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# Teaching employability skills to young people in junior high and middle schools

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**TEACHING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS TO YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN JUNIOR HIGH AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS**

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B.Ed., University of Calgary, 1983

A One-Credit Project  
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**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

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## DEDICATION

This project is lovingly dedicated to two very special women in my life.

To my mother, Sophie Galloway who passed away in 1996 -  
thank you for nurturing the talents which have helped me to succeed in my  
chosen career as a teacher.

And to my wife, Kathleen Galloway -  
thank you for your continued love and support in my efforts,  
and for always believing in me.

## ABSTRACT

Upon graduation from high school, many students find themselves on the road of life with little direction, their career path developments limited by their lack of exposure to a good solid career education program. In today's world of work, students need specific skills that many business leaders and community members feel are lacking in today's graduating students. The acquisition of these skills -- the employability skills -- and the teaching of these skills, is the subject of this study which will focus on junior high and middle schools. This project will highlight why it is necessary for schools to teach employability skills and examine closely the skills needed in today's job market. The study will also look at specific employability skill projects being carried out in different schools around the country, including a look at the projects and the evaluation of those projects in current use in Clive School, Clive, Alberta.

## PREFACE

This paper “Teaching Employability Skills to Young People in Junior High and Middle Schools” is one part of a culminating project required to complete a Masters of Education degree with the University of Lethbridge. It was written to be included in a resource binder called ““What Do I Want to be When I Grow Up?” -A Resource Manual for Teaching Employability Skills to Young People (Junior High and Middle Schools)’. Also included in the binder is a video of the Clive School employability skills projects, an “Employability Skills” web page, and a variety of resources (e.g. pamphlets, booklets, magazines, articles) centered on the issue of employability skills. Even though the binder was not published with this paper, it is available for interested educators who can contact the author at Clive School, Clive, Alberta TOC OYO or by e-mail ([galloway@rttinc.com](mailto:galloway@rttinc.com)).

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TEACHING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS TO YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN JUNIOR HIGH AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Chapter 1

Introduction

- Alice: "Would you please tell me which way I ought to go from here?"
- Cheshire Cat: "Well, that depends a good deal on where you want to go."
- Alice: "I don't much care where."
- Cheshire Cat: "Then it doesn't matter which way you go."

Lewis Carroll  
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, 1865

Like Alice, many students in our schools today find themselves on the road of life with little direction. So often, a students' career development begins upon graduation from high school, leaving open few windows of opportunity for career planning. An optimum situation for students, the economy and our society is for career awareness, choice and development to be a lifelong process, beginning at the elementary school level and progressing and expanding as students advance through the school system. At a young age, students would be exposed to a wide variety of careers to stimulate early on their thinking about the world of work. In the middle years, they would be given opportunities to sample a variety of courses that could lead to an even wider variety of careers. Finally, in their last years of high school, students would be confident in their career development plan, and together along with this plan, they would carry with them the necessary skills and aptitudes -- the employability skills - - necessary for success in today's evolving workplace.

### Historical Reasons for Secondary Education

For over 200 years, national debates have ensued about the purposes of secondary education (Herr and Long, 1989). Thomas Jefferson argued for an essentially general or liberal education to ensure that the citizens of the democracy in the late 1700s would be able to read, write, and participate in the political process. Benjamin Franklin, however, believed in combining general education with what would now be considered as courses in vocational education so that students would complete the secondary school both literate and with employment skills. Franklin's paradigm of learning is similar to John Dewey's key ideas as discussed in his 1915 book Chapters of Tomorrow (as cited in Berryman, 1993):

- \*the child as center of learning
- \*learning as active engagement with an environment structured for educational purposes
- \*the learning situation as reflecting the larger community
- \*the integration of the head and hand, of mind and action, or academic and vocation.

These contrasting views about educational purpose and outcome have been echoed and redefined many times during the last two centuries. An examination of the status of career guidance in schools today reveals that the field is experiencing a resurgence of interest. After an active decade of career guidance conceptual development in the 60s, of career education programs in the 70s, and diminished career development emphasis in schools in the 80s, there seems to be renewed interest in career guidance programs and career counselling in Alberta schools. The by-product of this current debate about education is the rediscovery of education as the major instrument available to develop a citizenry and a workforce which is purposeful, productive, and committed to maintaining and participating in the competitive workforce of today.

### Defining the Terms - What is Career Education and What Are Employability Skills?

Career Education is viewed as “all the experiences that help young people to make reasonable life decisions, to understand themselves and their potential and to develop their skills so they are better able to take advantage of the many paths that will come before them in life” (Katzman, 1989, p. 16). Simply put, career education is the development of the total person. Changes in technology are creating new careers and eliminating established ones at a rapid rate, forcing young people to make mature choices at earlier ages - choices between dropping out and graduating; between planning ahead and living for today; between a promising future and no direction; between pride and humiliation; between success and failure.

Career Education is not a specialized program for a select group of students during a specific period of their schooling. Kenneth B Hoyt, U.S. Commissioner of Education emphasized that “career education was for all students, preschool through grade 12, and that school would become more meaningful as young people saw correlations between school and other experiences in their lives” (Katzman, 1989, p. 17). The William T. Grant Foundation’s 1988 report “Youth and America’s Future” stated that “young lives are being damaged by our collective failure to help young people make a smoother transition from school to work” (as cited in DeRidder, p. 25). Their commission recommended the need for active learning with more diversity in how students are taught, where they are taught and by whom they are taught. For the sake of all students, educators need to reach beyond the walls of their schools and classrooms to take advantage of the rich possibilities for learning available in their communities. For all students, schools need to build more effective bridges to the adult world of work, family, responsibility and civic participation. This can be accomplished through an effective career education program designed for all students.

Employability skills are one piece of the “Career Education” puzzle. Employability

skills are the “generic essential workplace skills related to seeking, obtaining, keeping and advancing in any job” (Anderson-Yates, 1996, p. 136). The Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce in their 1990 study “*America’s Choice: High Skills or Low Wages*” found that the primary concern of more than 80 percent of employers was finding workers with a good work ethic and appropriate social behavior (as cited in Anderson-Yates, 1996). Carnevale, Gainer and Meltzer, authors of Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want (1990) included problem solving, personal management, and interpersonal skills as the most important employability skills.

Employability skills were defined by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment in 1988 in the following way: skills of problem recognition and definition, handling evidence, analytical skills, skills of implementation, human relations and learning skills (as cited in Herr and Long, 1989). These are the survival skills necessary in a rapidly changing and information rich environment. In addition to the aforementioned skills, an increasing number of employers are extending their conceptions of basic skills to include self discipline, reliability, perseverance, accepting responsibility and respect for the rights of others. These skills frequently include work context skills, self and career management skills, and decision-making skills. Employees in command of these skills are seen to be in great demand. The ability to perform effectively in every aspect of employment through demonstration of appropriate employability skills determines job success.

#### Purpose of this Study

In education circles of today, we hear words such as total quality education, cooperative learning, outcome based education, site based management, and technical preparatory education (Tech Prep); these are among the hottest topics on today’s educational reform agenda and they all have their roots in Career Education. Of course schools do more than simply prepare people to make a living. They prepare people to live

full lives - to participate in their communities, to raise families, and to enjoy the leisure that is the fruit of their labor. As well, a solid education is its own reward. This study concerns only one part of that education: the part concerned with how schools prepare our young people for work. In order to fully explore this issue, I will first address the following questions:

- 1) Why teach employability skills?
- 2) What skills are needed in today's job market?
- 3) What are the characteristics of schools of today and tomorrow: the mistakes and reforms?
- 4) How do students learn about the skill requirements of the workplace?

After careful examination of these questions, I will then present several examples of schools that successfully teach employability skills to young people, including a look at several local initiatives being carried out in Clive School, Clive, Alberta.



## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

#### Why Teach Employability Skills?

##### Predictions and Realities

Our country's economic strength and vitality, our productivity and international competitiveness, depend on our capacity to build and maintain a quality workforce. The foundation of a quality workforce rests with the ability of our country's school systems to provide the basic reading, writing and mathematical skills as well as an appreciation for the work ethic, which our young people must possess to perform effectively in the workplace. Predictions are positive for a bright economic future in Canada, and especially in Alberta.

Alberta Careers Beyond 2000 (Goodman, 1996) reports that over the next ten years:

- \*The Alberta economy should expand at a rate that exceeds the Canadian average
- \*Unemployment rates in the province should continue to decrease, while the number of jobs will continue to increase
- \*Both the Alberta labour force and employment should continue to expand
- \*Entrepreneurism will thrive, with a flourishing of small businesses based on specialized markets, customer service and quality

Despite such rosy forecasts, progress will be limited unless we have a well educated workforce. Today's newspapers and journals contain shocking statistics that cause us to reflect on how well we, as educators, are doing at preparing our students for work:

- \*one out of every eight 17 year olds is functionally illiterate
- \*one million youth drop out of school every year costing \$240 billion in lost earnings and foregone taxes over their lifetimes
- \*employers already spend an estimated \$210 billion annually on formal and informal training; remediation and lost productivity cost businesses \$25 billion a year (Katzman, 1989)
- \*35% of employers surveyed in a 1995 Environics West Survey believe that students are prepared for the workplace
- \*Only 40% of Alberta citizens believe graduating students are well prepared for the workforce (as cited by Alberta Education, 1997)

\*Even though Alberta's unemployment rate has dropped to 7%, its youth unemployment rate is still nearly 13% (A.T.A. News. 1997)

\*22% of Canadian businesses say that finding and training new employees is the biggest management challenge they face (Edmonton Journal, 1996)

The National Commission on Excellence report "A Nation at Risk" in 1983, informed Americans of the situation in education which shook the foundation of their society (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Critics stated that the education system did a great job preparing those students attending a four year college or university program. However, this only accounted for 25% of students enrolled in schools. The system failed a large number of students (almost 50%) who drifted through the general curriculum, either disinterested or uninspired by traditional secondary vocational education programs. The commission argued for greater rigor in the academic and basic skills preparation. Ironically, however, it advocated neither vocational education nor other skill training as major elements of secondary education; nor did it argue for a saleable employability skill for students.

Lawrence M. DeRidder, author of "Integrating Equity into the School" (1989) states that all students do not receive an equitable investment of time and energy to help them examine and explore available career choices. Career development opportunities, planning, orientation and placement support for the non-college bound students are significantly less prevalent. These are the students who need career education the most; they are the ones who often give up on school. Students often drop out because of the school or the school's response to the student. Students who drop out often leave school not because of lack of ability but because of lack of confidence in themselves. The experience of non-school employment programs such as Job Corps suggests that potential dropouts can learn appropriate work habits and can be motivated to achieve when the school system works with both youth and the community. The successful employment readiness programs for those who have dropped out and are disconnected from society

emphasize remedial education in basic skills, motivational activities, employment training and follow-up. Our failure to invest money and time in at-risk youth costs far more in wasted lives, inadequately prepared workers and social programs that assist the unemployed, than a better education system would cost. For every dollar spent on early prevention and intervention, according to the 1987 report of the Committee for Economic Development, about five dollars is saved in the future costs of remedial education, welfare and crime, and the dropout costs in lost revenue to the school system, to the state and to the nation are enormous (as cited in DeRidder, 1989). Education is still the most important avenue providing escape from poverty and welfare but the escape is not possible without a solid foundation of basic skills.

Building a Quality Workforce: A Joint Initiative (1988), a combined effort among three American Cabinet Agencies (Labor, Education and Commerce) reviewed and interviewed many business and education leaders in many communities to determine what businesses found lacking among new entrants into the labor force and what employers' work force needs would be in the future. In addition, employer/school forums were held across the country. Some of the findings were as follows:

- \* the workplace and the economy, as well as job requirements are changing rapidly
  - \* the basic skills gap between what business needs and the qualifications of entry-level workers is widening
  - \* employers find the competencies of entry-level workers deficient in basic mathematics, reading, writing, and communications, as well as in problem solving and teamwork
  - \* lack of these skills is costing business money
  - \* educators agree with business about the skills needed in the workplace but few educators acknowledge that the gaps are as severe as business indicates
  - \* business must do a better job of anticipating future work force needs and communicating them to educators, parents, students and the community
  - \* more cooperation between business and the educational community is needed
- (p. 1)

The initiative concluded that in order to close the skills gap, the quality of education must be improved, business must assist schools, and the community must be mobilized to

ensure the best education for young people and a high quality work force for the nation.

