform students' outlook and give them the confidence they need to explore new territory, take risks, and





learn new skills. Perhaps the single greatest thing we can do to help students regain confidence is to simply turn their assumptions on their head.

At Connections Academy we call these “SHIPS” for shorthand, and they’re no less essential for today’s students than they were for us. Offering students these opportunities—for one-on-one teaching or the chance to dip their toes into an industry—is incredibly impactful in building their confidence and pointing them in the right direction.

They need help networking. This is closely related to internships and apprenticeships: students know that relationships with the right people make a world of difference. There’s no substitute for straightforward, The skills will come; you just have to show up. As we noted earlier, 42% of the students surveyed believed they didn’t have any particular skills to offer. And while that may technically be

true, the demand for talent is so high that companies are now happy to solve that problem with you. Sure, as a high school junior you may not know how to program a computer chip or frame a house, but there are thousands of companies out there who would love to recruit, hire, and train you regardless. Your job is simply to show up and work hard. The reality is, the most valuable thing you bring to the table is not a particular skill set; it’s you. Skills are transferable, people are not. And even as the demand for particular skills waxes and wanes—due to AI, new technology, or economic shifts—the demand for willing and ambitious talent will only continue to rise.



Coursera Spotlight



Certifications for turning pro

Whether your student wants to build their resume or simply wants to explore a new interest, earning a entry-level professional certificate through Coursera is a great way for them to expand their knowledge and earn new, marketable skills.

Coursera is one of the world's leading learning platforms that works with the world's best employers, businesses, and universities to create educational content. With Coursera, users can take courses and earn professional certificates from top employers.*

Connections Academy participants can earn professional certificates in a variety of areas, such as Meta Social Media Marketing, IBM Cybersecurity Analyst, Google IT Support, and more.

A yellow diamond-shaped icon containing the word "META" in bold black capital letters.

META

A yellow diamond-shaped icon containing the word "IBM" in bold black capital letters.

IBM

A yellow diamond-shaped icon containing the word "GOOGLE" in bold black capital letters.

GOOGLE

*Courses vary by school offering

What are the benefits of earning a entry-level professional certificate?

1

An industry certification is a great way for students to signal to potential employers (or future colleges) they have proven skills and knowledge in a specific area. By completing a course, your student will gain useful, real-world skills that can be applied immediately in the workforce.

