

**PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER SPECIALISTS: WHAT
CONSTITUTES EFFECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL CAREER CENTERS**

by

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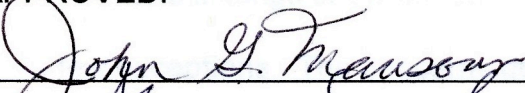
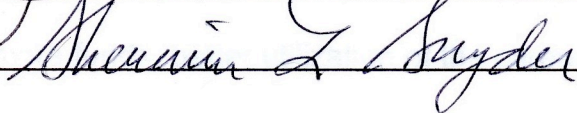
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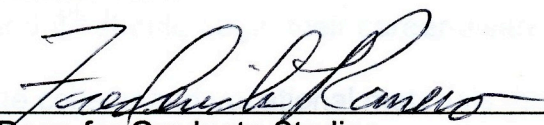
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ABSTRACT

High school students are expected to have a career decision by the time they exit high school. It is the responsibility of the faculty and parents of each student to encourage career planning throughout high school. This decision is not made in one day and takes a lot of preparation. Career centers are the core of the school to help facilitate career planning when they are utilized properly.

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of career specialists as to what constitutes effective high school career centers. The study was designed to determine the best materials and equipment, key components that make up a career center, influences of career planning, and any problem career specialists incur. The research was based on the question of what the perceptions were of career specialists as to what constitutes effective high school career centers.

The demographics included four career specialists, also referred to as participants. They were from four separate high schools in a unified school district in Arizona. They were each met with and verbally interviewed with open-ended questions.

The findings show the participants' perceptions were positive overall with a few exceptions. The concerns derived from the study pointed to the need for more funds, better utilization of the career centers, evaluations of the students pertaining to their career exploration, a more supportive staff, and better parent involvement. Students in grades 7th and 8th should begin their career awareness. Career centers need to use appropriate college and vocational materials, have

greater student awareness, and goal orientation by students. The career learning process can be enhanced by using counselors, faculty, and parents to assist the students. Recommendations were to promote the use of the career center through influences in the students' lives and support from the faculty at each school.

DEDICATION

To Mike, Brittini, and C.J.

Thank you for your sacrifice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER 1 – THE PROBLEM	1
Introduction	1
Development of the Problem	2
Need for the Study	3
Purpose of the Study	4
Research Question	4
Definition of Terms	5
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Introduction	6
Factors That Make Up Career Planning	6
Laws That Promote Post Secondary Education and Employment	8
Associations That Promote Post Secondary Education and Employment	10
Programs and Models That Promote Post Secondary Education and Employment	10
Summary	12
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY	13
Purpose	13
Research Design	13
Source of Data	14
Demographics	15
Assumptions and Limitations	15
Procedure	16
Instrumentation	17
Method of Analysis	18
CHAPTER 4 – PRESENTATION OF ANALYSIS OF DATA	19
Research Question	19
Demographics	19
Findings and Results	19
CHAPTER 5 – SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	24
Summary	24
Conclusions	25
Lack of Funds	26
Utilization of Career Center	26
Evaluation	26
Supportive Staff	26

CHAPTER	PAGE
Parent Involvement	27
Recommendations	27
REFERENCES	29
APPENDIX A – SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW ANSWERS	32

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Career planning is one of the most difficult decisions to make in one's life. People change careers because of many reasons such as: money, job description, coworkers, supervisors, travel time, benefits, satisfaction, and family. Without experience and knowledge, students in high school are often required to make this decision. Students who do not participate in career planning before graduation can find themselves making hasty decisions they may regret.

Proper career planning enables students to have choices and prepare them for their future. Successful career planning encompasses many factors. Administrators, counselors, and staff can use the information from this study to make more informed decisions regarding their students' career planning.

An assessment of what constitutes an effective high school career center may be conducted by interviews with career specialists. The results of this assessment may provide valuable feedback which would enable career specialists to help their students make informed decisions when planning their futures.

Development of the Problem

The average student begins high school about the age of 14. The major purpose for high school is preparation for life. It is imperative that each student have a tentative job career plan (Cassel, 1998).

