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Idaho's Career Information System Helps Students and Adults to Find the Right Career

By Dr. Linda Clark, president, Idaho State Board of Education

The Idaho Career Information System (CIS) program is nearly 40 years old. In that time CIS has evolved from something resembling a family board game, into a sophisticated online tool, which helps students and adults navigate hundreds of career options. “It’s kind of a one-stop shop for expanding students’ and even parent’s minds about opportunities that exist out in the world of work,” CIS Program Manager Sara Scudder said.

The 1980 version of CIS would usually involve a quick meeting between a student, school counselor, and a box of cards. “The student and counselor would sit down and the counselor would ask the student questions and based on their response, the student would stick a needle into a hole through a deck of cards then lift the cards up and watch as they made different choices, how their opportunities would change.”

Today, students can explore opportunities using CIS both in the classroom and at home. CIS is now an online program that is now part of the [Next Steps Idaho](#) website; and it goes way beyond picking potential careers and seeing what pops up. “CIS starts with personal skills and interest exploration and then it moves on to show students how to take those skills and interests and apply them to related occupations,” CIS Program Coordinator Inessa Palnikov said. “CIS then points the

student to an area of study or a program to further develop those skills and interests into a potential occupation.”

The program is built around multiple assessments that take into account different learning styles and work values that also helps students decide what they want to do. “A lot of times, kids really don’t know what their work values are or even what skills they already have and CIS helps them to start thinking about that,” Scudder said. “It really gets them thinking about some of the decisions they need to make and steps they’ll need to be focused on rather than just perhaps how much money they will make.”

There are over 400 unique CIS license subscriptions - most of which are schools. Since the beginning of the fiscal year in July, CIS has been accessed more than 112,000 times by Idaho students, teachers, jobseekers and other individuals interested in career development and exploration.

Scudder expects to see those numbers increase because CIS subscriptions now come free of charge. “During the last legislative session, the CIS program was moved from the Department of Labor to the State Board of Education to better align with state initiatives,” she said. “One of the tenets of that move was to provide the system free of charge to Idaho public schools to support college and career advising. CIS is also available to state agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation, the Department of Labor, the Industrial Commission and Idaho’s American Indian Tribes who work to support job seekers.”

The system is put to use in many different ways across the state. “For instance, the Idaho Digital Learning Academy has adapted CIS Junior (used by students in 5th through 8th grades) into one of their courses called 8th grade career exploration. Students enrolled in that course are creating their required 8th grade learning plans by using CIS,” Palnikov said. “Other schools use CIS to help students create resumes, or to find scholarships. Every school has a different method for how they choose to use it. Several schools are using CIS to support senior projects too.”

The addition of CIS to the [Next Steps Idaho](#) website will also help bring the program to more Idahoans, and will expand the array of resources for students and their families. “We think it makes the Next Steps website a more dynamic tool for students, and for career and college advisors,” State Board College and Career Advising Program Manager Byron Yankey said. “It will provide a personal history of student interests along with college and career choices and that will help us

better understand each student individually and how we can best help them succeed beyond high school.”

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