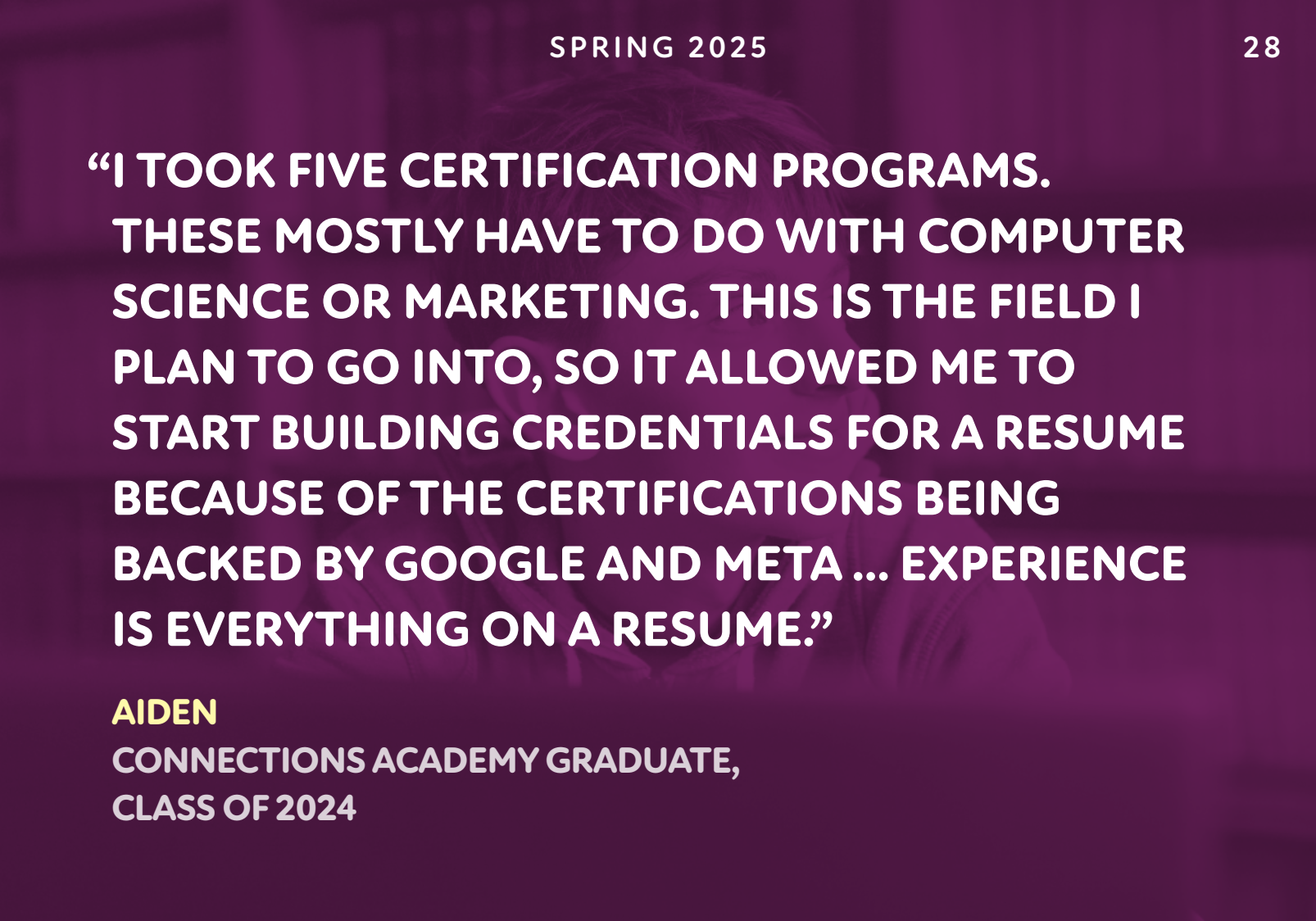
2

Depending on the offering at your school, you may be able to earn high school credit or even dual-credit that counts toward a college degree.

SCAN TO



LEARN MORE



“I TOOK FIVE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS. THESE MOSTLY HAVE TO DO WITH COMPUTER SCIENCE OR MARKETING. THIS IS THE FIELD I PLAN TO GO INTO, SO IT ALLOWED ME TO START BUILDING CREDENTIALS FOR A RESUME BECAUSE OF THE CERTIFICATIONS BEING BACKED BY GOOGLE AND META ... EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING ON A RESUME.”

AIDEN

CONNECTIONS ACADEMY GRADUATE,
CLASS OF 2024



“THIS PROGRAM HELPED ME DEVELOP MORE SKILLS AND HELPED ME HAVE MORE CAREER CHOICES.”

RACHEL

CONNECTIONS ACADEMY GRADUATE,
CLASS OF 2024

Jay Flores —Curiosity is a Launchpad



Curiosity first, STEM second

According to Jay Flores, a leading Global STEM Ambassador and owner of a successful STEM education enterprise, one of the major headwinds pushing students away from STEM (**S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, **M**athematics) is the acronym itself and what it has come to signify. “STEM” conjures up the image of calculus geniuses and trigonometry wizards who will one day end up with the latest and greatest tech innovations. If students don’t have a natural proclivity for math and other scientific subjects, then they tend to drop the idea of pursuing STEM education and career pathways. Because math and science are tricky for them, they figure they won’t make it.



Career Spotlight

Therefore to Jay, the way to raise up more STEM talent is by engaging their interests and fostering curiosity more than it is about figuring out who merely crush math and science courses with the greatest ease.

A home that embraced curiosity

Jay, who hails from Puerto Rico and was raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, credits his interest in STEM to his parents' creative and encouraging child raising methods.

Like most kids, Jay was very curious, and his curiosity shaped much of his play time. In one instance, his interest in airplanes turned into an attempt to build his own airplane out of the living room couch cushions.

Instead of getting annoyed at the mess and telling him to put the cushions back, his parents eagerly watched and even grabbed the video camera to capture their son's work. Yes, he did have to put

the cushions back when he was done, but the point is, his parents stoked rather than stifled his interests.

As Jay grew older, his parents continued to encourage his curiosity in the world, how things worked, and why things do what they do. In high school, Jay ended up in an engineering summer program not because he adored math or science, but because he realized that math and science were simply the natural outlets for his curiosity—because math and science allowed him to figure out how things work.

