

Helping Students Find Hope and Discover a Successful Path Forward

Exploring the Partnership of eDynamic Learning, Knowledge Matters, & DECA

A District Success Story



Featured Educator

Ms. Andrea Anderson

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(CTE) Coordinator, Birdville ISD
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Ms. Andrea Anderson
pictured in the center

Every day, teachers work tirelessly to encourage students who mention feeling disconnected from school or don't find the curriculum materials useful or relevant. Schools are aiming to address this by providing students with more experiences to engage in real-world applications that help them tie their interests and skills to rewarding careers.

Ms. Andrea Anderson is Birdville ISD's Career & Technical Education (CTE) Coordinator in Haltom City, TX. A former marketing major and classroom teacher, she understands the importance of real world experiences and the intricacies and nuances of the marketing field. Now, she is using that knowledge to find ways to inspire her students and has witnessed success, despite the numerous challenges her district faces daily.

Many of the students in her district have challenges that make even meeting basic educational requirements difficult, to say the least. Some of the students work to support their families who



barely have basic necessities, a few are teen parents, and others are even living in cars. It's not hard to understand that achieving modest results would be challenging considering these circumstances for students, let alone thinking about what they would like to do in life.

Ms. Anderson is tackling these challenges to afford students the possibility of discovering a future that could be life-changing. And while you may expect some of these students to feel lost, they are gaining hope and confidence and finding success in their CTE programs. Five years ago her district adopted the eDynamic Learning digital curriculum to help provide an alternative to traditional textbooks, and she has never looked back. She has also used Knowledge Matters online simulations for over 10 years and has seen firsthand the value each solution has provided to her colleagues and students. Both solutions complement how her district provides students with the opportunity to explore careers in the fields of business, marketing, and hospitality and tourism.

The CTE program uses eDynamic Learning to provide teachers with foundational course materials for instruction that can be accessed on any device, including Chromebooks, making it convenient for the students and their circumstances. However, developing passion for a career path and even having technical expertise and experience is sometimes not enough. Students often lack the soft skills that are essential in workplaces across all industries, and eDynamic Learning has created a plan to solve this common problem. Through eDynamic Learning's Workplace & Internship Readiness course, students can develop foundational skills that will set them up for real world success like becoming a better listener, more creative, tech-savvy, and well spoken.

“The eDynamic Learning Workplace and Internship Readiness course is also being taught by a Special Education (SPED) teacher in Birdville ISD who wanted her students to have access to CTE courses. The teacher loves how the course integrates with Canvas and especially appreciates the literacy toolbar, enabling her to provide that extra level of support for her students.”

Students who also want or need to earn a salary sooner than later, are able to obtain internships and valuable real world experience while still in high school. The CTE classes give them those opportunities while also gaining additional credits in school. Andrea is also proud to share that students have earned industry certifications in Microsoft Office after taking eDynamic Learning courses. Most of the students earned certifications in Word and PowerPoint, with a few earning the more challenging Excel certification. Andrea can't say enough about the “tremendous impact” the eDynamic Learning curriculum has had on students and teachers since adopting the technology years ago. Teachers are also finding that the eDynamic Learning built-in literacy toolbar that appears on the screen continuously, supports all students including English Language Learners and students with learning disabilities or IEP/504 accommodations. Since their schedules are variable, having built-in help at their finger-tips is essential to understanding new materials when a teacher is unavailable or they are working late at night.



“eDynamic Learning works, it’s flexible, effective, and it’s easy to use. It is so beneficial to have it completely online – instruction doesn’t stop and that is the silver lining.”

Getting Students Excited About Learning

Knowledge Matters gives students real world experiences in the fields of business, marketing, finance, fashion, and hospitality and tourism through experiential career-based online simulations. Students have the opportunity to learn about possible career fields, and they enjoy solving problems throughout the process. This path helps them understand the material from another level, because they can see how their decisions affect a business with real-time feedback. Andrea says that students are so engaged, because it is “like a game and they feel connected to what they are learning.”

