“What Do I Want to Do When I Grow Up?” – A Look at the Impact of Career Curriculum in the Fifth Grade

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Acknowledgments

There is really no way to accurately describe the change that has taken place for me during the course of the last four years. I started this program in another world, as another version of myself – less confident, less stable, and so unsure. If I had to boil down what I have learned to one phrase it would be, "Try not to stay attached to any outcome." I have been profoundly impacted by those few words. I started the program as a young woman so very attached to the plans I had set for myself, unsure of my future, but positive that with enough planning and organization things would go my way. I could not have been more wrong. Dr. Kitty Fallon's words about our attachments to a given outcome have helped to shape the way I view my own future, and the way that I am able to be present for others'.

> To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us (Keller, 2013).

I am eternally grateful to my professors, my classmates, my family, and my friends for the ongoing support and encouragement I have had throughout this process. I realize how difficult it must have been watching drastic change taking place, and for that I am thankful to my family and friends for not giving up on me. To Chris, Mark, and Amy; my compadres, my cohort, my people, my group chat; I will always go to you three for support, clarification, jokes, and consultations. We could not have done this alone. I am so proud of each of you for pushing yourselves, for growing, for challenging me and for being so unyieldingly invested in impacting

the lives of young people. We are going to make a difference. To Andrea, Melissa Lauren, Nicole Lilia, and Kayla; you are women who inspire me, push me and pick me up when I am down. I would not be where I am without each one of you. To Danny, for your evolving understanding of the enigmatic woman I think I am. Your love and support has made all the difference. To my parents, I am grateful for your patience, guidance, and support. I am the perfect combination of two people without whom I would not be here. Thank you for loving me.

I could go on for pages but suffice it to say, I made the right decision in pursuing this goal. I am now more than ever ready to take on the challenge of advocating for those less fortunate than myself. I am more gracious, more compassionate, and most importantly more present with those I serve. I began this journey so that I would be able to help support and guide the disenfranchised, abused, and addicted young people I had met in Romania. I made a promise to a young man I worked with in a small village in the mountains that I would return when I had received the education I needed to do the youth there justice. I am ready now.

I am eternally thankful for the opportunity to be surrounded by people who so wholly love me. It is with that support that I will take on new challenges, go new places, and do great big things.

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Abstract

Current research suggests that early exposure to career-related curriculum may give students more academic buy-in resulting in higher graduation rates. The ASCA model suggests that career development should be a K-12 program providing students with the skills to "investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self" (ASCA, 2005). Though research regarding career interventions at the elementary level is sparse, the literature suggests that beginning to introduce career curriculum at such a developmentally fundamental time could have significant impact on student success and ultimately career choice. This study examines the impact career curriculum taught by the School Counselor has on the knowledge fifth grade students have regarding their post-secondary options. These findings are applied to the school setting in order to develop a more well-rounded comprehensive plan.

Keywords: career development, elementary education, school counseling, ASCA, career aspirations

Career Curriculum in the Elementary Education Setting

According to Justin C. Perry (2008), of Cleveland State University, students who consider their education as relevant and preparing them to achieve future goals are more likely to perform well and graduate. Though little research has been done specific to vocational exploration at the elementary level, the literature suggests that academic buy-in begins no later than the third grade (Orthner et al., 2002). Additionally, research indicates that increasing student exposure to potential career outcomes has a positive impact on academic engagement and subsequently is a predictor of high grades (Orthner et al., 2010; Orthner, Akos, Rose, and Jones-Sanpei, 2013).

Presenting Problem

High school students struggle with the task of picking a career track and then applying it to future plans related to college and career readiness. The emphasis in New York State high schools on career development could be transformed from an added stressor to a "tool of exploration" for elementary students by starting the process earlier.. High school students already face challenges that add stress to their daily lives before taking into account additional stressors such as academic rigor and preparation for entering college or the working world (Arnett, 1999; Compas & Reeslund, 2009; Suldo, 2013). School counseling curriculum should strive to include career exploration starting as early as kindergarten, allowing students to have spent their entire public education learning about the world of opportunities available to them after graduation.

Herr and Cramer (1998) suggested that students who ultimately dropped out of school had already subconsciously detached from school during their elementary years. With so much emphasis on college and career readiness in high schools, it is becoming increasingly clear that

students need to know the potential positive outcomes of their hard work in school before they are able to fully commit to academic and social-emotional rigor of the education process.

Purpose

The promise of a successful future has become a key element in getting students to subscribe to their own education, despite the fact that the literature reflects a lack of exploration at the most fundamental time during elementary school. If career development is the key to academic resilience and subsequent graduation and success, then school counselors should be required to integrate this type of curriculum into comprehensive school counseling programs. The School Counselor should be a mandated position in every elementary building, though according to New York State Educational Law Title 6, Article 93, the school counselor is a position the Board of Education may put in place at any level but is not mandated to do so.

Research Question

This paper seeks to answer the question; does implementing a career development program impact elementary students' knowledge regarding future career paths? By examining pre-existing career curriculum in a fifth grade setting, the author will seek to evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions on the knowledge students have with regard to career aspirations.

Literature Review

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) suggests that comprehensive school counseling programs must include career education as early on as kindergarten, however current research in the field suggests that this is not happening in most schools (ASCA, 2003). The following review of current literature regarding this topic further emphasizes the necessity for students to begin exploring the potential career possibilities available to them well before

they enter high school. The literature suggests that current school counseling programs are not doing enough early on to support the holistic growth of students so that they may make more educated and informed decisions about their careers plans post-graduation.

Transitioning Students

The transition from elementary school to middle school is an important time in determining the trajectory of academic and vocational success for students. Research has indicated that "80% of sampled students entering Grade 6 think about where they will work when they grow up" (Orthner et al., 2010, pg. 228), suggesting that a majority of transitional students are already considering possible future outcomes as part of their academic success (Orthner, Akos, Rose, & Jones-Sanpei, 2013). Students emerging from elementary school are already considering what they will do beyond graduation. When students moved on to the sixth grade, there was a consistency in academic decline that directly correlated with increased distress (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999; Auger, Blackhurst, & Wahl, 2005). As a result, there is a clear need for school counselors to initiate career exploration activities during elementary school. It is possible that the pressure of figuring out what's next could be eased if elementary students were given the opportunity to explore career possibilities before moving on to middle school.

