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# A Study to Determine if Vocational Education Programs Would Decrease the Drop-Out Rate of High School Students in a Selected High School in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE IF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS  
WOULD DECREASE THE DROP-OUT RATE OF HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENTS IN A SELECTED HIGH SCHOOL IN THE  
UPPER PENINSULA OF MICHIGAN

by

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Bachelor of Science, 1971  
Northern Michigan University

An Independent Study

Submitted to

Dr. Thomas V. Buchl, Associate Professor

Business Education Department

of

Northern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in Education

Marquette, Michigan

May

1973

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This independent study submitted by Gary A. Bourdeau in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education at Northern Michigan University, Marquette, Michigan, is hereby approved by the Advisor under whom the work has been done.

Approved by   
Dr. Thomas V. Buchl

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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STUDENTS IN A SELECTED HIGH SCHOOL IN THE  
UPPER PENINSULA OF MICHIGAN

Gary A. Bourdeau, Master of Arts in Education

Northern Michigan University, 1973

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if vocational education programs would decrease the drop-out rate of high school students in a selected high school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Methods and Source

A selected high school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan was chosen for the study, and the high school dropouts from 1961 to 1971 were surveyed by means of a questionnaire/opinionnaire. Former students were asked their opinion on vocational education programs.

The questionnaire/opinionnaire was designed to obtain data concerning the status of vocational education programs in the high school the students attended. Specific questions were asked in regard to whether former students would participate in a vocational education program.



A listing of all students who had dropped out or left school between 1961 and 1971 was compiled and addresses were secured from the records of the high school with the help of the principal and the school staff.

### Summary of Findings

The results of this study show that former students are interested in vocational education programs and that a large number of former students would take advantage of vocational courses if they were provided in the local high school.

Over half of the former students said they would have stayed in school if vocational courses were offered in the high school.

The findings also indicate the need for vocational programs in the high school so that students can have a choice of occupations to choose from which will help to decrease the dropout rate.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Many high school students who drop out of high school have a hard time finding jobs because they lack educational training and the qualifications necessary to find a job.

With the increase in modern technology, peoples' lives are changing from year to year--new jobs are created and old jobs are eliminated to some degree. In order to keep up with these changes, schools must educate individuals to handle these new jobs. One method of achieving this goal is through vocational education.

The United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare published a pamphlet which states the need for vocational education:

Vocational education has traditionally emphasized preparation for the highly skilled and technical occupations in agriculture, the skilled trades, office occupations, distributive occupations, and home economics. This has meant that the greater part of its service has been directed toward those who could qualify for such occupations. Current technological change creates the need for vocational education to extend greatly the scope of its service. It must serve persons in all possible categories of occupational life, excluding the professions which are served by the professional schools. This will include education in a wide range of skills and knowledge, through

a wide range of age groups, for both sexes, all races, and for persons at various social, educational, and economic levels. Vocational education will need to offer preparation for any form of work for which workers are needed, and for which individuals can possibly be helped to qualify. Some professional fields show an increasing need for sub-professionals, including areas of health, education, social work, and public service.<sup>1</sup>

The high school must provide the instruction and training to enable each individual to obtain a saleable skill, a skill that will facilitate each individual in obtaining a job because he will be qualified for the job. It is the responsibility of the high school to meet the needs of these individuals, therefore, keeping them from becoming high school dropouts.

#### Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to determine if vocational education programs would decrease the drop-out rate of high school students in a selected high school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine answers to the following questions:

1. Would students participate in the program if vocational education courses were offered in the high school?
2. Would students remain in school if vocational education courses were offered?

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Organization and Operation of a Local Program of Vocational Education (published in 1968), p. 6.

3. Would students who have dropped out return to school if vocational education became part of the curricula?
4. What area would students prefer to specialize in if the high school offered a vocational education program?
5. Which vocational courses are currently being taught in the high school?
6. Does the school now provide an adequate opportunity to learn a trade or vocation?

#### Need for the Study

The establishment of vocational education programs in the high school is very important to student needs if the students are to succeed in today's society. Confusion and frustration must be avoided if the youth of America are to receive high-quality training. Vocational education courses can only be expected to provide quality training for the students if the students understand what is being taught in the course. A program in vocational education, meeting the students' needs, may also help them to stay in school, thus decreasing the dropout rate.

#### Definitions of Terms

1. Vocational Education - Vocational education is a program of study whereby a student is learning a skill in an area of interest that will help him to obtain employment when he completes his high school program. This program runs concurrently with a regular high school program.

2. Dropout - In this study the term refers to students who permanently or temporarily left high school between 1961 and 1971.

#### Limitations

This study is limited to the responses of the individuals who returned a completed questionnaire/opinionnaire.

The results are only applicable to the population surveyed.