It is true career plans often change, but a tentative career plan should be in motion. Many students in eighth and ninth grades have no career goals. Yet at this age they must make difficult decisions regarding the courses they will take in high school (Jarvis, 1991). Often students lack time and knowledge to guide their own career planning and often wait until their senior year to begin making their career decisions. Many times these decisions are irreversible due to the classes they have taken during their high school years. High school students are making educational decisions that will have lasting effects (Gullekson, 1995). Career planning is not a one-time event that is planned overnight. According to Gullekson (1995), a definition for planning should be "managing one's pathway through life" (p. 7).

If the purpose for school is to build a bridge to a meaningful and acceptable career plan, then a career plan must be in existence before a student can effectively prepare for such a plan (Cassel, 1998). Studies from the United States and other countries indicate that many working class youth do not choose careers, instead they find jobs (Hamilton & Powers, 1990).

The college preparatory curriculum is the most frequently followed in high school, yet fewer than half of the students progress on to degree-granting institutions (Hawkes & Robinson, 1997). Schools prepare students for college if

they choose, yet some students are overlooked because they do not choose college. Over 30 percent of youth are dropping out of high school and 35 percent are pursuing their education beyond high school (Jarvis, 1991).

When students do not have special needs or qualify for honors level classes, they get classified as “general track.” Gene Bottoms, director of the Southern Regional Education Board in Atlanta, is the chief advocate for eliminating the general track in high schools. He believes it keeps students in school long enough to graduate but fails to prepare them for their career plans (cited in Lozada, 1997). In 1993, a study for the U.S. Department of Education reported that 55 percent of youth had graduated from a general track (Lozada, 1997).

Students should not be pressured to make immediate decisions, but should learn the process that leads to informed decisions, exploring choices, and researching options. They need to learn the process of exploring values, beliefs, and interests while researching the labor market (Gullekson, 1995).

Need for the Study

Career centers are important in high schools because they contain the resources students can use to facilitate their career planning goals such as civilian and military opportunities, training opportunities, financial aid, self evaluation, and information about entrance exams (Brown & Brown, 1990). Career centers obtain college information so that students may read about the credentials of colleges. Career centers also have information, either through

literature or computer access, for occupations. Career centers are the place where students get a better concept of what direction they want their career to go. Unfortunately, many high schools do not have career centers.

Career specialists are important within the schools. They help guide students with specific questions and lead them to resources where the student may make better career planning decisions. It is important to identify those activities that career center educators believe are most effective. There is no single career development event, activity, or test that will answer or teach the process (Gullekson, 1995). Although career planning is time-consuming, it is important to integrate this process into all grade levels to ensure appropriate decisions before it is too late.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of career specialists as to what constitutes effective high school career centers.

Research Question

What are the perceptions of career specialists as to what constitutes effective high school career centers?

Definition of Terms

Career Specialist: The term career specialist refers to a person who facilitates the career development of people (Mariani, 1998).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A review of the literature in this chapter establishes an understanding of factors that make up career planning. Laws and associations established to promote secondary education and employment are discussed as well as models and programs that affect students with career decisions. This information provided a foundation for this study.

Factors That Make Up Career Planning

High school counselors are a vital tool in shaping students' career goals. "One of the most important tasks in school counseling is to facilitate students' educational and vocational development" (Mau, Hitchcock, & Calvert, 1998, p. 1). A study by Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans compared results collected in 1974 and 1983 which found that today's secondary students expressed more confidence in their counselors than their teachers or principals (cited in Parsons, 1997).

Career planning involves a variety of people: career specialists, parents, teachers, and other resources. "The entire scope of the career development curriculum can't fall on the back of one counselor who has a caseload of 250

students" (Parsons, 1997, p. 3). Many schools direct the students to career development facilitators. They may not necessarily have a college degree or formal training in counseling, but then do a great deal for students regarding career planning. They have titles such as: "career advisor, case manager, job search trainer, placement specialist, intake interviewer, school to work coordinator, career resource center managers, and more" (Mariani, 1998, p. 1).

