

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF MODEL SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION
PROGRAMS AND THEIR APPLICATION TO THE THORP AREA SCHOOL
DISTRICT

By

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ABSTRACT

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A Comprehensive Study of Model School to Work Transition
 (Title)

Programs and Their Application to the Thorp Area School District

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The purpose of this study was to explore the common principles and practices of successful school to work programs. This study included a comprehensive review and critical analysis of research and literature focused on the objectives of the study. This study identified how the components of a school to work transitional program can be utilized to bridge the gap between schools and the workforce. Youth apprenticeship, cooperative education, job shadowing, internship, work experience, and mentoring are the major components analyzed in this study. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made to the administration, school board, and the vocational department. A major outcome of this study was to help improve the overall school-to-work program at the school district.

Research suggests that schools teach an academic and vocational based curriculum to assist students as they prepare for the work force. Educators need to be inserviced on the continually changing career education curriculum. School districts need to employ a school-to-work coordinator to implement the components of a successful program.

The student selection process and training placement are crucial to provide a positive learning experience. Research suggests placing students with a well qualified supervisor, who will mentor students at the training site. The work site supervisor needs to work collaboratively with the school-to-work coordinator to monitor and evaluate skill development of students participating in the school-to-work program.

An advisory committee needs to be formed to advise school districts of the needs and changes in the business world. Businesses benefit as well as the students and school districts. They begin to train their future work force, to receive addition help in their industry, and to build public relations within the community. Everyone involved in school-to-work programs benefit greatly.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Since the turn of the century, man and woman have prepared themselves to work in society. Man started as a gatherer, progressed into a farmer, developed industry, and now is moving in the fast paced information society. Society today is still preparing itself for the new number of challenges that evolve each and every year.

We live in the land of instant gratification. Get rich fast. Retire early. For many multimillionaire, twenty year-olds this has happened on the internet. However, the baby boomers are starting to retire, and employers are looking for young people to fill the shoes of seasoned skilled workers. The rapid changes that we are experiencing in the workplace require businesses to build a bridge with schools. We need to move the obstacles that prevent a smooth transition from school-to-work. Just in case the get rich scheme doesn't work.

The school-to-work program at the School District of Thorp is in desperate need of organization. Even though the vocational programs are providing great learning opportunities for the students. The linking of each program with the businesses in the community are struggling to stay a float.

The problem begins with the communication between the local businesses and school officials. There is no one spokesperson for the school to mentor the students' progress

during the school to work transition. Each department does its own special thing, which ultimately confuses the students and business mentors. This confusion reflects poorly upon the school to work program.

The single largest problem is the lack of accountability for the students placed in the variety of work based learning sites. The students have been documented by members in the community driving their cars around town when they were suppose to be at their work-based learning site. When approached, the students denied that these guidelines were violated. These cases reinforce the claim that students need to be monitored in some way. The School District of Thorp is not maximizing this valuable tool at the present time. The vocational department, guidance department, and administration are all going in their own direction. There is not a unified front. Thus, the educational process is not benefiting from the current school to work program.

This study is essential to the vocational program at Thorp High School, which in turn encompasses those students who benefit most from the school to work programs. With declining enrollment, the first thing that is normally cut from the budget in school districts is the vocational education department. This is why finding answers to the school to work transitional problems are essential for the survival of small rural school districts' vocational programs.

A review of the literature shows that school-to-work programs when implemented with the following components: work-based learning and mentor teaching activities are highly successful. Studies have also shown strong administrative support propels student learning in job related activities. Therefore, the research hypothesis for this study is that school-to-work programs when implemented with strong administrative support are favorable.

The benefits from this study will be the implementation of a successful school to work transition program. These benefits include the following: uniformity, job security, community involvement, a suggestion list for the ultimate school-to-work program, a valuable resource for the School District of Thorp which is fighting declining enrollment, student success in job placement, career exploration, cooperation skills, and a guide for continuous learning (Hopkins, Naumann, Wendel, 1999).

Researching this problem statement will have an impact on many people in the Small Cloverbelt. The rural setting communities are all experiencing declining enrollments. The school districts are forced to cut teachers, staff, summer school, athletics, vocational education, and administration. Utilizing school to work to its fullest will help justify the importance that vocational programs have in a school district. In the review of literature the history of school-to-work and all the building blocks that have preceded the current program will be explained, as will the components of

a successful school-to-work program, and successful mentoring activities.