This study is further limited to the researcher's ability to interpret and analyze the data gathered.

#### Delimitations

This study is delimited to the status of vocational education as applied to the curricula in a selected high school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

The effectiveness of the high school curricula is not to be evaluated. The questionnaire/opinionnaire is designed to determine whether the dropout student would have participated in vocational education if the program had been available to the student.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The school dropout problem is no new phenomenon on the American educational scene. Indeed, for much of the greater part of public education history the dropout has been as much a part of the fabric of national life as the high school graduate.<sup>2</sup>

How are we going to reach the dropout students? Where have we failed? Professor Edgar Z. Friedenberg of the University of California at Davis states:

What has gone wrong is pretty complicated, but basically I think one might locate it in the school's assumptions about the nature of what it had to offer the children of the poor. These assumptions were probably never valid; but both the school and the poor believed them. Now, only the school continues to assert them, though no longer with much conviction.

The schools assumed that in order to get ahead in America the student had to learn not only a body of skills, but also a set of social conventions, increasingly subtle and refined, as he climbed the ladder. In school he learned techniques for handling things and manners for getting along with people. The teachers were the transmitters of an alien culture--alien to them, too. Social mobility was a process like

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<sup>2</sup>Daniel Schreiber, Profile of the School Dropout (New York York City: Random House, Incorporated, 1967), p. 9.

preparing to get a job as a rice farmer in China or a coffee grower in Brazil. There was a strange body of techniques to be mastered--from teachers who had never practiced them firsthand. It would all have to be learned over again when he got there; but at the time it seemed relevant and made the student feel that he was on his way.<sup>3</sup>

In order to keep students interested in school, we must provide instruction which they can understand and follow. Professor S. M. Miller of New York University states:

A revolutionary vision has emerged in American education. This vision is to educate the disadvantaged, for education today is central to security and status. The issue today is how to promote this vision into deep-seated change effective practice. We need to move from an image of what we wish to its realization in practice.

Each year, for the last five years or so, a new major educational breakthrough has been heralded. One year it is programmed instruction. Another year it is team teaching. This year it is obviously pre-kindergartens for the "culturally deprived." We hunger for a one-shot, magic potion.

I vacillate between two reactions to these claims and efforts. On one hand, I feel that we know very little about how to do an effective job of educating the disadvantaged. On the other hand, I feel that if we implemented what we know we would be much further along the line. We really cannot talk about programs unless we have assurance that we have an educational structure and citizen and professional pressure to implement programs. We are not utilizing what we know, as Alvin Eurlich has contended, about the neglect of educational television. Demonstration and pilot

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

projects often do not grow into model practice, even when they prove out.<sup>4</sup>

Schools can provide instruction for potential dropouts through vocational education programs, programs geared for the student interested in obtaining employment upon graduation.

In an article published in the Business Education Forum, November, 1970, Frank Harwood comments on the high school dropout problem by saying:

By helping to solve the dropout problem, welfare, delinquency, and/or prison populations may well be reduced because educated and/or skilled people tend to be more employable. Hence, there would be less need for welfare and less opportunity and reason for some types of criminal activity. Tax burdens could be spread across a broader base because a generally higher level of education would result in a more employable labor force. But, perhaps the greatest bonus of all would come in the manifold blessings to the individual who learns the dignity and pride that comes from being an independent contributor to the economy, compared to the alternative of being a dependent beneficiary of doles of subsidies.

The underdeveloped talents of these prospective dropouts represent an untapped natural resource of untold wealth.<sup>5</sup>

In a recent article about dropouts, Hubert H. Humphrey makes reference to vocational education:

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>5</sup>Frank Harwood, "Wanted: Partners to Work a Gold Mine," Business Education Forum, Volume XXV, Number 2 (November, 1970), p. 51.



Almost one million young Americans will not return to their high school classrooms this year. I submit that this figure--one million dropouts--should be the Sputnik of 1967.

In the late '50's, Sputnik was the impetus for an intensive appraisal of our teaching methods, curricula, and administrative practices.

Few vocational programs in the schools, for example, are pointed at careers in numerous emerging fields such as visual communications, industrial and engineering technologies, hotel restaurant management, landscape architecture and other ornamental horticulture, health and medical technologies, and police and fire sciences.

We should implant a career preparation consciousness in all schools. This would enlarge the number of options and alternatives open to individual pupils--both in terms of job opportunities and higher education.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of vocational education is seen in the high unemployment rate of our youth. The untrained youths have a more difficult time to find a job than trained youths. Thomas S. Swanstrom, Division of Population and Labor Force Studies, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, states:

The purpose of a vocational or commercial program in high school is to better equip students who will look for jobs after they leave school. Only 30 percent of the youths who dropped out of high school followed such programs. It may be that the proportion with vocational or commercial programs would have

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<sup>6</sup>Hubert H. Humphrey, "One Million Dropouts--The Sputnik of 1967," (Reprinted from) American Education, September, 1967.

been higher if more schools had offered these programs in the ninth and tenth grades--the highest grades attended by a majority of the high school dropouts included in the survey.