Middle school is a difficult time for students as they begin to transition from childhood to prepubescence. The combination of changes, including increased hormones, new schedules, the introduction to organized sports, social changes, and a variety of other factors, can potentially create a difficult three years during middle school. It is possible that the previously aforementioned changes could also create a shift in priority for students in addition to increased social and academic pressure. Middle school students begin to place more emphasis on higher socially valued occupations in tandem with an increase in general knowledge of possible careers,

students generally tend to maintain incomplete views regarding availability of jobs post-graduation (Helwig, 2004; Wood & Kaszubowski, 2008). During this period of transition, students are already working to develop their own sense of identity. Exploring what personal identity means to each student and how it correlates to their individual sense of passion, focus, perceived success, and future careers is vital.

Identity Development

Career development is a process that spans the length of a persons' life and subsequently should not be limited to the four to seven years spent in middle and high school (Yawkey, 2001). Early childhood experiences, especially those occurring in school, have a significant impact on how children ultimately identify with jobs, gender roles, various stereotypes, race, class, and socioeconomic status (Gottfredson, 1981; Trice, Hughes, Odom, Woods, & McClellan, 1995). All of this can later have a heavy influence on career development. Trice and King (1991) concluded that little research has been done in the area of elementary career education, college plans, and career preferences and career choices begin to solidify during elementary school. Identity formation begins early in a child's life and continues through each developmental stage. It is important to include the development and understanding of how stereotypes, gender roles, Socio Economic Status and other various personalizing characteristics might affect a child's determination of what future career to pursue. It is during the pivotal period of development, including what Piaget referred to as the pre-operational and concrete operational stages of development, that children should be exploring different perspectives in order to have the most holistic outlook on their future (Berk, 2010). Yawkey (2001) concluded that career development at the elementary level was imperative in order for children to form early ideas regarding what work will look like later on in life.

Auger et al. (2005), interviewed students in the first, third, and fifth grade regarding career expectations and found that a "possible explanation" of how children determine which occupations are acceptable based on their gender is their own experiences. The authors went on to conclude that the importance of the career-related decisions made by elementary-aged students could be supported by retrospective studies conducted with adults. It is unknown at this time how much of an effect early exposure to career development would have on a person's lifelong career experience and ultimate decisions.

Long-term Success

Teachers and school counselors need to establish curriculum that pairs academics with the relevance of career exploration so that students can connect what they are learning in school with their expectations for the future (Orthner, 2007). Career education seeks to build a certain level of academic "buy-in" that otherwise might not exist for students. Orthner, Cook, Rose, and Randolph (2002) found that vulnerable students, meaning those who were at risk to drop out before graduation, were disengaged from their education before high school began. "Students begin dropping out before innovative high school programs have an opportunity to make a difference" (Orthner et al., 2002, p. 28). Fredericks (2004) and Blafanz (2009) reported that higher percentages of school engagement translate to a reduction in living below the poverty level, receiving public assistance, and poor health outcomes. Fredericks (2004) went on to conclude that not only does increased engagement in school decrease the likelihood of poor outcomes, but it also increases the chances that a student will successfully transition to college or a career.

Part of ensuring student success is making sure students are aware of all their options post-graduation. In order to achieve student awareness of this magnitude, education programs

need to keep students engaged. It is imperative to offer students who are at risk to drop out of high school every possible opportunity during the early years of education in order to become invested in their own education before they become disengaged. Wood and Kaszubowski (2008) found that a "lack of attention to career development in elementary schools is problematic because it inhibits the building of a systemic career development program" (p. 432). The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) encourages school counselors to develop a K-12 comprehensive program including career development at all levels; however many school counseling programs are not doing this (ASCA, 2003). By developing comprehensive school counseling programs that begin interventions during elementary school, students are able to link academic achievement with future success (Knight, 2015). Additionally, students whose exposure to career development begins during elementary school have a better chance of understanding the future consequences of their decisions and thus increasing their perspective of career development as a life-long process (Wood & Kaszubowski, 2008).

Research regarding career development in elementary schools is not a topic that has seen much attention, despite the fact that the research that does exist supports the claim that college and career plans begin to take shape during the elementary years (Trice & King, 1991). This literature review was limited due to the fact that there has not been much research done in the area of impact of career development curriculum at the elementary level.

It is important to note that there still is not a wealth of research regarding career development at the elementary level, despite increasing conclusions supporting the need for career development to begin early. A big concern is that currently school counselors are not mandated at the elementary level in New York State, making it increasingly difficult for

standardization of expectations. The implications of this lack of career development material at the primary level means that there is a major gap created in the full counseling program.

Methods

In order to find out if implementing career development curriculum would have an impact on elementary students' knowledge regarding future career paths it was important to consider what population would have the most significant results. It was with the idea of significance of impact that the fifth grade students were selected to be participants in the new curriculum. The study focused on wealth of knowledge and understanding of fifth graders in regards to their career aspirations by measuring if the group gained understanding before and after the career exploration unit through the use of pre and post assessments.

Participants

This program evaluation included 48 participants all of who are current students in the fifth grade at Freewill Elementary School in Walworth, New York. 35 students provided both parental consent and student assent forms in order to be included in the final tallying of student assessments. 14 students either did not return the consent and assent form or chose not to be part of the subsequent research. Students names, ages, ethnicity, gender, classroom teacher, and other identifying characteristics were not included as part of the study.

Sampling Procedure

The *Careers for Me* inventory was purchased by the school in September 2015 at the request of the school counselor. The *Careers for Me Junior* inventory was used in conjunction with a three-lesson unit that was created using pre-existing material provided by the school counselor. The objective was to begin the "Life Skills" psych educational programming received by all fifth grade students with the new career curriculum. The Life Skills programming was a

proposal made by the Wayne Central School District elementary School Counselors in the spring of 2005. The goal was to replace the D.A.R.E program with a more holistic program for grades three through five that would focus on the essential question of, "What is healthy and how do I know when I am making healthy decisions? (Smith, Sensenbach & Peters, unpublished, 2005). The Life Skills program strives to equip fifth grade students with effective decision making skills, goal setting, problem solving, sense of self, communication skills, and making healthy choices in order to make a smoother transition in to the middle school. Planning took place over the course of four months, which included the time necessary for the inventories to be ordered and received by the school. Brainstorming took place from March 2015 until May 2015 when principle approval was received. During the months of May, June, July, and August of 2015 assessment materials, lesson plans, and classroom teacher approval was discussed, organized and put together. In September, all the material were organized and edited by the school counselor so as to provide continuity between the new career curriculum and the pre-existing "Life Skills" lessons taught to the fifth grade.

It was determined that the entire fifth grade class would receive the career curriculum lessons during the month of October 2015. It was ultimately concluded that it would be easiest and least disruptive to implement the new career curriculum material to one grade rather than trying to push in to the classrooms of three grade levels. This decision was made primarily as a result of the time constraint placed on the evaluation, as well as the foreseen difficulties involved in obtaining both parental consent and assent forms from all students. The entire fifth grade cohort received all three lessons during the month of October while third and fourth graders were eliminated from the study. The pre-assessment was administered to each fifth grade class during the last week of September, while the post-assessment was administered during the first week of

November. The entire process from beginning to end lasted from January 2015 through November 2015, including the months during summer break.