In 1991 the United States “Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills” (SCANS) studied the world of work and the implications of changes for learning. The Commission represented America’s schools, businesses, unions and governments. The Commission spent 12 months talking to business owners, to public employers, to the people who manage employees daily, to union officials, and to workers on the line and at their desks. Their message to the Commission was the same across the country and in every kind of job: good jobs depend on people who can put knowledge to work. New workers must be creative and responsible problem solvers and have the skills and attitudes on which employers can build. Based on these observations, the commission developed three major conclusions:

- 1) All American high school students must develop a new set of competencies and foundation skills if they are to enjoy a productive, full and satisfying life
- 2) The qualities of high performance that today characterize our most competitive companies must become the standard for the vast majority of our companies, large, and small, local and global
- 3) The nation’s schools must be transformed into high-performance organizations in their own right (p. vi).

The workplace know-how identified by SCANS is made up of five competencies and a three part foundation of skills and personal qualities that are needed for solid job performance. These are demonstrated in the “Workplace Know-How” chart shown in Figure 1:

## WORKPLACE KNOW-HOW

The know-how identified by SCANS is made up of five competencies and a three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities that are needed for solid job performance. These include:

**COMPETENCIES** - effective workers can productively use:

- \***Resources** - allocating time, money, materials, space and staff;
- \***Interpersonal Skills** - working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating, and working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds;
- \***Information** - acquiring and evaluating data, organizing and maintaining files, interpreting and communicating, and using computers to process information;
- \***Systems** understanding social, organizational, and technological systems, monitoring and correcting performance, and designing or improving systems;
- \***Technology** selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks, and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies.

**THE FOUNDATION** competence requires:

- \***Basic Skills** - reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening;
- \***Thinking Skills** - thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn, and reasoning;
- \***Personal Qualities** - individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity.

**Figure 1:** *Workplace Know-How Chart (adapted from U.S. Department of Labor , 1991).*

In her article entitled “ A Response to the Challenges of the Year 2000”, Susan E. Katzman (1989) reports that the National Alliance of Business is deeply concerned with the impending mismatch between our future workplace needs and the skills and capabilities of our future workforce. The alliance recognizes that the education of our youth plays a paramount role in bridging this gap. They urge business people, educators, elected officials and concerned citizens to initiate and foster effective partnerships which have the capacity to significantly impact not only our future workforce, but our future economy and our quality of life.

It is clear from these well documented reports that teaching students employability skills in today's schools is extremely important. For success, career education programs must be closely aligned with the needed employability skills of today's and tomorrow's job market. Once the employability skills are identified, there are literally hundreds of ways that students can acquire them. Before I look at the implementation of such programs, I will examine closely the skills needed for the workplace of today.

### What Skills are Needed in Today's Job Market?

#### Characteristics of the Workplace

As the 21st century approaches, it is clear that the workforce of today is quite different from that of yesterday and almost certainly will become much different from the workforce of tomorrow. In the workplace of yesterday, work was routinized, repetitive and organized along hierarchical lines. Its most prominent feature was that it emphasized mass production by workers who were not asked to think about what they were doing. It left quality of the product to be inspected after the fact. As the world enters the information age, the influence of the world's changing markets is being felt in every classroom. Low skilled jobs are disappearing, partly because of automation and partly because many of these jobs are being moved to developing countries. Service industries will create many of the new jobs and most of the new wealth in the country. American business was able to dominate the world's markets through most of the 20th century because it invented and mastered the mass production factory model for producing goods. Key features of this model included minimal worker control, limited worker discretion, high levels of inventory, sophisticated quality control systems, and specialized personnel. The school system turned out workers who fit these specifications through schools built on the industrial model. Today, the workplace is changing to an information age model. These changes are shown in Figure 2.

<b>Mass Production Workplace</b>		<b>Information Age Workplace</b>
Narrowly defined jobs and tasks; requires minor responsibility	<b>Job Definition</b>	Comprehensive, open-ended jobs and tasks; requires critical thinking and high responsibility
Heavy supervision; requires passive order taking	<b>Employee Supervision</b>	Little supervision; requires active individual initiative
Specific responses, a limited number of possible problems; deviations handled by specialists	<b>Problem Solving</b>	Creative solutions, increasing non-routine situations; deviations handled by lowest level of specialist
Completing tasks more important than continued improvement of performance	<b>Product/Process</b>	Improving process is as important as improving the product or service
Specific tasks and independent of purpose in overall operation	<b>Task Integration</b>	Work processes are integrated; there is increased ownership of product and process

**Figure 2:** *Mass production workplace as compared with the information age workplace (adapted from U.S. Department of Labor, 1991)*

These high performance workplaces, by contrast, stand as a model for a successful future. In this new environment, work is problem-oriented, flexible and organized in teams; labor is not a cost but an investment. Most important, the high performance organization recognizes that producing a defective product costs more than producing a high quality one. The solution: design quality into the product development process itself by enabling workers to make on-the-spot decisions. These differences between the workplaces of yesterday (traditional model) and those of tomorrow (high performance model) are shown in Figure 3.

<b>TRADITIONAL MODEL</b>	<b>HIGH PERFORMANCE MODEL</b>
<b>STRATEGY</b>	
*mass production	*flexible production
*long production runs	*customized production
*centralized control	*decentralized control
<b>PRODUCTION</b>	
*fixed automation	*flexible automation
*end-of-line quality control	*on-line quality control
*fragmentation of tasks	*work teams, multi-skilled workers
*authority vested in supervisor	*authority delegated to worker
<b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b>	
*labor-management confrontation	*labor-management cooperation
*minimal qualifications accepted	*screening for basic skills abilities
*workers as a cost	*workforce as an investment
<b>JOB LADDERS</b>	
*internal labor market	*limited internal labor market
*advancement by seniority	*advancement by certified skills
<b>TRAINING</b>	
*minimal for production workers	*training sessions for everyone
*specialized for craft workers	*broader skills sought

**Figure 3:** *Characteristics of today's and tomorrow's workplace (as cited in "U.S. Department of Labor, 1991)*

*"Alberta Careers Beyond 2000"* (Goodman, 1996) describes the future

workplace with the following characteristics:

- \*rapidly changing, globally competitive environment
- \*dynamic, knowledge based competitive advantage
- \*customized, differentiated products and services
- \*technologically skilled workers
- \*entrepreneurial, generalist employees
- \*small business structure
- \*flexibility
- \*customer service orientation
- \*self-reliant, innovative, accountable workers
- \*pay based on performance
- \*unconventional job patterns, including telecommunicating, part-time and contract arrangements
- \*flattened organization with lateral rather than hierarchical job movement
- \*continuous learning
- \*continuous improvement (p. 13)



### Competencies Needed for Success in the Changing Labor Market

Such changes in the labor market result in major qualitative and quantitative shifts in competencies required for job success, both now and in the future. Economists argue that such shifts require workers with a much wider range of competency and skills than before. Group interaction and social skills will also become more important as the move to flexibility for both skilled and unskilled workers continues.

What exactly are the employability skills that students are lacking? Building a Quality Workforce: a Joint Initiative (1988) found that there was a large gap in the employability skills of students entering the workforce and the workplace needs of business. In summary, business consistently noted that entry level workers and applicants did not have the skills to:

- \*read and comprehend policy and instruction manuals as well as technical material
- \*write sentences with correct sentence form, spelling, punctuation and other matters of mechanics
- \*perceive errors and rewrite
- \*speak and explain ideas clearly
- \*answer and ask questions and follow verbal directions
- \*add, subtract, multiply and divide
- \*type with accuracy and speed
- \*work accurately with computers and computerized programs
- \*measure and comprehend spatial relationships and use metric measurements
- \*ability to have a positive attitude
- \*ability to learn, be flexible, and respond to change quickly
- \*deal with complexity, that is, learn and perform multiple tasks and analyze and deal with a wide variety of options
- \*identify problems, perceive alternative approaches, and select the best approach
- \*operate independently
- \*work cooperatively with people of different personalities, race, sex, across different authority levels and organizational divisions
- \*be punctual and dependable as well as show pride and enthusiasm in performing well (p. 17-18)

In July, 1991, the United States Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) published its report "What Work Requires of Schools" which specified that after graduation from high school, all potential workers

should possess the ability to:

- \*manage resources, such as money and time
  - \*work as a team member and negotiate
  - \*acquire and use information
  - \*understanding complex systems
  - \*use technology
  - and possess
  - \*a solid foundation in basic skills, such as reading, writing, math and speaking
  - \*thinking skills, enabling them to detect and to solve problems
  - \*high personal qualities, enabling them to work well with others
- (as cited in Law, 1994, p. 68)

Workers of the future will need to operate more independently in a less well-defined environment, which requires a greater facility for creative thinking, decision making, reasoning, and problem solving. Success, then, in the educational and economic marketplace of today and the future requires:

- \*basic literacy skills (reading, writing, computing and thinking)
- \*the desire and ability to learn from every situation
- \*human relations skills
- \*information management skills
- \*specific job skills sufficient to gain entry into some recognized career
- \*an in-depth understanding of theory and concepts that allows individuals to transfer and apply as they move up their own career ladder (p. 70)

Competencies such as those identified in the SCANS Report span the chasm between the worlds of the school and the workplace. They are the basis of the modern workplace dedicated to excellence and the hallmark of today's expert worker. The worker of tomorrow will not simply "pick up" these competencies; their acquisition must begin in the schools and be refined through on-the-job experience and further training.

### Characteristics of Schools of Today and Tomorrow: The Mistakes and Reforms

The world has changed. Work is changing. Educational reform has seen new curricula, adult literacy efforts, compensatory programs, in-school child care, and new

teacher training efforts. Yet, despite some promising exceptions, we are unable to demonstrate that things are, on the whole, much better. Why? One reason for the perceived lack of educational improvement lies in the confusing signals exchanged between the education and the business communities. They do not provide direct links to the “stuff” of schools or a sense of the work enabled by the skills identified. Many students do not consider high school work as worth serious effort, as what they are doing in school today bears little resemblance to what they will be expected to do in the workplace tomorrow. Most students believe that job skills are learned on the job, by hands-on experience, through extra curricular activities, or by osmosis. They believe that the skills needed in the real world are “picked up”. When students fail to associate “school” work with “real” work, they draw the inaccurate conclusion that “school” work is not “real”.

The vast majority of current workers, especially non-college bound individuals, grade their schools very poorly in regard to preparing them for jobs and careers. Most adults recommend that schools should increase and improve the vocational education and guidance programs to assist all students in preparing for life after school (Law, 1994). They stated that they needed to more fully understand the labor market, better identify where their career plans fit into the world of work when they leave school, and also to have the employability and occupational skills to enter and succeed at work.

### How Do Students Learn Best?

How do our students learn best? According to the latest research on how the brain actually works, “multiple complex and concrete experiences are essential for meaningful learning to take place” (Law, 1994, p. 89). Students learn from their entire experience and the reality for most of them is that content and context are virtually inseparable. Effective instruction, therefore, empowers students to access the knowledge they bring with them to the classroom to build new knowledge. Most people seem to learn best when:

- 1) that which they already know is recognized, respected and built upon
- 2) the information and skills to be learned are presented as part of a natural environment in which they make sense and are of immediate utility
- 3) the learning environment is as tension-free as possible
- 4) the teacher and learners interact freely and regularly with their environment and one another
- 5) the learning experience proceeds from the specific to the general and from the practical to the theoretical
- 6) the learner is given immediate feedback
- 7) the learning experience encourages different and creative learning styles on the part of the learner (p. 91)

### Educational Mistakes

Despite our knowledge and the available research, educators still make mistakes that create learning problems. Sue Berryman (1993) identified some of the following problems as the most serious ones being carried out today:

#### 1) *The Passive Learner*

In a typical classroom, government hearing or corporate training session, the teacher, or expert, faces the learners in the role of knowledge source. The learner is the passive receiver of wisdom. This style of learning reduces or removes chances for exploration, discovery and invention, and places control over learning in the teacher's, not the learner's hands. Passive learning undercuts the development of higher order cognitive skills that we use to govern our problem-solving attempts, and it creates motivational and "crowd control" problems which show up later in the workplace in the forms of high turnover and absenteeism.

