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Students Find Their Perfect 'Match'

By Leslie Perales 
Observer Staff Writer

Many students at South Lakes High School are highly anticipating the week of Valentine's Day when they will receive the results of their personalized Data Match, a program that connects students based on personality traits they identified in a questionnaire. This is the second time that South Lakes has offered the program, which is organized as a fundraiser for the Future Business Leaders of America student group.

Kirsten Hillgaard Lukas, who is a co-adviser for FBLA, said Data Match is one of their programs that students get really excited about because of its novelty.

"Other clubs do candy grams or singing grams, and this is different and gets the club's name out there as well," she said.

She said Data Match gives participants a chance to meet people with similar personality traits that they might not get to know otherwise. Data Match uses questionnaires that students complete to figure out which students are most alike. She said the South Lakes FBLA created their own questionnaire for the program, and questions included topics such as a person's favorite sport or class subject.

In addition to raising money for FBLA, the program also gets other students interested in businesses classes at the school, she said. While teachers do not know the exact science behind Data Match—questionnaires are sent away to determine results—using the program gives teachers the opportunity to teach students about different business techniques.

For example, offering the program near Valentine's Day teaches students about how timing is involved in marketing campaigns, Lukas said. She said the program also lends itself to explaining to students how databases work.

The FBLA offered the program a few years ago, and about 80 percent of the student body completed Data Match questionnaires. Only about 20 percent of the students purchased their results that year, but Lukas said she expects they will have a higher turnout this year.

"We have 1,000 students who filled out the forms, so they could purchase them," Lukas said. "There was a lot of interest and curiosity about it all."

She said few students understood the program the first time Data Match was used, but the FLBA did a better job marketing the program and explaining how it works this year.

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In addition to student matches, the program also connects teachers and results include male and female matches.

"For teachers it's kind of hard to meet each other outside of your department," Lukas said. "When I got my results, I was able to meet four or five teachers outside of my department."

The results of the matches are sold for \$2 each, and that money benefits the FBLA, which uses it to attend leadership conferences where they are able to learn about things such as managing their own companies, public speaking and business etiquette, Lukas said.

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