Students can work on these plans individually or as groups. Andrea says the students practice self-reflection, asking questions such as “How would this look if I ordered this much inventory here at this price point? What’s that going to cost on my bottom line? What about my advertising dollars? Why couldn’t we break even? Oh, we put 20% of our budget into advertising. That’s why.” The students are seeing their plans in action instead of just proposing them.

Andrea notices that students become connected to their plans and take ownership of their success, which is so powerful.

They are realizing . . . ***‘This is what I really want to do. They really get excited and competitive in those simulations, and they say, ‘This is a business I want to start.’***

Andrea mentioned that many new teachers find themselves tasked with teaching different pathways with material that is often new to them. They feel so relieved to have access to high quality curricula for their students’ learning. Other teachers love that they can customize the courses and add new resources they find or create on their own.

She loves that when new teachers come into the district, she is able to set up teachers’ courses seamlessly, without assistance from the eDynamic Learning support team. She can do it herself, which is a huge relief and timesaver.

“As an administrator you allow us to manage our student and teacher accounts so that we can provide support whenever we need to. We don’t need to go back to you and make requests. This is very unique compared to other publishers.”

Some of the many benefits Andrea has seen firsthand from the use of Knowledge Matters simulations:

- Higher participation in hands-on learning
- Ability to compete in virtual business competitions/games in various fields
- Utilization of real business standards
- A risk-free environment to learn firsthand what works and fails in business
- The experience to see the effects of choices in real-time and make adjustments
- Eligibility for scholarship opportunities

Gaining Real World Experience Through DECA

Birdville ISD students have the opportunity to find a career path that interests them through eDynamic Learning's customizable curriculum and Knowledge Matters' hands-on simulations. In addition, the district supports student participation in DECA, a co-curricular student organization designed to prepare emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management.



Each year the teachers and their students look forward to participating in DECA simulation challenge competitions hosted by Knowledge Matters. Students get the chance to flex the skills they've learned in the simulations and compete against other teams for a chance to win scholarships and recognition from businesses and colleges. She enjoys watching them engage with the business principles they have learned from their teachers.

Getting Students Excited About Learning

Andrea acknowledges that teachers have different strategies for using eDynamic Learning and Knowledge Matters together. While some teachers save the Knowledge Matters simulations as a way to incorporate projects at the end of units, Andrea feels that the most effective way is to integrate them throughout the curriculum from the beginning.

She has also noticed that the unique approaches to using both programs depends upon teacher experience. New teachers are using eDynamic Learning as a foundational resource and making adjustments to it as they go. Their lessons are integrated with the simulations, and they are constantly learning. For more experienced teachers who already have their favorite lesson plans and a specific unit design, customizing the curriculum from the start may be a better option.

Andrea believes that schools should be continuously updating their resources and seeking the most relevant and up-to-date content since business/industry and technology are continually changing.

Continuously Providing Non-Stop Instruction

The COVID-19 pandemic altered everyone's plans. But with eDynamic Learning and Knowledge Matters already in place, teachers had minimal interruptions. The curriculum and simulations were digital, and Andrea saw the technological benefits of both programs.

Throughout the pandemic, teachers have had the students participate in the simulations online or in person. It has been a way to engage all students with weekly updates and competition results, helping all of the students feel connected to each other regardless of where they were learning.

Seamlessly Working Better Together

A comprehensive curriculum is an essential tool for the ever changing field of education, and hands-on simulations are extremely valuable as a real world component of learning. Educators who have used either eDynamic Learning or Knowledge Matters simulations are now seeing how they can integrate seamlessly to create a remarkable student and teacher experience. Each product provides them with value.

Both products can easily be integrated into Canvas, which is the Learning Management System (LMS) used at Birdville ISD. The district is able to issue Chromebooks for all of the students so that they can easily participate in the classroom and at home. Other resources utilized include virtual desktops and laptops with the software for each applicable pathway.

The dynamic trio of eDynamic Learning, Knowledge Matters, and DECA has enabled Andrea to support teachers and instill both a love of learning and real-world industry experience for students.