

NORTHWEST ISD

In what most would agree has been an unconventional year in education, a rapidly growing North Texas public school district has successfully rolled out the MajorClarity platform with students in both in-person and virtual learning models. We caught up with Bobby Morris, Director of College and Career Readiness to learn more about their approach to CCR and to discuss how MajorClarity aligns with and supports the district's CCR goals.

Here are 7 key takeaways from our conversation:



FORT WORTH, TX



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PARTNERSHIP
SPOTLIGHT

Q MC: Your district has seen a lot of success with students using MajorClarity this year. How are you feeling about this accomplishment?

A Bobby: I'm feeling really quite fortunate that this project has taken off so well! It's really filling a need for us, and no matter which learning model our students are receiving instruction in at this time, we are seeing a high level of engagement with MajorClarity. Parents were given the choice to determine which setting would be most appropriate for their family, so our students are learning virtually as well as in person, depending on their preferences and needs. Communicating with students is critical, and it has certainly become more challenging to reach everyone these last several months. One of the things that really excites me about the platform is having such user-friendly communication tools at our disposal. I just sent a message out earlier to all of our eighth graders and already I am getting messages back from the students! It's nice to be able to get a read on what the kids are thinking - especially now - and to be able to facilitate those communication efforts in a format that is accessible to all learners.

Q MC: In what ways does MajorClarity align with and support your district's primary CCR goals?

A Bobby: One of our primary goals is for our students to be able to live locally and compete globally. We're in one of the fastest growing areas in the nation, the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. The entire metroplex is shifting west, to the point where the town that's on the far east side of our district will eventually be the center of the DFW metroplex. We're seeing so much expansion, so we want to make sure that our kids have the opportunities to stay here and live here and be successful. We are in what we call the 'Alliance Corridor' where I-35W runs up through the middle of Texas - there is an airport, a speedway, and a wide range of industries already thriving in our area, with a lot more on the horizon. The key is to effectively communicate that information to our students and their families so that we can create true 'customers for life'. We want our kids to want to remain in the district and to be a proud part of it. That takes work, but MajorClarity is helping us to reach that goal. Having such a user-friendly program makes it feel a lot less like work because the students are able to really drive that discovery process, and can do so in a format they enjoy and are comfortable with. This makes it a lot easier for my team to meet our goals. It really is so easy to get kids started - they can log in, take their assessments, and then already have a good starting point for career exploration based on those career path fit scores. It just makes sense, and it is intuitive, which the students love.

Q MC: What are some of the things that have been most beneficial to your district through your partnership with MajorClarity?

A Bobby: MajorClarity has truly been a solution provider - not a vendor - but a solution provider. For everyone working in this space, we don't need more vendors. We don't need more problems. We need solutions, and you guys provide those solutions for us. I had a friend call me from a nearby district asking why we decided to switch to MajorClarity and I gave her an earful - it's user-friendly, more cost effective, just such a high quality product, and we didn't lose anything we were using before by making the switch to MajorClarity, we only gained. Another thing I like is the consistency. When I'm doing a training I tend to reset my account so I can show the people in my training how the platform works on the student side, and every time I take the personality assessment my results are always accurate, and my best fit career path matches align exactly with what I am doing right now. That is a powerful thing to see in action, and goes a long way in creating positive sentiment among staff. We also use Career Trees in our district, and they are set up in all of our elementary, middle, and high school buildings. Students are able to see all of the jobs that relate to a specific field and learn more about them, and this is a system our kids are really familiar with. MajorClarity matches our Career Trees perfectly, so having those two pieces pair together makes it authentic for our students. You guys also continuously improve the platform and add new features. My team is so excited about the Micro-Credentials - it is pretty incredible to have access to something like that without having to pay the vendor another \$20,000 dollars. The value you guys provide is really what sets you apart from other programs.

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36+**CTE
CERTIFICATION
OPPORTUNITIES****19****# OF CAREER
PATHWAY
PROGRAMS****66+****# OF LOCAL
EMPLOYER
PARTNERS****8****# OF CAREER
ACADEMY
PROGRAMS**

Q **MC:** How does your team help students determine their next best steps after graduation? What is your ultimate goal in preparing students for that transition?

A **Bobby:** We try to provide as much guidance as we can by having key staff who are able to assist with different aspects of the post-secondary transition. We have coordinators for each one of our CTE content areas and a coordinator oversees each of the different career pathways and academies we offer. We have two College and Career facilitators in two of our high school campuses working with our three comprehensive high schools to help get students registered for college classes and to provide general support as they navigate that process. Filling out applications and knowing what materials are required to pursue a higher ed degree or certification can be challenging, so our main priority is to make the process less overwhelming and as transparent as possible. We work with students who are pursuing internships to help review and polish resumes and to suggest relevant talking points in preparation for employer interviews, and we have a coordinator who oversees our internships and practicums to help with student placements, working to ensure that our students are a good fit for these real-world experiences. At the end of the day, we want our kids to graduate with as many options as possible. We've kind of moved away from the notion that college is for everybody. Our focus instead has been to help students make choices that are right for them, no matter what that may look like. If a student does go to college, then we want that student to go to college with purpose. If a student opts to go directly into the workforce, then we want that student to begin their career with equal purpose. Whatever they do, there has to be a clear purpose behind those decisions. Our job is to help students define that purpose. MajorClarity is making that much easier.

Q **MC:** How has the shift to virtual learning impacted the work you do?

A **Bobby:** More than anything, I believe that virtual learning has stretched education, for all of us. I hope it's stretching us in a good way so that we can find ways to offer more, to offer better. I wouldn't say that we've figured out all aspects of effective virtual teaching yet - that is a process that will be on-going, and I think we all still have a long way to go - but there are quality learning tools out there that can make the transition much more tolerable, even enjoyable. Most importantly it has become all the more clear that educators need to get creative, be willing to try new things, and to remain flexible.

Q **MC:** What are some effective strategies your team has in place to introduce the concept of CCR and to communicate CCR opportunities to students and families in your district?

A **Bobby:** We use a lot of social media to keep the district community informed... especially now. A lot of planting the seed in the wind so to speak, just to remind our students about the resources and programs that are available to them. It is a great medium for notifying students about easy tasks they can accomplish in MajorClarity... simple things like, "Did you know you can search for scholarships in MajorClarity? Go here and login to get started!" - I think it is a good idea to just continuously toss those reminders out so students become used to hearing about the program and understand that it is a tool that is available to them whenever they need it and is something they can rely on, especially now as they are dealing with so much uncertainty. I also create a lot of videos and PSA's to share information. Our superintendent hosted Facebook Live sessions all summer long, and he made sure to mention MajorClarity a few times during those sessions as well. We also begin introducing the notion of college and career readiness in middle school through an 8th grade course. This is where students are learning about the CTE pathways that are offered in NISD, and our academy schools, and it is really the time when they begin making decisions around that four-year plan. This is where students really need to begin making informed choices about what they want to do and how they are going to get there.

Q **MC:** How does your district build community partnerships with local employers? How do you maintain those relationships?

A **Bobby:** Our district liaison is really the face of the district to the businesses in our area. She'll meet with employers to discuss the things that our students are really looking for in internships. We know these businesses need somebody who can come in and be useful to their organization. The employer's expectations are that students are coming to them ready to work, with professional skills. The students are going to be wearing their NISD badges when they go off-site, so it is critical that they act professional, are dressed appropriately, and are on time. We put a lot of focus on fostering those skills before our students get to those placements. It is really important to learn from the business partners what exactly they are looking for so we can tweak our programming to deliver on that. On-going and open communication between the district and our employer partners is key. Communicating expectations to students is also key.