Among the young men who were high school graduates, about 38 percent had taken either of these programs, only a slightly higher proportion than for dropouts. But the differences in the proportions were more pronounced among the girls; 50 percent of the graduates had been enrolled in vocational or commercial programs, two-thirds again as high as for the dropouts. Since better educated and trained workers are more likely to be in the labor force, this variation may partially explain the higher post-school labor force participation rates of the female graduates. Probably a more important factor is the smaller proportion of graduates than dropouts who were married.

Even though most students do not follow a vocational or commercial program while in high school, almost 95 percent of the male graduates and about 70 percent of the dropouts completed at least one vocational or commercial course. As shown in the following tabulation, nearly the same proportion of the dropouts as graduates had completed the most commonly given vocational courses despite the shorter period of time that dropouts had been in school. (See table on next page.)

On the other hand, both the male and female graduates were much more likely than dropouts to have completed commercial courses, and this training doubtless gave the graduates an added advantage in finding clerical jobs; about 68 percent of the female graduates employed in 1963 were employed in clerical jobs compared with only 20 percent of the female dropouts.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Thomas E. Swanstrom, Profile of the School Dropout (New York City: Random House, Incorporated, 1967), pp. 85-87.

PROPORTION TAKING VOCATIONAL OR  
COMMERCIAL COURSES<sup>8</sup>

Male	Graduates	Dropouts
Typing	54	18
Machine shop	37	28
Metal working	34	27
Carpentry	32	29
Agriculture	29	18
Bookkeeping	21	6

Females	Graduates	Dropouts
Typing	87	50
Home economics	73	76
Bookkeeping	52	21
Shorthand	51	15
Business machines	36	5

Eli Ginzberg puts the blame on the curriculum as the most important reason for students becoming dropouts. Mr. Swanstrom comments on the amount of effort that has been made in recent years to study the

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

"dropout" problem and on the answers to questions of why so many of the young people fail to complete high school. One of the most important reasons for failure to complete high school is that by the time the students reach learning age, usually sixteen (the age where students begin to understand what is being taught and can use the knowledge in a constructive way, such as solving a problem and understanding how they did solve the problem and why it was done that way), the majority of students are one to three years behind their grade level. Therefore, students entering the eleventh grade may be on the educational level of either the eighth or ninth grade. This causes many of the students to have difficulty in mastering the curriculum which contributes to a negative attitude toward the school. Classes do not interest the students and discipline problems begin to mount rapidly. No wonder that these students take the first chance to escape from this confinement.<sup>9</sup>

Charlotte Lee in a recent article stated:

No longer can education be directed toward the average student. In recent years, educators have become increasingly aware of the wide range of interests and abilities exhibited by their students. School dropouts and unemployed youth exemplify the problem created by the failure of schools to meet individual needs. With the passage of the Vocational Education Act of 1963, educators have been challenged to provide vocational preparation programs for persons of all levels of ability.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>10</sup>Charlotte Lee, "Cooperative Office Education and the Low-Average Student," The Balance Sheet, Volume L, Number 5 (January, 1969), p. 204.

Mr. Braden talks about the need for evaluation of the vocational office training program in light of social and economic changes. He says that keeping pace with current changes is a must and that the high school administration, business education teachers, businessmen, parents, and society generally agree with this trend. He continues by mentioning that the technological changes, increasing mobility of the population, increasing size of the labor force, greater role of women in the work force, and urbanization of population have brought on many changes in the American economy. In addition, the increasing young adult population has been burdened with a disproportionate unemployment rate. This unemployment rate among young adults has been intensified by our evolution from an industrial to a technological society. Although bringing many benefits to society, this technological age has created new problems which confront us from day to day.<sup>11</sup>

The President's Panel of Consultants on Vocational Education presented its report to former President John F. Kennedy on November 28, 1962.

The report states:

It is becoming increasingly clear that there is no real assurance now that mastery of an occupation, once achieved, will last any worker a lifetime.

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<sup>11</sup>Paul Vaughn Braden, Effects of High School Vocational Office Training upon Subsequent Beginning Career Patterns (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1963), p. 105.