Jay became the valedictorian of his class and went on to receive a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from University of Wisconsin.



STEM isn't for STEM

For Jay, this is key: STEM isn't for STEM, meaning, STEM isn't merely for a stereotypical student who garners comments like "You should be in STEM" because they can ace every tough subject. Rather, STEM is for all those who have interest and curiosity in a specific subject and who want to better understand that subject.

Like many kids, Jay struggled to maintain his interest in school. Long days at a desk, buried in books and notes isn't exactly the most thrilling thing to most kids. School lacks a lot of play time and hands-on work, which is what Jay said he missed most. He also mentioned that math and science, on their own, were actually harder subjects for him.

But what ultimately clicked was the fact that Jay's ever-present curiosity in, well, everything led him to STEM disciplines because there he could find explanations for the mechanics of things he found

interesting. "When you really like something, and you know the math and science behind it, you can do a lot with your interest." And Jay is adamant that this curiosity basically applies to anything.



Curiosity first, STEM second

So, if the goal is to get more students heading toward STEM pursuits, then teachers, parents, and schools can spend more time on the interests of their students as a starting point. When we think about how we approach math and science courses, Jay believes that teachers get a big leg up if they discover and incorporate the interests of their students first. Then, when it is time to learn math and science, students can grasp the concepts more easily because they are already curious about how they might apply them to an area of interest.

If math is just for math's sake, then no wonder many students struggle. "How am I ever going to use this in the real world?" isn't a dumb question, after all. But if you lead with an interesting subject (e.g., sports for those who like sports, art for those who like art, healthcare for those who like healthcare, and so on), then the STEM subjects really come alive.

This is the approach largely used in "It's not Magic, It's Science" video experiments where Jay uses everyday objects from around the house to encourage his students' curiosity. The experiments wow the students and pique their interest in a variety of subjects. "Each time I teach a concept, I try to use a real-world example," Jay says. "It helps them connect what they are learning to things they see everyday. When it comes to STEM, it is about finding subject matters that interest them and touching on ideas that they already would like to learn more about."

Jay also tries to incorporate a lot of different subjects into his experiments to ensure that a wide variety of interests are captured.

Encouraging curiosity first and STEM second, however, can be time-consuming for many teachers, which is why Jay

matters first, then connecting that curiosity to STEM subjects—young students everywhere will realize they are interested in STEM careers after all. And the predicted worker shortage might just be solved by the most eager generation of STEM workers yet.

Today, Jay Flores is working hard to spread the word about his approach to STEM education. He has appeared on a number of TV shows including NBC's *American Ninja Warrior!* and PBS's *Make48*.

He has also partnered with education-providers like Pearson to help students and teachers fall in love with STEM.

creates educational content to assist educators. He also frequently gives talks and presentations to K-12 students, which serve as great assists to teachers and parents who would love to see more of their students thrive and pursue STEM related topics with more confidence.

Jay's "Curious" Approach: It Works

Does Jay see more students engage with STEM as a result of his unique approach? Indeed he does. In his talks and shows, which are designed for elementary and middle school students, he shows them how they can do it themselves. Inspired, the students often show their parents and friends these same experiments. Jay often receives notes from parents, and his website receives numerous visits (even in the summer when school is largely out) as families seek more information about his work and experiments.

Thanks to Jay's unique approach—sparking curiosity in practical real-world





hosa future
health
professionals

HOSA Spotlight



Certifications for turning pro

HOSA is the largest healthcare career and technical student organization, offering students hands-on healthcare experiences, leadership skill-building opportunities, and pathways to exciting careers in health. It's not just more than a club — it's tied into Connections Academy students' classroom activities in healthcare pathways.

Connections Academy Students who are HOSA members get access to:

- Exclusive healthcare courses designed to prepare you for real-world experiences.
- Community service projects that make a difference and look great on college applications.

Nationally Recognized, Industry Aligned, Skills Building Organization

1

Opportunities for certifications, scholarships, and recognition to help you stand out.

2

Healthcare-related activities that inspire and ignite your passion. Build the skills that are in demand.

SCAN TO



LEARN MORE

Joining HOSA means joining a community of students dedicated to making a positive impact and setting themselves up for success in healthcare.

