

# Canadian School Counselling Review

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# A New Name, a New Look, a New Mandate and a New Resource for Canadian School Counsellors

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*Jeff Chang and Kristy McConnell*

Welcome to the first issue of the *Canadian School Counselling Review*, the only peer-reviewed publication for school counsellors in Canada. We have a new name, a new look (to go along with the new name for our specialist council) and a new mandate. Before we share our vision for the future, we'd like to reflect on the past.

Our previous incarnation, the *Alberta Counsellor*, has served counsellors in Alberta—both ATA members and community counsellors—very well since 1972. I (JC) was able to locate online issues back as far as 1992. Some of the titles from that year include “Peer Programs: A Major Strategy for Fostering Resiliency in Kids” (Benard 1992), and “Counselling Needs of Gifted Children and Youth (Yewchuk and Jobagy 1992). About 10 years later, we find titles like “Identifying Children Who May Be at Risk of Severe and Persistent Mental Illness” (Cairns 2001), and “The Essential Elements of a Comprehensive School Suicide-Prevention Program” (Forgeron and Everall 2002). In this decade, we've seen articles like “Learning from Canada's First Inhabitants: A First Nations Interview and Implications for Counselling” (McConnell 2013), and “A Team Approach to School Counselling” (Walsh 2014). Articles from 10 or 20 years ago cover topics that would be of interest to school-based counsellors today. Clearly, the *Alberta Counsellor* had an important role in supporting the practice of school counselling practice over its 40-plus year history.

Reflecting on the past means thanking those who have made such large contributions over the years. The first person who comes to mind is Michael Lupart, the immediate previous editor. Michael selflessly edited the journal on his own for the last few years, receiving articles, reviewing them and putting them all together for the ATA editorial and document production team. Michael's coeditor until 2006 was Bryan Hiebert, whom many of you will recognize for his contributions to school counselling and career development, and his work as a professor at the University of Calgary. We would like to recognize Michael and Bryan's service.

By rough count, about half of the articles over the last five years have been contributed by faculty from Alberta's universities. I want to thank you—faculty from the Universities of Alberta, Calgary and Lethbridge and Athabasca University—for supporting the *Alberta Counsellor* over the years. Typically you have coauthored with students, giving them the opportunity to get their feet wet writing for publication. We hope we can count on your support in the form of continuing contributions to the *Canadian School Counselling Review*. I'd also like to thank the counsellors who have taken the time and effort to share their work with their colleagues, who have made the *Alberta Counsellor* a viable concern, and invite you to keep contributing to the *Canadian School Counselling Review*.

As the name suggests, the *Alberta Counsellor* has served Alberta readers, and in particular members of the Guidance Council, by publishing topical work by Alberta authors. We will ensure that the *Canadian School Counselling Review* continues to be accountable to the re-named Council of School Counsellors and, ultimately, to the ATA.

What do we see ahead? We believe the peer-reviewed incarnation will provide an even better resource for Alberta teachers and school counsellors as it attracts submissions from across Canada and the world. And it will give Alberta counsellors a chance to shine on a more visible national platform. Specifically, our vision is to develop a journal that is scholarly,

supportive and practical. We moved to a peer-reviewed format to provide scholarly legitimacy to the journal. We believe that authors, especially from outside of Alberta, will be more motivated to contribute to a peer-reviewed publication.

We also want to be supportive and therefore inviting. One of my colleagues, another journal editor, suggested, “School counsellors don’t write.” We don’t agree. We think that school counsellors need an arena that will support them to turn their fantastic ideas into articles. We want to encourage you to write up your innovative programs and interesting cases. The editorial team and reviewers are using a supportive approach to help authors make their offerings readable and thorough. We do not want authors to experience being “ripped apart” by reviewers. As an editorial team, we are happy to consult about how to transform your idea into a publishable article before you start to write.

Furthermore, we will strive to make this journal practical. We will have at least one school counsellor review most articles. The test of whether we have done our job or not will be whether or not you find the journal to be a useful source of ideas, find new possibilities for strategies or programs to implement in your school or benefit from a review of the literature that helps shape your practice.