Statement of the Problem

Confronting the issues of changing dynamics that impact education implies that educators customarily assess pedagogical approaches to include learning models that examine how we think, learn, and are impacted by the environment in which we live. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act was designed to improve student learning, in-school retention, and transition to the workplace by improving the quality and relevance of education for all students through experiences that integrate school-based and work-based learning and improve students' knowledge of and access to career opportunities. Its implementation requires the restructuring of secondary education and the extensive involvement of business in the work force preparation of youth. Efforts to make the fundamental changes required by the school-to-work legislation have been reported in the literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine the methodology and implementation of successful school to work programs through a comprehensive review and critique of the research and literature. Based upon critical analysis of the research and literature, the researcher has made conclusions and recommendations

Definition of Terminology

In order to provide an appropriate framework for the comprehension of material contained within this study the following definitions of terms are provided for the reader.

Cooperative Education: is instruction in vocational education for students who, through written cooperative arrangement between the school and an employer, receive instruction, including required academic courses and related vocational instruction, by alternating study in school with a job.

Internship: is a school-approved program where students work for an employer for a specific period of time to learn about a particular industry or occupation.

Job Shadowing: as part of career exploration in middle school or early high school years, students observe an employee at a workplace for a period of hours, a whole day, or, in some cases, over several days, to learn about the business, industry or profession.

Mentor: is a person who connects the culture of school with the culture of work.

Small Cloverbelt conference: consists of the following schools: Augusta, Chippewa Falls McDonnell, Eau Claire Regis, Fall Creek, Gilman, Greenwood, Loyal, Owen-Withee and Thorp.

Wisconsin's Cooperative Education Skills Standards Certificate Program: the Wisconsin program builds on the

cooperative education definition by adding state-approved competencies developed by industry and educators.

Work based learning programs-

Work Experience: students participate in a school-supervised work experience, typically during the school day.

Youth Apprenticeship: a two-year program that combines academic and technical classroom instruction with workplace learning in a four-semester, state-approved curriculum for juniors and seniors.

Limitations of the Study

Although the researcher has participated in facilitating the current school to work program at the School District of Thorp, this study does not include a first-hand empirical quantitative research assessment. The researcher considers this to have been a limitation to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

This literature review was conducted to reveal the key components of successful school-to-work programs to assist the Thorp School District in improving the existing school-to-work program at Thorp. The review will be comprised of the following components:

- The philosophy of school to work programs
- The history of school to work programs
- The origin of school to work program in Wisconsin
- The components of school to work programs
- The role of the school to work coordinator
- The student selection
- The training site selection
- The mentor development
- The advisory committee
- The benefits of school to work programs
- The barriers of school to work programs
- The integration of academic curricula

Philosophy of School to Work Programs

In today's information society, young employees are entering the job scene with insufficient skills and training to be effective at their job duties. According to Lewis (1997), three quarters of the work force enters directly after high school without entry-level occupational skills

resulting in job turnover and unemployment. This problem is especially dominant with minority, disabled, and economically disadvantaged populations. According to the National School-to-Work Learning and Information Center (1996), American business spends \$30 billion dollars on training and retaining its work force. Therefore, the school-to-work programs were designed to prepare students for their future duties by improving student learning.

History of School to Work Program

Through out time humans have transitioned from school to the work force. It was not uncommon for young people to get a job or a trade and to stay with that job for 20, 30, or even 40 years. As early as 1909, U.S. education and labor leaders sought ways to more clearly connect schools with the workplace. Even in the early 19th century labor leaders understood the importance of educating the youth of America. According to Hoyer (1999), Frank Parsons established a vocational bureau in Boston that raised issues about individual choice, employability, and work satisfaction. All of these issues are still concerns today, almost 100 years later.

By the 1970's, career education was at the forefront of education. Sidney P. Marland, Jr., the Commissioner of Education in the United States Department of Education helped to promote the passing of the first official federal dollars to be spent, as part of the elementary and secondary

educational act amendments. According to Hoye (1999), the \$40 million dollars of allocations was intended for career education demonstration projects at 425 different sites. This was an enormous amount of money in the early seventies.

The implementation of career education was the first major act by the government in linking education and businesses. This involvement set forth the foundation for Ken Hoyt (1976), the Associate Commissioner for Career Education in the United States Office of Education, to issue a statement that still has relevance in today's laws and policies: "Career education is defined as an effort aimed at refocusing American education and actions of the broader community in ways that will help individuals acquire and utilize the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for each to make work a meaningful, productive, and satisfying part of their way of living" (p.46). This statement and the work performed by Ken Hoyt have provided a valuable foundation for the current school-to-work programs.

Wisconsin's School to Work Origin

School-to-Work emerged in Wisconsin in the late 1980's as part of a reform goal for K-12 education and workforce development in the state (Schug,Western 1999). The goal of the program was to upgrade the preparation of Wisconsin's young people, which would hopefully jumpstart the economy.