#### 2) *Getting the right answer*

Teachers and students spend too much time worrying about getting the "right" answer, rather than focusing on learning from mistakes. In their search for right answers, teachers tend to characterize student errors as "failures" rather than as opportunities to strengthen students' understanding. Since the instructional focus is on the right answer, it is not on how to think about problems or on different ways to solve them and this jeopardizes the development of real understanding.

#### 3) *Teaching in Context*

Teaching in context is not about making learning "relevant" as in teaching subject matter directly applicable to students' lives rather than the traditional academic disciplines. It means to teach using students' experiences to help them learn the disciplines. In the traditional workplace, workers were not expected to understand much about the broader context in which they work. Context was not important when tasks were well defined and specified. The modern workplace, however, changes that notion. Teachers need to use context in the form of concrete objects and real world problems for teaching a distinctly "academic" subject.

### Reforming Education for Today

The broad skill requirements of restructured workplaces and our knowledge of how individuals learn the most effectively seem to come together to imply that educational reform strategies are needed. Raizen (1989) suggested that what needed to be done in schools was

- 1) integrate learning of basic skills with learning about those aspects which are characteristic of specific work settings and responsibilities
- 2) provide most education for work in settings that are, or duplicate as closely as possible, the work setting for which the individual is preparing, while ensuring that the necessary guidance and tutoring are provided
- 3) ensure that the education being provided is not narrowly limited in its scope
- 4) take into account the personal lives of the student or novice worker and recognize the interrelationships that exist among healthy families, schools that educate, and productive workplaces (p. 59).

In order to provide a reasonable opportunity for all of the school's youth to learn, the William T. Grant Foundation recommended in 1988 a mixture of experiential and abstract learning through expanding the use of cooperative education, work-study, apprenticeships, internships, community volunteer service, youth operated enterprises, mentoring, and on-the-job training, with the focus not only on what is taught, and when, but how to make it relevant to the work place (as cited in DeRidder, 1989). The school reform most needed to encourage student learning and retention is

curricular reform which emphasizes the integration of academic concepts with real world problems and job related tasks, using flexible teaching methods.... All instruction should emphasize those learning processes and values which sustain life and work skills: cooperation, team problem solving, communication, decision making, commitment, and confidence in abilities sufficient to express one's own ideas and approaches (DeRidder, 1989, p. 28).

Educational reform is taking place. Efforts have been made to reduce truancy and dropout rates, introduce computer literacy and foreign languages in the early years, establish after-school programs, require more basic academic courses for a high school diploma, extend the school year, and enhance job-readiness programs with collaborative

partnerships between business and industry. Today's schools must determine new standards, curricula, teaching methods, and materials. Teachers and schools must begin early to help students see the relationships between what they study and its applications in real-world contexts. It is not true that everything we need to know in life we learned in kindergarten; it is true, however, that we can begin very early to learn what life requires. If they are taught employability skills, students in the schools of tomorrow will find the content more relevant and challenging. Teachers will find their classes to be more attentive and interested. Employers and college officials will be delighted with the results because the curriculum will be tied to real things in the real world. By teaching employability skills, our schools will soon become schools of tomorrow, as demonstrated in Figure 4.

<b>SCHOOLS OF TODAY</b>	<b>SCHOOLS OF TOMORROW</b>
<b>STRATEGY</b>	
*Focus on development of basic skills	*Focus on development of thinking skills
*Testing separate from teaching	*Assessment integral to teaching
<b>LEARNING ENVIRONMENT</b>	
*recitation and recall from short term memory	*Students actively construct knowledge for themselves
*Students work as individuals	*Cooperative problem solving
*Hierachically sequenced - basics before higher order	*Skills learned in context of real problems
<b>MANAGEMENT</b>	
*Supervision by administration	*Learner-centered, teacher directed
<b>OUTCOME</b>	
*Only some students learn to think	*All students learn to think

**Figure 4:** *Characteristics of today's and tomorrow's schools (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991)*

### How Do Students Learn About The Skill Requirements of The workplace?

Reports, commissions, and statistics all seem to indicate a need for a curriculum that focuses on workplace skills and a restructuring of our schools that would deliver these skills. Most young people, in moving from school to a career, do not know where to step next and need help to reach beyond the school walls to tap into new learning possibilities. This transition from school to work is a gradual and extended process. Teaching employability skills is about people coming together to help our students make more informed career decisions and learn the necessary skills they need for their future in the workplace. There are many initiatives designed to teach employability skills to our young people in junior high and middle schools.

### Vocational and Career Education

Traditionally, much time, energy and success has been demonstrated through the teaching of employability skills in vocational education programs. These programs, which have been in existence for many decades, are now evolving into more sophisticated career education programs. Miller, in his 1976 article A Philosophy for Vocational Education stated that according to the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, vocational education should have the following characteristics:

- 1) Occupational preparation should begin in the elementary schools with a realistic picture of the world of work. Its fundamental purposes should be to familiarize the student with his world and to provide him with the intellectual tools and rational habits of thought to play a satisfying role in it.
- 2) In junior high school, economic orientation and occupational preparation should reach a more sophisticated stage with study by all students of the economic and industrial system by which goods and services are produced and distributed. The objective should be exposure to a full range of occupational choices which will be available at a later point and full knowledge of the relative advantages and the requirements of each (as cited in Law, 1994, p. 149-150).

Despite its success in the past, vocational education needs to evolve. It should be available to all students at times when they need it most, and its content should have immediate and practical application to the world of work. Academic and vocational education should also be integrated into a more holistic instructional program which complements the learning experiences that are available in the community. Many of these recommendations have been considered in the development of new career education programs such as Applied Academics and Tech Prep.

### Applied Academics

At one time or another most educators have been asked by their students, “How will **this** ever help me in the real world?” This question is often raised by inquisitive students who question the relevance of a course or topic that they are learning in school. Applied academics provides realistic applications of academic material/knowledge/skills to real-life (work-related) situations. It helps students understand what they will do with what they are learning in the classroom. According to Walter (1992), applied academics simply means “the use of certain types of teaching methodologies that result in students reaching higher standards because of a more relevant, ‘hands-on’, approach to learning”. Probably the best example of applied academics being used today in schools is the Tech Prep program.

### Tech Prep

Technology Preparation (Tech Prep) is “an educational restructuring strategy, centered in curriculum and instruction” (Law, 1994, p. 2); it is a new and vital source of energy in the revitalization of vocational technical education. Tech Prep operates through a sequence of study beginning in high school and continuing through at least two years of post secondary occupational education. Its core is a clearly defined four or six year



curricular pathway in which students move from the 9th or 11th grade through two years of technical education beyond the high school, receive an associate degree, and enter productive employment. Tech Prep is built upon the competencies needed for employment in a specific sector of the labor market, rather than upon arbitrary university requirements. Its theoretical and technical content is integrated into a single program of study. The goals of Tech Prep are as follows:

- \*provide students with information about the world of work as it is and as it should be
- \*help students develop decision making skills
- \*help students learn how to learn
- \*prepare students to participate successfully in the marketplace, providing them with both specific job-entry skills and transferable, conceptual skills
- \*help educators reform secondary and post secondary education by translating its instructional content into that which is relevant and applicable to the students' real world.
- \*break down the artificial barriers between academic education and education for work (p. 170)

Tech Prep offers an excellent educational environment because it is true to life for students. To ensure success, the Tech Prep program should be available to all students when they need it most. The content of the instruction should be determined by an analysis of the workplace, and have immediate and practical application therein. Tech Prep programs of study should result in measurable outcomes that reliably reflect the levels of skill attained by each student. Tech Prep programs of study should have flexible exit and re-entry points for students, and should integrate the concepts and skills of academic and vocational education into a more holistic instructional format. Tech Prep programs of study should complement the learning experiences that are available in the community, and all such experiences should be coordinated for the benefit of the student. Tech Prep should help the school open its doors to its community, and in so doing, open the doors of the community to its students.

### Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship is “one of the world’s oldest forms of education and centers on the practice of immersing students in the culture of the workplace they wish to join” (Law, 1994, p. 90). Apprenticeship happens as a way of life and activities are organized around the work that must be accomplished. Performance lies in doing something, rather than talking about it. Evaluation of the learner’s competence is implicit, rather than explicit. In many apprenticeship programs, a high school student learns a craft or occupation by working at a job under the direct guidance of a mentor or master craftsman, while attending school part time.

### Career Exploration

Career and career development begins when individuals first engage in a very general and non-skilled type of work as children. Career is further characterized by the recognition of the fact that as individuals mature the appropriate selection of work enables them to achieve desirable goals which give pleasure and meaning to life. Growing individuals also exhibit an increasing ability to learn what information is necessary for selecting appropriate work and how to learn first the general skills and then the more specific skills required for this work. By definition, career development continues as long as individuals choose to engage in work, whether it be paid or voluntary.

A variety of approaches can be used to help students with career exploration and decision making: likes and dislikes, interests, values, skills, aptitudes, goals, preferences and behavior (Johnson, 1989). These can be obtained from interest surveys, interviews, inventories and value scales, computer programs such as CHOICES, and by games such as “The Real Game” or “The Game of Life”. Once students have narrowed their career choices they are ready to explore specific occupations through a variety of sources including media, personal observations (field trips, job shadowing), personal interviews

with workers, and direct work experience. Upon completing career awareness assessment and career exploration, students are ready to decide which occupation best meets their values and serve as a career goal for their career plan. They are ready to prepare a career plan which will identify the sequence of activities, the necessary resources, and the timeframe required to learn the competencies and obtain the credentials required for a particular occupation. Students will have to make many decisions in the development of their career plan, including their choice of summer and part time work, the selection of academic courses in high school, and the selection of post-secondary educational institutions to attend. If the occupational choice is appropriate and the career plan well designed and implemented, students should be able to reach their career goals. The career plan should also include the timing for learning how to locate appropriate jobs, to complete resumes, and to interact during an interview. Once occupational choice has been clarified and career goals stated, these activities are more likely to become appropriate and meaningful to students.

### School to Work Transition

School-to-Work transition is about people coming together to help our students make more informed career decisions and learn the skills they need for their future (Loock, 1996). It is a system of high standards combining school and workplace learning that helps transform youth from students to economically self-sufficient adults. The School-to-Work system reforms education by increasing the skills and expectations for all students so that they may succeed in both the workplace and in postsecondary education. School-to-Work refocuses the mission of elementary and secondary education by saying all youth should be prepared for work and for lifelong learning. This concept embodies John Dewey's notion of "learning by doing" and, therefore, links education to real-world learning. Teachers at all levels need to assist students in connecting what they learn in

school to applicability in the workplace; in understanding and planning for career awareness; and in teaching human relations skills needed for success in the workplace. Students learn the need for basic skills in the working world through practical applications. Employers and educators gather on a regular basis to discuss what should be considered basic education for the future. The answers they find help to refocus the content taught in class. The essential elements of a School-to-Work initiative are:

- \*Systematic, regularized career awareness activities that begin during the early middle school years and are delivered through regular instruction. This might include career days, field trips, or release time from school to enable children to go to work with a parent or neighbour.
- \*Structured job shadowing during the late middle school years, continuing into the ninth and tenth grades, that gives students direct, in-depth, hands on experiences with employers
- \*Preparation of a specific career plan that builds on practical knowledge gained in job shadowing.
- \*Continuous career counseling that helps a student constantly reevaluate the continued validity of a career plan by reviewing the impact of school-based and work based experiences
- \*Community based career centers that contain reliable, easy to use information about employers, occupations, wages, job openings, skill qualifications, and education or training option
- \*Career guidance and counseling services that are fully integrated with the school curriculum (p. 35-36).

### Authentic Assessment

The emphasis on authentic assessment today is a result of the concern that objective tests do not accurately assess the critical thinking, problem solving, and self directed learning of students (Schultz and Zelif, 1996). Authentic assessment offers both the learner and assessor opportunities not readily available with traditional assessment strategies. With authentic assessment, the learner has the opportunity to become more self-reflective about past learning and set goals for future work. Student self-evaluation is possible due to clearly defined criteria on checklists and rubrics. Projects, presentations, and portfolios are examples of authentic assessment which place the student in the real world with deadlines, revisions, technological mishaps, and teamwork. With authentic

assessment, the student not only demonstrates the behavior but completes the behavior in a real-life context.