Planning and implementation of this program required the approval of the school counselor, the school principle, the fifth grade classroom teachers, the Brockport faculty supervisor, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. Approval from the school counselor was obtained in March of 2015, while approval from the school principle was not obtained until September of 2015. The discrepancy in time between approval from the school counselor and principle is due primarily to the amount of time it took to plan out and organize the program. IRB approval was given in August of 2015. Planning of the program occurred preemptive of approval from all aforementioned parties.

Measures

A pre and post-assessment was used in order to measure participant knowledge [Copies of the assessment can be found in the appendix.]. The assessment was created by compiling previously existing worksheets used by the school counselor for the purpose of assessing student goals during lunch group sessions. The four questions chosen for the assessment were used in order to maintain Level 1 Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. In addition, it was easier to create an assessment based on questions already in use than to request approval from a third party or create an entirely new assessment. The same four questions were used to measure gains or losses in student knowledge pertaining to the career curriculum lessons. The assessment was mixed-methods as it included both qualitative and quantitative questions. The use of a mixed-methods design was not intentional but was a result of compiling the school counselor's previously existing material for the assessment. A fifth question was added to the assessments at

the fifth grade teachers' request for use in the classroom but was not included in the data analysis for this research.

Question one asked, "In the space below, list as many possible jobs as you can think of…" This question was intended to measure the difference in knowledge regarding career options of students before they received the lesson material and after. The assumption was that student knowledge of job options would increase from pre-assessment to post-assessment.

Question two asked, "One job that I think about doing when I'm a grownup is…" This question was intended as a way to track individual student aspirations regarding post-secondary goal setting. Ultimately this question had to be assessed from the entire group rather than tracking each students answer from pre-assessment to post-assessment due to the necessity for anonymity of student data.

Questions three, "Circle the subjects in school that you think would be important for this job:" and four, "Check the kinds of training you might need for this job after finishing High School," used in both the pre and post-assessments had to be discarded for the purposes of obtaining results as a result of the author being a novice at conducting research. This decision was made after it was realized that the only way to determine the meaning of questions three and four would have been to connect those answers with each individual students' answer to question two. Though questions one and two could be coded as qualitative questions without any connection back to the individual, questions three and four irrelevant without the connection back to the individuals' answer to question two. It should also be noted that this might have been avoided if the author were not conducting research of this magnitude for the first time.

Research Design

Participants (N = 34) in this program were exposed to three classroom lessons that were approximately 40 minutes in length. The lessons were psychoeducational in nature. Participants took a pre-assessment the week before the first lesson began and a post-assessment the week after the third lesson concluded. The intention of using the pre and post-assessments was to determine if students (N = 34) gained knowledge with respect to choosing a career and knowing the necessary steps to take in order to achieve that goal.

Interventions

All three lessons including the *Careers for Me Kids* inventory can be found in the appendix.

Lesson one: participants (N = 34) took a career inventory that used personal interest in order to group the participant into a career cluster.

Lesson two: participants (N = 34) used a vendiagram to do an exploratory activity related to the career cluster their inventory (Lesson one) placed them in.

Lesson three: participants (N = 34) were split up in groups based on their career cluster from the inventory. Using provided materials from the inventory answered questions created by the researcher in groups.

The *Careers for Me Kids* inventory was used in order to show students the link between their own interests, strengths, and activities and what career path that could lead them to post-graduation.

It is important to note that depending on when students (N = 34) received the intervention they may have gotten slightly different information due to the fact that this was the first time the author was teaching these lessons. Furthermore there were students who missed the lessons due to excused absences, music lessons, and early dismissal.

Data Management & Analysis

All student data including inventory worksheet answers, pre-assessments, consent forms, and post assessments were kept in a locked drawer while not being used. Additionally, pre and post-assessments were not labeled in any way so as not to indicate individual student information. See appendices for data analysis tables.

Results

The results of this research cannot be applied to any other student population due to the fact that it was a pilot study. Tests such as t-tests and chi-squared could not be used to evaluate the results because the results from questions one and two were evaluated as qualitative answers rather than empirically. The results were based on career track themes pulled from the variety of student responses to question one. For example, answers that fell under the theme of "Business & Management" might have been accountant, or businessperson. It should be noted that the major themes were created by synthesizing student response with the career clusters used in the *Careers for Me Kids* inventory along with general knowledge of various job markets.

Answers to both questions one and two were categorized using the following categories – Business & Management, Culinary Arts & Hospitality, Education & Administration, Design Engineering & IT, Fine Arts, Health Services, Media & Communications, Military, Professional Sports, Public Service, Science & Agriculture, Skilled Trades, and Transportation. The number of student responses that fell within each category was compared from pre-assessment to post-assessment in order to evaluate difference in student knowledge. Tables breaking down student response according to theme can be found in the appendices.

Question one (Q1) asked, "In the space below, list as many possible jobs as you can think of." There were a total of 331 responses in the pre-assessment, while the post-assessment yielded

a total of 348 responses. Q1 sought to assess student knowledge regarding possible career options. There was an increase in student response between the pre and post-assessment but only by 17 responses. The most common answer on the pre-assessment for Q1 was in the Professional Sports category at 57 responses. The second most common answer on the pre-assessment for Q1 was in the Education & Administration category at 47 responses. Based on the literature reviewed, further research needs to be done in order to understand why students at this level choose the occupation that they do. At this time, the author is unable to conclusively speak to the motivation behind student responses.

Question two (Q2) asked, "One job that I think about doing when I'm a grownup is…" There were a total of 36 responses on the pre-assessment, with two students listing two responses. The post-assessment yielded 35 responses, with one student listing two responses. Q2 sought to assess what students post-secondary goals were regarding a career they could see themselves doing later in life. While the pre-assessment yielded a variety of student responses in all but three categories (Culinary Arts & Hospitality, Media & Communications, & Military), the post-assessment saw a shift of students whose job preference changed to either "Fine Arts", "Professional Sports" or "Skilled Trades". The "Fine Arts" category saw the highest increase in shift of student responses from pre to post-assessment, however it was the "Professional Sports" category that maintained the most responses on both the pre and post-assessment. A ten-year longitudinal study by Andrew Helwig reported that by high school students became less likely to choose fantasy occupations like professional sports and enternainers (2001; 2004). It is possible that student response changed for Q2 as a result of exposure to new job options during the unit of lessons as well as a variety of other environmental factors. Further research would be necessary in order to obtain conclusive results.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether or not career curriculum guidance lessons would help increase student knowledge regarding their post-secondary plans. In order to help students become invested in their own academic success they need to be exposed to as many post-secondary options as possible. Starting career curriculum in elementary school potentially allows more time for students to explore their own interests in relation to their career aspirations. This pilot study found that after four career curriculum lessons were implemented, students were able to name more possible jobs on the first question of the post-assessment than they were on the pre-assessment. Additionally, the second question saw a shift from a more stratified cross-section of jobs listed as those students want to pursue after high school to an increase in student answers that fell under themes of “Professional Sports” and “Fine Arts”. The following is a discussion of limitations to the study as well as implications for further research and implications for school counselors.

