

National Career Development Month:

A CELEBRATION OF WORK

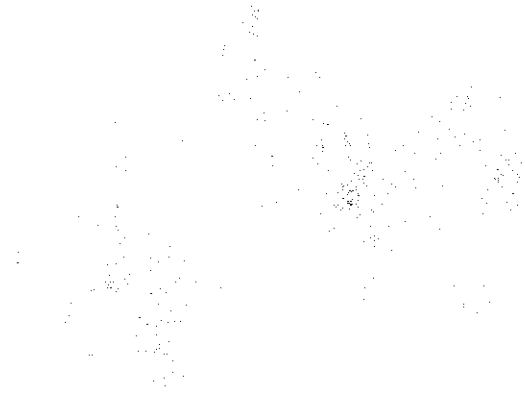
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CHAPTER IV:

CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH TWELFTH GRADE

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Purpose

The focus of career development in kindergarten through twelfth grade is career education. In addition to mastering basic competencies, young people must be taught to value themselves. Our increasingly multi-racial/ethnic population requires that the students be taught to understand, cooperate and be productive in diverse work settings. They must be taught to identify and develop their occupational skills and be prepared to employ strategies for adapting to frequent occupational changes.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: first, it presents a view of the important role career education plays in preparing American youth for the work force of tomorrow. Next, it offers the infusion method as a time-efficient and cost-effective career education delivery system. Finally, it provides a plan for organizing National Career Development Month (NCDM) activities on a classroom, school or district level. The exhibits following this chapter contains suggested activities and information appropriate for grades K-12.

Career Education

Career education has developed dramatically over the years. Originally focusing on occupational information, career education today teaches youth:

- to celebrate their own unique qualities,
- to appreciate the contributions of others,
- to understand the importance of "community," and
- to value the dignity that comes from work.

Furthermore, the delivery of career education is no longer the sole responsibility of the guidance counselor. The entire school is involved, and in particular the classroom teacher plays the major role. A review of the State Department of Education definition reflects this position. The definition adopted by the Commonwealth of Virginia is characteristic. In part it states:

"Career education is the totality of experiences infused into the elementary and secondary curricula through which individuals learn about work as a part of their

way of life, and through which they relate work values to other life roles and choices. It is a process which provides people with knowledge about themselves and about the world of work to assist them to make well-informed career decisions. Career education is differentiated from vocational education, which trains persons to perform tasks associated with particular occupations. It is also differentiated from general education, which provides persons with the basic skills necessary to function in the total life of society."

This view of career education means that it is an integral part of a school's daily operation throughout the year. It is an important concept to remember when developing the scope and sequence of NCDM activities.

Career education and regular education are not only compatible but actually enhance one another. The development of children intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically is one of the primary tasks of general education. Career education offers a vehicle that fosters student understanding. Career education demonstrates the relationship between school, home, work, community and the student's own personal needs. Because of its close initial association with trade and vocational schools, the term career education was, and is often today, mistakenly used in place of vocational education.

Career education is for all students. It gives them the foundation necessary for career development as a lifelong process. In the classroom career education promotes an atmosphere where students understand their individual value because of their own unique characteristics. In addition, it clearly demonstrates to the student that the variety of talent held by other students in the classroom complement his/her own strengths and are important for their own personal well-being. A respect and appreciation for diversity in others is fostered along with a "team" approach to problem solving.

Basic skills become relevant and student learning is enhanced as occupational and daily living applications are explored. It is important that the classroom teacher understand the contribution that career education can make in student learning. Offering the classroom teacher a strategy for weaving career education competencies into the curriculum is essential. NCDM is a good place to start.

Infusion

A Cost-Effective and Time-Efficient Classroom Career Education Delivery System

With infusion the school's regular curriculum remains the same. What occurs is integration of career education and academic/vocational education goals. Infusion may be defined as a process that blends or integrates career education and existing subject area curriculum competencies. It focuses on both the cognitive and affective domains, and allies the formal educational process more closely with everyday life situations. It uses students' interests in academic subject matter to stimulate their awareness of their own personal development and life roles.

Infusion takes the student into the community and brings community resources into the classroom. Activities can range from a discussion focused on how to relate academic information to situations outside the classroom, to more complex tasks such as role playing, field trips, group interactions, and simulations. The key, however, is directly relating what is learned to the life experiences of the student.