### The Use of Cooperative Learning in the Classroom

A great deal of emphasis was placed on cooperative learning in the K-12 classrooms during the 1980s (Caton, 1996). Cooperative learning places students in learning groups that seek outcomes beneficial not only to themselves but also to other members of the group. Evaluation is based upon all members of the group reaching a predetermined goal. The cooperative learning model, outlined by David and Roger Johnson in their 1989 book Cooperation and Competition: Theory and Research, contains five elements:

- \*positive interdependence (“we” instead of “me”)
- \*face-to-face promotive interaction (students facilitating each others’ success)
- \*individual accountability/personal responsibility (results of the assessment of an individual student are shared with the group, which holds each person responsible for contributing his/her fair share to the group process)
- \*interpersonal and small-group skills (teamwork skills)
- \*group processing (reflection on what went well in the group and what needs to be changed or modified (as cited in Caton, 1996, p. 118))

Coincidentally with the cooperative learning movement in education, leaders in business and industry were implementing the use of quality circles, which later evolved into self-directed teams requiring many of the same skills developed by cooperative methods in the classroom. Since life out-of-school emphasizes team performance, small groups of students with mixed abilities formed for cooperative study, with assigned tasks, and which report their accomplishments as a team, should lead to the development of very important employability skills. Cooperative learning encourages team work, communication, mutual assistance, development of individual interests, responsibility and leadership.

Education is not preparation for life, but is fully part of life. We must accept the belief that general academic courses have the potential to promote the development and delivery of employability skills of all students. Career education can be delivered through instruction in math, science, language arts, social studies, visual arts, health, phys-ed, and foreign languages. Through the linking of curricular experiences with guidance and counselling toward a specific goal, students can be provided the general employability skills to pursue their career goals with poise and competence.

### Examples of Successful Employability Skills Projects

#### (Junior High/Middle School)

Many schools and school districts are listening to the concerns of business and community, and are hard at work teaching employability skills. These school communities are identifying the skill gaps and deficiencies that are of greatest priority to them. They are taking actions to address these issues through a range of partnership initiatives among business, education, government and other sectors. The following section of this report offers several examples of communities that have taken the first steps to overcome barriers and build partnerships to enhance the quality of education and economic opportunity for their young people. They demonstrate the importance of community-wide efforts to improve our children's education. They also illustrate the critical role of business in these community partnerships and demonstrate that business leadership and involvement can make a substantial improvement in a community's education of its young people. The key to the success of these projects is that their initiators have identified and reached agreement on their problems, gathered the necessary baseline data and established measurable goals

while obtaining and sustaining top level business and education support, quality staff resources and financial and other support needed to follow through on initiatives. These examples demonstrate the successful teaching of employability skills to young people in junior high schools and middle schools throughout the country.

### Career and Technology Studies

Career and Technology Studies, or CTS, is a program designed to help Albertan students develop skills they can apply in daily living now and in the future, make effective career choices, and prepare for entry into the work place or further learning opportunities (Alberta Education, 1997). The CTS curriculum, developed by educators, business and government, was designed to respond to such changes as

- \*an emphasis in the workplace on teamwork, creativity, problem-solving and flexibility
- \*technological advances
- \*the demand for multi-skilled workers
- \*the move towards a global economy
- \*growth in trades, technical and service occupations

Through CTS courses such as Agriculture, Design Studies, Enterprise and Innovation, Forestry, Tourism Studies, and Wildlife, students enhance their basic job skills which will assist them in daily living and in the workplace.

### The Employability Skills Portfolio

In Calgary, businesses, government and the community help students make the transition from school to work with the development of an Employability Skills Portfolio (Donaldson, 1995). The Conference Board of Canada, initiated a study in 1991 to determine the skills critical to the emergent work force. Later, the Board distributed copies of its Employability Skills Profile pamphlet worldwide and organized a conference to reward innovative projects and people who develop employability skills.

One of the finalists was the *Employability Skills Portfolio* developed by the Calgary Educational Partnerships Foundation. A committee was organized to integrate the employability skills profile into a portfolio concept. The portfolio helps students organize their accomplishments both inside and outside of school. Checklists, goal setting activities, and suggestions for portfolio organization and use during a job search help students to prepare for their transition. During the process of preparing a portfolio, students integrate school-based competencies with extracurricular accomplishments and identify personal strengths and weaknesses. The project has been popular with students, teachers, parents and employers. In fact, some participating employers will no longer interview students who have not prepared an employability skills portfolio.

#### The Electronic Career Portfolio:

Chinook's Edge Regional Division in Alberta has made a commitment to integrate the philosophy of career focus into all grades, K-12, by 1998. An integral part of this philosophy is the development of an electronic portfolio, (Alberta Education, 1997). The electronic format will be introduced at grade six and students will begin entering data into an electronic portfolio manager. The portfolio is part of the graduation requirement for students in Chinook's Edge schools, and will take the form of a CD that is user friendly and visually attractive.

#### Central Alberta Tech Prep Project

Central Alberta educators have created a partnership that involves the local school districts, community colleges, business and industry. This partnership has led to the Central Alberta Tech Prep project (Red Deer Advocate, 1996). Tech Prep is a focused, goal oriented program for grade 9 - 12 students, which combines challenging applied academic curriculum with employability skills to better prepare students for post secondary



training or direct entry into employment.

Tech Prep incorporates real-life examples that give context to learning with a challenging Alberta Education curriculum. Course content prepares students for post-secondary programs and is relevant to the world or work. Work site learning opportunities enhance the curriculum and give students a first hand look at the skills and attitudes needed in the labour market. Comprehensive career guidance and planning is provided to students in the three broad career clusters: technology, business services and human services. Students develop and complete an employability skills portfolio that evolves through high school. Students take their portfolios with them as they graduate.

#### J.A.C.K.S.

220 Grade 8 students at Eastview Community Middle School in Red Deer, Alberta had the opportunity to go to work with a parent or a sponsoring business as part of a project called “Joining Adults in Careers with Kids at School - J.A.C.K.S.”(Red Deer Advocate, 1997). The project allows students to experience what their parents do in the workplace. Part of the program saw students forward a letter of introduction, along with a resumé to the workplace where they spent the day. On the other side, parents enjoyed the day as they felt it was a special time to be with their children. The program’s goal is to help motivate a child to explore various career goals.

#### Skills Now!

In British Columbia, a coordinated effort is underway to ensure that schools are teaching the skills necessary for graduates to succeed in a rapidly changing world. The Skills Now! program, a government mandate designed for K-12 education, is the first step in the direction to improve job related skills such as technological literacy, and to upgrade the quality of career education programs (Dickson, 1995). It is also designed to link

education and training systems wherever they are found, to accommodate the needs of workers to retrain for evolving careers.

A summit for influential business, labor and education leaders was held in Vancouver in 1993 to discuss education and training needs. Subsequent community forums and surveys of high school graduates were also used to gather information. The messages from these meetings regarding school-to-work transition were clear:

- \*Seek partnerships with business and labor, and seek provincial policy solutions for linking the secondary and post-secondary systems to the education and training needs of economic development programs
- \*Develop a range of career options for students that balance the overwhelming influence of universities on students' course selections in school
- \*Revitalize and re-energize trade and technical training options for students
- \*Develop proactive strategies to ensure that workplace standards are reflected in education programs
- \*Provide students with work experience and/or apprenticeship options in high school (p. 1-2)

Surveys from students graduating from British Columbia high schools showed a strong ambivalence toward the existing school system. Students wanted a learning environment in which they got “connected” to the world outside of school. They were concerned that what they learnt and how they learned did not relate to the demands of employers, nor did it reflect the dynamics of the modern workplace.

Four positive interventions were initiated to respond to these concerns:

- 1) *Student learning plan* - Students are required to develop a personal learning plan while attending school. Time will be allotted for students to work on their envisioned plan for the future, and a newly created high school course called “Career and Personal Planning” will include elements of career planning. Linking schooling to students' envisioned future career is seen as a way to improve the school-to-work transition and to raise student motivation levels.
- 2) *Career Programs* - These programs respond to the students' claim that what they learn has no practical application to life outside school. School districts provide programs such as career preparation, cooperative education, and apprenticeships.
- 3) *Applied curriculum* - A massive curriculum is being developed so all students from K-12 will take applied studies with a strong math, science and technological application. New career-oriented courses, such as Forest Sciences, are also being

developed.

4) *Technology skills* - All curriculums being developed will enhance knowledge associated with computer technology. Students will have the opportunity to learn skills such as information access, word processing, data management, networking, and project management. (p. 2)

### In-School Jobs

Cottrell Middle School in Oregon believes that work experience is an important part of mid-level education and a natural complement to intellectual and social development (Yatvin, 1995). The school has created a formal program that offers in-school jobs to all students who want or need them, thus enabling middle schoolers to experience many of the conditions of work in the outside world and give them opportunities to apply abstract knowledge to practical problems. Students are hired to perform jobs identified by school staff members who write job descriptions that are posted in September. Students fill out applications, provide references, and go through interviews. During the course of their employment, students must fill out daily time sheets, and undergo periodic evaluations by their adult supervisors. The school expects all workers to be prompt, reliable, polite, and industrious; those who fall short are warned and may be fired. Students work for 20 minute blocks of time during the school day on jobs such as Science Aid, Groundskeeper, Recycler, and Gym Manager. Students earn wages in the form of tokens that can be spent for parties, field trips, items in the school store, and gifts and the end of the year auction. Through this program, students are given the opportunity to practice the skills they are learning in classrooms and to see that such skills have valuable applications.

### Integrated Career Curriculum

To meet the needs of students at Cedar Bluffs High School in Nebraska, teachers designed a curriculum for grades 7 - 12 that provides opportunities to practice employability skills in an integrated curriculum environment (Meggison, 1996). Students

have the opportunity to showcase their human relations, time management, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, oral communication, and written communication skills in an integrated Business/English employment unit entitled “How to Land a Job and Keep it”.

Higher student achievement, a greater interest in the business curriculum, and growing enrollments in all business courses are the positive outcomes brought about by this integrated approach to teaching and the implementation of projects and activities that afford students the opportunity to practice employability skills. Students at Cedar Bluffs High School understand how math, science, the social sciences, and English relate to business because they have had an opportunity to practice their employability skills in a contextual environment through an integrated curriculum.

#### Students With Warranties

Prince George’s County in Maryland launched an ambitious employability skills program in 1985 (Building a Quality Workforce: A Joint Initiative, 1988, p. 42). One of the highlights of the school system’s program included “students with warranties”. The schools asked the business community to identify all of the skills that they need in their entry level workers. The schools ensured that these skills were included in their program. Students would be tested on these skills and if they passed, they would be given a guarantee certificate with their diploma. When they applied to employers for a job, their certificate would guarantee that they have the skills specified by business. During the first year on the job, if the youngsters did not demonstrate these skills, the schools would take them back, educate them, and retrain them at no cost to the employers.

#### The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative: Partners in Education

In 1986, several forces came together that led to the establishment of the Cincinnati

Youth Collaborative, a partnership organization aimed specifically at dropout prevention (Building a Quality Workforce: A Joint Initiative, 1988, p. 51-52). Its targeting objectives included reducing the numbers of dropouts, increasing the number of youth entering the job market, increasing the number of students attending college, increasing the number of children involved in early childhood education programs, and improving the overall effectiveness of the instructional program. The Collaborative planned several initiatives:

*\*The Taft Project* -improved counseling, mentoring, tutoring, smaller classes and job programs. Teams of teachers work with the same group of students throughout the day. An enrichment program called “Club Ed-Venture” rewards students for good attendance and performance. Summers will bring in-service training for teachers, and a summer school/summer jobs program for at-risk students.

*\*Pre-School Program* - the establishment of a public school/private sector pilot pre-school program for three year olds at two elementary schools. The program is supervised by the University of Cincinnati and financed by business. It prepares inner-city children for kindergarten by developing appropriate basic skills, and will nurture the children’s academic and social skills throughout their elementary and secondary school careers.

