

## Workshops aim to help Boulder students focus on future

By MARGA LINCOLN - Independent Record - 03/21/08

One in three of today's eighth-graders won't graduate from high school.

For Boulder educator Mary Ellen Earnhardt, this disturbing national statistic is a call to action.

She's organized "Career Connection" workshops, March 31 and April 1 in Boulder, bringing in a national leader in career counseling, Rebecca Dedmond. The workshops are geared for parents, educational professionals and community leaders.

"High school freshmen are making critical academic choices that influence the rest of their lives," said Earnhardt, director of the 21st Century Community Learning Center in Boulder.

Some drop out. And some make academic choices that will shut doors on their future goals.

"Too often, students see little relevance between school work and what awaits them," said Dedmond.

"Research shows that if they have a vision, if they have a written plan and they see the relevance of the school work to what they want, they have a far greater chance of achieving their goals."

For educators, the workshops will help them prepare young people to form a realistic action plan for achieving their career path.

A separate workshop, March 31, is designed for parents.

"Research shows that parents are the number one choice for where students turn for career information," said Dedmond.

"We want to have parents who are informed. Our evening workshop is about tools parents can use in their home to help their child plan their future."

Students who have a long-term vision are willing to choose harder topics in school and make more realistic career path choices, she said.

"Too often, we say, 'Be anything you want to be,'" Dedmond said. "But we need to help them set realistic goals in line with their own aspirations and dreams."

Many career options don't require four-year post-secondary degrees, Earnhardt added.

In many schools, the discussion with students about their future is taking place too late — in their junior year, she said.

"Career development is more than a resume of jobs and doing job shadowing. It's learning what you are and finding things you are really good at. This searching takes a long time," Earnhardt said.

She's concerned about all the children in the community.

"What about these kids from rough families?" she asked. "We need to believe in them. Every human being deserves a chance to reach their potential. Every kid deserves a chance to succeed."

It is during the high school freshman year that the highest dropout rates are recorded, according to a written statement by Dedmond.

While education reforms have focused on academic standards, they've ignored an important factor — student motivation.

"Without a willing and motivated learner, all our best efforts will be wasted," said Dedmond.

Teaching more math isn't the answer, if the student hates math and doesn't see that it's relevant to her future.

To address this type of problem, Dedmond created the Freshman Transition Initiative, a course promoting student self-sufficiency. It assists eighth- or ninth-graders in developing their own 10-year plans.

Dedmond is a national leader in bringing together all the components needed for student success — students, parents, teachers, community and business leaders and research, said Earnhardt.

Dedmond is the past president of the National Consortium of State Career Guidance Supervisors. She directs the career counseling program at George Washington University, where she is also a researcher.

The upcoming workshops are sponsored by the Boulder School District and the 21st Century Community Learning Center.

For more information call Mary Ellen Earnhardt at 406-225-3316 ext. 100 or maryellenearnhardt@bgs.k12.mt.us.

### Details announced for Career Connections' two workshops

A free Career Connection Parent Workshop will be held Monday, March 31, 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., at the Boulder Catholic Church Center, 214 S. Elder.

The workshop is designed to engage parents in helping their child set career development goals



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There will be a two-day Career Connection workshop for administrators, counselors, educators, community and religious leaders March 31 to April 1, also at the Catholic Church Center.

Cost for one day is \$100.

Cost two days is \$150.

Group discounts are available

The workshop covers research of best practices to assist in setting up a comprehensive guidance system supporting all youth in preparing for their future.

Includes Freshman Transition Initiative Program implementation and action plan.

For information or to register, call Mary Ellen Earnhardt 406-225-3316 ext.100 or maryellen.earnhardt@bgs.k12.mt.us

Visit the [Freshman Transition Initiative](#) Web site for more information.

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