The next most significant act was not passed until 1994 when President Clinton signed the School-to-Work

Opportunities Act (Guest, 2000). The stated intent of the legislation was to provide seed money to states and to local collaborative endeavors for the development of school-to-work systems (National School-to-Work Learning and Information Center, 1999). This act has propelled us through the 90's and culminates this year. What does the future hold for school to work?

Components of School to Work Programs

Components of a School-to-Work program consist of the following: cooperative education, Wisconsin's cooperative education skills standards certificate program, youth apprenticeship, work experience, job shadowing, and internship programs (Naylor, 1997). Each component is essential for a complete school-to-work program. Connecting schools and worksites doesn't happen naturally or automatically for the students. A highly efficient program must be in place before anyone can reap the benefits.

Cooperative education and Wisconsin's cooperative education skills standards certificate programs are very similar in nature. Established in June of 1995, the Department of Public Instruction administers the program which is developed cooperatively between the Wisconsin Technical College System and the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations (Dunahee, 1995). Completion of this program requires a school supervised, paid, work experience. The work experience needs to be performed in an

approved state cooperative education skill certificate area. If the work experience is performed in such an environment, then the student will receive a certificate endorsed by the Department of Public Instruction, Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations and the Wisconsin Technical College System (Dunahee, 1995). Cooperative education is very valuable to those students who want to begin working right after high school and succeed in an occupation.

The standard youth apprenticeship model is a two year program requiring 900 hours of work experience and four semesters of related classroom instruction based on statewide, industry-developed curriculum, which leads to a certificate of occupational proficiency issued by the Governor's work-based learning board (Wisconsin Work base Learning Programs). The standard youth apprenticeship program is broken down into two levels: level one, and level two.

The level one program consists of the following requirements: 450 work hours and typically needs to be completed in one year. The level two program is an extension off of the level one program. This program consists of the following requirements: 4-semester curriculum, 900 work hours that typically needs to be completed in two years (Wisconsin Work base Learning Programs). Youth apprentices are limited to working on restricted machinery on an intermittent and occasional basis, so it is important that they rotate through all the

tasks in the curriculum and not be assigned to one task or job during their employment (Paris, Mason, 1995). Close supervision is required.

Work experience programs are not designed around any particular employment or curricular area. The employment experience is not required to coincide with a student's area of interest; the pupil must receive credit toward high school graduation as a result of the work experience program. Employability skills must be a part of the students academic program, and the student's work experience activities must be paid. The type of work can be outside of the regular vocational educational areas (Thiers, 1995). Local competencies for the program are broad, and the approximate completion of the program is one year.

Job shadowing is a school sponsored career exploration activity, which can begin in middle school and continue into high school. It is a short-term, school-supervised, work-place learning opportunity with an emphasis on exploration, not work. (Littrell, 1987). This program provides student's with a meaningful introduction to the world of work and also provides a context for understanding the relationship and interaction between the academics taught in a classroom setting and the job-site. This opportunity for students is not a paid program. It is administered by the local school district and requires minimum amount of hours.

Internship programs help to move students from school to the work place by offering real work settings, over a

long period of time. The experience is designed to give students a better sense of the jobs within a particular business or industry. It provides students with information about all aspects of the business and helps them learn through experience (Wisconsin Workbase Learning Programs).

Role of the School to Work Coordinator

The role of the School to Work Coordinator is very important to all cooperative programs. The coordinator is the backbone that holds all of the details together (Paris, 1994). According to Lewis (1997), the following elements/characteristics of a coordinator reflect the summary of successful cooperative vocational programs.

- Properly trained training supervisor following a plan. Guided by a comprehensive strategic vision that sets forth the linkages expected at each level of the program.

- * Ongoing career guidance and counseling: Getting the guidance counselor involved in the program as a recruiter can only have positive effects on the program. Ongoing counseling can only benefit a student who is making career decisions.

- * Written training agreements/plans involving three parties: These plans and agreements are necessary so all parties follow the same path and are on the same page when describing the roles of each party in the cooperative program.

- * Follow up studies on a continual basis: It is important to meet with the students during the program,

because you want to hear what the students and employers have to say about the progress being made. A follow up at the end of the program is also very important, because progress can be measured and any changes to the program for future use can be discussed.

* Active Advisory Committee: The local business owners need to be able to voice their opinion on these types of issues. Transpose the owners into recruiters to get other local businesses involved in the program.