*\*Bridges to Jobs* - links the youth employment services of the school system with a Jobs Network which will initiate priority hiring if the schools succeed in increasing achievement and job readiness levels.

### The Portland Investment

The Portland Investment is a unique strategy designed to address the needs of at-risk youth and reduce youth unemployment and improve the quality of the young labor force in the Portland area (Building a Quality Workforce: A Joint Initiative, 1988, 58-60). It involves an extraordinary degree of commitment on the part of the business community, the local governments, public and higher education, organized labor, and community organizations. Its master plan is to consolidate the fragmented youth employment programs, stimulate private sector involvement in schools in order to reduce school dropouts, provide more employability skills, and provide increased access to jobs, especially for low-income and minority youth. Their programs are to introduce at-risk

students to the world of work and help them to set life goals, beginning in grade 8 and continuing through high school. Some of their programs include the following:

\**Financial Services Academy* - a program which prepares students for entry level positions in the financial field by providing a specialized curriculum, intensive basic skills development, job sampling opportunities, paid work experience, business community mentors, and preemployment skills training

\**Summer Training and Education Program (STEP)* - the program works to reduce summer learning losses among at-risk youth through a combination of education, work experience and personal counseling with an emphasis on life skills

\**BRIDGE* - Its goal is to help disadvantaged youth establish the patterns of personal and academic success that lead to graduation and employability. It targets young people who face barriers to employability. BRIDGE assesses 8th graders and then runs special classes for 9th and 10th graders that stress the connections between school and work, provide basic skills enrichment, motivate them to stay in school, and help them set personal and academic goals

\**Outside-In* - This employment program provides career exploration, work experience, and training to homeless youth between the ages of 16 to 21. Youth participate in formal pre-employment training as well as practical work experiences

\**Portland Investent Marketing Plan* - leaders of the labor market committed to insuring job opportunities for all graduates of the Investment programs including a work-readiness diploma, an organized publicity plan, staged media events, and recognition to employers who hire Investment students

### The St. Louis Career Education Program

The St. Louis Public Schools Career Education Program offers a variety of activities for preschool through grade 12 students (Katzman, 1989, p. 18-21). Experiential career education learning components embracing collaboration between education and business/community persons involve the following:

1. *Travelling Career Panels* - 7th graders learn the importance of the basic skills within the world of work and how these skills are applied by individuals on the job. A panel of two persons visits a 7th grade classroom, bringing tools and a classroom activity that typifies their job. The class follows up with career related field experiences to view the panelists at their work site.

2. *College Planning Conferences* - 8th graders spend the day on a college campus. This experience provides an awareness of college life and helps students to envision of the directions their lives might take.

3. *Career Awareness Fair* - 8th graders have an exciting opportunity to watch career role models demonstrating their jobs. The fair is a way for 780 business persons and community members to reinforce how important it is for students to master the basic school subjects, remain motivated about learning, stay in school and explore the diversified world of work. Students complete pre and post fair activities and conduct career interviews while at the fair.
4. *Career Pathfinders* - 9th graders get an opportunity to sharpen their decision making skills, goal setting and coping with choices and consequences. Consisting of six lessons, the program draws its strength from the expertise of business and community people who team-teach with the classroom teacher.
5. *Career Prep Clubs* - business and community people again team teach with the classroom teacher. Aimed at 10-12th graders, this 12 lesson program draws upon business people to present job seeking and keeping skills. Topics include career planning, how to find job openings, applications, resumes, interviews, job attitudes and how to advance on the job. Every student is responsible for completing a portfolio.
6. *Decision making seminars* - 9th graders learn individual and group decision making techniques and how public and private sector personnel use social studies on the job.
7. *Shadowing* - High school students investigate their career interests at a business site. This one-on-one personalized experience provides an exciting opportunity to observe first-hand in the work environment what a job entails. It is designed as a three hour experience. Students are energized by the shadowing and are better able to ascertain how realistic their career choices are. They report to their class about their shadowing experience.
8. *Men and Women of Tomorrow Plan Today* - High school juniors are paired with professional business people for the day in a conference setting outside of school. The adult role models and the students attend sessions together on self-esteem, goal setting, manhood/womanhood, and communication skills.
9. *Pre-employment Skills Work Program* High school students have an opportunity to work as well as attend school. Designed as an after-school program, students work two hours a day, five days a week in the private sector and attend a Career Prep Club class every two weeks.
10. *Business/School Mentoring* - A business or community agency has a chance to pair with a school to effectively communicate and guide students over an extended period of time.

These programs and services listed above are also supplemented with classroom curriculum components for each grade level which include leaders' manuals, student handbooks, spirit master sets and commercially prepared materials and intensive training and staff

development for educators and business persons who participate in the variety of programs.

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The beauty of all of these endeavours is that they provide an avenue for collaboration among education, business and the community. Career Education asks for human resources to impact young people, to be positive career role models and to help students' transition from school to work. Career education provides students with valuable employability skills - the keys to unlock their futures. The future of our young people and our economy depends on building effective relationships among education, business and the community sectors.

#### Implementing Employability Skills in Your School

Teaching employability skills in your middle or junior high school is a worthwhile venture for your students. So often our schools, their curricula and guidance programs are oriented toward serving college-bound youth, with very little development of employability skills before high school. In order to provide equity, learning opportunities must be available to all students: college-bound students and those who are planning to join the work force after graduation. The result will likely widen students' available career possibilities, keep more students in school until graduation, and create more successful students upon graduation who have the employability skills that the job market demands.

Through curricular experiences and individual and group career guidance activities, career education programs, in conjunction with academic and vocational education programs, should promote for all students, knowledge about career and self, values related to work, decision making skills, economic understandings, employment skills, career



employability and placement skills and education identity. Employability skills programs can infuse subject matter with career development concepts that are related to the likely questions students ask about their personal characteristics and available career opportunities. All of these opportunities are possible with collaboration of thoughts between education, government, business, industry and community. When thinking of how to develop your employability skills program, It is crucial to mesh your school's instructional programs with local labor market needs. The following suggestions may prove helpful:

- 1) identify the career clusters upon which you will focus by analyzing the labor market with assistance of employers
- 2) get representatives from the various career clusters to help identify the competencies (academic, vocational and technical) necessary for successful entry into and promotion in that job market
- 3) identify the tasks in the career clusters in which employees are expected to be proficient
- 4) place these competencies into a continuum that leads from the more simple to the most complex
- 5) review all the curricular components of your courses of study to identify where these competencies can best be taught (Law, 1994, p. 71).

Teaching students employability skills must be a planned commitment of a junior high or middle school. If it is not, the school will not be effective in delivering the outcomes sought. An analysis of effective models of career education programs in schools which teach employability skills shows that they share several ingredients for their success:

- 1.They have administrative support that is visible and continuing
- 2.Career education is a planned, integrated dimension of an education setting, not a random add-on or by-product relegated to a group of specialists. Representatives of all the groups of educators, industrial personnel, and the community affected by and making a contribution to career education are involved in the planning and selected advisory groups are used effectively
- 3.Resources are provided for planning and for staff development which is based on theory and research in career education
- 4.Field experiences (whether internships, planned field trips, job shadowing) are planned to extend and to reinforce curriculum infusion and other career education instruction. The community is seen as a large learning laboratory and one that has the responsibility to be in partnership with the school, creating the most effective educational and occupational opportunities available.
5. Career education is not seen as something so different. Rather it acknowledges

that experiences and academic subject content already in place have career education implications and additional career-relevant emphases can be built on them

6. Career education and vocational education are not confused. Career education is seen for all children with the education level where it is implemented

7. There is an evaluation process built into the planning and implementation of career education so that its results can be examined and advocated as appropriate to policy-making bodies or other decision makers

(Herr & Cramer, 1988, p. 28).



*Photograph of Clive School Career Transition student reprinted with permission)*

## Chapter 3

### The Clive School Employability Skills Projects

#### Description of School

Clive School, where I am an assistant principal, is an ECS-9 rural school made up of approximately 300 students and 12 professional teaching staff. The climate of Clive School is very open: the staff are highly committed to their work, and there is a great deal of respect and collaboration between teachers and the administration. The school environment is one in which innovation is encouraged and frequently attempted. Creative initiatives have been exercised in many areas, including the teaching of employability skills to our junior high students.

#### Description of Employability Skills Projects

##### Cooperative Learning

In 1990, the staff of Clive School decided on a major professional development initiative. The plan was to make Clive School a demonstration site for cooperative learning. Cooperative learning, it was felt, was an excellent tool for creating an atmosphere of cooperation in the school, and bringing about greater student success, both in school and out of school. It was also a device to provide students with valuable employability skills; in fact, one of the key arguments to convince parents of the advantages of cooperative learning was its focus on the teamwork and interpersonal skills required in today's job market. Students worked in various teams completing projects or daily assignments, and practicing various social skills taught by the teacher such as listening, encouraging, sharing ideas, providing constructive criticism, and staying on task. Students were encouraged to assess their group's progress both in terms of completed work and the function of the group. 1991 saw staff focusing their attention on refining their cooperative learning

techniques through peer coaching. This followed with the staff opening their classrooms to visitors in 1992 to show how cooperative learning worked in a very practical, everyday kind of situation. A new report card was also developed that year, by teacher Garry Trarback, which included teacher-designed rubrics assessing students' task and social skills. With this report card, as shown in Figure 5, students could see the real-life importance of acquiring such skills in school.

<b>SKILLS CHECKLIST LEGEND:</b>			
1 = Not covered or assessed at present time			
2 = Needs assistance most of the time			
3 = Needs assistance some of the time			
4 = Frequently works independently			
5 = Consistently works independently			
<b>TASK SKILLS</b>	1st	2nd	3rd
• Completes assigned homework			
• Stays focused on assigned tasks			
• Comes to class prepared and on time			
• Maintains neat and organized notes, binders, and student planner			
• Works with care and attention			
<b>SOCIAL SKILLS</b>	1st	2nd	3rd
• Able to listen to others and use appropriate voice control			
• Shares ideas and works to achieve group goals			
• Encourages participation of others			
• Checks instructions, seeks help and is willing to help others			
• Able to use constructive criticism			

**Figure 5:** Evaluation of task and social skills (Clive School Report Card, 1998)

### Whole School Social Skills Program

A school wide Social Skills program was implemented in Clive School in 1993. We wanted cooperative learning and its emphasis on social skill development to have an impact on students outside of the classroom as well as in the classroom. The reasons for developing a whole school social skills program included the following:

- 1) it supports the social skill learning that is going on in the classroom
- 2) it broadens the opportunity for positive social interaction
- 3) it supports school wide discipline
- 4) it provides opportunities for students to practice conflict management
- 5) it promotes trust and trustworthiness
- 6) it creates greater opportunity for parental involvement
- 7) it provides opportunities for student leadership
- 8) it provides students with valuable skills for the “real world” (e.g. future employment)

Students were given a great deal of leadership in the social skills program. We felt that more effective modeling would occur when the model was “friendly and helpful, and was of the same age, sex, and social status as the observer” (McGinnis and Goldstein, 1990). The plan involved a drama presentation on an identified social skill written and performed by junior high Drama students for the entire ECS to grade 9 student body. The teachers, through a social skills committee, were responsible for identifying the social skill themes for the year, and following up the drama presentations with classroom lessons. Students were empowered with the role of social skill super spies to roam the halls and playgrounds looking for students who were practising these important skills. Upon the achievement of a targeted point total, the whole school received a reward. At the junior high level, the student council organized and decided upon the rewards for those students. They also were responsible for promoting the social skill for each time period. It was largely because of this tremendous involvement by the student body that our social skills program has met with a lot of success. Students enjoyed writing and performing the social skills for their peers, being superspies, and also having input to reward decisions. This empowerment of our students taught them the valuable employability skill of leadership and it has had a definite positive impact on the behavior of our students. As evidenced earlier in my research, it is crucial that students learn these social and interpersonal skills in school; they are some of the most important employability skills, yet evidence suggests that they are seriously lacking in many employers new to the workforce. Our whole school program

teaches all students about the importance of social skills in the real world.