Students do not always want to approach the supposed expert in the field. Many times they go to someone they feel is approachable, a person they feel will take an interest in helping them. According to Watts (1996), the career specialist "should see his primary role as being to help pupils to identify their needs, and then to plug them into people or other resources or experiences that may be able to meet those needs" (p. 6). Watts (1996) and Ginzberg (1971) agree research has shown students named their parents as their most important influence when deciding an occupational choice.

There are many ways of organizing career guidance in high schools. First there can be specialists outside of the school. This type of specialist, whether it be education or labor market specialists, come into the school to do interviews or lectures. Second, there can be specialists inside the school. Guidance can be integrated throughout the school by encouraging teachers and other faculty to participate (Watts, 1996). "Without top level administration support, a career instructional center will not come to fruition" (Brown & Brown, 1990, p. 12).

Guidance centers (career centers) which do not personally spend time with students make three assumptions. First, they assume the students are

motivated to obtain the information. Second, they assume the students are capable of understanding the information obtained. Third, they assume the students are qualified to relate the information obtained to their own needs (Watts, 1996). It is the duty of the counselor and career specialist to approach each student. According to Cassell (1998), "without a career plan there is no goal, and therefore, no basis for personal motivation for students to do successful course work" (p. 1). Bailey (1985) supports a developmental curriculum model for career education; grades K-3 is time for awareness, grades 4-6 is the time for accommodation, grades 7-8 is the time for orientation, and grades 9-12 is the time for exploration and preparation.

Career centers should be located in the mainstream of user traffic. The most ideal location is adjacent to the counselors' offices. It should also be easy to find for the community and any public relations the career specialist contacted. The career center should have an ambiance of comfort and pleasantness (Brown & Brown, 1990).

Laws That Promote Post Secondary Education and Employment

Many secondary school counseling programs have transformed into updated programs that benefit the students; many programs have not.

Much confusion can be traced to the 1940s, when the "position" orientation to guidance was established. The concept of counselor as a professional position and counseling as a professional process dominated training and practice through the 1970s; school counselors played a remedial-reactive role, outside the educational mainstream, and were viewed as providing an ancillary support service. (Hogan, 1998, p. 1)

The National Defense Education Act of 1958 helped focus on training bright students for higher education. Unfortunately, non-college-bound youth were neglected during this time period (Hogan, 1998).

Another group that gets neglected many times are students in the general track. They are the students who are not the standard scholar nor the at-risk student. They are deemed average. A 1993 study from the U.S. Department of Education reported that 55 percent of youth graduated from the general track (Lozada, 1997).

Career planning is important for all students. Students with disabilities need guidance with career planning; therefore it's important to be aware of the regulations and services available for students with disabilities. Over 130,000 students with learning disabilities attend colleges. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires services and programs be provided to persons with disabilities attending colleges that receive federal funds. The IDEA (Individuals With Disabilities Education Act 1990) is designed to promote movement from school to post-school activities, education, and employment (Levinson & Ohler, 1998).

Funding is considered so important that the School to Work Opportunities Act encourages counselors to "provide students with opportunities for career exploration, instruction in academic and technical skills, and guidance in identifying employment and education goals" (Parsons, 1997, p. 2). In 1993, President Clinton introduced the School to Work Opportunities Act. This federal

legislation promises up to \$300 million funding for students to have better access to post secondary education and better jobs after high school (Hudelson, 1994).

Associations That Promote Post Secondary Education and Employment

Career centers need current programs to work from to develop and update; always improving the career center. The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) designed a 120-hour curriculum for career advisors to better service students. The curriculum is based on these topics: helping skills; labor market information and resources; assessment; diverse populations; ethical and legal issues; career development models; employability skills; training clients and peers; program management and implementation; promotion and public relations; technology; and supervision (Mariani, 1998). The National Career Development Association along with the NOICC developed four curriculum models that last 30 classroom hours, "career development overview, theory, and information; helping and assessment skills; career information, resources, and program design; and reality checks, goal setting, and action plans" (Mariani, 1998, p. 3).