Limitations

There were several limitations that impacted the results of this pilot study. The author notes that each limitation discussed here is a direct result of two things; necessity for anonymity of students and the length of time allowed for the study to take place. The first limitation was the need to keep all student information anonymous. This ultimately resulted in a difference in the originally intended research design due to the necessity of anonymity with regards to student data. The original intention was to measure each students’ growth or lack of growth regarding knowledge of career options, however the necessity for anonymity in combination with the authors’ novice approach to research resulted in a mixed methods study. Essentially the author looked to empirically measure each students’ knowledge using a pre and post- assessment,

however by keeping student data entirely anonymous, the author was unable to track individual student progress. In addition, the first and second questions on the pre and post-assessment can be measured empirically while the last two questions of the pre and post-assessment cannot. Ultimately it was determined that by measuring questions one and two as qualitative rather than quantitative, the author would be able to determine overall growth in knowledge based on the use of coding.

Another limitation was that the study ended up being a pilot study. This means that while the sample size was statistically significant (n = 34 students), the findings cannot be applied to any other population of students. This is the case as the results can only be generalized and applied to other students at Freewill Elementary school. The study assumed that students were already receiving some general career information based on the programming already in place at Freewill. If a study were to be conducted elsewhere, the original results from this pilot study could not be applied as population size, comprehensive programming, and previous student knowledge are all different.

Finally the length of time during which the study was conducted did not allow for repeated review of the research by a supervisor and professor. It would be helpful to conduct a longitudinal study examining the progression of knowledge for students, including additional integrated lesson plans throughout the length of the entire school year. The extended length of time necessary to conduct a longitudinal study would also allow for additional review of the research design so as to help alleviate any possible confusion or mistakes. It is important to note that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) did not approve the study until the end of August 2015 and the final presentation took place in November 2015, allowing just over two months for the entire study to occur.

Implications for Future Research

In order to find more conclusive results regarding elementary student knowledge of career options it will be important for future research to be conducted longitudinally. A longitudinal study would allow for appropriate time to measure student knowledge and growth throughout the entire K-12 experience, rather than looking at the impact of one unit of lesson. In addition, longitudinal studies would offer insight into how student knowledge and response changes with experience, age, and maturation. It is also important to note that there is not a wealth of research regarding career development at the elementary level, despite increasing conclusions supporting the need for career development to begin early (Herr & Cramer, 1998; Orthner et al., 2002; Woodland & Kaszubowski, 2008). Studies conducted in the future must consider following student progress throughout at least one academic year. The benefits of a longitudinal study would be in the ability to show long-term increased knowledge, and as a result, present a stronger argument for the mandate of School Counselor curriculum to include career information at the elementary level.

Additionally, future research should strive to track individual student progress by assigning a number or letter to student responses rather than using names. This process will help maintain anonymity while still tracking each student. By following individual student progress over a longer period of time, future research could potentially show how various student interests align with academic subjects and the growth of knowledge students have regarding the connection between the two. This is imperative for future School Counselors as current literature continues to suggest that early intervention with students regarding investment in their own post-secondary outcomes is a key to keeping students through to graduation.

Finally, it is important to examine the difference between students who are the first of their siblings to work towards going to college, as opposed to those who have older siblings that have previously gone through the process. Examining the impact of parent knowledge would be impactful for School Counselors as they continue to help guide students through the post-secondary decision making process. A study such as this could provide another perspective on student career aspirations and knowledge. As a result studies of this kind could encourage School Counselors to help students explore their own motivation for making certain post-secondary decisions as well as identifying how they formulate their own goals. Examining the impact of environment could potentially offer helpful data for programming that seeks to help students become invested in their own post-secondary outcome.

Implications for School Counselors

According to New York State Educational Law Title 6, Article 93 (New York State Legislature), the School Counselor is a position the Board of Education may put in place at any level but is not mandated to do so. Currently school counselors are not mandated at the elementary level, making it increasingly difficult for the standardization of expectations. This pilot study suggests that students exposed to career exploration earlier will ultimately benefit from the opportunity. The argument for supporting the implementation of career curriculum in elementary school is primarily a result of seeking to help students become invested in their own academic success.

According to the National Skills Coalition (2012), the demand for Middle-Skilled jobs will account for 46 percent of the job openings in New York State between the year 2012 and 2022. According to a Harvard Business School U.S. Competitiveness Project, Middle skills jobs are defined as those that require more education and training than a high school diploma but less

than a four-year college degree (2015). For School Counselors this means students could benefit from being introduced to a wider variety of specialized jobs at a younger age. Early exposure to career exploration curriculum has the potential to open up a world of possibility and understanding for students throughout their entire K-12 experience.

In addition to early exposure, School Counselors could benefit from looking at the impact of parent engagement and response on student career aspirations. One way to measure this would be to send out a needs assessment home to parents asking them what their current occupation is as well as what their dreams/goals are for their student. Comparing parent answers to student answers would be an interesting way to approach career exploration within the greater community and also provide possible gaps in career knowledge that might be important to cover with curriculum.

Finally School Counselors need to be leaders in their schools and advocates for students. It is imperative that School Counselors play a key role in reminding themselves and staff that students rise to the expectations set forth for them. Students spend equal time at school, if not more, than they do at home – as a result it is important that School Counselors, teachers, staff, and administrators set positive expectations for students. Students should be immersed in high expectations and broad career exploration in order to increase awareness regarding the connection between current education and post-secondary success. Career education is an essential component of the academic experience because it offers students the opportunity to invest in their own future at an early age, a task that has proven difficult especially with high school students who have already considering dropping out (Herr & Cramer, 1998).