### Service Option

Our junior high students have also been empowered to be leaders in our school through our locally developed complementary course called Service Option. This course gives students an opportunity to work in a service capacity with a teacher in the school. The course provides valuable work experience for the students and allows them to develop employability skills such as time management, independent work, and goal setting. Because of our school composition, many of our Service Option students are placed in elementary grades where they are responsible for individuals or small groups; thus, the development of leadership skills is predominant. The result of this is that the junior high students are seen as “positive” leaders in our school by many of our younger student population, and at the same time they are receiving on the job training and valuable employability skills.

Students apply for Service Option by filling out a job application form, complete with references. Staff members fill out job descriptions and then the students are hired based on qualifications and who fits the job profiles best. Students are evaluated by the supervising staff members on a regular basis on the basis of their work quality, attitude, punctuality, and other aspects of their job. This in turn translates into a mark for report cards. Students are provided a checklist so that they can reflect and make changes if necessary.

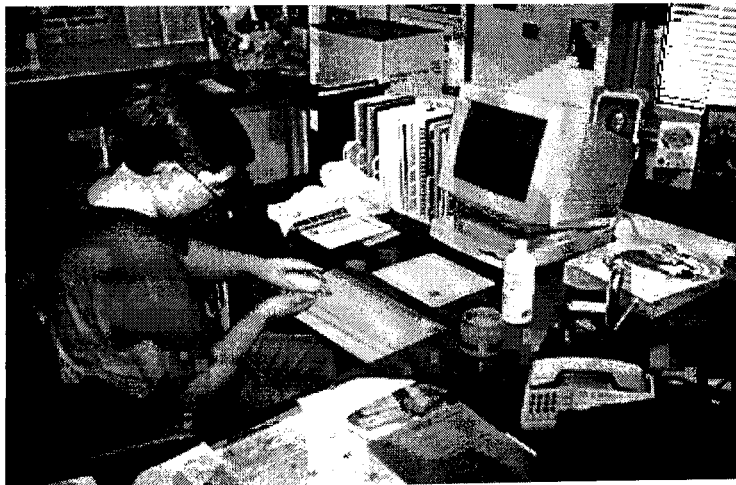
### Career Transitions

Career Transitions is a CTS course (Career and Technology Studies) for our junior high students. It combines elements of the Service Option program, with expanding opportunities for the teaching of employability skills. As in Service Option, students were

assigned to a staff member in a job capacity; in fact, a couple of students also worked with a local theatre company after school. In addition to this, students were also taught about

- \*the job market and employment trends
- \*selected occupations (monthly career talks and work site visits)
- \*good work habits
- \*resumé writing
- \*interview skills
- \*portfolio development
- \*developing a career plan

Monthly guest speakers and work site visits were arranged on the basis of students' needs. During this past year, we had a variety of career talks including zoo keeper, dentist, dairy farmer, social worker, research scientist, actress/director, oilfield worker, police officer, professional photographer, and pharmacist. We also had half day work site visits to a veterinary, agriculture research center, tourist agency, fast food restaurant, newspaper, and a television station. Students were required to complete career analysis sheets and work site forms to help them determine the importance of various employability skills for different careers. Students complete one major project for the course - a career skills portfolio - which includes evidence of their own career planning and development of their own employability skills.



*(Photograph of Clive School Career Transition student reprinted with permission)*

### T.E.A.M.S.

T.E.A.M.S. (Together Everyone Achieves More Success) is a leadership initiative developed two years ago at Clive School. T.E.A.M.S. was established as a locally-developed complementary course for our junior high students. In addition to past student council responsibilities, T.E.A.M.S took on the added duties of our school wide social skills program, and school recognition program. Our program also includes a service learning component and a training component in which leadership skills are taught.

T.E.A.M.S. was created with the hope of filling in some of the gaps created with the former student council volunteer approach to student leadership: more accountability for student leaders, more leadership training, more decisions being made and carried out by students (rather than by teachers), and more opportunities for student leadership and the learning of valuable employability skills.

In order for it to succeed as a program, I felt it was essential that T.E.A.M.S. be designed as a leadership course with a clear purpose in mind. The first step was to organize a course outline with specific objectives and key focus areas. It was also very important that the students be evaluated, and receive continuous feedback as to their success as student leaders. Assessment is done through a variety of means (e.g. monthly time logs, social skills scripts/ presentations, newsletter articles, portfolios, activity/project evaluations, and teamwork/leadership skills). Evaluation is done by me (as teacher advisor), teachers, other students, and by each student in a self evaluation capacity.

T.E.A.M.S. has achieved many successes. In addition to their social skills program, T.E.A.M.S. group members also plan several fund-raising events each year, and organize several student activities for the student body (e.g. dances, fun fest, hiking trip, ski trip). As well, they have also been involved in providing input for many school decisions such as student planners, planning the school calendar, creating incentive programs and revising the student recognition policy by running monthly recognition



rallies and sponsoring the year-end junior high awards. These opportunities for involvement in school-wide decisions provide a realistic component to the teamwork approach being used so extensively in the real world of work.

### Integrating Career Education

Clive School teachers believe very much in integration, and this is the case with our approach to career education. Following, are several examples of how Clive School teachers have integrated employability skills into their curriculums:

#### Cooperative Learning:

Teachers rely on the strategy of cooperative learning to integrate employability skills wherever in the curriculum. When students are taught social skills, the examples provided are often of a “work/real world” nature (for example, why is ‘listening’ important if you are working the till at MacDonalds?).

#### Math Problem Solving Festival:

Problem solving in the real world was our focus for a three year initiative in our Math program. Students were encouraged to use manipulatives and to work in teams to solve weekly math problems, and then the whole school participated in a two day Math Problem Solving Festival near the end of the year.

#### The Reading Project:

Basic skill development is crucial to employability, and this is strongly evidenced with our current three year reading project. Many reading strategies such as Early Reading Intervention, and the Accelerated Reading Program are designed to make all students at Clive School good readers.

#### Integrated Health Curriculum:

Two years ago, the Clive School staff decided that it would be better to teach the junior high Health program by integrating it with the core subjects. The major themes of the Health program were divided up with the various subjects wherever appropriate (e.g. Drug Awareness - Science class, Personal Fitness - Phys-ed class).

#### Integrated Technology:

Research shows that the use of technology is an emerging employability skill. What happens to students who avoid computers and computer courses? The Clive School staff felt that **all** students need the skills developed by the use of technology such as computers. Currently, the staff is developing a three year plan which will integrate technology into every classroom, and will have all students acquiring the technology outcomes recently issued by Alberta Education.

Careers Teaching Unit:

Recently, our school counsellor created a Careers unit for elementary grades based on the acronym “Careers”:

- C - Change is Constant
- A - Ally Awareness
- R - Remember Your Dreams
- E - Everyday Education
- E - Enjoy the Journey
- R - Responsibility
- S - Summarize/Survey

The unit included lesson plans for each grade level which dealt with the seven themes above which address the topic of “Life Careers” from the Health curriculum. Within this context the three prongs of life careers were taught: self understanding, life careers, and career awareness, planning and preparation. Students were taught to look at themselves and the world of work and leisure and present skills that help them prepare for the next step. This early exposure to career education helps develop the necessary employability skills which will continue to develop and mature as students get older.

Social Studies 9 - The Market System:

Research states that the most effective way to teach about the world of work is by integrating the content with other subjects. This is the case in many of our junior high social studies classes. For example, in Social Studies 9, students learn about the market system by designing an automobile, first, on the assembly line (mass production), and secondly as teams responsible for the entire product. As part of this task students also form companies and fulfill the responsibilities for each of their roles (shareholders, board of directors, president). During this unit as well, students adopt the roles of famous entrepreneurs (e.g. Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Henry Ford) to determine what employability skills they had that made them successful. Lastly, students survey workers in the community to find out what they value most and least on their jobs.

Social Studies 7 - Japan Internet Study:

In Social Studies 7 students use the internet to learn about the differences between working in Japan and working in Canada. The entire unit is designed as a series of teacher-designed web pages with links to recent information about Japan. Not only do the students discover that there are a lot of differences between the two cultures, they also learn how to use new technology such as the internet.

Language 7 - Communication Unit:

In Language 7 students learn about the importance of oral and written communication in today’s work world. Scenarios are provided in which students hypothesize what their lives would be like in the future without the necessary communication skills required of the workforce. Students learn the importance of developing good speech skills and practice using them with their classmates before delivering a class presentation on a culture (integration with Social Studies 7). Other areas include writing business and friendly letters.

I believe that Clive School is a leader when it comes to teaching employability skills to its young people. Earlier this year, I surveyed the junior high students and parents to examine, more closely, the issue of teaching employability skills to students. The next section of this report will offer an analysis of these survey results to determine what successes have occurred and suggest recommendations for the future.



*(Photograph of Clive School Career Transition students  
reprinted with permission)*

## Chapter 4

### Evaluation of Clive School Employability Skills Projects

#### Relevant Background Research

##### The Work of Robert Huff

Information already exists about the current teaching of career education in the school division in which Clive School resides. In 1989, Robert Huff, a teacher at Lacombe Composite High School (Clive School feeds into this school) completed a research project entitled "Career Guidance in the County of Lacombe #14 Junior and Senior High Schools" (The County of Lacombe is now part of the Wolf Creek School Division). His findings showed that career guidance was important in junior high schools: 65% of the parents and 71% of the grade nine students agreed. However, many of the respondents - - 58% of the parents and 73% of the grade nine students sampled - - responded that career guidance should play a larger role in junior high. Both groups, especially the parents (75%) felt that junior high schools could make better use of various community people, agencies and other resources to improve its career guidance. Furthermore, neither group believed that students had a broad and systematic exploration of occupations in the junior high schools. Collectively, the respondents indicated that the following would improve a career guidance program:

1. counsellors trained in the area of career guidance
2. teacher inservice in the area of career guidance
3. compulsory courses such as Career and Life Management but an increased emphasis on career guidance
4. more activities to help in making decisions
5. more emphasis on career counselling
6. more opportunities to search information on careers
7. career resource rooms
8. career fairs
9. active use of career guidance materials by classroom teachers
10. increased course sections
11. making the schools more employment oriented (p. 50)

### The Work of Shealagh McClelland

In 1997, Shealagh McClelland, the Clive School counsellor, completed a great deal of work in the area of career education. Based on her studies, she discovered that when it comes to her relationships with students, parents felt that teaching students social skills was the second most important task (out of a possible ten), and teaching students about choosing careers was fourth. With respect to the counsellor being a liaison between the students and community, parents felt that it was very important for the counsellor to seek out professionals as speakers for students.

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For my research, I developed several surveys for the junior high parents and students (see appendices). Two surveys were quantitative based, and one survey, developed for the Career Transition students, was qualitative. My purpose in my surveys was to attempt the following:

- 1) Determine to what extent junior high students were involved in career decision making (e.g. career choices, necessary education, skills)
- 2) Determine to what extent junior high students learned about different careers
- 3) Determine which junior high courses taught our students employability skills
- 4) Determine which type of complementary courses appealed to both the junior high students and their parents, and which ones were best for learning about careers, and learning different employability skills
- 5) Determine to what extent it is important to learn about careers
- 6) Determine at what stage in schooling (elementary, junior high or senior high) career education should be presented
- 7) Determine how successful the "Career Transitions" course was in teaching students about careers and developing students' employability skills
- 8) Determine how successful Clive School has been in teaching employability skills to its students

### Clive School Surveys

#### Survey Background

My student and parent survey was developed and delivered to all 92 students of our junior high. A representative sample of 44 surveys were returned (48%) of which 18% were completed by grade 9 students, 36% were completed by grade 8 students, and 46%

were completed by grade 7 students. The Career Transitions survey was only completed by the nine students who were taking the course at the time.

### Career Path Development of Students

In analysing the surveys, I found that students at our junior high appeared to have a good start on their career path development. Of our junior high respondents, 27% stated that they wanted to get a job upon high school graduation, 39% implied that they wanted to go onto post-secondary education, and 34% were unsure. When asked if they had some idea as to what job/career they would like to have upon graduation from high school, 43% of respondents answered “yes”, while another 43% stated “somewhat”: only 14% replied that they did not have any idea. Even though students stated that they had a good idea of their future career plans, the majority of them (45%) did not know what high school courses were required for this job/career. Despite their best intentions in their career path development, only 7% of the respondents had a resumé or job skills portfolio.