Here’s the part where we ask for something—we need your contributions. Counsellors, if you have an innovative program to showcase, an interesting case study or literature review that can help school counsellors in their day-to-day work, we would love to see it. If you’d like to chat about what it would take to get an article in print, contact us at schoolcounsellingreview@gmail.com. Faculty, keep doing what you are doing as you submit manuscripts and support your students with their writing. Also, if you have any ideas for a themed section or issue—a burning issue school counsellors need to hear about—we would be thrilled to discuss that. Also, if you would like to be a reviewer, we would appreciate your contribution. This entails anonymously reading an article from a warm critical perspective and giving suggestions for improvement.

Finally, as we launch this new endeavour, we would like to thank the entire executive of the Council of School Counsellors, especially past president Mary Frances Fitzgerald and president Jennifer McIntee-Leinweber, for their support and patience. Also we send big thanks to Sandra Bit and the ATA editorial and document production staff. Everyone there has been a joy to work with.

Welcome to the first issue of the *Canadian School Counselling Review*. We welcome your feedback.

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# A Research Review of Career Education and Engagement with K–12 Students

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*Annelise M J Lyseng, Kerry B Bernes, Thelma M Gunn  
and Stanley A Ross*

## Abstract

Students who participate in career education are more likely to connect their classroom learning to the real world (Harkins 2001; Orthner et al 2013). Unfortunately, not all students are regularly exposed to career education, and students do not always perceive that current methods of delivering career education are helpful (Bardick et al 2004; Witko et al 2006). Extant literature surrounding the integration of career education into elementary, junior high and senior high classrooms, and student engagement, is reviewed to support the contention that career education should be an integral part of every student's academic career.

Career education is a process that serves to educate students about their viable career options and teach them the skills required to shape their lifelong career development (Super 1975). In this article, extant research in career education will be reviewed to describe characteristics of career education at the elementary, junior high and senior high levels, respectively. The literature shifts from describing specific career education techniques at the elementary school level (Beale 2000, 2003; Gillies, McMahon and Carroll 1998; Harkins 2000, 2001; Proctor 2005; Welde et al 2016) to describing students' perceived career education needs in junior high (Bardick et al 2004; Gibbons et al 2006; Welde et al 2015b) and senior high school (Bloxom et al 2008; Kosine and Lewis 2008; Truong 2011; Welde et al 2015a). Therefore, this article's focus on junior and senior high career education differs slightly from its presentation of elementary career education. This article will then conclude with a discussion of school engagement and its relationship to career education.

## Career Education Research

This section presents selected research regarding the implementation of career education. Career education at the elementary, junior high and senior high school level is described.

## Elementary School

Several authors (Harkins 2001; Herr and Cramer 1996; Palladino Schultheiss 2008) have outlined desired outcomes for career education in elementary school. These goals involve

- developing students' self-awareness;
- encouraging students to form positive attitudes and habits, and develop competencies;
- enabling students to link classroom learning with real-world applications;
- delivering developmentally appropriate career-related knowledge;
- discouraging students from prematurely foreclosing future career options; and
- helping students to develop a sense of relatedness to others, the ability to empathize and a coherent set of values.

Proctor (2005) outlined a career education intervention, implemented in an Australian elementary school, which incorporated career-infused course content and two career and learning oriented conferences. Teachers from each grade level met and devised strategies to connect their teaching methods with overarching career education themes of personal development, learning skills and strategies, and building awareness of the world of work. Overall, the infusion of career-related learning and the two career-related conferences were received extremely well by students, parents and teaching staff.

Harkins (2001) recommended using literature to promote elementary students' career education. Literature enlivens students' learning about the world of work, as students are more likely to attend to a story than a dry textbook, and stories add relevance and foster discussion. Harkins concluded that "literature provides context and is a logical source for additional information on almost any subject ... it can also be an important first step in creating a life plan" (p 32). Using literature in career

education with children is beneficial in many ways, and it is often easily integrated into subject areas such as language arts and social studies.

Career education can occur during conferences and novel studies, but career-related field trips and excursions are also helpful. Beale (2000) described a hospital visit for elementary students. The field trip introduces students to local sites of employment, demonstrates the necessity of work and the requirement that employees work together, and helps alleviate the anxiety that students associate with hospitalization experiences. Two classes of Grade 5 students who participated in planned hospital visits reported that they enjoyed and learned from their experiences. By linking features of the hospital visit to children's classroom experiences, teachers increase the relevance of what students are learning in school.