The following seven competencies, adapted from the BICEP (Barnstable Public School System, Hyannis, MA) career education materials, represent the values and skills that make up many career education infusion models.

1. *Self-Concept*: Students will become aware of their own aptitudes, abilities, interests and values and will relate these understandings to possible career life skills.
2. *Decision Making*: Students will acquire the ability to make rational decisions based on an analysis of alternative solutions and a course of action, and transfer this process to career and life skills.
3. *Value and Dignity of Work*: Students will develop an appreciation of and positive attitudes toward self and work and their relationship to career and life skills.
4. *Interpersonal, Multicultural Skills*: Students will understand how to communicate positive thoughts and actions to achieve caring and cooperative relationships through a respect for differences, uninhibited by barriers of prejudice, racism and discrimination.
5. *Occupational Information*: Students will acquire knowledge of work and jobs in a technological society and seek to pursue occupational choices free of bias or stereotypic limitations.
6. *Economic Awareness*: Students will become aware of economic processes and how they relate to personal and societal needs, decisions and actions.
7. *Employability Skills*: Students will develop work habits, attitudes and behaviors that are necessary for success in any work role.

The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee has published *National Guidelines* that discuss elementary, middle/junior high, and high school career development competencies (NOICC, 1989).

National Career Development Month

NCDM provides an opportunity for all teachers and career development specialists to increase the awareness of the public schools, colleges, business, industry and government of the importance of career education and its role in laying the foundation for career development through the lifespan. Special NCDM events or activities focusing on career education are necessary for contributing to greater understanding. However, career education can not be isolated in time. NCDM must be a part of a comprehensive, curriculum-infused, career education program. Planning at the school level is the key to a successful NCDM. A lead person with a team can organize a high impact set of activities. Depending on the organization of career education in your district, responsibility for career month activities may be delegated to a specific individual. Or it may become the project of a classroom teacher, counselor, parent organization or, better yet, a combination of interested advocates. Nevertheless, whether planning on the district, school or even classroom level, a team approach is critical. Individuals representing as many of the following groups as possible must be included on your NCDM committee to ensure success: 1) school administration, 2) classroom teachers, 3) guidance counselors, 4) parents, 5) students, 6) local business, 7) government and 8) community representatives.

Each of these groups represents key components of any effective career education program. With an eye to the future, forming this team will not only contribute to an effective NCDM, but will establish a group of career education advocates for your program throughout the school year.

Organizing a School Program

In most school systems, classes resume around the first week in September, many after Labor Day. Most teachers and school staff are not available during the summer months. Traditionally, the first two weeks of school are filled with organizational concerns and "getting school going," yet NCDM occurs in November! Consequently, it is important that as soon as possible after school starts the "count down" for NCDM begin.

Those districts and schools that have standing career education advisory committees will be poised to move. Where there is no such group, the first step will be forming the NCDM committee and holding the initial meeting.

At that kick-off session, present the NCDM theme and lead the group to define it in terms of local concerns. It may be helpful to offer some structure to the first meeting by distributing a handout listing possible NCDM activities from the list provided in Exhibit IV(A) or others that better fit your local situation. You may want to be the "chair" or you may want to consider encouraging a member of the committee to act as "chair." Having another person fill the role of "chair" often spreads the feeling of "ownership" to both that individual and the other members of the group. Your role would be career education expert offering technical advice and leadership.

Another technique that is often helpful when planning future events is "backward planning." Begin with the date of an event and then work back in time. Identify the sequence of events and actions that must be taken by specific dates to reach the goal. In general, those same skills that you use every day in teaching or in counseling will serve you well in working with the NCDM committee.

Each community and each school within a community are different. No one NCDM scenario can meet the needs of every school. The list of suggested activities (Exhibit IV(A)) are offered as possibilities or starting points. The planning committee must keep career education's goal of helping students become contributing members of a changing society clearly in view. As your team of school administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, business, government and community leaders share their needs and concerns, mutual understanding and strategies for cooperation and support will surface. Ways of executing these suggested activities and/or other activities based on the unique characteristics of your school and community will emerge. Hopefully National Career Development Month will become the catalyst for the infusion of career education into the curriculum in all K-12 classrooms throughout the school year.