Conclusion

Career development is considered by the American School Counselor Association to be one of the three main components of a fully comprehensive school counseling program. As a result, career development should begin no later than kindergarten in order to ensure enough time is offered to students to explore their interests and become invested in their own post-secondary success. Research supports the notion that academic buy-in begins no later than the end of elementary school (Orthner et al., 2002). School counselors need to be impactful when helping students connect academic success to future goals. Additionally, though little research is available supporting the effectiveness of implementing career curriculum at the elementary level, the lack of research illustrates the hole in elementary level career exploration. This pilot study sought to measure the effectiveness of implementing career curriculum with a fifth grade class and found that while there was an increase in student response, additional research is necessary in to obtain conclusive results and add to the body of work.

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Appendix A

In the space below, list as many possible jobs as you can think of:

One job that I think about doing when I'm a grownup is _____

_____.

Circle the subjects in school that you think would be important for this job:

Math Reading Writing Social Studies Science

Computer Speaking Art Music Physical

Education Recess Library

Check the kinds of training you might need for this job after finishing High School:

____ College ____ On the job training ____ Internship ____ Military

____ Specialty training/school ____ Coaching/mentoring ____ Graduate school

Appendix B

Career Inventory

Grade Level: Elementary School (5)

Concepts: Helping students understand how their interests can be grouped to pick a career path.

Generalizations: Students will be able to identify with an interest cluster.

Content Knowledge: Students will learn about how personal interest connects with future career decisions.

Skills: Students will display focus and the ability to follow directions.

ASCA Competency Indicators:
A:B2.4 Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting
C:A1.3 Develop an awareness of personal abilities, skills, interests and motivations
C:C1.3 Identify personal preferences and interests influencing career choice and success

Common Core Standards:
CCRA.R.1 Reading to determine what the text says and to make logical inferences from it.
CCRA. SL.1 Participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners.
RI.5.3 Explaining relationships or interaction between two or more concepts in text.
SL.7.6 Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Learning Objectives:
During and after the lesson 100% of students will be able to:

1. Identify the career cluster that most aligns with their interests.

Materials:

- Student inventory workbooks
- Writing utensils

Developmental Learning Activities

Introduction

Essential Question: What do my personal interests tell me about what I might want to do when I grow up? Today you are going to take a pre-assessment so that we can gain a better understanding of what Freewill 5th graders already know about what they want to do for a career. We are going to explore our interests and how they impact our choices during the next three lessons, starting with a career inventory today.

Endearing Understanding: What you do makes a difference for who you are and where you are going. The more we try new things, the more we discover about ourselves, and are able to choose our own path in life.

Say – "When I understand myself better, I am better equipped to make good choices for myself."

Introductory Activity: Ask students why they think they have to go to school. Generate discussion –Why do you think you have to be here? Why *do you* come to school? What does it matter? Why are you learning the things you're learning in school? Who thinks they can see into their future? How does coming to school today affect tomorrow and beyond?

Activity: Students will each receive a copy of their own *Careers for Me Junior* inventory. Students will be given ten minutes to complete the inventory as soon as every student has received their copy.

It is important to make sure that students know there are no right or wrong answers. Each student should be encouraged to answer honestly.

Lead the class through tallying up their answers and circling a cluster once all students have completed the inventory. We will have time during our next lesson to share our results!

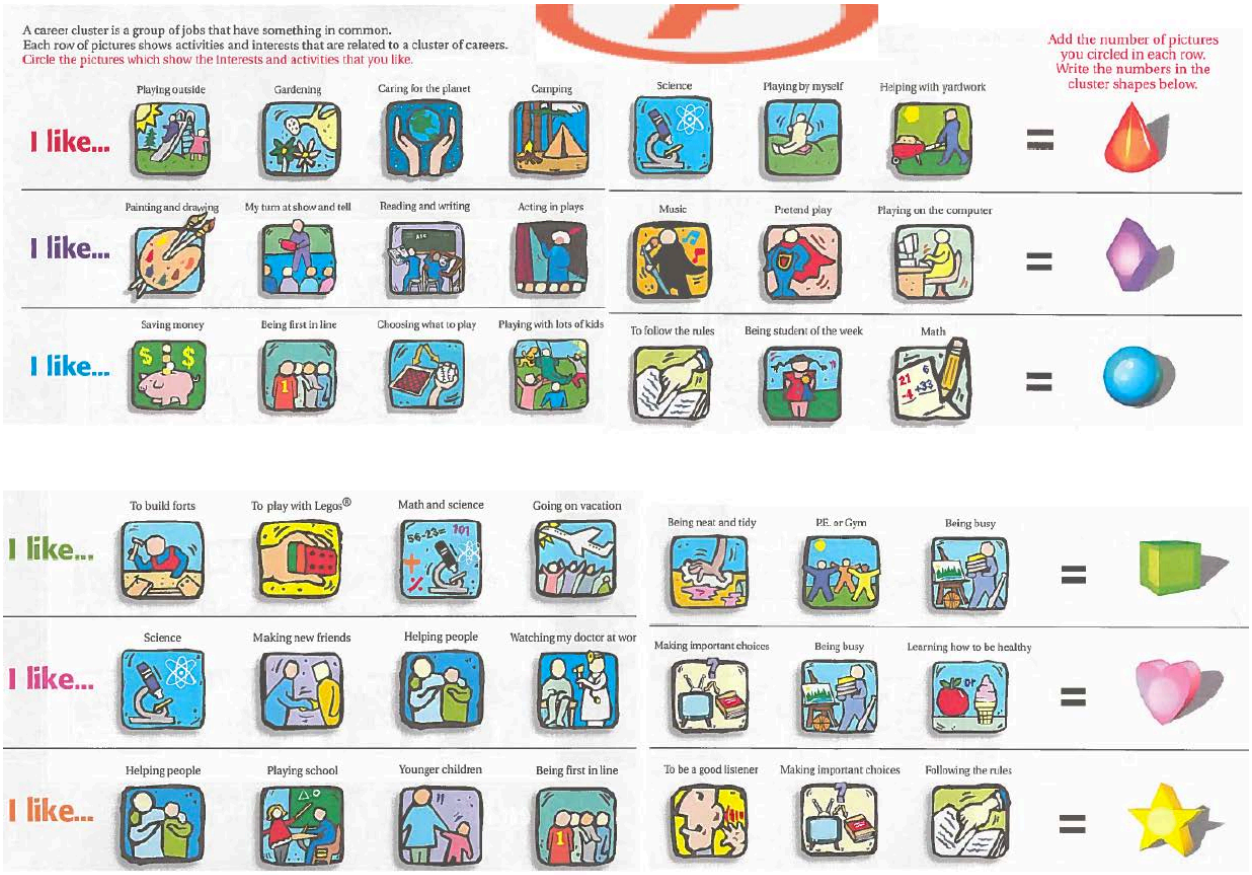
Conclusion: This activity is a good time for students to explore how their interests may lead them to a future career path. The end result will be that each student falls into one of six clusters based on their answers. Ask students if they were surprised by the cluster they fell into – what did they agree with? What did they disagree with? What do they like about their cluster? Was there anything that they did not think fit them?