It is not always possible to plan career-related field trips; however, there are other creative ways of bringing career-related situations to the school. Beale (2003) described an activity wherein elementary students are introduced to the concept of running a restaurant and the need for employees to work together as a team. In this activity, the teacher acts as a restaurant owner and enlists student actors to help run the restaurant. This activity was implemented in several Grades 3 and 4 classes and was well received by both students and teachers. In this case, drama was used as a tool to heighten student engagement and enjoyment during career education and to help them relate school to the world of work.

Although devoting conferences, field trips and drama presentations to career education is useful, it is possible to integrate career education using simpler methods. Harkins (2000) asserted that career education in elementary school can be achieved through such simple strategies as adding work-related clothing and tools to a classroom's play centre then discussing various occupations and their relationship to students' lives. Until students gain concrete knowledge about the world of work, the concept of having a job remains abstract. Students must ultimately connect their school learning with workplace reality and learn that academic courses are related to real-world problems. Since education aims to prepare students for the future, children must start developing work-readiness skills at an early age (Harkins 2000).

Children who participate in career education gain greater self-knowledge and a better understanding of how their school-based learning relates to various jobs (Gillies, McMahon and Carroll 1998). Gillies, McMahon and Carroll evaluated the effectiveness of a program that provided Grade 6 children with an understanding of themselves, the world of work and how they could apply school knowledge to the world of work. Compared to peers who did not participate, students in the program showed greater awareness of career options, factors that

could influence career choice and how school learning relates to potential jobs. Gillies, McMahon and Carroll suggested that even brief career programs are advantageous for students, and career education does not have to be a daunting process for it to be effective. Instead, instructors can integrate career education where possible and thereby produce such positive student outcomes as increased self- and career awareness.

Welde et al (2016) examined 25 intern teacher reports and 555 elementary school student surveys regarding the integration of career planning into a variety of courses in Alberta. Intern teachers integrated career planning interventions into their teaching assignments and often incorporated career interventions into more than one subject area at a time. Based on these reports and surveys, Welde et al made several recommendations for integrated career education at the elementary level, elaborated below.

Teachers should incorporate career education into multiple subject areas to foster the development of self-awareness and career planning processes (Welde et al 2016). As many curricula overlap at this level, students may be engaged in career planning activities that span multiple courses. For example, teachers may design reading and writing assignments that require students to examine their personal interests and attributes in relation to a text. These assignments could span English language arts and health and life skills curricular outcomes. Alternatively, a social studies unit could involve studying a particular country, exploring career options available in that country and examining the music and literature representative of that country. This unit would thereby incorporate social studies, music and English language arts outcomes while advancing students' career awareness.

Career guidance should expose students to a broad spectrum of career options to enhance their awareness of potential careers, especially those that are outside of their own communities (Welde et al 2016). This exposure could be achieved in numerous ways, such as creating a career board with featured careers in the classroom, reading stories that involve unusual careers and tasking students with researching careers that are unavailable or uncommon in their local communities.

Wherever possible, engaging career interventions should be used to stimulate student interest (Welde et al 2016). For example, students could participate in career-relevant games (for example, Guess the Job, as students guess the title of a job based on a series of clues, or Career Bingo, as students play bingo with career titles or images of working professionals used on the bingo card), or guest speakers could be invited into the classroom to discuss their careers with students. Ideally, students would complete a variety of career education interventions and some

of these interventions would be unusual and exciting like those described here.

Career education interventions must be tailored to students' developmental abilities (Welde et al 2016). For example, such art-based exercises as create a collage "All About Me" or draw and colour a paper cut-out of a gingerbread person to represent a career of interest could be implemented with students in early elementary grades. In contrast, more challenging tasks such as career research assignments and advanced journal writing in response to career-related prompts could be used with older elementary school students.

## Junior High School

Herr and Cramer (1996) asserted that career guidance in junior high should

- take into account the transitional nature of junior high and the necessity of student exploration and planning;
- emphasize the consequences of curricular and course choices made in junior high so that students do not prematurely limit their options; and
- provide timely, relevant and accurate information to students so that they can explore and develop informed educational and/or occupational goals.