Programs and Models That Promote Post Secondary Education and Employment

According to Goldberger & Kazis (1996), "institutionalizing separate college-bound and technical-training tracks in high school forecloses rather than

expands options” (p. 3). Some programs ask students to choose a four-year college or technical training track by age 16. Some students who did not feel they were college bound were motivated to go to college through learning academic concepts and succeeding in them. Therefore, instead of asking students to make career decisions by grade 11, school-to-work programs should encourage students to think about career exploration throughout their high school years (Goldberger & Kazis, 1996).

There are a variety of programs implemented to encourage students to pursue their career goals. The Job Shadowing Program matches students with occupational role models to spend part of the day together on the job. This gives students opportunities to explore if they are pursuing the right career for them (Gullekson, 1995). “Business people are advocating training and employability skills while educators are advocating career development skills” (Gullekson, 1995, p. 3). “Career development skills nurture intrinsic motivation and the personal values that are critical for developing valued employability skills” (Gullekson, 1995, p.3).

The Bev Facey Model for career planning is made up of student-centered activities. The model includes; a pre-planning meeting for all students in grade 10; a World of Work in grade 11, research of occupations, a profile of every student’s progress through career planning activities, active involvement of resource people throughout the school, and a career education coordinator who may be a staff member (Gullekson, 1995). This model encourages all the resource people to collaborate as a team.

According to Gullekson (1995), the World of Work units include self-assessment using Life Role Analysis; computers that assist with career planning; goal and decision making skills; research of the current job market; exposure to resume writing, application forms, and interviewing skills; and updating their personal career file. The student career profile card is so important it is kept behind the students' master card file for quick reference. The students' goals and activities are charted on this document to show progress toward their career planning (Gullekson, 1995).

Summary

An overview of the elements that make up career planning establishes a better understanding of the importance of career planning. Students, parents, counselors, teachers, career specialists, and friends help the students determine their career choice. Each influence can serve to help the student explore as many options as possible.

Supportive laws encourage educators to provide necessary services for students to receive the career planning services they deserve. There are many programs and models in place to follow for compliance.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of career specialists as to what constitutes effective high school career centers. The research question answered by this study was what are the perceptions of career specialists as to what constitutes effective high school career centers?

Research Design

The study was a descriptive type interview. The researcher believed that the design was appropriate because through responses of the participants, they could systematically describe facts and characteristics of career centers. Each interview was conducted using verbal, open-ended questions. An advantage of open-ended questions is that the respondent can reply with his/her own answers. This format allows the interviewer to probe for clarification or clarify any questions given. The disadvantage is that the answers are timely to edit and code. It is also a disadvantage that there may be bias in evaluation (Snyder, 1999). This design was an identification of problems of current conditions. It allowed for an evaluation and comparison of experiences between individuals with similar situations (Merriam & Simpson, 1995).

Interviews allow the researcher clarification, restatement, and explanation on the responses of the participants. The researcher is able to ask the participant to elaborate about any unclear information. The researcher chose a structured interview format. This format allowed more for consistency from one interview to the next. A disadvantage is that it lacks predictability (Snyder, 1999). Exact questions were asked to the participants allowing for continuity. Using the same questionnaire made it easier to organize the documentation for future explanation. Each question was listed and the participants' answers were gathered and listed under the questions for comparisons and differences.

The interview questions were developed by the researcher and approved by faculty from Ottawa University. This interview was used to evaluate the opinions of four current high school career specialists. Four high schools in this district use career specialists, therefore four career specialists were interviewed. They were interviewed the summer of 1999. The study was designed to investigate perceptions of career specialists as to what constitutes effective high school career centers. The term effective refers to responses the participants gave to attempt to find techniques and tools that help students to prepare and enable them to achieve goals they have for their future.

Source of Data

The participants interviewed in this study were career specialists currently working in career centers during the summer of 1999. The career specialists

were four participants from four separate high schools in a unified school district in Arizona.

Demographics

Four career specialists from four high schools in a unified school district in Arizona were chosen to be participants in this study to find what constitutes effective high school career centers. All the participants were asked to give their perceptions to the interview questions regarding what constitutes effective high school career centers. Since all the participants currently work for the same school district, the questions allowed for an evaluation and comparison of similar experiences and situations.