Assessments

- **Formative:** None. Students will present research about their cluster during the third lesson.
- **Summative:** Pre and post assessment based on learned career knowledge.
- **Reflective:** Career Kids for Me Inventory. Introduction/conclusion processing questions.

Adapted from Career Kids F.Y.I. (2000).

APPENDIX C


A career cluster is a group of jobs that have something in common.
Each row of pictures shows activities and interests that are related to a cluster of careers.
Circle the pictures which show the interests and activities that you like.
Add the number of pictures you circled in each row. Write the numbers in the cluster shapes below.
I like...
Playing outside
Gardening
Caring for the planet
Camping
Science
Playing by myself
Helping with yardwork
I like...
Painting and drawing
My turn at show and tell
Reading and writing
Acting in plays
Music
Pretend play
Playing on the computer
I like...
Saving money
Being first in line
Choosing what to play
Playing with lots of kids
To follow the rules
Being student of the week
Math
I like...
To build forts
To play with Legos®
Math and science
Going on vacation
Being neat and tidy
P.E. or Gym
Being busy
I like...
Science
Making new friends
Helping people
Watching my doctor at wor
Making important choices
Being busy
Learning how to be healthy
I like...
Helping people
Playing school
Younger children
Being first in line
To be a good listener
Making important choices
Following the rules

APPENDIX D

Career Clusters – Lesson #2

Grade Level: Elementary School (5)

Concepts: Helping students understand how their interests can be grouped to pick a career path.

Generalizations: Students will be able to identify details about each career cluster.

Content Knowledge: Students will learn about how personal interest connects with future career decisions.

Skills: Students will display focus and the ability to follow directions.

ASCA Mindsets:
M.4.C Understanding that life-long learning is necessary for long-term career success.
BLS.7.C Identify long-term and shot-term goals.
BLS.9.C Gather evidence and consider multiple perspectives to make informed decisions.
BSS.6.C Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills.

Common Core Standards:
CCRA. SL.1 Participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
RI.5.3 Explaining relationships or interaction between two or more concepts in text.

Learning Objectives:
During and after the lesson 100% of students will be able to:
1. Explain how their interests influence their career choices later in life.
2. Match a variety of jobs with their career cluster.

Materials:
- *Cluster posters*
- *Poster markers*
- *Possible use of smartboard*

Developmental Learning Activities
Introduction

Essential Question: What do my personal interests tell me about what I might want to do when I grow up? Today you are going to take a pre-assessment so that we can gain a better understanding of what Freewill 5th graders already know about what they want to do for a career. We are going to explore our interests and how they impact our choices during the next three lessons, starting with a career inventory today.

Enduring Understanding: What you do makes a difference for who you are and where you are going. The more we try new things, the more we discover about ourselves, and are able to choose our own path in life.

> **Say** – "When I understand myself better, I am better equipped to make good choices for myself."

Introductory Activity: After handing inventories back to each student, ask students to consider if the career cluster that was determined for them using the inventory matches what they wrote about wanting to do when they grow up during the start of the year activity.

> **Say –** "What kind of education and training is needed to work in each cluster? Ask students to brainstorm out loud for each using the posters or smart board to add their thoughts. Students should follow along on their worksheet.

Activity: Hand out vendiagram worksheet to each student. Take this time to explain what the clusters mean, using the attached breakdown.

> **Say –** "What about your career cluster is similar to the job you said you wanted to do when you grow up? What about the two are different?" "Are there any careers in your inventory cluster that you might be interested in that are different than the one you wrote about at the beginning of the year?"

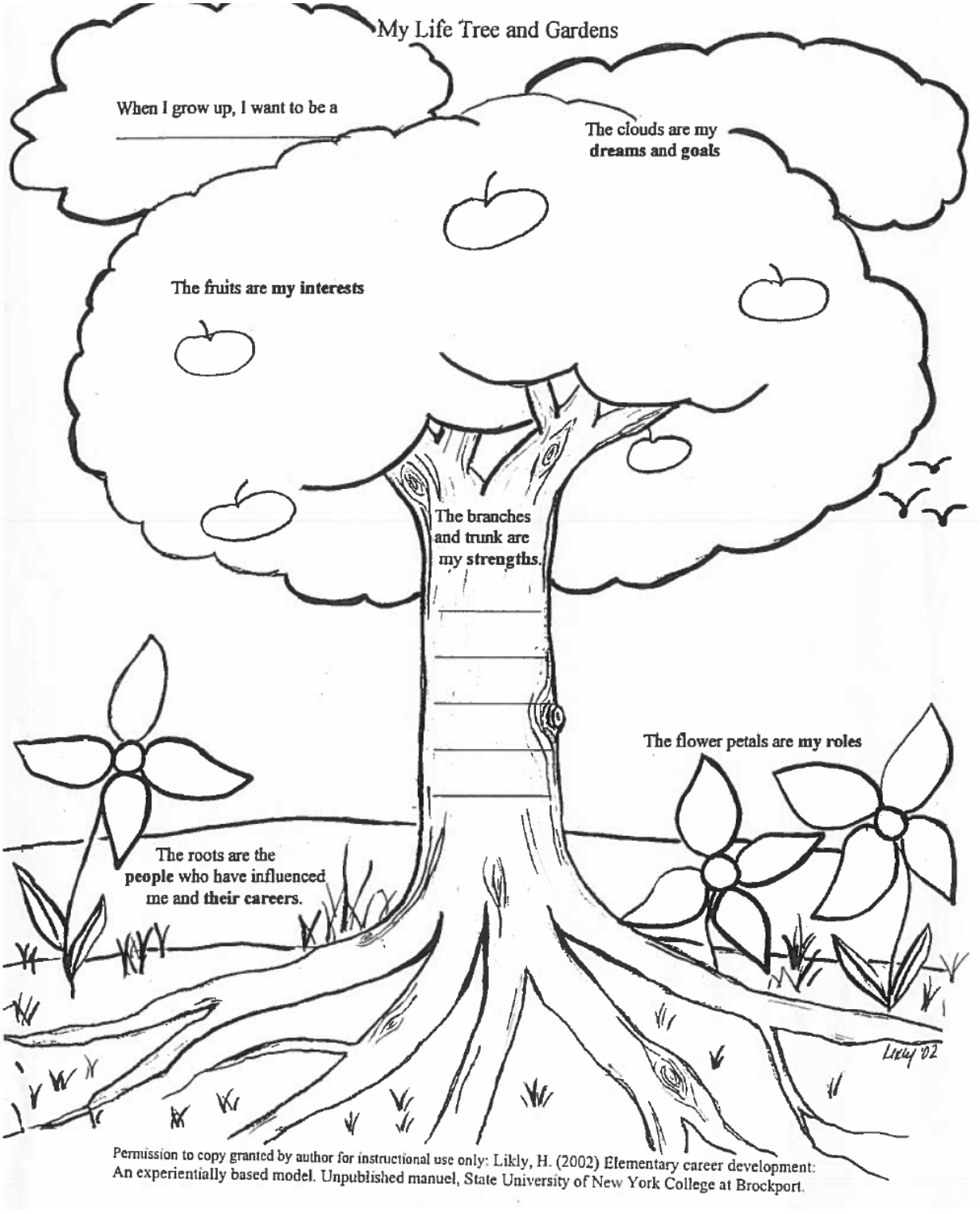
Explain to students that they will return to these groups during the next lesson to do a "think, pair, share" activity. *Educational links regarding career research will be added to Edmodo for additional student exploration.

