

CLASSROOM CHRONICLES

CURATING CURIOSITY

How a New Orleans Career Center Academy Instructor Trains Educators to Set Students Up for Success



In 2017, the Louisiana Department of Education partnered with the national nonprofit organization America Achieves to launch the [Louisiana Educator Voice Fellowship for 21st Century Learning](#). Throughout this fellowship, educators collaborated with state leaders and industry experts to create what is now

known as *Quest for Success* (QFS), a course designed to help students in Louisiana become better prepared for their future, whether their chosen path includes college or career readiness. The course was [piloted last year in select school systems](#), and it is [now being scaled statewide](#).

Courtney Guidry, Engineering and Manufacturing Academy Lead at New Orleans Career Center, was among the first educators to join this fellowship and provide educators from around the state with the opportunity to play an active role in securing successful futures for their students.

Guidry shared with us her experiences with QFS, why she feels opportunity and exposure are a must in education, and her top five tips for supporting students in career exploration.



Q. What was your experience like in developing QFS?
A. In developing this course, I had the opportunity to work with amazing educators from around the state, all with various skill sets and expertise. Together, we were able to visit several different industries and communicate with industry professionals, a step that was imperative to designing a course that reflects the current and future needs of Louisiana's workforce. This experience has afforded me the privilege of training numerous QFS instructors from around the state on rolling out the new, project-based curriculum. I am able to support teachers in transitioning from a traditional classroom where students are typically in rows, lecture style, to being comfortable in what I refer to as the "controlled chaos" of a project-based learning classroom where students facilitate and support conversations and hands-on work.

Q. How does it feel knowing you are impacting career readiness at the state level?
A. I believe that having resources for career navigation and exploration is critical in a student's high school education. Students that go through QFS are more able to make informed choices about their post-secondary plans, whether that's attending a four-year university or a two-year college, or going directly into the workforce. This course gives me hope that our current students will be better prepared for the future, and that this elevated level of preparation will continue to increase as more and more schools utilize QFS in their high school course requirements.

Q. How has this experience changed you as a Career and Technical Education (CTE) leader?
A. Through this experience, I have become a better CTE leader, learning about other pathways and the steps necessary to have a successful career in that field. I have also gained a tremendous amount of knowledge about skills all industries deem as crucial for success—"soft skills" such as communication, time management, and critical thinking—that are transferable across high school, post-secondary, jobs, and careers. These are vital skills for all students to practice and master. Being able to provide these skills and experiences to my students has made my work as a CTE leader relevant and real.

Q. How can educators help students find a career path that best suits their individual needs?
A. I think it's all about opportunities and exposure. If students are never exposed to something new, such as engineering, they will never know if they are good at it or even like it. It's all about promoting curiosity. Being exposed to a variety of career choices, even career options that students didn't know existed, is how that passion can turn into a career choice. We are able to offer them resources and support to assist them in receiving on-the-job training and exposure such as paid internships or apprenticeships, planning college visits, engaging with industry professionals, filling out scholarship forms and resumes, and refining interview skills. These experiences provide them with skills that can propel their future.

GUIDRY'S TOP FIVE TIPS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN CAREER EXPLORATION

- 1. Embrace controlled chaos.**
Be okay with active learning. The teacher is the facilitator; students should be the ones doing the thinking.
- 2. Create a safe place for students to struggle.**
It's equally important for students to discover something they don't like; it can save them years and money.
- 3. Help students make informed choices.**
Expose students to a wide variety of career and post-high school graduation choices that appeal to them.
- 4. Support students in navigating their own path.**
Remain unbiased and provide resources and support needed to ensure authentic success for each student.
- 5. Keep relationships with students alive.**
The relationship shouldn't stop when students leave the classroom.



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