



Job interview practice: B.C. Central students' reality check

The mediacenter at Battle Creek Central High School on Wednesday hummed with the chatter of young potential, the buzz of students learning to compete for their futures.

Throughout the morning, 118 Central students flowed in and out of the media center, taking their turns at 15-minute mock interviews with one of 25 volunteer businessmen and businesswomen from the community. The students, part of Central's Career Connections class, got the chance to practice their interview skills and take pointers from folks who know what to look for in a strong applicant.

"It helps people in school really try to become better people, to understand the world, the real world ... that it takes effort from you," said Fernanda Reyes, a 17-year-old senior who said she wanted to be a cosmetologist or a choreographer. "You have to learn how to be a businesswoman."

"I think it's great," said Dale Aldrich, branch sales and service manager for Omni Community Credit Union. "It gives them a chance to learn the process."

Jason Coats, Central business and

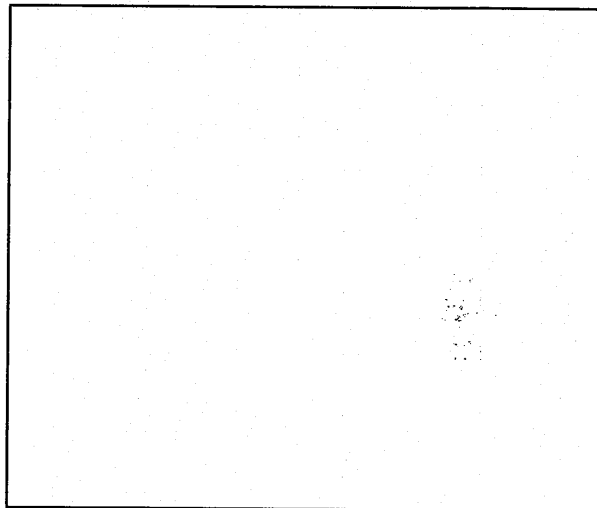
technology teacher, said students learn in Career Connections how to write résumés and cover letters and to develop portfolios, then how to land an interview and perform well during an interview. He said the class is run in partnership with Junior Achievement of Southwest Michigan's Success Skills program and he said volunteers from Battle Creek's RE/MAX Perrett Associates "bring in an outside perspective to (the class) ... so they can learn what's really happening out there in the business world."

"This gives them the opportunity to see how an interview works," Coats said. "They're developing all the necessary skills to find a job."

In an increasingly competitive job market, that can be an important leg up, said Brad Kaufmann, president of the local Junior Achievement and one of the volunteer interviewers on Wednesday.

"We're stressing more about setting themselves apart, being that unique

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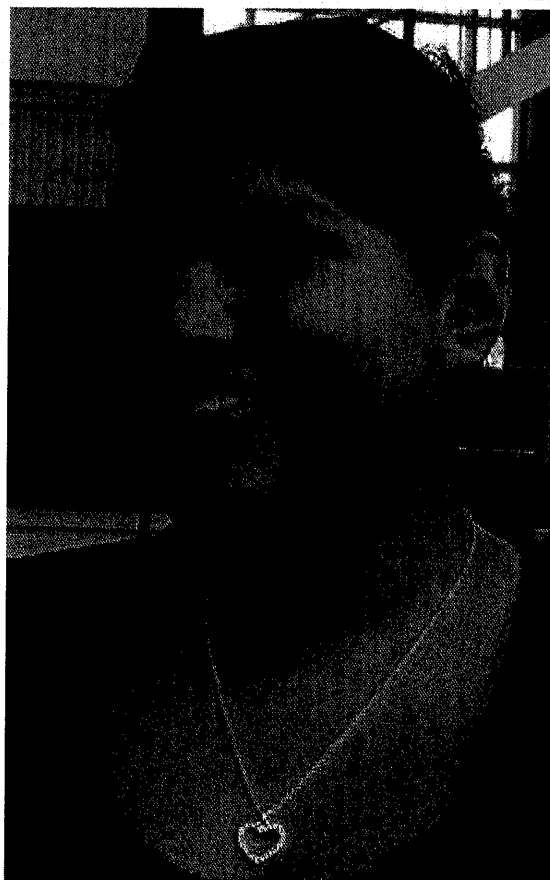
candidate," Kaufmann said. "You need to do the things that set you above the rest."

He said he would press students to sell themselves on paper -- develop a strong résumé, cover letter and portfolio -- to land the interview, and then sell themselves in person during the interview.

Phone Sin Pau Yu, an 18-year-old senior, said the program was teaching him how to do just that.

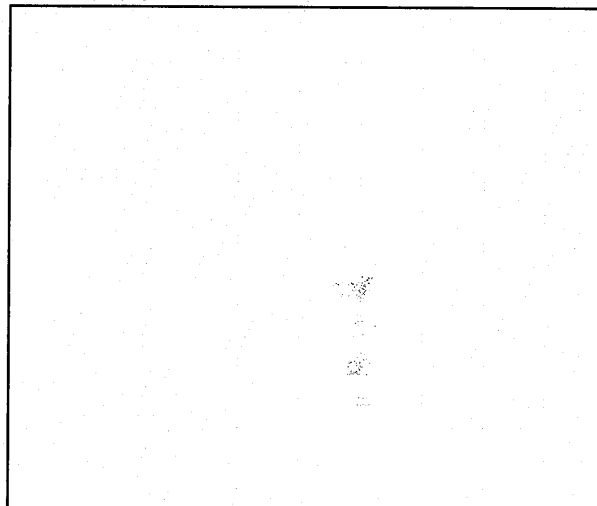
"I think it's really good," he said. "The things I didn't know today I will know tomorrow."

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Zoom
Fernanda Reyes, 17, a senior at Battle Creek Central, after her interview: "It helps people in school really try to become better people, to understand the world, the real world ... that it takes effort from you." / John Grap/The Enquirer

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