Although jobs may change, a worker who has mastered the skills of a trade or occupation and who has kept himself abreast of new techniques and developments can reasonably expect to continue in his trade throughout his working life. Preemployment training of youth must therefore provide a solid occupational foundation. In addition, the potential member of the labor force must be well aware of his responsibility for his own self-development if he is to continue to keep up to date in his occupation. Since more and more workers will need a program of lifelong learning, continuing educational opportunities must be provided to cope with occupational change. Vocational education must train more broadly for career patterns, for a lifelong sequence of employment opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

Mr. Braden cites Stratemeyer, Forkner, McKim, and Passow in their book, Developing a Curriculum for Modern Living, which states:

The fundamental issues which underlie the choices made by those who guide the learning experiences of children and youth must be re-examined in terms of new findings and changing conditions. Alternatives for resolving basic curriculum problems will have to be critically studied and appraised to determine how well they actually contribute to the achievement of desired ends. Ways will have to be found for using the constantly growing body of research reported by educators and specialists in related fields. But at the same time, those who work most closely with learners must extend their competencies in studying the potency of school-guided experiences for helping individuals cope with the persistent life situations they face.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>U.S. Office of Education Vocational Education, November 28, 1962, quoted in or "cited by" Paul Vaughn Braden, Effects of High School Vocational Office Training Upon Subsequent Beginning Career Patterns (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1963), p. 107.

<sup>13</sup>Stratemeyer, Forkner, McKim, and Passow, Developing a Curriculum for Modern Living, quoted in or "cited by" Paul Vaughn Braden, Effects of High School Vocational Office Training upon Subsequent Beginning Career Patterns (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1963), p. 108.

According to Mr. Bournazos, who did a study on the effects of vocational training in the career patterns of high school graduates, there is a difference between students who completed a trade or industrial course and those students who did not complete such a program.

In his conclusions Mr. Bournazos states:

Trade and industrial public high school graduates and a group tend to have greater job stability in terms of Employment Ratio than do non-vocationally trained graduates. This conclusion would probably lead one to believe that trade and industrial graduates usually enjoy more full-time employment and work fewer firms. Subsequent findings did show that the trade and industrial graduates were employed longer than the non-vocational graduates during the same work period. Trade and industrial graduates averaged 3.65 firms per person and non-vocational graduates averaged 4.30 firms per person.<sup>14</sup>

What the future holds for occupational training can be seen in the Allied Health High School Project, which rounded out its first year of operation in 1971 in four Los Angeles slum high schools. The father of the program is U.C.L.A. Professor Melvis L. Barlow, a chief architect of the Vocational Education Act of 1968. He established a three-year program which involved the health occupations which today have a very urgent need for highly trained skilled workers. The first year, which starts in the tenth grade, will consist of career exploration

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<sup>14</sup>Kimon Bournazos, A Comparative Study of the Effects of Vocational Training on the Career Patterns of High School Graduates (unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1963), p. 121.

in many fields; it will then be followed by actual training in the eleventh and twelfth grades.

Looking for volunteers, Barlow received over 900 applications. One hundred applicants were to be used as guinea pigs--15 percent of them high achievers, bound for college; 60 percent average students; 25 percent low-achieving potential dropouts. He also chose another 100 applicants to serve as a control group whose work in a regular high school program would help provide some means to measure Allied Health Project achievement.

After the first semester, evaluators found that Allied Health students increased one letter grade (from D to C; from C to B, etc.). They were also doing a full letter grade better than the "control" students.

Barlow hopes that his Allied Health Professions Project will be a forerunner of similar exploration and training programs in other families of occupations. In construction, for instance, a student could go as far as his talents would take him.

In an age of changing institutions, our schools have been among the slowest to change. Yet educational reform cannot wait. The mass of idle and frustrated ghetto youths grows daily. The need for schools that will turn them into self-supporting citizens is as urgent as your police department's next call to a ghetto riot.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Lester Velie, "Schools for Failure," Reader's Digest (July, 1971), p. 147.



Dr. Strom relates the situation of the employer in the lines of Edna St. Vincent Millay who, in her poem, "Conversation at Midnight," wrote:

All creatures to survive adopt themselves to  
the changing conditions under which they live;

If they can grow new faculties to meet the  
new necessity, they thrive;

Otherwise not; the inflexible organism,  
however much alive today,

Is tomorrow extinct.<sup>16</sup>

#### Summary

From the literature received in this chapter, the educators quoted are in agreement that vocational education should be offered in the high school. However, schools that cannot afford the added costs of vocational education can develop and integrate some vocational courses into the present curriculum as a start. Statistics prove that a student who is provided with courses which appeal to him or her will work harder to achieve his or her goal. In order for a student to learn he must want to learn. Vocational education provides a variety of occupations from which a student can choose his or her course of study.

Vocational education is a must in the high school curriculum to provide students with the qualifications to obtain and hold employment.