There are many aspects that come together to make a successful School to Work coordinator. Listed below are some of these significant characteristics of an effective school to work coordinator according to the article entitled, "The Top Traits for Teachers" (1998):

- A creative and innovative teacher
- A very good public relations person
- Current and Competent in discipline area
- Organized in Administrative functions
- Good evaluators
- Reliable planners
- Skilled in career guidance
- Effective communicator
- Demonstrates positive attitude
- Professional conduct
- Adaptable to technology advances
- Meets the needs of the student

- Committed and knowledgeable
- Collaborative work with area businesses

Student Selection

Student selection is not just an important component of a quality cooperative vocational education program. It is the most important (Lewis, 1997). Student selection is the prime determinant in a cooperative program. Quality students will make for a quality program, which will in turn make for a quality learning experience. The whole program is based on the experience a student is to receive, so choosing the correct student is crucial. The chosen students go out into the workforce and represent the school, so the coordinator has to make sure the students give off a positive image of the school. Student selection is the key to a quality program, because every other aspect of the program centers on the student (Porter, 1995).

Selection Criteria

A student selection criterion has to be measurable in order to be effective. The selection process should be just that, a selection process, not an elimination process. In selecting criteria, a coordinator does not want to have too many standards to measure. If there are too many standards then it makes it difficult for students to make the program. However, the selection criterion has to be stringent enough to keep the number of students to around twenty for each

classroom session. According to Bentley (1977), the following four criteria should be used for student selection. The justification for each follows.

- The student must benefit from the program. This can be measured by having each student fill out an interest survey and by analyzing the classes that each student has taken in the past. The process of interviewing students would also be a valuable tool to measure how a cooperative program would benefit each individual student. An interview would determine how serious a student is about a certain career interest.
- Must limit the number of students in the program to around twenty students. After the interview process and interest inventories, the coordinator will have to choose a maximum amount of students to fit into the program. A coordinator has to limit the number of students to the program for it to be a quality program. A coordinator has to maximize his/her time and too many students would reduce the effectiveness of the coordinator.
- Must maintain a positive image of the program. The student image is the school image. A coordinator should not place any student on the job that may damage the image of the cooperative program or the school. The interview process should give the coordinator a good feel for what image the student might portray at the work site. Also having the student in previous classes would be a good indicator of the image a student may portray.

- **Discipline.** Students must not be disciplinary problems in the classroom or on the job site. Students in the program would have to have no current discipline problems or agree to stay out of trouble in the future. The students with some discipline problems would start the program on probation, and any problems would eliminate them from the program. This is also easy to measure by checking the student's school file.

According to Lois Ann Porter (1995), the interview panel evaluates each student applying for the cooperative education program on the following criteria: the application, teacher recommendation, attendance, tardiness record, overall grade point average, appearance, ability to communicate interest, and the presentation during the interview.

Appropriate Training Sites

Once the students have been selected, they need to be matched to appropriate training sites. Each training site that is chosen to work in the cooperative vocational program should match certain criteria. This criterion is significant to operating a quality cooperative vocational education program. According to the Handbook for Cooperative Vocational Education in Illinois (1977), the five employment conditions to consider in selecting a suitable cooperative worksite are as follows: convenience of location, safe working conditions, appropriate hours of

employment, adequate and up to date equipment, and compliance with local, state, and federal labor regulations.

In order for a student to receive a quality experience, the training site must be one of quality. The more stringent a coordinator is when selecting training sites the better chance of the student receiving a quality experience. The whole goal of the program is for a positive learning experience for the student, so having strict criteria for choosing a training site is very important.

Measurable Standards for the Training Sponsor

There are many factors that should be looked at when determining a viable training sponsor for the cooperative vocational education program. Olson (1997) outlined the standards that companies should possess to be considered as a sponsor:

- Good reputation and ethical. A student must be placed at a site that follows good ethics because it is important to learn these positive characteristics early on in the work force. This is measurable by talking to local business owners and by asking specific questions to the site owner that is being reviewed. Key situation questions with "what if" can help to determine ethical behavior. More than likely the answers will be positive, so the main component would be what others have to say about the site.

- A positive learning atmosphere. A positive learning atmosphere for the student is very critical to a successful site. This is one of the most important standards because a positive learning atmosphere would keep the student positive throughout the program. As long as the student is positive at the site, the student will want to learn more from the classroom as well. The positive learning atmosphere can be measured by merely talking to current employees at the site.
- Matches needs of students. The site is only a quality site if it matches the needs of the students. The site is of no use if it does not pertain to a career that a student is interested in. This can be measured by asking one very specific question. What types of job experiences can you offer a student in the cooperative vocational program?
- Qualified supervisors. Qualified supervisors are important because they are the direct contact with students. These supervisors are the individuals that do the hands on activities with the students and are the ones who help the students' progress during the program. Qualified supervisors can be measured by talking to both their superiors and their workers. If the workers talk about the supervisor in a helpful manner, the supervisor is probably a good choice. The supervisor's boss should also be able to tell you what type of personality and attitude each supervisor has.