Participant A has one year experience as a career specialist. Participant B has one and one half years experience; Participant C has three years experience, and Participant D has two years experience.

Assumptions and Limitations

According to Merriam and Simpson (1995), the descriptive design lacks predictive power. Descriptive research is unable to generalize, therefore the researcher is unable to predict what will be.

The researcher assumed the individuals would answer the questions honestly. Structured interviews do not allow the participants to have as much time to think about the question as a written survey might. Since the size of the sample was small, the study cannot be generalized. However, verbal interviews

allow the researcher clarification, restatement, and explanation on the responses of the participants. Interviews also provide the opportunity for elaboration of responses by the interviewee (Merriam & Simpson, 1995).

Procedure

The researcher chose four participants. They were career specialists from four high schools in a unified school district in Arizona. The participants were called by the researcher in the spring of 1999. They volunteered their home phone numbers so the researcher could call them once the interview questions were formulated.

Once the interview questions were approved by the faculty from Ottawa University, the participants were called to choose a time to schedule their interviews. Interviewing the participants during the summer of 1999 gave ample time to schedule the interview during their summer break. They were told the interviews would be no longer than 20 minutes with no more than nine questions. They were asked if they would give their consent for the interview to be tape-recorded.

At each interview, the participants were told their answers would be kept in strict confidence and their answers would be reported anonymously. The participants were told they would be able to get a copy of the report by calling the researcher at her home telephone number.

The researcher tape recorded each participant during the structured interview. The interviews were conducted June 14, 1999, June 16, 1999, and

June 18, 1999. The interview responses were analyzed and organized. The results are presented in Chapter 4.

Instrumentation

The interview questions were developed by the researcher and approved by faculty from Ottawa University. The interview format was chosen so that responses could be compared. There were nine questions asked. They were:

1. What age group do you believe career awareness should begin and why?
2. What are the three most often used activities or workshops that tend to benefit students with their career exploration and what they are?
3. What materials or equipment are necessary in a career center to ensure career awareness?
4. What key components do you feel promote students' career awareness and career exploration?
5. How can students be evaluated to ensure they are working toward career exploration?
6. How can counselors and school faculty collaborate as a team to ensure student career exploration?
7. Who do students usually rely upon for assistance when deciding a career?
8. What can career specialists do to help involve parents with career exploration of their children?
9. What disadvantages or problems do career centers incur?

Method of Analysis

Each participant was assigned a letter, A – D. The researcher listened to the tape recordings and checked for accuracy from the notes taken during the interviews. Each interview question was listed in the order it was presented. The responses to each question were compiled by the researcher (See Appendix A). The researcher listed each question and summarized the answers in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research Question

The research question was what are the perceptions of career specialists as to what constitutes effective high school career centers?

Demographics

Four career specialists from four high schools in a unified school district in Arizona were chosen to be participants in this study to find what constitutes effective high school career centers. All the participants were asked to give their perceptions to the interview questions regarding what constitutes effective high school career centers. Since all the participants currently work for the same school district, the questions allowed for an evaluation and comparison of similar experiences and situations.

Participant A has one year experience as a career specialist. Participant B has one and one half years experience; Participant C has three years experience, and Participant D has two years experience.

Findings and Results

The results of this study are based on data collected through an interview from four career specialist. The interview consisted of nine question asked in an

open-ended format. The interviews were conducted June 14, 1999, June 16, 1999, and June 18, 1999. The instrument used in this study follows, complete with a summary of responses from all four participants.

1. What age group do you believe career awareness should begin and why?

Three of the participants agreed 8th grade is best while the other participants chose elementary school age. Participants B, C, and D agreed 8th grade is the best age group where career awareness should begin. Participant D believes this is the age the students have a clear picture of what they want to do. Participant A chose elementary school because kids are seeing what their parents are doing and thinking about careers at that age. Participant A encourages parents to take their children on “take your child to work day.”

2. What are the three most often used activities or workshops that tend to benefit students with career exploration?

All four participants agreed career fairs were important with minor differences with the other answers. All four participants chose career fairs as an important activity. Participant C explained career fairs can be based on certain themes. For example, in the fall a general career fair is offered. In the spring, depending on the input from student surveys a technology, for example, or health and public safety career fair is offered. Participant A also has a college fair in the fall.