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<sup>16</sup>Dr. Robert D. Strom, "The Tragic Migration - School Dropouts" (The Sears-Roebuck Foundation, 1964), p. 38.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to determine if vocational education programs would decrease the drop-out rate of high school students in a selected high school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. To accomplish this objective, a survey of the high school dropouts over a ten-year period (1961-1971) was conducted.

Information concerning the high school dropout as applied to vocational education was obtained from books, magazine articles and unpublished reports, using the facilities of the Northern Michigan University Library, Marquette, Michigan.

The first three chapters of the study, along with the questionnaire/opinionnaire, the cover letter, and the follow-up letter were prepared and submitted to Dr. Thomas V. Buchl.

A sample of the cover letter and follow-up letter are provided in Appendix A, page 36.

The questionnaire/opinionnaire was designed to obtain data concerning the feasibility of vocational education in the curricula of the selected public high school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Specific questions were asked in regard to whether former students

would participate in a vocational education program if vocational courses were offered in the high school, would students remain in school if courses were offered, would students who have dropped out of school return if vocational education became a part of the curricula. The study also determined the areas students would prefer to specialize in, what courses are presently being taught, and whether or not the school should provide an opportunity to learn a trade or vocation.

A listing of all students who had dropped out or left school between 1961 and 1971 was compiled, and addresses were secured from the records of the high school with the help of the principal and school staff.

On November 1, 1972, the questionnaire/opinionnaire and cover letter were mailed to the former students, who were located in all parts of the country.

On November 22, 1972, a follow-up letter and duplicate questionnaire/opinionnaire were mailed to those former students who had not responded to the first letter.

On January 25, 1973, the findings of the responding former students were analyzed.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

An attempt was made by the writer to determine if vocational education programs would decrease the drop-out rate of high school students in a selected high school. The writer surveyed students who had dropped out of school during the period 1961 to 1971 in a selected high school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

A questionnaire/opinionnaire was sent to 77 former high school students; a response from 54, or 70 percent, was received.

The writer started with a list of 93 individuals; however, 16 individuals could not be located because addresses were unobtainable. Of the 77 questionnaire/opinionnaires sent, 47, or 86 percent, respondents lived in the state of Michigan; 45, or 82 percent, of those respondents resided in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Houghton county had the largest number of former students, with 38, or 70 percent, residing in the county. Four of the respondents, or 8 percent, lived in Wisconsin. Each of the following states had one respondent, or 2 percent, of the respondents living there: Indiana, Minnesota, and New Jersey.

This information indicates that approximately three-fourths of the former students stayed in the same county where they attended school. A little over three-fourths of the former students lived within their own state, concentrated almost entirely in the Upper Peninsula.

Table I, below, presents the breakdown of dropouts by sex. It is interesting to note that the largest percentage were females.

TABLE I  
SEX OF FORMER STUDENTS

Sex	Number	Percent*
Male	18	33
Female	36	67

\* In this table and others to follow, percents are rounded to the nearest whole number.

The greatest number of former students are currently housewives with full-time employment and part-time employment ranking second and third. One former student was attending college and another was attending high school. Information on present status is given in Table II, on the following page.

The former students are currently employed in many different occupations. A more detailed breakdown of Table II, page 21, is given in Table III, on page 22.

TABLE II  
PRESENT STATUS OF FORMER STUDENTS

Present Status	Number	Percent
Housewives	24	44
Employed	20	37
Unemployed	8	15
Student	2	4

The former students were asked how many years they attended high school. Twenty-nine individuals, or 54 percent, stated three years; 12, or 22 percent, stated two years; 10, or 18 percent, stated four years; 1, or 2 percent, stated one year; and 2, or 4 percent, gave no answer.

When asked what course of study they followed while attending high school, 32 respondents, or 59 percent, stated general; 11, or 24 percent, stated vocational; 9, or 17 percent, stated college preparatory; and 2, or 4 percent, gave no answer.

Former students were asked to list the reasons that caused them to leave school. Several individuals checked more than one response. The responses are given in Table IV, page 23.

TABLE III  
CURRENT OCCUPATION OF FORMER STUDENTS

Occupation	Number	Percent
Housewives	24	44
Unemployed	8	15
Nurse's Aid	5	9
No Answer	4	7
Waitress	3	5
Hospital Orderly	1	2
Medical Assistant	1	2
Gas Station Attendant	1	2
Mine Worker	1	2
Paper Mill Worker	1	2
High School	1	2
College	1	2
T. V. Technician	1	2
Hair Dresser	1	2
Maintenance Man	1	2

TABLE IV  
REASONS THAT CAUSED FORMER STUDENTS  
TO LEAVE SCHOOL

Reason	Number	Percent
Was not interested in school work	18	33
Disliked a certain teacher	11	24
No answer	9	17
Was failing and didn't want to repeat same grade	8	15
Preferred to go to work	7	13
Could not learn and became discouraged	6	11
Ill health	5	9
Wanted to earn spending money	5	9
Needed to earn money to help at home	4	7
Parents wanted me to leave	4	7
Could learn more out of school than in school	3	5
My friend or friends left school	2	4

Former students were asked who they contacted prior to leaving school. Table V, on the following page, shows that over half of the people talked it over with their parents.