Bardick et al (2004) used the Comprehensive Career Needs Survey (CCNS) to assess the career counselling needs of 3,562 southern Alberta junior high students. Students stated that they found career planning relevant, and if it was not important at the time of the survey, they thought it would become important in the future. Students reported that they would like help with career decision making, accessing relevant information and support, and selecting appropriate courses. Based on these findings, Bardick et al recognized that junior high students are thinking about their futures. Introducing career planning to students at this level is beneficial because it increases students' perceptions of the relevance of career decision making and encourages them to explore potential career options rather than postponing this important process for the future.

Gibbons et al (2006) surveyed 222 Grade 9 students in North Carolina to examine their current educational and career plans, the resources they were accessing for their planning, and the information and resources that they wanted. Gibbons et al found that although the students in their sample had stated specific and stable career goals, they had not finished exploring potential careers and were open to further exploration. Consequently, students at this level require more accurate information about careers and college planning before they begin to eliminate potential career options based on inaccurate perceptions of the

financial commitments associated with postsecondary education (Gibbons et al). Rather than waiting until high school to impart students with specific career planning information, Gibbons et al advocated for concerted efforts from elementary school through high school to provide accurate information, support and encouragement to assist students in their career development.

Welde et al (2015b) analyzed 11 career education projects that intern teachers in Alberta integrated into their teaching assignments. Three hundred and nine junior high school students completed surveys to evaluate these projects. Based on this analysis, Welde et al recommended that career educators encourage students to expand their use of technology to career-related outcomes. For example, career education assignments could require students to research careers of interest, develop PowerPoint presentations to present to their peers or use online career quizzes to help recognize and refine their career interests. This exposure would help students identify career planning resources and websites, develop career planning processes and establish research practices that they could return to for additional information in the future.

It is also important to allow students to work together and discuss their ideas with their peers (Welde et al 2015b) as this enables students to trade ideas, clarify opinions, receive feedback from others and develop social skills. For example, class discussions could focus on career-related topics, and students could be invited to share their personal aspirations with their peers. Alternatively, students could watch brief, inspirational career-related videos on YouTube (for example, a celebrity's success after experiencing failure or motivational speeches) and then discuss their responses to these videos with their peers. In these situations, educators should encourage students to create and explore their own ideas to balance individualized career planning with social interaction.

## High School

Herr and Cramer (1996) described key concepts for career guidance in the senior high school context. At the senior high level, career guidance should

- acknowledge wide variation in students' career development and their needs for career guidance and counselling;
- assist students in planning their specific steps in education and work, and life role decisions, and assuming responsibility for their career decision making and its consequences; and
- include structured classes, group and individual counselling, computer-assisted programs, self-directed activities, integrated work and education, and job placement.



Career education can be difficult to accomplish in high school, because “even when the information is as relevant as that on occupations related to chemistry in a course on chemistry, it is still not the knowledge that college entrance exams cover nor is it the information that the chemistry teacher feels he should be expected to know” (Super 1975, 36). Super suggested that career education can be infused into subjects such as English and social studies with greater ease, as students may write about or examine literature that involves ways of life and work in various occupations and/or history involving key political, cultural, economic and social contexts. However, Hutchinson (2012) noted that, “while science educators are not career educators, they can recognize, support and integrate aspects of career-related learning in their delivery of the curriculum and enhancement of enrichment activities” (p 96). Hutchinson implied that, with the right training, science educators can discuss career-related learning and information with their students. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that, while integrating career education into content-heavy senior high courses can be daunting, it can be accomplished if teachers are adequately trained and prepared to do so.

Witko et al (2006) examined the CCNS results of 1,088 senior high students in southern Alberta. The majority of students in this sample indicated that they were considering more than one career option or had a specific plan for their post high school pursuits, and most respondents expressed confidence that they would reach their future career goals. However, Witko et al found that mature students may delay career-related decision making, and therefore they require assistance with career planning earlier in their educational paths. Earlier career education would be useful in helping students to carefully navigate the career planning process rather than waiting to make career-related decisions toward the conclusion of high school.

Bloxom et al (2008) used the CCNS to examine 888 southern Albertan Grade 12 students’ career needs and their perceptions of the effectiveness of high school career development services. Bloxom et al reported that Grade 12 students generally have established career plans; however, the resources they currently access are not perceived as effective. In particular, an isolated high school course devoted to career and life management (CALM) was not perceived as helpful to students’ career planning. Instead, students would appreciate access to more career development resources to help them pursue their passions, understand their interests and abilities, and acquire more information about postsecondary education.