### Parent Surveys

It appeared that parents put a great deal of emphasis on career development as a major element of school curriculum. 84% of the respondents believed that it was important for junior high students to learn about different jobs/careers through their school courses; while 14% replied “somewhat” and 2% stated “no”. In terms of what school level career exposure is best taught, 16% replied that it should be taught in all three school levels: elementary, junior high, and high school. However, the majority of respondents, 77%, stated that it should be taught in both junior high and high school. Parents also believed strongly (80% - yes, 20% - somewhat) that the complementary courses should help develop employability skills and provide exposure to different careers. Overall, 57% of parent respondents felt that Clive School was doing a good job teaching employability

skills to our students, and 41% stated “somewhat”.

### Clive School Course Selection

The Clive School junior high offers a program consisting of the four core subjects, daily phys-ed, integrated health, and two complementary courses. When asked in which courses students learned about specific careers/jobs, I was pleased to see that in **all** our courses offered, there was some degree of career exposure for students. The courses which students rated the highest were Science (72%), Social Studies (50%), and Language Arts (43%). This provides some good evidence that our integrated health program had met its objective of integrating the “Life Careers” theme into our core subject areas. The four core subjects also rated the highest when students were asked which courses taught them various employability skills: Language Arts (75%), Science (64%), Math (61%), and Social Studies (55%). This high correlation would relate to the fact that there is a heavy emphasis on social and task skill development, via cooperative learning, in our core subjects. Secondly, **all** students are required to complete the core subjects, unlike the complementary courses which students would only rate if they had taken the course. This would explain the low rates for obvious “career” courses like Career Transitions (9%) which only has nine students in it; only some of whom would have completed this survey.

Parents provided a clearer understanding of our complementary course selection. When asked if they felt that our current complementary courses helped to develop our students’ employability skills and provide exposure to different careers, 41% responded “yes”, while 55% stated “somewhat” and 4% replied “no”. In terms of teaching our students employability skills, parents felt that the best complementary courses which did this were Career Transitions (68%), Construction Studies (47%), Service Option (39%), and T.E.A.M.S. (32%). The lowest rated courses were our fine art courses of Art (0%), and Music (2%).

In response to a question about which complementary courses they would like to see at our school, parents and students provided very different answers. Figure 6 shows those responses:

<b>Student Choices</b>		<b>Parent Choices</b>
Mechanics	<b>1st choice</b>	Financial Management
Cosmetology	<b>2nd choice</b>	Management and Marketing
Foods	<b>3rd choice</b>	Agriculture
French	<b>4th choice</b>	Communication Technology Information Processing
Fashion Studies	<b>5th choice</b>	Enterprise and Innovation
Service Option		
Wildlife		
Financial Management		
Career Transitions	<b>6th choice</b>	Mechanics
T.E.A.M.S.		
Energy and Mines	<b>Last choice</b>	Cosmetology
Music	<b>Second last choice</b>	Art Community Health Music

**Figure 6:** *Complementary course selection at Clive School (1998)*

It appears that parents value courses that would provide “general” career knowledge and employability skills (e.g. business style courses, Technology courses), while valuing less the fine art courses (e.g. Art, Music). Students, on the other hand, value courses such as Mechanics and Cosmetology, which would teach “specific” career knowledge and employability skills. It should also be noted, that the top two student choices are courses that have never been offered at Clive School, and perhaps students’ opinions are colored by the excitement of “newness”. Despite this, courses already offered at Clive School were also rated highly: Foods (3rd), Fashion Studies, Service Option, and Wildlife (5th), and Career Transitions and T.E.A.M.S. (6th). In both group of respondents, it seemed fairly



clear that the courses preferred were CTS courses which heavily emphasize career education and employability skills.

### Career Transitions

In evaluating our new Career Transitions course, I used a qualitative survey of eight questions. I chose this method because I was interested in what words the students would use to describe the course, and, because of the small numbers of students in the class (nine students), I thought it would be easier to assemble the results. Six out of the nine students chose to respond. The information gathered from this survey is presented below.

Students have enjoyed taking the Career Transition course. Ironically, most of them chose it because they had already taken the other complementary courses being offered. Two of the respondents stated that it was a good way to learn about jobs in the real world, and one student was interested in the “service” capacity that the course offered. By far, the favorite parts of the course were certain career speakers and work site visits; this was acknowledged by 100% of the respondents. As well, some students identified specific career talks or work site visits as their least favorite aspects of the course even though 100% of the students felt that the career talks and work site visits were beneficial. Students replied that the career talks “helped me realize that there are good and bad parts to jobs”, and the career talks “opened up my mind to see exactly what a certain career involves and not just what I read in the paper”. Similar comments were expressed when students described the value of the work site visits: “I was able to observe the hands-on techniques of employers. I was able to see how people put their knowledge to work” and “You see some of the types of environments people work in”. Five out of the six respondents stated that the work service component of the course was beneficial to them because “it taught me [them] various things needed for the future such as following and carrying out instructions, and how to function independently without a supervisor”. Students were not as sure when



## Chapter 5

### Conclusions and Recommendations

I believe Clive School has done an excellent job teaching employability skills to its junior high students. The important job skills identified through my research, I feel, are being taught in our school, and students are being well prepared for the workforce of today. The school's philosophy of collaboration, openness, and creativity, grounded with a strong background in cooperative learning, has resulted in a very strong junior high program which provides students a great deal of opportunity to learn about different careers and to develop their own employability skills. Based on my findings from this project, I would recommend that Clive School consider the following actions:

#### 1. CTS Courses

-Continue to expand the CTS program with more opportunities for choice by students and parents. These complementary courses should emphasize career exploration and employability skills, and should reflect the desired employability skills of the community and local industry/businesses (e.g. Agriculture). Increased input from local businesses/industry should be sought and partnerships developed and utilized.

#### 2. Career Transitions/Service Option/T.E.A.M.S.:

-Continue to offer creative program options such as Career Transitions, T.E.A.M.S., and Service Option with greater opportunities for more student involvement. Perhaps the programs could evolve more around a "work-site" theme, where students are employed and must fulfill the obligations of employment (e.g. job interview, resume/application form, work payment, etc.) as in the "In-School Job Program" at Cottrell Middle School in Oregon. The Career Transitions program could be expanded to have more "off-site" work experiences for the students, as well as job shadowing opportunities, and an assigned classroom period for the learning of skills such as resume writing and portfolio development. All three courses could also contain a mandatory requirement for the supervising staff members to provide a letter of reference for their students.

#### 3. Integrated Career Education:

-Develop a careers unit as part of a Language Arts class. The unit could be called "Take this Job and LOVE it!". Students would be introduced to the unit by examining various songs, poems and stories about working. At the same time they would be introduced to important elements of the communication process (listening, speaking, writing), and how they relate to the world of work. Students could finish the unit by preparing a research project on a career interest based on research in the library. The students would then provide a presentation to their classmates

complete with artifacts, posters, handouts, and a speech.

#### 4. Employability Skills Portfolio:

-Many students begin to develop an employability skills portfolio near the end of their high school experience. Because of our strong foundation in cooperative learning, I believe we should have our students start their portfolios in junior high. Their portfolios would contain evidence of their teamwork and interpersonal skills based on the evaluation of their social and task skills. Their portfolios would also contain evidence of the other valuable employability skills sought by the job market. Students would develop their portfolios in our school, and then take them with them on to high school.

#### 5. Career Awareness:

-There is such a wide variety of careers available today, and students often are simply not aware of the choices. To help increase awareness for students, our entire school (K-9) could host a Career Awareness Week. For a one week period, students could explore different careers in their core subjects and complete class projects with a "careers" theme. The week would conclude with a Career Fair in which students would choose various sessions to attend on a variety of different careers. The gymnasium could be used to house different "career" artifacts and displays for students and parents.

#### 6. Cooperative Learning:

-Staff should continue to use and develop cooperative learning in their classrooms. Staff should re-visit the various elements of cooperative learning, in particular, individual accountability, and seek opportunities to peer coach to gain further expertise with this model. The school wide social skills program could also focus on highlighting the most important employability skills to demonstrate to the students.

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The employability skills projects that have been developed and are being used at Clive School are excellent examples of how to integrate Career Education into the school curriculum. These programs provide many opportunities for students to acquire the employability skills required in the job world of today. With a focus on continued improvement and a visit to the recommendations listed above, coupled with further ingenuity and continued collaboration with students, parents and community, Clive School students will continue to be very successful in their future endeavours in the world of work.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Clive School Letters to Parents

#### Appendix 1: Letter to all Junior High School Parents

Dear Parent:

I am conducting a study about “Teaching Employability Skills to Young People in Junior High Schools” through the University of Lethbridge. The purpose of my study is to examine various ways that schools, including Clive School, prepare students for the world of work by exposing them to a variety of careers and by teaching them employability skills - skills that are necessary to complete the jobs of today. I anticipate that your child and others will benefit from participation in this study by providing valuable information, via a survey, necessary in planning school programs (e.g. complementary course selection, ways of integrated “employability skills” into the curriculum). In the long run, students who are taught employability skills are more “employable”, and this is perhaps the greatest benefit of a study such as this.

As part of this research I am conducting several surveys for both parents and students. Your child has been given such a survey and completed it during school time (please see attached). I would also like you to complete the attached “Parent Survey”. Both surveys are anonymous, however, results will be tabulated together for my study, and will be reported in summary form. Please note that all information will be handled in a professional and confidential manner. You or your child will not be identified, however, the location of our school will be mentioned in the study. At anytime, you have the right to withdraw your child or yourself from my study without prejudice at any time.

After completing your survey, if you choose to include your child’s survey, please indicate your willingness by signing this letter in the space below, and return the letter along with your survey to the school with your child by the end of the week.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 782-7442. Also, feel free to contact the supervisor of my study, Dr. David Townsend (329-2177) and/or any member of the Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chairperson of the committee is Dr. Craig Loewen (329-2455).

Yours sincerely,

Brent Galloway  
University of Lethbridge  
782-7442

----- please detach and forward -----  
“A Resource Manual for Teaching Employability Skills to Young People”  
a study by Brent Galloway (University of Lethbridge)

I agree to allow my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent’s Name (Please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



Appendix 2: Letter to Parents of Career Transition Students

Dear Parent:

I am conducting a study about "Teaching Employability Skills to Young People in Junior High Schools" through the University of Lethbridge. The purpose of my study is to examine various ways that schools, including Clive School, prepare students for the world of work by exposing them to a variety of careers and by teaching them employability skills - skills that are necessary to complete the jobs of today. I anticipate that your child and others will benefit from participation in this study by providing valuable information, via a survey, necessary in planning school programs (e.g. complementary course selection, ways of integrating "employability skills" into the curriculum). In the long run, students who are taught employability skills are more "employable", and this is perhaps the greatest benefit of a study such as this.

As part of this research I am conducting several surveys for both parents and students. Because your child is in our complementary course called "Career Transitions" he/she will be given such a survey and will complete it during school time (please see attached). This information will be tabulated together for my study, and will be reported in summary form. As part of my resource manual I would like to include a sample video and a sample web page disk (only used in the binder but not on an Internet Server on the World Wide Web) showing how employability skills are taught at Clive School, therefore, I am also requesting permission to use your child's work samples from "Career Transitions" and photographs/video footage gathered during this past year. Please note that all information will be handled in a professional and confidential manner. Your child will not be identified by name, however, the location of our school will be mentioned in the study. At anytime, you have the right to withdraw your child from my study without prejudice at any time.

If you choose to do so, please indicate your willingness to allow your child to participate in my study by signing this letter in the space below, and returning it in the self addressed envelope by the end of this week. (May 29th).

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 782-7442. Also, feel free to contact the supervisor of my study, Dr. David Townsend (329-2177) and/or any member of the Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chairperson of the committee is Dr. Craig Loewen (329-2455).