Participants A, C, and D agreed interest inventories are important. Participant A explained JOBO is a 9th grade inventory of career exploration. Participants B and D listed job shadowing. Participant B also listed internships.

Participant C explained that English teachers require students to go to the career center and library to research an interesting career.

3. What materials or equipment are necessary in a career center to ensure career awareness?

All four participants listed the same materials and equipment with minor differences. Participants A, B, C, and D all listed reading literature such as books, pamphlets, and brochures. Participants B and D detailed the literature to the chronicle publishers. The chronicle publishers list different occupations with information varying from job description, salary, to the amount of education required. The last item all four participants listed was access to computers.

College view is a program Participants A, B, and C listed specifically.

Participants B, C, and D listed access to the internet as being beneficial.

4. What key components do you feel promote student awareness and career exploration?

Each participant gave unique, different answers. Participant A explained once the student has an idea of interest, the career center is where they come and use JOBO to further their research. Participant B believes career awareness should be and usually is introduced in the home. Participant B goes on to say once a career interest is pinpointed, different organizations need to be contacted for further research and future job shadowing and internships.

Participant C stresses the importance of teachers' roles with career awareness. These teachers should bring the students into the career center as well as the library and assign career exploration projects. Career specialists

should go into the classrooms to promote the activities, workshops, and the career center itself. Participant C went on to explain situations that happened in the past where guest speakers were invited and teachers backed out of bringing the students at the last minute, leaving a handful of students left to participate. It was a very embarrassing situation for all parties involved.

Participant D suggested the students get as much exposure to different careers as possible. Guest speakers, interest inventory, and school workshops are promoters for this exposure. Participant D also explained teachers need to back up such activities.

5. How can students be evaluated to ensure they are working toward career exploration?

The following answers varied with little continuity. Participant A stated it is the responsibility of the counselors. Participants B and C suggested a survey to show career interests. Participant B also suggested a card or personal profile to be followed. Participant C explained mandatory Discovery classes broaden the students' awareness and therefore are documented as to what the student's interests are. Participant D suggested a portfolio as well as a follow up during registration.

6. How can counselors and school faculty collaborate as a team to ensure student career exploration?

Most of the participants agreed with administration support, but one participant did not suggest an answer. Participant A and D agreed that support from administration helps to combine unity. Participant A added that both parties

should work off the student profile card. Participant C and D both agreed good recordkeeping skills would help facilitate both parties. Participant B had a different answer than the rest. The comments were that currently the teachers and counselors already work well together; the career exploration begins in the home, and who knows how to motivate kids.

7. Who do students rely upon for assistance when deciding a career?

This question was interesting because two counselors listed peers while the other two did not think peers had an influence. Participants A and D chose parents in their list but not peers. Participant A included real life experiences; participant D included counselor and career specialist. Participants B and C agreed peers had an influence. Participant B added it depended on which friends of the student .

8. What can career specialists do to help involve parents with career exploration of their children?

A variety of answers were given. Participant A did not know or have a suggestion. Participant B believed parents should not be contacted until they make the initiative. Participants C and D agreed to invite the parents to the activities via newsletter.

9. What disadvantages or problems do career centers incur?

The participants were unanimous with their answers to this question. All four agreed lack of funds in order to update material was a problem. They all agreed lack of colleague support was a factor. Participants A and D pointed out the job is part time, not allowing for time to get to tasks that need to be done.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate what are the perceptions of career specialists as to what constitutes effective high school career centers.

A review of literature established an understanding of the importance of career planning; factors that make up career planning; laws that promote post secondary education and employment; associations that promote post secondary education and employment; and programs and models that promote post secondary education and employment.

Four career specialists who currently work in career centers from four high schools in a unified school district in Arizona were interviewed in June 1999. The interview consisted of nine questions.