- Facilities and equipment up-to-date. In order for a student to learn what the real work force is like, the facilities and equipment must be similar to those used on the job. It is a bonus if a student is able to work with the most advanced equipment available. Granted that equipment is more important with some jobs than others, but it is important from both a learning and safety standpoint. This standard can be measured by walking around the site and observing the equipment that is used and making sure you know what equipment the student will be working with.
- Paid comparable wages and benefits. Wages and benefits must be comparable to other business sites similar to the site being reviewed. As a coordinator, you want the student to feel like he/she is being treated fairly. This discourages a student from switching jobs for greener pastures every time the opportunity arises. It is also important for the student to realize what an actual paycheck looks like, especially after deductions. This standard is measurable by asking the site owner what the wages would be and comparing them to other similar sites.
- Follow State and Federal laws. This goes back to the ethics issue. The site must follow all state and federal laws. It is especially important that the site sponsor realize what the child labor laws are. The way to measure this standard is to research if the sponsor

business has ever been in noncompliance of state or federal laws.

- Safe working conditions. A coordinator is not going to place a student that has unsafe working conditions. No coordinator wants to leave a student at a site where there is a chance of the student receiving an injury. This can be measured in two ways by touring the facility checking for any unsafe practices taking place by employees and by also checking the equipment used at the site. A work site history of injuries should also be in place at the site and I would think that the coordinator should be able to view this type of information.

Work Supervisor

Developing a qualified training supervisor is instrumental in the development of the student at the job site. The supervisor is the connection between the student and the specific job. This connection reflects how the student initially feels about the job. The supervisor has to give a positive orientation to the student, so the student feels comfortable at work. As the program progresses, it is the job of the supervisor to work with the student daily and give constructive criticism to the student. When everything is brought together, the supervisor is what makes the on-the-job training for the student a success or a failure.

A training supervisor must match the profile that the school to work coordinator is looking for in order to make for a successful program. Each coordinator has a profile in mind that will create a positive learning experience for each student. Below is a profile, according to Olson (1997) that would demonstrate a good training supervisor.

- Competent in Area of Business--This is a very important component because if the supervisor is not skilled at the job, then he/she is not valuable to the student. This can be measured by asking the supervisor about an educational background or actual job experience.
- Willingness to Work with Student--This is detectable by asking simple questions that can measure an individual's belief on students in general. Questions regarding time at work or about helping a current employee learn a new job could help determine the attitudes of the supervisor.
- Solid Communication Skills--Possibly the most crucial aspect to selecting a supervisor. All the other qualities depend on the communication skills of the supervisor. Communication skills can be measured by just talking to an individual in different situations. Situations could involve talking over the phone, in front of a group of people, or in a one-on-one conversation.
- Positive Role Model--The supervisor is the most direct person that the student will work with on the job site. This person could even grow into a mentor for the student after the program concludes. The student should look at

a job as a positive experience, and a good role model will demonstrate good work ethics to the student. Measuring an individual's role model qualities can be very difficult. Talking to others in the business can be a good source of information and asking the specific individual about being a role model are two ways to find out about role model qualities.

Mentoring

Education is more relevant to the real world when students combine learning and thinking in the classroom with the application of knowledge and skills in the workplace. Employers play an active role in shaping the quality of their future workforce when participating in youth apprenticeship programs. According to Gray (1999), of the Wisconsin Department of Instruction, the roles and responsibilities of a mentor or work supervisor are as follows: remember the special social and learning needs of adolescents; mediate among trainers and students; provide instruction in industry and workplace competencies, and inform the student about workplace norms, customs, social relations, and expectations.

Students in the school-to-work program will benefit from a mentor in the following ways: strengthen their academic skills, earn wages while learning from skilled professionals, earn a state-recognized certificate upon completion, increase their career options and future

employability, and earn advanced standing credits in a technical college (Office for Workforce Excellence, 1994). Along with these benefits, an article entitled "School-to-work Pays for Students and Employers" (1999), reports that school to work students have higher grades, improved attendance, better chance of attending college, and are often recruited by their former mentors.

Advisory Committee

An advisory committee is vital in starting and maintaining a cooperative education program. The Educational Amendments of 1976 require local educational institutions to establish advisory committees (Handbook for Cooperative Vocational Education in Illinois, 1977). An advisory committee brings in influential members of the educational community, business community, and the general community to give advice on current employment needs. These influential members can help gain support for a cooperative education program. The members can help in recruiting, maintaining, and supporting a cooperative program.

There are many specific reasons to form an advisory committee for a cooperative vocational program. The following are ten basic reasons for forming an advisory committee according to the Handbook of Cooperative Vocational Education in Illinois (1977):

1. Provide insight to suitable training stations and training sponsors.

2. Assist with ongoing public relations.
3. Serve as a liaison group between the school and the business community, also between the local committee and the state advisory committee.
4. Provide instructional enrichment through resource speakers and occupational information.
5. Offer support and advice from layperson's point-of-view.
6. Project employment needs in occupational areas.
7. Actively aid in the placement of graduates.
8. Assist in keeping programs up-to-date.
9. Assist in determining the standards for measuring employment performance of the students in training.
10. Assist in development, implementation, operation, and evaluation of the program by offering advice, recommendations, suggestions, and resources.