Yours sincerely,

Brent Galloway  
University of Lethbridge  
782-7442

- - - - - please detach and forward - - - - -  
"A Resource Manual for Teaching Employability Skills to Young People"  
a study by Brent Galloway (University of Lethbridge)

I agree to allow my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Name (Please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B: Clive School Student and Parent Surveys

### Appendix 1: Junior High Survey

1. Please circle your Grade Level: 7      8      9
  
2. Do you have some idea as to what job/career you would like to have when you graduate from high school? YES NO SOMEWHAT
  
3. After high school, do you want to get a job rather than go onto to post-secondary education (college, university, etc.)? YES NO Unsure
  
4. Do you know what high school courses are required for this job/career? YES NO SOMEWHAT
  
5. Do you have a resume or a job skills portfolio? YES NO SOMEWHAT
  
6. Circle the courses at Clive School which have taught you about **specific** careers/jobs:
 

Language	Science	Social Studies	Math
Phys-ed	Art	Music	Drama
T.E.A.M.S.	Service Option	Career Transitions	Wildlife
Tourism	Industrial Arts	Foods	Textiles
  
7. Circle the courses at Clive School which have taught you various skills needed for employment (e.g. Academic Skills, Technical Skills, Personal management Skills, Social Skills, Teamwork Skills, etc.)
 

Language	Science	Social Studies	Math
Phys-ed	Art	Music	Drama
T.E.A.M.S.	Service Option	Career Transitions	Wildlife
Tourism	Industrial Arts	Foods	Textiles
  
8. Our complementary courses are designed to educate “the whole child”, and include courses in the practical arts(Career and Technology Studies) and fine arts (art, music, drama). They also help to develop employability skills and exposure to different jobs/careers for our students. From the list below, **CHECK five** complementary courses that you would like to have offered at our school. (Please see the attached summary sheet for a description of CTS courses)
 

Agriculture	Art	Career Transitions
Construction Studies	Cosmetology	Communication Technology
Design Studies	Drama	Electro-Technologies
Energy and Mines	Enterprise & Innovation	Environmental /Outdoor Education
Ethics	Fabrication Studies	Fashion Studies
Financial Management	Foods	Forestry
French	Information Processing	Management & Marketing
Mechanics	Music	Service Option
T.E.A.M.S.	Tourism Studies	Wildlife

## Appendix 2: Junior High Parent Survey

1. What grade is your child currently registered in? 7 8 9
2. Do you feel it is important for Junior High students to learn about different jobs/careers through their school courses? YES NO SOMEWHAT
3. At which level do you feel this is best taught? (circle one or more)  
 elementary junior high high school
4. Should the complementary courses (options) that students take, help develop their employability skills (skills needed for future jobs) and provide exposure to different careers? YES NO SOMEWHAT
5. Do you feel the complementary courses currently offered at Clive School (see list below) help develop our students' employability skills & provide exposure to different jobs? YES NO SOMEWHAT
- |            |                      |                     |
|------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Art        | Music                | Drama               |
| T.E.A.M.S. | ServiceOption        | CareerTransitions   |
| Wildlife   | Tourism              | Fabrication Studies |
| Textiles   | Construction Studies | Foods               |
6. From the list above, please circle **three** complementary courses that you feel best teach students employability skills.
6. To help teach employability skills to our students (e.g. Academic Skills, Technical Skills, Personal management Skills, Social Skills, Teamwork Skills) Clive school has spent much time focusing on Cooperative Learning, Student Leadership, Project Based Learning, Integrated Computer Literacy, and CTS (Career and Technology Studies) courses.
- Do you feel CliveSchool is doing a good job teaching employability skills to your children? YES NO SOMEWHAT
7. Our complementary courses are designed to educate "the whole child", and include courses in the practical arts(Career and Technology Studies) and fine arts (art, music, drama). They also help to develop employability skills and exposure to different jobs/careers for our students. From the list below, CHECK **five** complementary courses that you would like to have offered at our school. (Please see the attached summary sheet for a description of CTS courses)

Agriculture	Art	Career Transitions
Construction Studies	Cosmetology	Communication Technology
Design Studies	Drama	Electro-Technologies
Energy and Mines	Enterprise & Innovation	Environmental & Outdoor Education
Ethics	Fabrication Studies	Fashion Studies
Financial Management	Foods	Forestry
French	Information Processing	Management & Marketing
Mechanics	Music	Service Option
T.E.A.M.S.	Tourism Studies	Wildlife

Appendix 3: Career Transitions Survey

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why did you take this course?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What types of jobs/careers did you learn about?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What was the favorite part/least favorite part of the course?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Were the Career Talks beneficial to you? Why or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Were the work site visits beneficial to you? Why or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Was it beneficial for you to complete a job skills portfolio?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Was the "work service" component of this course beneficial to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Did this course help you to make any "career path" decisions? If so, how?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Survey Results

Appendix 1: Junior High Survey Results

## Junior High Survey Results

1. Please circle your Grade Level: 7 - 20 8 - 16 9 - 8
2. Do you have some idea as to what job/career you would like to have when you graduate from high school? YES - 19 NO - 6 SOMEWHAT - 19
3. After high school, do you want to get a job rather than go onto to post-secondary education (college, university, etc.)? YES - 12 NO - 17 Unsure - 15
4. Do you know what high school courses are required for this job/career? YES - 11 NO - 20 SOMEWHAT - 13
5. Do you have a resume or a job skills portfolio? YES - 3 NO - 26 SOMEWHAT - 15
6. Circle the courses at Clive School which have taught you about **specific** careers/jobs:
 

Language (19)	Science (32)	Social Studies (22)	Math (17)
Phys-ed (17)	Art (11)	Music (10)	Drama (11)
T.E.A.M.S.(10)	Service Option (8)	Career Transitions (6)	Wildlife (11)
Tourism (11)	Industrial Arts (12)	Foods(21)	Textiles (10)
7. Circle the courses at Clive School which have taught you various skills needed for employment (e.g. Academic Skills, Technical Skills, Personal management Skills, Social Skills, Teamwork Skills, etc.)
 

Language (33)	Science (28)	Social Studies (24)	Math (27)
Phys-ed (25)	Art (7)	Music (8)	Drama (13)
T.E.A.M.S.(16)	Service Option (8)	Career Transitions(4)	Wildlife (10)
Tourism (7)	Industrial Arts (14)	Foods (20)	Textiles (9)

## Appendix 2: Junior High Parent Survey Results

1. *What grade is your child currently registered in?* 7-20 8-16 9-8
2. *Do you feel it is important for Junior High students to learn about different jobs/careers through their school courses?* YES-37 NO-1 SOMEWHAT-6
3. *At which level do you feel this is best taught? (circle one or more)*  
 elementary - 7 junior high - 34 high school - 34
4. *Should the complementary courses (options) that students take, help develop their employability skills (skills needed for future jobs) and provide exposure to different careers?* YES-35 NO-0 SOMEWHAT-9
5. *Do you feel the complementary courses currently offered at Clive School (see list below) help develop our students' employability skills & provide exposure to different jobs?* YES-18 NO-2 SOMEWHAT-24
- |                |                           |                          |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Art (0)        | Music (1)                 | Drama (4)                |
| T.E.A.M.S.(14) | ServiceOption (17)        | CareerTransitions(30)    |
| Wildlife (5)   | Tourism (12)              | Fabrication Studies (11) |
| Textiles (4)   | Construction Studies (21) | Foods (4)                |
6. *From the list above, please circle **three** complementary courses that you feel best teach students employability skills.*
6. To help teach employability skills to our students (e.g. Academic Skills, Technical Skills, Personal management Skills, Social Skills, Teamwork Skills) Clive school has spent much time focusing on Cooperative Learning, Student Leadership, Project Based Learning, Integrated Computer Literacy, and CTS (Career and Technology Studies) courses.
- Do you feel CliveSchool is doing a good job teaching employability skills to your children?* YES -25NO - 1 SOMEWHAT-18

Appendix 3: Complementary Course Survey ResultsStudent Choices:

- 1st - Mechanics (19)
- 2nd - Cosmetology (17)
- 3rd - Foods (15)
- 4th - French (14)
- 5th - Fashion Studies (11)  
- Service Option (11)  
- Wildlife (11)  
- Financial Management (11)
- 6th - Career Transitions (10)  
- TEAMS (10)
- 7th - Communication Technology (9)
- 8th - Agriculture (8)  
- Construction Studies (8)  
- Electro-Technologies (8)
- 9th - Drama (7)  
- Art (7)  
- Design Studies (7)  
- Environmental/Outdoor Education (7)
- 10th - Forestry (5)  
- Tourism (5)

Bottom Three Choices:

- 1st - Energy and Mines (1)
- 2nd - Music (2)
- 3rd - Ethics (3)  
- Community Health (3)  
- Management and Marketing (3)

Parent Choices:

- 1st - Financial Management (27)
- 2nd - Management and Marketing (18)
- 3rd - Agriculture (15)
- 4th - Communication Technology (14)  
- Information Processing (14)
- 5th - Enterprise & Innovation (13)
- 6th - Mechanics (12)
- 7th - Construction Technologies (10)
- 8th - Environmental and Outdoor Education (9)
- 9th - Service Option (7)
- 10th - Fabrication Studies (6)  
- Foods (6)  
- French (6)  
- TEAMS (6)  
- Design Studies (6)

Bottom Three Choices:

- 1st - Cosmetology (0)
- 2nd - Art (1)  
- Community Health (1)  
- Music (1)
- 3rd - Electro-Technologies (2)  
- Energy and Mines (2)  
- Fashion Studies (2)  
- Forestry (2)  
- Tourism (2)  
- Ethics (2)

#### Appendix 4: Career Transitions Survey Results

1. Why did you take this course?
  - Friends were in course
  - Only option available (\*\*)
  - Good way to view the variety of jobs available in the real world (\*\*)
  - I wanted to do Service Option
  
2. What types of jobs/careers did you learn about?
  - Vets, police, dentists, zoo people, pharmacists, oil people, RDTV, Fastfood, Newspaper industry, Drama director, dairy farm, oil industry, and research scientist (accumulated response)
  
3. What was the favorite part/least favorite part of the course?
  - Favorite
    - going to Macdonalds (\*\*)
    - Work site visits (\*\*)
    - The speakers (\*\*)
    - The Vet Clinic
    - RDTV
    - The Dentist
  - Least favorite:-The Advocate
    - Too many speakers, became somewhat repetitive
    - The Vet
  
4. Were the Career Talks beneficial to you? Why or why not?
  - Yes
    - because they taught us about their jobs
    - they gave me a bit more sense of direction in what it is I would like to take in school to be successful after school
    - the talks opened up my mind to see exactly what a certain career involves and not just what I read in the paper
    - they helped me realize that there is good and bad parts to jobs
    - I enjoyed the talks and was very well informed about those jobs that I thought I may enjoy
    - I enjoyed the director and the dentist
  
5. Were the work site visits beneficial to you? Why or why not?
  - Yes
    - I learned about different jobs
    - you see some of the types of environments people work in
    - I was able to observe the hands-on techniques of employers. I was able to see how people put their knowledge to work
    - I didn't learn as much as from the speakers, however, they were more interesting
    - I enjoyed the McDonalds tour. I realized how easy it is to apply
  
6. Was it beneficial for you to complete a job skills portfolio?
  - I don't know
  - I do not think it is as beneficial as a resume, especially at my age level
  - It hasn't been yet but I believe as I learn more and accumulate more experience, it will help tremendously in the future
  - Now I can go for a job interview and show them all my work



- I feel that it will be beneficial
- Yes, I got a lot of information from it

7. Was the “work service” component of this course beneficial to you?
- Yes, a little
  - I don’t know how beneficial it was, but it was fun
  - Yes, it taught me various things needed for the future such as following and carrying out instructions, and how to function independently without a supervisor.
  - Yes, because it showed the teachers that we can do other work besides school
  - Yes, I felt I learned what it was like to be independent. I enjoyed it very much
  - Oh yeah
8. Did this course help you to make any “career path” decisions? If so, how?
- No, because I already had my mind made up
  - It did help to clear up a few questions and make more possibilities
  - It most certainly did. Our visit to Lacombe Veterinary Clinic let me see exactly what a vet’s job is. I had been contemplating that idea for a few years but now I know I’m going to become a vet.
  - Yes, now for sure I’m going into Health Care
  - I have always been set on being a teacher or a lawyer. However, the RDTV work site opened my eyes to television broadcasting
  - Not really, I had a few narrowed down, now the choices are overwhelming.