Conclusion: This activity is an opportunity for students to explore what their career cluster means – what jobs this includes, the kind of people who flock to these types of jobs, etc. The end result will be that each student falls into one of six clusters based on their answers. Ask students if they were surprised by the information they gathered with their group – what did they agree with? What did they disagree with? What do they like about their cluster? Was there anything that they did not think fit them?

Assessments
- **Formative:**
- **Summative:** Pre and post assessment based on learned career knowledge.
- **Reflective:** Poster discussion.

Adapted from Career Kids F.Y.I. (2000).

APPENDIX E


My Life Tree and Gardens
When I grow up, I want to be a
_____
The clouds are my dreams and goals
The fruits are my interests
The branches and trunk are my strengths.
The flower petals are my roles
The roots are the people who have influenced me and their careers.
Likly '02
Permission to copy granted by author for instructional use only: Likly, H. (2002) Elementary career development: An experientially based model. Unpublished manuel, State University of New York College at Brockport.

APPENDIX F

Pre-Assessment Q1 331 total responses counted

"In the space below, list as many possible jobs as you can think of:"

Category	Job Listed		# of Times Students Listed a Job in this Category	Notes
Business & Management	Accountant	(1)	14	
	Boss	(2)		
	Business Person	(1)		
	Car Dealer	(1)		
	Manager	(2)		
	Office Worker	(1)		
	Pizza Delivery	(1)		
	Staff	(1)		
	Store Employee	(4)		
Culinary Arts & Hospitality	Baker	(1)	20	
	Chef/Cook	(7)		
	Fast Food Worker	(1)		
	Lunch Person	(3)		
	Maid	(1)		
	Restaurant Worker	(2)		
	Waitress	(5)		
Education & Administration	Art Teacher	(2)	47	
	Band Teacher	(1)		
	Coach	(3)		
	Dance Teacher	(1)		
	French Teacher	(1)		
	Gym Teacher	(3)		
	Horse Teacher	(1)		
	Librarian	(3)		
	Music Teacher	(2)		
	Principle	(4)		
	School Helper	(1)		
	Substitute	(2)		
	Swim Teacher	(1)		
	Teacher	(22)		
Design, Engineering & IT	Architect	(2)	19	
	Car Design	(1)		
	Computer Engineer	(1)		
	Designer	(2)		
	Engineer	(4)		
	Game Creator	(1)		
	Gamer	(2)		
	Inventor	(4)		
	Software Engineer	(1)		

Pre-Assessment Q1 331 total responses counted

"In the space below, list as many possible jobs as you can think of:"

	Train Engineer	(1)		
Fine Arts	Actor	(3)	25	
	Artist	(6)		
	Author	(3)		
	Clothes Designer	(1)		
	Conductor	(2)		
	Dancer	(2)		
	Fashion	(1)		
	Film Maker	(2)		
	Musician	(1)		
	Painter	(1)		
	Set Designer	(1)		
	Writer	(2)		
Health Services	Counselor	(1)	23	
	Dentist	(2)		
	Doctor	(10)		
	Eye Doctor	(1)		
	Nose Doctor	(1)		
	Nurse	(7)		
	Therapist	(1)		
Media & Communications	Agent	(1)	12	*Director & Producer could also have fallen under Fine Arts
	Camera Man	(1)		
	Director	(1)		
	Interviewer	(2)		
	News Person	(2)		
	Pop Star	(2)		
	Producer	(1)		
	Sports Announcer	(1)		
	Weatherman	(1)		
Military	Astronaut	(4)	6	
	Military	(2)		
Professional Sports	Baseball	(5)	52	
	Basketball	(4)		
	Biker	(1)		
	Cycle Racer	(1)		
	Football	(9)		
	Golfer	(2)		
	Hockey	(2)		
	Lacrosse	(5)		
	NASCAR	(2)		
	Professional Athlete	(9)		
	Racer	(1)		
	Soccer	(10)		

Pre-Assessment	Q1	331 total responses counted	
"In the space below, list as many possible jobs as you can think of:"			
	Tennis	(1)	
Public Service	Babysitter	(1)	43
	FBI	(2)	
	Firefighter	(5)	
	Garbage-Man	(3)	
	Janitor	(2)	
	Judge	(1)	
	Lawyer	(5)	
	Lifeguard	(4)	
	Mailman	(1)	
	Marine Biologist	(1)	
	Paramedic	(1)	
	Park Ranger	(1)	
	Police/Cop	(11)	
	President	(1)	
	Power Plant Worker	(2)	
	Sheriff	(1)	
	SWAT	(1)	
Science & Agriculture	Animal Breeder	(2)	40
	Biologist	(2)	
	Discoverer	(1)	
	Dog Trainer	(1)	
	Farmer	(3)	
	Horse Trainer	(2)	
	Hunting	(1)	
	Lumberjack	(2)	
	Paleontologist	(1)	
	Pest Control	(2)	
	Scientist	(7)	
	Scuba Diver	(2)	
	Storm Chaser	(1)	
	Veterinarian	(11)	
	Zoo Keeper	(2)	
Skilled Trades	Barber	(1)	24
	Building Cars	(1)	
	Builder	(1)	
	Carpenter	(1)	
	Construction	(5)	
	Digger	(1)	
	Electrician	(2)	
	Hairdresser	(2)	
	Mechanic	(4)	
	Plumber	(3)	

Pre-Assessment Q1 331 total responses counted

"In the space below, list as many possible jobs as you can think of:"

Transportation	Shoemaker	(1)	
	Technician	(2)	
	Bus Driver	(2)	6
	Pilot	(2)	
	Taxi Driver	(1)	
	Truck Driver	(1)	
*Total Responses		331	331