TABLE V  
INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED BY FORMER STUDENTS  
PRIOR TO LEAVING SCHOOL

Person	Number	Percent
Parents	30	56
Teachers	5	9
Others	9	17
No one	10	18

The former students were asked the reasons that would have encouraged them to stay in school; it appears that they would have preferred to work part time and attend school part time. Then came more personal assistance from teachers. Table VI, on the following page, gives the information and rank in order of being answered.

Former students were asked whether or not they would have stayed in school if the school had offered a larger number of vocational courses. Thirty-two of the respondents, or 59 percent, stated they would have stayed in school; eighteen, or 33 percent, stated they would not have stayed in school; and five, or 9 percent, gave no reply.

Former students were asked if they obtained employment immediately upon leaving school. Thirty three of the respondents, or 61 percent, stated they did not obtain employment immediately upon

leaving school; four, or 7 percent, gave no answer; and two, or 4 percent, stated that they joined the army.

TABLE VI

REASONS THAT WOULD HAVE ENCOURAGED STUDENTS  
TO STAY IN SCHOOL

Reason	Number	Percent
An opportunity of working part time and going to school part time	17	32
More personal assistance from teachers	12	22
No answer	8	15
The service of guidance counselor	7	13
Chance to participate in school activities	3	5
Other reasons	7	13

Former students were asked how they found employment.

Thirty three of the respondents, or 61 percent, gave no answer; seventeen, or 32 percent, stated they found employment by shopping around; and four, or 7 percent, stated they found employment through a friend.

The former students were also asked if their high school courses prepared them for a job. Thirty eight of the individuals, or 74 percent,

stated that the high school did not prepare them for a job; twelve, or 22 percent, gave no answer; and four, or 7 percent, stated that the high school courses prepared them for a job.

When asked if they are presently interested in an opportunity for further training or education, 30 of the respondents, or 56 percent, stated they were interested in further training and education. 19 of the individuals, or 35 percent, stated they were not interested in further training or education; four, or 7 percent, stated that possibly they would be interested in further training or education.

The following questions were asked of former students about the program currently in effect in the high school they attended.

Their opinions were asked on whether or not the local school now provides an adequate opportunity to learn a trade or vocation. Thirty three of the respondents, or 61 percent, stated that the school did not provide an adequate opportunity for learning a trade; fifteen, or 28 percent, stated that the local school did provide an adequate opportunity for learning a trade or vocation; four, or 7 percent, gave no opinion; and two, or 4 percent, did not respond.

Former students were asked their opinion on whether the school should currently provide instruction in vocational education. 47 former students, or 87 percent, stated that the school should provide instruction in vocational education; three, or 5 percent, stated that the

school should not provide instruction in vocational education; and four, or 7 percent, gave no answer.

The former students were asked if they would be willing to fund a vocational program. Twenty seven of the individuals, or 50 percent, stated they would not be willing to fund a vocational program; twenty two, or 41 percent, stated they would be willing to fund a vocational education program; and five, or 9 percent, gave no answer.

Former students were asked their opinion on whether guidance counselors should provide information on vocational education courses. 47 of the respondents, or 87 percent, stated that guidance counselors should provide information about vocational courses; five, or 9 percent, stated that guidance counselors should not provide information on vocational courses; and two, or 4 percent, gave no answer.

The survey also asked what kinds of vocational courses should be offered in the high school and to list all courses the respondents felt would be helpful to students who would participate in a vocational education program. Table VII, on the following page, summarizes the findings of the types of vocational courses that should be offered in the local high school.

Twenty three of the individuals, or 43 percent, stated they would possibly take advantage of the training if vocational-technical programs were currently available to them at the high school. Seventeen

TABLE VII

VOCATIONAL COURSES THAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE  
LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL

Vocational Course	Number	Percent
Automotive repair	40	75
Appliance repair	32	59
Welding	32	59
Building trades	30	56
Nursing	30	56
Banking	29	54
Accounting/Bookkeeping	28	52
Business machines	28	52
Drafting	28	52
Surveying	26	48
Data processing	24	44
Agriculture	24	44
Retail-selling and salesmanship	22	41
Food service	19	35
Domestic service	18	33
Electrical work	2	4
Printmaking	1	2

of the respondents , or 32 percent , stated that they would take advantage of the training if programs were available in the local high school; fourteen , or 26 percent , stated they would not take advantage of the training .

