

Shawnee Heights Middle School brings Kolbe to 7th and 8th grade students

568 students at the Shawnee Heights Middle School in Tecumseh, Kansas are taking the Kolbe Y index this year. In a project funded by the Center for Conative Abilities, all students and their teachers will not only complete the index but use the information throughout the school year.

Jennifer Bessolo, Principal of the school and director of this project, believes the biggest impact will be on students' self-efficacy. "At this stage of their life students begin to see themselves differently. When Kolbe shows them that there is no 'bad' result, no 'bad' way of operating, no 'bad' MO it makes a huge difference. Students gain confidence and that shows in their schoolwork." As part of the study students were also given a pre-index survey that measured their attitudes about learning and problem solving. This same set of questions will be administered at the end of the project to compare answers.

"In education, teachers are often initiating Fact-Finder/Follow-Thru's. If students have that MO they can do quite well. But if they initiate in Implementer or Quick Start there may be a missing connection and they may struggle" says Jennifer. "It is huge for students AND teachers to have Kolbe. It can be life changing all around." One way teachers will be able to use Kolbe is to understand more about how their students problem-solve. "Teachers can really use this information for synergistic group work, as well as in their instructional strategies to differentiate learning."

This isn't the first time the Shawnee Heights Middle School has introduced Kolbe. In 2007 a group of 7th graders took the Kolbe Y index at the school. Recently, Jennifer met with those students and was impressed with their progress. One student told her he had never understood why he didn't "fit" the mold of other students. After taking the Kolbe and seeing his MO as initiating Implementer he realized he had an untapped talent. Today he is a student at Washburn Technical School, a vocational program at the local university open to high school students, getting ready for a well-paid career in diesel engine mechanics. This student attributes his success to taking the Kolbe.

During this year's project, teachers will not only receive their Kolbe A results, but will learn how to apply the Kolbe wisdom in their classrooms. "It can be overwhelming for teachers when faced with all the different MO possibilities," says Jennifer, "but when we show them how they can differentiate learning by providing choices of activities to teach a concept, it becomes exciting, even for our skeptical teachers."

Parents have also been quite supportive of the initiative. After a letter was sent home explaining the project, some parents went online to Kolbe.com and have expressed sincere enthusiasm in wanting to know their own MO's.

Recently the staff went through the Glop Shop exercise. “It is a great way to illustrate how our instincts drive our behavior. It was an eye opening exercise for the teachers and I could see light bulbs going off all over the room” said Jennifer. The same exercise is being considered for both the Parent Site Council and students as they learn about the team component to the Kolbe Wisdom.

“Kolbe should be a part of our student information system that we maintain on each student. It should be part of our school culture” concludes Jennifer, “I’d like to see it go district wide, but for now we are concentrating on working with our students and gathering data to show others the positive impact.”

By Beth Banks Cohn PhD