“THE BIGGEST IMPACT I’VE SEEN FOR STUDENTS JOINING HOSA IS THE STUDENT GROWTH, BOTH ACADEMICALLY AND SOCIALLY. HOSA GIVES STUDENTS A SOCIAL CONNECTION WHILE BETTERING THEMSELVES, GAINING CONFIDENCE, AND PREPARING FOR THEIR FUTURE.”

GUADALUPE CASTILLO

CONNECTIONS ACADEMY TEACHER
& HOSA ADVISOR

“REFLECTING ON MY CAREER JOURNEY, I REALIZED THAT WITHOUT HOSA, I MIGHT HAVE PURSUED A CAREER IN LAW OR ANOTHER FIELD, BUT NOT IN HEALTHCARE. THROUGH HOSA, I WAS SUPPORTED BY FELLOW STUDENTS, GAINED FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE OF THE HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT, AND CAME TO UNDERSTAND THE PROFOUND DEDICATION.”

CANDACE

CONNECTIONS ACADEMY GRADUATE,
CLASS OF 2024

Learning Coach Success



The kids are alright.

While teenagers are generally notorious for angst, recent studies show that there is more going on with Gen Z – teens and young adults born between 1997-2012 – than teenage moodiness, especially when it comes to developing work readiness skills and their outlook for the future.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 42% of Gen Z youth generally have persistent feelings of hopelessness. In one recent survey, 36% of Gen Z respondents described their mental health and emotional wellbeing as “poor” or “fair” and only 41% reported that they were thriving. For comparison, 60% of millennials said they were thriving when surveyed at the same age.



Developing a Growth Mindset and Work Readiness Skills

It's not just members of Generation Z that don't believe in themselves. Another survey found that 40% of business leaders believe that older Gen Z graduates are unprepared to enter today's workforce and lack critical work readiness skills.

Pessimism and feelings of hopelessness are often tied to students not believing in themselves and feeling like they don't have the right skills or knowledge to succeed. Today's teens may feel like they have no control over their future, so they have no choice but to accept whatever happens to them.

While caregivers and Learning Coaches can't change the external factors that impact today's teens, they can work with their students to change their outlook of the future and help them build the job readiness skills they will need once they leave high school by working with them to develop a growth mindset.

People with a growth mindset believe that they can improve their abilities by working on them rather than believing difficult things are out of their control. Students with a growth mindset believe they can get that A on an exam, they can excel in a class on an unfamiliar subject, and they can land that internship by setting goals and pushing themselves to do the necessary work to achieve them.

Developing a growth mindset can lead to a more optimistic view of the future for teens who feel overwhelmed by a negative outlook.

Studies show that optimistic people are more likely to achieve career success and find contentedness throughout their lives because people with a growth mindset are typically confident in their ability to meet challenges and overcome barriers.

5 Ways for Teens to Build a Growth Mindset for Future Career Success

1

People with a growth mindset know that putting in the work is critical to finding success; they need to study, practice, and follow an action plan to achieve what they want out of life.

But if a student lacks confidence in themselves because they feel like their future is out of their hands, they might have a harder time doing the necessary things to prepare for the workforce.

Here are five ways students can gain confidence in their skills and gain more optimism for their futures while also preparing for the workforce.

TAKE A VARIETY OF ELECTIVES IN HIGH SCHOOL

Elective classes are the perfect opportunity for students to step outside of their comfort zone and try new and different things. They can also provide opportunities for career readiness in high school by allowing them to explore their interests and expand their horizons.

Encourage your student to try new subjects in school to help them overcome the fear of the unknown. Trying new things helps them believe that they can learn new skills and find success in areas where they have no experience.

While figuring out their class schedules with your student, review the list of electives at their school and choose subjects that sound interesting or fun. If you don't have any electives that interest your student, try looking around for other extracurricular groups your students could sign up for.

2

GET A PART-TIME JOB OR INTERNSHIP

In 1978, 45.1% of high school students held part-time jobs. That number dropped to 30.5% in 2021. While teens today have more extracurricular activities that prohibit them from working, carving out time to work part-time while in high school can help give students confidence in their work readiness skills. Building Gen Z working skills is crucial. In addition to 40% of surveyed business leaders not believing Gen Z are prepared to enter the workforce, 39% of business leaders have fired a Generation Z employee. The top reasons were lack of communication skills and poor work ethic.

Taking a part-time job in high school exposes students to a real working environment and requires them to build and practice the soft skills they will need for career success in the future, including time management, collaboration, communication, and accountability.