APPENDIX G

Post-Assessment Q1 348 total responses counted

"In the space below, list as many possible jobs as you can think of:"

Category	Jobs Listed		# of Times Students Listed a Job in this Category	Notes
Business & Management	Accountant	(1)	23	*Dog sitter listed here as it is a business
	Banker	(4)		
	Boss	(2)		
	Business person	(1)		
	Cashier	(1)		
	Delivery Service	(2)		
	Dog sitter	(2)		
	Fast Food Employer	(1)		
	Manager	(4)		
	Sales	(1)		
	Secretary	(1)		
	Store Clerk/Worker	(3)		
Culinary Arts & Hospitality	Butler	(1)	21	
	Hotel Manager	(2)		
	Maid	(1)		
	Restaurant Boss	(2)		
	Restaurant Cook	(7)		
	Waitress	(8)		
Education & Administration	Art Teacher	(5)	51	
	Librarian	(3)		
	Music Teacher	(3)		
	Teacher	(23)		
	PE Teacher	(5)		
	Principle	(7)		
	Science Teacher	(1)		
	Social Studies Teacher	(1)		
	Speech Teacher	(1)		
	Substitute Teacher	(2)		
Design, Engineering & IT	Architect	(2)	19	
	Computer Engineer	(1)		
	Computer programmer (YouTube)	(4)		
	Computer Repair	(1)		
	Engineer	(3)		
	Electrical Engineer	(1)		
	Inventor	(3)		
	Software Engineer	(1)		

Post-Assessment		Q1	348 total responses counted
	Tech Person	(1)	
	Train Engineer	(1)	
	Webmaster	(1)	
Fine Arts	Artist	(7)	22
	Author	(2)	
	Fashion Designer	(3)	
	Jeweler	(2)	
	Musician	(3)	
	Painter	(1)	
	Photographer	(1)	
	Singer	(3)	
Health Services	Child Psychologist	(1)	38
	Counselor	(8)	
	Dentist	(6)	
	Doctor	(15)	
	Nurse	(8)	
Media & Communications	Actor	(9)	15
	Director	(3)	
	News Announcer	(1)	
	Spokesman	(1)	
	Sports Announcer	(1)	
Military	Astronaut	(1)	5
	Military	(3)	
	Sargent	(1)	
Professional Sports	Acrobat	(1)	44
	Baseball	(4)	
	Basketball	(6)	
	Cricket	(1)	
	Football	(7)	
	Golf	(2)	
	Hockey	(1)	
	Lacrosse	(4)	
	Olympian	(1)	
	Professional Athlete	(5)	
	Racecar Driver	(1)	
	Soccer	(7)	
	Tennis	(2)	
	Water Skier	(1)	
	Volleyball	(1)	
Public Service	Babysitter	(3)	64
	Detective	(1)	
	Family Work	(1)	
	Firefighter	(9)	
	Garbageman	(2)	

Post-Assessment		Q1	348 total responses counted
	Government Worker	(1)	
	Janitor	(3)	
	Judge	(1)	
	Lawyer	(6)	
	Lifeguard	(4)	
	Mailman	(1)	
	Mechanic	(1)	
	Paramedic	(2)	
	Park Ranger	(1)	
	Plumber	(3)	
	Police Officer	(16)	
	President	(6)	
	Town Clerk	(1)	
	Treasurer	(1)	
	Vice President	(1)	
Science & Agriculture	Dog Trainer	(3)	27
	Dolphin Trainer	(1)	
	Exterminator	(1)	
	Farmer	(2)	
	Horse Trainer	(1)	
	Marine Biologist	(1)	
	Paleontologist	(1)	
	Scientist	(5)	
	Veterinarian	(7)	
	Zoo Keeper	(5)	
Skilled Trades	Barber	(1)	8
	Builder	(2)	
	Construction Worker	(4)	
	Town Worker	(1)	
Transportation	Bus Driver	(3)	11
	Pilot	(5)	
	Taxi Driver	(1)	
	Truck Driver	(2)	
*Total Responses		348	348

APPENDIX H

Pre-Assessment Q2 36 Total Responses

"One job that I think about doing when I'm a grownup is..."

Category	Job Listed		Total Student Responses in Category	Notes	Q3
Business & Management	Game Stop Employee	1	1		Student in this category for Q2 could did not account for all necessary subjects.
Culinary Arts & Hospitality					
Education & Administration	Soccer Coach	1	2		
	"Work in a School"	1			
Design, Engineering & IT	Car Design	1	2		Both students in this category for Q2 chose subjects that appropriately matched the job field.
	Inventor	1			
Fine Arts	Fashion Designer	1	4		
	Film Maker	1			
	Musician	1			
	Set Designer	1			
Health Services	Doctor	1	4		
	Nurse	2			
	Surgeon	1			
Media & Communications					
Military					
Professional Sports	Baseball	1	11	*3/5 students who did not answer Q1 placed in this category for Q2	
	Basketball	2			
	Football	3			
	Lacrosse	1			
	NASCAR	2			
	Soccer	2			
Public Service	Lifeguard	1	4		
	Police	3			
Science & Agriculture	Horse Trainer	1	6		
	Marine Biologist	1			
	Reptile Breeder	1			

Pre-Assessment		Q2		36 Total Responses	
	Scientist	1			
	Veterinarian	2			
Skilled Trades	Construction	1	1		The student in this category was not able to accurately match any subjects with this job field.
Transportation	Pilot	1	1		
***Total Responses**		36	36	*Two students listed two jobs	

APPENDIX I

Post-Assessment Q2 35 Total Responses

"One job that I think about doing when I'm a grownup is..."

Category	Job Listed		Total Student Responses in Category	Notes	Q3
Business & Management					
Culinary Arts & Hospitality					
Education & Administration	School Treasurer	1	3		
	Teacher	1			
	PE Teacher	1			
Design, Engineering & IT	Computer Programmer	2	3		
	Inventor	1			
Fine Arts	Actor	2	7		
	Artist	1			
	Fashion Designer	1			
	Film Maker	1			
	Photographer	1			
	Singer	1			
Health Services	Neuro-Surgeon	1	1		
Media & Communications					
Military					
Professional Sports	Basketball	1	12		
	Football	8			
	NASCAR	1			
	Soccer	2			
Public Service	Police	2	2		
Science & Agriculture	Dog Trainer	1	4		
	Horse Rancher	1			
	Marine Biologist	1			
	Veterinarian	1			
Skilled Trades	Barber	1	2		
	Construction	1			
Transportation	Pilot	1	1		
*Total Responses		35	35		

*Of the students who answered this many students were able