Public Relations

Public relations are very crucial to a healthy cooperative program. Public relations are a way of receiving initial attention and then gaining recognition as the program builds.

They keep all the parties interested and up-to-date with the cooperative program. Continuing strong public relations is a step to keep the program visible to current members and to prospective members, who may at some point, join the cooperative program (Handbook for Cooperative Vocational Education in Illinois, 1977).

Media Recognition

The news release that gives information for an upcoming survey is very important. It gives community members an idea of the issues that are taking place at the local school district and also gives the community a chance to give input on the issue at hand (Bentley, 1977). The announcement of the survey is important, because it gives people who may take the survey time to study the issue. The survey shows that there is genuine interest in the beliefs of the local community members. If a cooperative program is started, then the community and businesses must believe that the program will be successful.

Benefits of School to Work Programs

According to the report from Columbia University found in the article entitled "The Difference School-to-Work Makes" (2001), school-to-work activities do make a difference for students. They found that these activities support academic success by reducing the dropout rate and increasing college enrollment. School-to-work activities also contribute to career preparation and greater psychological development in recognizing the importance of school. Students are more motivated to learn through the occupational opportunities given by these cooperative business/education partnerships.

Other benefits to participating in the school-to-work program were found by Bailey and Merritt (1997). They are as follows:

1. Help students clarify their personal goals and purposes for going to college.
2. Broaden and inform students' choices for careers.
3. Help students develop self-confidence through responsibility and community involvement.
4. Boost students' earning power.
5. Offer hands-on learning opportunities to reinforce academic instruction.

In October 1996, a project directed by Ivan Charner entitled, School-to-Work Initiatives, had similar findings to the Columbia study with one additional benefit, which was the empowerment of students. Students have the knowledge, freedom, self-esteem, and motivation to take responsibility and make independent career choices. Participating at the training stations empowers students with responsibility to make decisions and take the consequences for the results. They develop into life long learner and respectful citizens.

Students are not the only ones who benefit from the school-to-work programs. According to the same project, School-to-Work Initiative (1996), business and industry benefit as well. First, they had immediate benefit of extra workers. Second, as for future benefits, with the school-to-work program the development of a well trained pool of potential employees is evident. Businesses take on the

leadership roles in advisory committees, but cooperative roles with students and teachers as they take on mentor roles and curriculum developers. This training improves internal training for regular employees.

Businesses who participate in school-to-work programs improve political and business connections. The involvement in the program proves to be good public relations. The business becomes more visible in the community and school demonstrating commitment to the students and community's future.

The schools benefit greatly also by implementing a school-to-work program into the district. One benefit for schools is the extra resources brought to the school such as new equipment, speakers, mentors, and staff development opportunities. With school-to-work reform, changes in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, scheduling, and location of learning tend to follow. Instructors become more flexible, make instruction more individualized, and make assessment more competency-based. Not only the classroom instructors experience change, but the counselor's role in the school-to-work program is transformed in structure and in process. Counselors need to be apart of the educational planning process, continually assessing the student's progress, and be up-to-date with the labor market information. Schools become less isolated by bringing in a variety of community members with new perspectives,

resources, and connections. The community begins to form a strong commitment to the school-to-work program.

Barriers of School to Work Programs

Some barriers may inhibit the success of the school-to-work program. According to Brown (1998), attitude is the major barrier to the success of school-to-work activities. Some school districts are apprehensive to participate in school-to-work programs because of the increase in cost and time put into collaborative efforts with local businesses. They also lose some control and accountability by being involved with businesses to educate students.

Teachers may be reluctant to change. Participating in the school-to-work programs requires educators to devote time and effort changing curriculum, instructional methods, and classroom management.

Parents are a second group of individuals who may not have a positive attitude about school-to-work programs because they are unfamiliar with the work settings. They also feel that their sons or daughters are being drawn away from the academic preparation for college and perceive school-to-work initiatives as a threat to academic learning.

Cooperative business employers may view school-to-work programs as costly and unproductive in the beginning. Skilled workers are taken away from production to train

student workers who are temporary employees. Business are also discouraged by the child labor laws, insurance costs for general liability, and employee resistance to work-based learning (Brown, 1998).