Former students were asked their opinion on what action should be taken to provide additional buildings and equipment that might be needed to provide better programs . Twenty three of the respondents , or 43 percent , stated that all school districts in the area should cooperatively develop and expand vocational-technical programs supported by a tax levy on the entire area . Seventeen of the individuals , or 32 percent , stated that they did not know what action should be taken; four , or 7 percent , gave no response .

The former students were asked what type of school they attended , if any , following high school . Table VIII , on page 30 , summarizes that information and lists the results .

TABLE VIII  
TYPE OF SCHOOL ATTENDED FOLLOWING  
HIGH SCHOOL

School	Number	Percent
A community college	12	22
A trade or vocational school	7	13
A four-year college	-	-
Correspondence course	2	4
Adult education	2	4
None	12	22
No answer	19	35

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to determine if vocational education programs would decrease the drop-out rate of high school students in a selected high school in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. A questionnaire/opinionnaire was sent to 77 former students who were classified as dropouts in the years 1961-1971. A return of 54 replies, or 70 percent, were received.

Results of the survey showed that 36 of the respondents, or 67 percent, were females; 18, or 33 percent, were males.

Twenty four of the people, or 44 percent, are currently housewives, which ranked first. Twenty of the individuals, or 37 percent, of the former students were employed and working either full time or part time in some type of occupation.

Houghton county was the residence of 70 percent of the former students, and 8 percent were located in Wisconsin. Other locations included Indiana, Minnesota, and New Jersey.

The respondents were enrolled in school from one to four years prior to dropping out. Twenty seven of the individuals, or 50 percent, stayed in school for three years; 12, or 22 percent, two years; 10, or



18 percent, 4 years; one, or 2 percent, one year; and two, or 4 percent, gave no answer.

The curricula students followed while in high school were as follows: 32 of the individuals or 59 percent, stated general; 11, or 24 percent, stated vocational; 9, or 17 percent, stated college preparatory; and one, or 2 percent, gave no answer.

Fifty six percent of the former students said they talked it over with their parents before they left school. Seventeen percent said they talked with someone about leaving school. Nine percent talked it over with a teacher, and 18 percent did not talk to anyone.

Thirty two percent of the respondents said they would have stayed in school if they had had an opportunity of working part time and going to school part time. Twenty two percent said that they would have stayed in school if more personal assistance from teachers had been provided.

Vocational education would have decreased the number of dropouts. Fifty nine percent of the people said they would have stayed in school if vocational courses were offered, and thirty three percent said they would not have stayed in school.

Employment was difficult for the dropout to find. Sixty-one percent said that they did not obtain employment immediately upon leaving school. Thirty two percent of the former students said that

they found employment by shopping around for jobs, while sixty-one percent gave no answer.

Seventy four percent of the respondents said that their high school courses had not prepared them for a job. Seven percent said that their high school courses had prepared them for a job.

Fifty six percent of the respondents said they are interested in further training and education. Thirty five percent said they are not interested in further training and education.

Sixty-one percent said that the high school did not provide an adequate opportunity for learning a trade or vocation. Twenty eight percent said that the high school did provide an adequate opportunity for learning a trade or vocation. Eighty seven percent said that the school should provide instruction in vocational education.

Forty three percent of the individuals said that they would possibly take advantage of a vocational program if it were available to them at the high school. Thirty two percent said they would take advantage of the training if vocational programs were available in the local high school.

Twenty two percent said they attended a community college following high school. Thirteen percent said they attended a trade or vocational school following high school. Two replied that they attended adult education courses, and two replied they took correspondence courses.

### Conclusions

The results of this study show that former students are interested in vocational education programs and that a large number of former students would take advantage of vocational courses if they were provided in the local high school. Almost half of the former students said they would have preferred to work part time and attend school part time.

Findings also indicate that over three-fourths of the former students are residing in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and more specifically in Houghton county, the county in which the high school is located.

Over half of the former students said they would have stayed in school if vocational courses had been offered in the high school. The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is providing more and more vocational education programs, but it is a slow process because funding is the major problem.

The types of vocational courses that should be offered in the high school according to this study included: welding, building trades, nursing, banking, accounting/bookkeeping, business machines, drafting, and data processing.

The findings of this study indicate that vocational programs should be provided in the high school to offer students a choice of occupations and to help decrease the dropout rate.

### Recommendations

To help decrease the dropout rate every possible means should be looked into for establishing vocational education programs in the selected high school.

Because of the findings, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Follow-up studies should be conducted in other high schools and compared with the findings of this study to see if former students agree on the status of vocational programs.
2. Additional information on occupational trends should be compiled, and vocational courses should be built around the needs of the students in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.
3. The students should be made aware of vocational education and job orientation as an incentive for the students to remain in school.