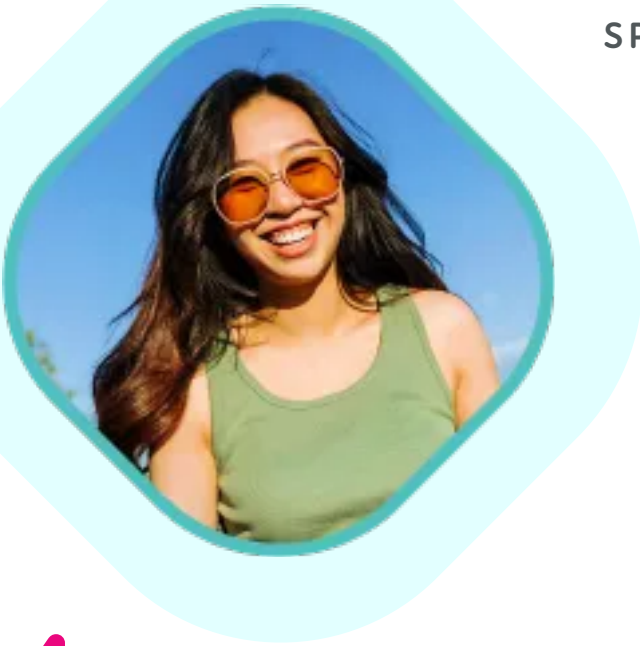
3

VOLUNTEER

Volunteering, much like holding a part-time job, can build confidence and work readiness skills. Students who volunteer can give back to their community or favorite cause, which can also boost their confidence and improve their outlook because they feel like they are making a difference.

Volunteering can expose students to different roles within an organization, providing on-the-job training on a wide range of functions and activities. By the time student volunteers reach the working world, they can develop more confidence in their abilities because these skills will no longer be unknown.

Encourage your teen to think about how they would like to help their communities. Reach out to organizations including food banks, hospitals, animal shelters, and civic organizations to explore volunteer opportunities. Check websites like voluneermatch.org to find organizations that work with teen volunteers near you.



4

CHOOSE A SCHOOL WITH CAREER ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Some schools, including some Connections Academies, help students with early career preparation by offering credit-earning opportunities, mentorship experiences, or focused training often in the medical, business, or STEM fields that can help students start their careers earlier.

By earning certifications or exploring early job training while still in school, students can hone their skills, build a resume, and start establishing industry connections before graduation. This can help students who know what they want to do in their careers to take charge of their futures and feel a bit more in control of what to expect from the working world.

5

ENROLL IN COLLEGE CLASSES

Many high schools offer dual enrollment with local community colleges, giving students the opportunity to take college-level classes on a variety of subjects while still in high school. Students will be challenged to meet higher expectations and complete more advanced coursework, which can get them out of their comfort zone, help them get used to handling a higher level of responsibility, and get them interacting with other students who are coming to class with a wide range of experiences, much like they would experience in the working world.

Humility is key!



While confidence is a critical element of a growth mindset, overconfidence can work against Generation Z

The survey of business leaders noted that many in this generation need to be more self-aware of their abilities and to take constructive criticism, which is meant to help them grow. Confidence is crucial but be mindful of overconfidence, which can lead some to stop learning, practicing and trying new things.

For Learning Coaches supporting teens, help them build a healthy sense of confidence and develop a growth mindset by working with them to set realistic goals and brainstorm how to handle tough situations if things go wrong. This can help them overcome overconfidence and help them focus on what is truly obtainable.

Generation Z has many exciting opportunities available to them as they prepare for their journey after high school. With an optimistic outlook, they can achieve anything they set their minds to.



CONNECTIONS ACADEMY WORKS

97%

The program
prepares students for
future success

THE NUMBERS ADD UP



**GREAT RIVER
CONNECTIONS
ACADEMY**

96%

Parents agree that
curriculum is high
quality



98%

Parents are happy with
Connections Academy



95%

Connections Academy is preparing my
student(s) for college and/or career success

99%

Provides a Safe
Learning environment

98%

Satisfied with the
helpfulness of
teachers

98%

Students say they're
satisfied with CA

*Statistics are Based on 2024
Parental Satisfaction Survey

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SCAN TO



LEARN MORE ABOUT
YOUR SCHOOL'S
COLLEGE AND
CAREER OFFERINGS