References and Further Readings

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Exhibit IV(A)

Suggested Career Development Month Activities

- Participate in the National Career Development Month poetry and poster contest.
- Send announcements on NCDM to local newspapers, radio and television stations.
- Ask to be interviewed on radio and television news shows and discussion programs.
- Hold a city-wide open house, career fair or career day for the public.
- Give talks to such community organizations as PTAs, service clubs, Chambers of Commerce, religious groups, and others.
- Have a career booth at shopping malls or other public places.
- Arrange career talks to classes and assemblies at the elementary, middle and high schools.
- Make career videos and other media shows available.
- Ask the librarians to set up a career book display table.
- Conduct a job club for high school seniors.
- Prepare bulletin board displays.
- Arrange field trips to workplaces.
- Ask department stores to provide a program on career dressing.
- Conduct free public career workshops on such topics as: resume preparation, how parents can help their children in career planning and how to select a college.

Exhibit IV(B)

National Career Development Guidelines

Elementary	Middle/Junior High School	High School	Adult
<i>Self-Knowledge</i>			
Knowledge of the importance of self-concept.	Knowledge of the influence of a positive self-concept	Understanding the influence of a positive self-concept.	Skills to maintain a positive self-concept.
Skills to interact with others.	Skills to interact with others.	Skills to interact positively with others.	Skills to maintain effective behaviors.
Awareness of the importance of growth and change.	Knowledge of the importance of growth and change.	Understanding the impact of growth and development.	Understanding developmental changes and transitions.
<i>Educational and Occupational Exploration</i>			
Awareness of the benefits of educational achievement.	Knowledge of the benefits of educational achievement to career opportunities.	Understanding the relationship between educational achievement and career planning.	Skills to enter and participate in education and training.
Awareness of the relationship between work and learning.	Understanding the relationship between work and learning.	Understanding the need for positive attitudes toward work & learning.	Skills to participate in lifelong learning.
Skills to understand and use career information.	Skills to locate, understand and use career information.	Skills to locate, evaluate and interpret career information.	Skills to locate, evaluate and interpret career information.
Awareness of the importance of personal responsibility & good work habits.	Knowledge of skills necessary to seek and obtain jobs.	Skills to prepare to seek, obtain, maintain and change jobs.	Skills to prepare to seek, obtain maintain & change jobs
Awareness of how work relates to the needs & functions of society.	Understanding how work relates to the needs and functions of the economy & society.	Understanding how societal needs & functions influence the nature and structure of work.	Understanding how the needs & function of society influence the nature & structure of work.
<i>Career Planning</i>			
Understanding how to make decisions.	Skills to make decisions.	Skills to make decisions.	Skills to make decisions.
Awareness of the interrelationship of life roles.	Knowledge of the interrelationship of life roles.	Understanding the interrelationship of life roles.	Understanding the impact of work on individual and family life.
Awareness of different occupations and changing male/female roles.	Knowledge of different occupations and changing male/female roles.	Understanding the continuous changes in male/female roles.	Understanding the continuous changes in male/female roles
Awareness of the career planning process.	Understanding the process of career planning.	Skills in career planning.	Skills to make career transitions.

NOICC. (1989). *The national career development guidelines*. Washington, D.C.: National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee.

Exhibit IV(C)

Stages of Career Development

Career Development Tasks of the Primary Years

1. Developing an awareness of self
2. Acquiring a sense of control over one's life
3. Identifying with workers
4. Acquiring knowledge about workers
5. Acquiring interpersonal skills
6. Learning to present oneself objectively
7. Acquiring respect for people and the work they do

Career Development Tasks of the Intermediate Years

1. Developing a positive self-concept
2. Acquiring the discipline of work
3. Identifying with the concept of work as a valued institution
4. Increasing knowledge about workers
5. Increasing interpersonal/multi-cultural skills
6. Increasing ability to present oneself objectively
7. Valuing human dignity

Career Development Tasks of the Junior High/Middle School Years

1. Clarifying the self-concept
2. Assuming responsibility for career planning
3. Formulating preliminary career goals
4. Acquiring knowledge of occupations, work settings and lifestyles
5. Acquiring knowledge of educational and vocational resources
6. Increased awareness of the decision-making process
7. Acquiring a sense of independence

Career Development Tasks of the Senior High Year

1. Reality testing of the self-concept
2. Becoming aware of preferred lifestyles
3. Reformulating preliminary career goals
4. Increasing knowledge of and experience in occupations and work settings
5. Acquiring knowledge of educational and vocational patterns
6. Clarifying the decision-making process as related to self
7. Making tentative commitments in a changing world