Integration of Academic Curricula

The integration of academic and vocational education is a curricular and instructional strategy that makes learning more available and meaningful to every student. The integrated program allows students to achieve vocational competencies as it fosters learning of abstract or theoretical concepts under applied conditions. Integration replaces the job specific instruction of traditional vocational education, which limits students' employment opportunities, with a wide range of problem-solving and employability skills. Integration also raises the amount of teacher collaboration in curriculum planning and coordination of instruction. Ultimately, it involves the business community in the program, which is good for school and community relations (Berryman, 1992).

There are varying purposes, goals, and desired outcomes for integrating academic and vocational education. All models have different variations and suggest new ways for educators to think about integration and about the practices that can best help them meet the new challenges of integration. A description of eight models and their benefits is provided below (Lankard, 1992):

1. *Incorporating more academic content into vocational courses.*

Using this approach, vocational courses include more academic content. This is beneficial because it meets the academic needs of students while matching the technological requirements of business in a relatively inexpensive manner.

2. *Combining vocational and academic teachers to enhance academic competencies in vocational programs.*

Using this approach academic teachers cooperate with vocational teachers in curriculum development. This tends to be beneficial because an academic teacher can give remedial assistance to students with needs and enrich the vocational curriculum with academic material.

3. *Shaping academic courses to be more vocationally relevant.*

Using this approach, academic courses are focused more upon vocational material. All students seem to benefit from this approach using innovative curricular materials in a sequencing order.

4. *Modifying both vocational and academic courses.*

This model is designed to change the content of both vocational and academic courses. This model requires a team effort between the vocational and academic teachers. This model requires flexibility, limited monetary resources, and existing teachers to expand their teaching expertise.

5. *Independent senior study.*

This approach involves both academic and vocational teachers in organizing curriculum around student projects. By using this approach, collaborative planning creates new courses.

6. The Academy model.

This is a school-within-a-school concept. One group of students studies the main subject areas along with a vocational course with the same team of teachers for two or three years in the Academy and takes all the other subjects in the regular high school. The benefits are consistency of educators, smaller class sizes, connections with firms who are linked with the program, and teacher commitment to the Academy model.

7. Occupational high schools.

The benefits of having occupational high schools include the potential alignment of all courses focusing on specific occupational areas and having academic and vocational teachers collaborate to integrate units.

8. Occupational Clusters.

Occupational clusters are used with both comprehensive high schools and specialized vocational schools. Teachers usually belong to clusters rather than conventional academic or vocational departments. Courses encourage students to think about occupations early in their high school careers. Student from very different backgrounds and with different ambitions are learning together. Opportunities for contact

with potential employers and with educators at postsecondary institutions are offered to students (Lankard, 1992).

Every state or individual school district may use a different model. The model is usually determined after studying local labor markets, existing programs, and the main component that is student needs. Brown (1991) found that the following traits have been identified as crucial for the successful integration of academic and vocational programs:

- Vision and Commitment
- Consistent Support from administration
- Sustained efforts
- Integration-oriented teacher training
- Reduced isolation of teachers
- Reduced segregation between "vocational" and "academic" students
- Increased emphasis on vocational programs fostering interest in broad occupational areas
- Adequate time for implementation
- Improved strategies for businesses' participation in school programs to help students better identify and attain their career development goals (Brown, 1991)

Berryman (1992) reported that there are many benefits that occur due to integration. One of these benefits is student motivation. Integration is an ideal way to help schools retain students not interested in the benefits of an

"academic" education, but know of the advantages of entering the job market with proven skills.

Another benefit is just having that workplace experience. Many students never have a chance to work before having to make a career decision. Program components that allow students to work provide them with a needed income, hands-on experience in a chosen field, and contact with employers who may offer them a career path upon graduation.

A third benefit is equity between all students. Integration can help offset discrimination in schools and in the work force. It offers students identified as lacking basic academic skills with higher order thinking skills. These skills are a form of meaningful education that can improve a student's future opportunities in the work force.

Educationally rich learning is another benefit of integration. Integrating vocational and academic education provides students with problem-centered learning. Following the principles of the cognitive apprenticeship model, integration is an effective curricular and teaching strategy that allows students to develop the cognitive skills needed to apply academic learning to practical situations.

Another important benefit to integration is the development of a qualified work force. Employers seeking to fill middle skill level jobs with changing duties are looking to high schools to produce a qualified work force. Employers need graduates who not only can accomplish

discrete tasks, but who have problem-solving skills that allow them to be flexible when carrying out aspects of their jobs. Students who complete integrated education programs are most likely to meet current and future employer needs (Berryman, 1992).

A study of more than 600 students and 100 teachers was conducted in Worcester, Massachusetts in March 1998, on the impact of work experience on classroom performance. A team of six students and one teacher spent four weeks together at a company working on specific projects, as well as spending one day a week in class connecting the work to their academics. The study looked at the attendance and grades of 104 randomly chosen students, comparing their fall semester before the summer experience and after the summer.