APPENDIX A

Gary A. Bourdeau  
821 Summit St. , Apt. #12  
Marquette, MI 49855

A STUDY TO DETERMINE IF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS  
WOULD DECREASE THE DROP-OUT RATE OF HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENTS IN A SELECTED HIGH SCHOOL IN THE  
UPPER PENINSULA OF MICHIGAN

A special study is being conducted in your home county to determine why high school students decide to leave high school before graduation. You can help. Your answers will enable the high school to determine what action, if any, will help keep students in school until they graduate. Please answer the questionnaire today and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. PLEASE DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME.

1. How many years did you attend high school? (check one)
  - One year
  - Two years
  - Three years
  - Four years
  
2. What course of study did you follow while in high school?
  - College preparatory
  - Vocational (Business, Industrial Arts, etc.)
  - General
  
3. What reasons caused you to leave school? (check all that apply)
  - Preferred to go to work
  - Disliked a certain teacher
  - Could not learn and became discouraged
  - Ill health

- Could learn more out of school than in school
  - My friend or friends left school
  - Wanted to earn spending money
  - Needed to earn money to help at home
  - Was not interested in school work
  - Parents wanted me to leave school
  - Was failing and didn't want to repeat the same grade
4. When you decided to leave school who did you talk it over with?
- Teacher
  - Counselor
  - Parents
  - Other, please list . . . . .
5. Check the reasons that would have encouraged you to remain in school.
- More personal assistance from my teachers
  - Chance to participate in school activities
  - An opportunity of working part time and going to school part time
  - The services of a guidance counselor
  - Other, please list . . . . .
6. Do you think that by the school offering a larger number of vocational courses you would have stayed in school?
- Yes
  - No

7. Did you obtain employment immediately upon leaving school?

Yes

No

If yes, how did you find employment?

Through a friend

Through the school

By shopping around

8. Did your high school courses prepare you for your job?

Yes

No

9. Are you presently interested in an opportunity for further training or education?

Yes

No

The following questions pertain to the program currently in effect in the high school you attended.

10. In your opinion, does the local school now provide an adequate opportunity to learn a trade or vocation?

Yes

No

11. In your opinion, should the school now provide instruction in vocational education?

Yes

No



If yes, would you be willing to fund a vocational program?

Yes

No

12. In your opinion, should the guidance counselor provide information on vocational educational courses to see if students would be willing to participate in the program?

Yes

No

13. What kinds of vocational courses should be included in the local high school? (check all that apply)

Accounting/Bookkeeping

Banking

Appliance repair

Nursing

Automotive repair

Welding

Building trades

Drafting

Business machines

Agriculture

Data processing

Food service

Domestic service

Surveying

Retail-selling and  
salesmanship

Other (write in)

. . . . .

14. If vocational-technical programs were currently available to you at your high school, would you take advantage of the training?

Yes

No

Possibly

15. To provide increased numbers of vocational programs , additional buildings and equipment may be needed. Indicate the action which in your opinion would be best.

( ) Each school district should establish additional courses and expand existing facilities in accordance with their ability to support such additional programs.

( ) All school districts in the area should cooperatively develop an expanded vocational-technical program supported by a tax levy on the entire area.

( ) I do not know

( ) Other action (write in)

. . . . .

16. If you attended a school following high school , which one of the following did you attend?

( ) A trade or vocational school

( ) A community college

( ) A four-year college

( ) Other, please list . . . . .

17. What is your present occupation?

. . . . .

Your cooperation in completing this survey is greatly appreciated. It will be used to give guidance to administrators of high schools in providing necessary courses and to educate the public of the need for more adequate high school programs where necessary.

Gary A. Bourdeau  
Marquette, MI 49855  
October 11, 1972

Dear Former Student:

An area of interest to me is the need for vocational education courses. I am undertaking a study to determine an interest in vocational education in a selected high school of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The purpose of this study is to see if high school students would complete their education if vocational education courses were a part of the high school curriculum.

A brief definition may explain what vocational education is:

Vocational education is a program of study where a student is learning a skill in an area of interest that will help him to obtain employment when he completes his high school program. This program runs concurrently with a regular high school program.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope. Your prompt reply will be very much appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Gary A. Bourdeau

GB:nac

Enclosures

821 Summit St., Apt. #12  
Marquette, MI 49855  
October 11, 1972

Dear Former Student:

Two weeks ago a questionnaire concerning the need for vocational education in the high school was sent to 90 former students in all areas of the country.

To make this study representative of former students, it is important that you be included in the survey. Therefore, I am asking you to complete the questionnaire and return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

Best regards,

Gary A. Bourdeau

GB:nac

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## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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