The results of the interview indicated the career specialists' overall perceptions of what constitutes effective career centers in high schools were positive with the following exceptions: (1) numerous material in the career centers are not updated regularly due to lack of funds; (2) the career centers are not utilized as much as they could be used; (3) all high schools do not have a follow-up program or evaluation for each student to ensure the student is exploring career options throughout high school; (4) many colleagues and

administrators show little interest in supporting the career centers and career specialists; (5) some of career specialists did not feel it was their job description to involve parents with career planning the of the students; rather it was the counselors job.

Conclusions

The general responses of the participants indicate the following:

- 1) Career awareness should begin at the 7th and 8th grade.
- 2) The three most popular activities or workshops were career fairs, job shadowing (student follows an employer around the work place), and interest inventory tests (student inventory of career exploration).
- 3) The three most popular materials to have in a career center were books about different careers, chronicle publishers (complete job description of individual careers), and reliable computers with access to the internet.
- 4) The most common key component which promotes student awareness and career exploration is exposure whether it be through exposure from the home, school, or literature.
- 5) Students can be evaluated to ensure they are working toward career exploration through counselors, surveys, and portfolios.
- 6) Counselors and school faculty can collaborate as a team to ensure student career exploration through meetings, questionnaires, and support from the administrators.

7) All the career specialists believe students rely upon family for support when deciding a career. Fifty percent of the career specialists believe peers are an influence while the other fifty disagree.

8) Suggestions to involve parents with career exploration were to invite them to the activities at the school such as career fairs or other career meetings.

9) Problems which occur in career centers are lack of funds, utilization of career centers, evaluations, supportive staff, and parent involvement.

Lack of Funds: Proper funding is vital to help programs function properly. Funding is so important the literature revealed federal legislation promises up to \$300 million funding for students to have school to work opportunities. Material that is not updated is not beneficial to a student looking up current salaries for an occupation.

Utilization of Career Center: There are a variety of tools to promote career exploration. The career centers have a variety of materials, literature, computers, and a career specialist to help assist with this exploration. It is a waste to have these assets available and ignored.

Evaluation: Without a career goal there is no personal motivation. If students are not being evaluated and followed throughout high school, they may graduate with no career goal in mind. Students need to know the ramifications of their choices to make clearer decisions upon graduation.

Supportive Staff: One person alone cannot be responsible for each student's career exploration. The teachers and administration need to stress the importance of career exploration. Everyone at the school needs to work as a

team to encourage and support all activities, workshops, and inventive lesson plans regarding career exploration.

Parent Involvement: According to students, parents are regarded as a number one influence with help in career exploration. Parents need to be encouraged from the school to participate in their child's career planning. Since the career specialist is one of the important fixtures of career planning, it makes sense they would involve the parents as much as possible.

Recommendations

Further evaluation should be considered to determine whether or not suggestions from this study could be implemented. Opinions from faculty at the school, parents, and students via survey could establish different perceptions of what constitutes effective high school career centers. One of the most important responsibilities of a high school is to guide each student in an occupational direction prior to graduation. This study may help to facilitate effective measures to complete that task.

The following recommendations are offered: (1) funding needs to be allocated appropriately to the career centers and if there is lack of funds some type of fundraising needs to be addressed to keep the materials updated for proper resources; (2) there needs to be better promotion of career centers. If the administrators and teachers help to promote the importance of the career center, there will be more people utilizing the center; (3) student exploration courses or limited workshops do not ensure students are pursuing their career exploration.

All students need to be evaluated and followed throughout high school. A majority of the students are not addressed and left to research and explore on their own. It is hoped that schools make sure each student is working toward a goal perhaps through the use of student profile cards (individual student cards which contain academic and career exploration information); (4) administration should stress the importance of the career specialists to the faculty. The career specialists need to be respected and sought out as facilitators for students' career planning. Career specialists should be utilized in the classroom to give presentations regarding career planning and assist with career planning assignments; and (5) parents need to be encouraged by the school assisting their child toward career planning. Many times parents know they should be helping but without direction may not have the initiative to ask. If the parents knew their child was being evaluated and followed throughout high school regarding career planning, they may have a higher key role in the development.

In closing, "the journey's the thing; follow your heart, use your allies, change is constant, learning is continual" (Goldberger & Kazis, 1996, p. 14).