Class attendance during the fall improved overall by 61 percent the first quarter compared to the first quarter before the summer experience. Some facts follow:

- 104 students had a total of 467 days absent in the first quarter of 1996.
- The same students missed only 184 days of the first quarter of 1997.
- The average number of absent days per student dropped from 4.5 to 1.8.
- In 1996, 10 of 104 students had perfect attendance. After the summer experience, 38 of the same 104 had perfect attendance the first quarter of 1997.

Student grades were also positively affected by the experience.

- Student grades in English rose 74 percent.
- There were nine more A's; a 56 percent rise.
- Eight more B's; 35 percent rise.
- Fewer C's and D's, and the same number of F's.
- Student grades in math improved or remained the same for 61 percent (Silverberg, Haimson, Hershey, 1998).

There are many different ways to make integration between vocational and academic education a positive venture. There are also many benefits for all types of participants who are involved in the integration programs. When schools are trying to implement integration between vocational and academic education, the positive learning experience provided for the students is worth the extra effort educators put into the integrated program.

Chapter Three

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter reviews the purpose of the study and summarizes the information found in the Review of Literature Chapter. A critique of the findings and conclusions are drawn from the results found in the Review of Literature Chapter. The researcher concludes with recommendations to the local school district administrators with the intent to create a new teaching position for a half time school-to-work coordinator as well as to gain support for the school-to-work program in Thorp.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine literature pertaining to school-to-work programs in an attempt to identify the key components, best practices, effective methods, and benefits of implementing a successful program within the school district.

Conclusion

Public Education has been faced with reform within the last decade with the increasing demands placed upon students entering the work force directly out of high school. Research indicates that three quarters of students enter the job market without additional schooling. Employers spend a

great deal of money each year training new employees to be efficient workers. Yet job turnover and unemployment create a need for the business world to work collaboratively with school districts to develop successful school-to-work programs that will benefit student needs as well as the corporate business needs.

The government has also noticed the need to use education as an avenue of transition from school to the work place. In the past ten years, large amounts of money have been supplied to schools in order to implement career education programs. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act was passed by President Clinton in 1994 with the intent to support local school districts with the financial means to reform educational programs.

The key components of school-to-work programs were found to be the following: cooperative education; youth apprenticeship; work experience; job shadowing; and internship programs. For successful implementation of these components it is essential for school districts to employ a school-to-work coordinator to recruit business employers, to select students to participate in the program, to monitor student progress, to monitor working conditions, to work collaboratively with the work site supervisor, and to evaluate students as well as the programs effectiveness.

Research indicated that along with the school-to-work coordinator an advisory committee should be formed to assist school districts with advice, support, resources, and

assessment of the program needs and outcomes. This advisory committee is vital to good public relations as the program commitment is built up within the community.

As for the schools, the best practices and methods to use when preparing students for their work site placement and future career is to use integrated academic and vocational education programs. In-services should be provided for teachers to assist with professional development opportunities in career education curriculum. Educators reap the benefits of working with area businesses through school-to-work programs by receiving resources for their classrooms and by providing students with guest speakers, who can help develop students' awareness in career selection. Schools become less isolated in their efforts to educate children when they work collaboratively with community members. Everyone involved in the school-to-work programs benefit.

Recommendations

The results of this comprehensive review of literature has led the researcher to the following recommendations regarding the implementation of a school-to-work program in the school district of Thorp.

1. The Thorp School District should hire a half time school-to-work coordinator. This would build the school district's commitment to the program.
2. The coordinator would also provide the school with a public relations person to recruit area business

employers to participate in a collaborative school-to-work program.

3. This half time coordinator would monitor the school-to-work program students at the worksite as well as in the classroom.
4. The Thorp School District needs to provide a school-to-work based course to prepare selected students for the work place, to create career awareness, and to be used as a transitional program to assist students with support as they participate in the work based learning site.
5. The coordinator would plan professional development in-services for educators to increase their awareness of vocational skills needed for career success.
6. The half time school-to-work coordinator would coordinate a school-to-work meeting quarterly to provide educators and business members time to work collaboratively as they plan, prepare, evaluate, and assess the program and student needs. Administrators would be invited to these quarterly meetings to gain their support and commitment to the school-to-work program.
7. The business members participating in the school-to-work program would make up the local advisory committee for the Thorp School District along with school board members, local government members, school administrators, and staff members.

8. The advisory committee's first responsibilities would be to assist the school-to-work coordinator to create a standardized assessment tool for participating students and businesses.
9. The advisory committee's second responsibilities would be to create and implement a plan to provide the program with a well defined mission statement to focus on as well as guidelines to act a safeguard to business employers as well as the students involved in the program.

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