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APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW ANSWERS

Notations A, B, C, and D represent responses from each of the four participants. Answers are not transcribed word for word, but instead are summarized.

1. What age group do you believe career awareness should begin and why?

- A. Career awareness should begin in elementary school. Kids see what family and friends are doing for occupations. Encourage “take your kid to work day”.
- B. Career awareness should begin in 8th grade. Students have so many decisions to make and need to see experiences.
- C. Career awareness should begin in 7th and 8th grade. Students in these grades need to start thinking about occupations, but the main focus begins in the 10th grade because they are more motivated.
- D. Career awareness should begin in 7th and 8th grade. Students have a clear picture by this age of what they want to do.

2. What are the three most often used activities or workshops that tend to benefit students with their career exploration?

- A. Career fair one to two times per year
 - JOBO which is a 9th grade inventory of career exploration
 - College fair in the fall
- B. Career fair
 - Job shadowing
 - Internships

- C. JOBO which is a 9th grade inventory of career exploration
- COPS which is a 10th grade interest test
- ASVAB
- D. Career fair
- Interest inventory tests
- Bridges (computer system) and job shadowing
- 3. What materials or equipment are necessary in a career center to ensure career awareness?**
- A. Necessary equipment should be books about careers, pamphlets, brochures from colleges, and college view (computer system).
- B. Necessary equipment should be the Chronicle Publishers, reliable computer with internet access, college view, and CDs.
- C. Necessary equipment should be books on different careers, internet sites, CD's on encyclopedia for careers, career view, and any CD form so kids can use it on their own computer.
- D. Necessary equipment should be Chronicle Publishers, computer access to internet, and literature from colleges.
- 4. What key components do you feel promote student awareness and career exploration?**
- A. Once they have thought about an idea of interest they have a step to work from. They rarely come in and say they don't know what they want. JOBO helps to give them interests.

- B. A key component is career awareness in the home. Once career exploration is pinpointed, organizations need to be contacted. Students need to use the career center, job shadowing, and internship programs.
 - C. Key components are teachers making students aware of literature in the library, encouraging students to participate in the workshops and career activities, career specialist going into English rooms to introduce career center to students, and more teachers do career awareness assignments.
 - D. Key components are exposure to careers, guest speakers, interest inventory, and school workshops.
- 5. How can students be evaluated to ensure they are working toward career exploration?**
- A. Counselors
 - B. Their information card/personal profile, survey of career interest
 - C. Survey every semester, mandatory classes such as Discovery
 - D. Portfolio, follow-up at registration
- 6. How can counselors and school faculty collaborate as a team to ensure student career exploration?**
- A. Both counselors and faculty should work off of student profile card. Support from administration is very important.
 - B. Teachers already are working with counselors. It starts in the home. Who knows how to motivate kids.
 - C. Monthly meetings to discuss options and good recordkeeping help counselors and faculty work as a team.

D. Questionnaires, checklists, goals set, gearing activities toward needs, communication, and backing of administration help counselors and faculty work as a team.

7. Who do students usually rely upon for assistance when deciding a career?

- A. Parents, real life experiences, not peers
- B. Career center, counselors, parents, peer pressure depending on friends
- C. Peers, family, favorite teacher
- D. Counselor, career specialist, parents, not peers

8. What can career specialists do to help involve parents with career exploration of their children?

- A. I don't know.
- B. Parents should be involved, but only if they contact the school.
- C. Invite parents to career night. Many parents don't have the time so we should provide information to the parents through newsletters, invite them to the career center and activities.
- D. Invite to parents to the career fair and other activities. Send to parents articles, newsletters, and updated meetings.

9. What disadvantages or problems do career centers incur?

- A. Problems are lack of exposure to students, lack of traveled areas, aides are allowed to sit in career center to chat, career specialist only works 3 days per week, and updated material.
- B. Problems are lack of funds and backing of administration.

- C. Problems are lack of funds, lack of communication with teachers, and lack of interest from teachers.
- D. Problems are not enough time for career specialists to do things, updated materials, lack of funds, and lack of colleague support.

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161 MIS 10/06/99

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