Welde et al (2015a) examined 10 career education projects implemented by intern teachers at the senior high school level and 170 corresponding student evaluation surveys. Students rated career education interventions that

balanced self-exploration with career research and planning (for example, creating budgets based on anticipated earning and expenses, creating career portfolios, researching careers of interest) to be the most helpful. When asked how future projects could be improved, students and intern teachers recommended that future career education projects involve more opportunities for career research. This could involve research exercises that encourage students to identify career options that connect to a particular course subject; alternatively, students could simply explore careers that fit with their personal interests and goals and then present their findings through written or oral presentations. Welde et al also emphasized the importance of tailoring career education interventions to match course content and student interest. To assist with this tailoring, teachers could poll students before the unit and midway through the unit to identify career planning needs and students’ areas of interest. This formative assessment could then inform future career education interventions.

Truong (2011) analyzed two counsellor interviews and 35 student questionnaires regarding career education at an Ontario high school. The students reported a degree of certainty with their postsecondary plans and indicated that experiential learning had been beneficial to their career planning. Truong argued that the integration of career education into routine teaching helps students connect academics with career planning. Truong favoured curricular integration in career education because

- the inclusion of a career planning component in each subject, linking a particular occupation linked to the subject area connects the subject to career planning;
- the integration of career planning into subject courses helps students to examine academic and career pathways, transition from high school and receive individualized attention;
- the integration of career education across subjects forces students to consider their career goals with greater depth and earlier than they otherwise may have; and
- cross-curricular career education reduces the pressure placed on limited counselling resources and empowers students to be independent in their preparation for the transition from high school to the workforce of post-secondary education.

Based on Truong’s position, it appears that the integration of career education across subjects can have an abundance of positive outcomes for high school students.

## Career Education and Student Engagement

This section presents research connections between career education and students’ level of engagement.

Student engagement is described and then linked to career education research.

## Student Engagement

Trowler (2010, 3) wrote that student engagement is “concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students.” By this definition, student engagement is explicitly linked to the quality of the student’s learning experiences and outcomes. Similarly, Alberta Education (nd) asserts that students’ experience of engagement is closely linked to student learning, and student engagement takes place when “students make a psychological investment in learning, ... are involved in their work, persist despite challenges and obstacles, and take visible delight in accomplishing their work” (Alberta Education, nd, para 2). This statement suggests that student engagement is complex.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) described student engagement across behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions. If students were behaviourally engaged, they would adhere to behavioural norms, such as attendance and participation, and refrain from displays of disruptive or negative behaviour (Trowler 2010). Students would demonstrate emotional engagement if they experienced “affective reactions such as interest, enjoyment, or a sense of belonging” (p 5). Finally, cognitively engaged students would demonstrate investment in their learning, a desire to go above and beyond basic requirements and relish challenging opportunities.

Why is student engagement relevant to career education? Trowler (2010) related the work of Kuh (2009) to describe the benefits of student engagement as increased engagement corresponds with an increased likelihood that students of all educational and social backgrounds will be able to attain their educational and personal goals, gain the skills and competencies demanded by the challenges of modern society, and experience intellectual and monetary advantages to attaining an education. For these reasons, student engagement is an important factor to consider within the context of career education, because increased student engagement has the potential to inform and direct the course of a student’s career path.

## Linking Career Education to Student Engagement

To engage students, learning tasks should generally

- require and encourage profound, critical thinking;
- immerse the student in intellectual inquiry;

- be relevant and authentic for students;
- compel students to meaningfully interact and participate; and
- possess intellectual rigour (Alberta Education nd; Dunleavy and Milton 2009).

By this line of reasoning, career education activities may foster student engagement if students are encouraged to

- critically reflect on their experiences, abilities and personal attributes;
- conduct research to explore potential career options;
- make meaningful connections between school and the world of work;
- interact with peers and participate in career-related activities; and
- participate in activities that are carefully designed to foster self- and career exploration.

Overall, career education may help students make connections between their learning and its future uses, which may then translate to greater engagement with school and a greater sense of connection to life.

Career education programs have been linked to improved student engagement (Kenny et al 2006; Orthner et al 2013; Sutherland, Levine and Barth 2005; Welde et al 2015a). Orthner et al (2013) examined the effect of three years of career-relevant education on levels of school engagement of American middle school students. A career education intervention, CareerStart (Orthner et al 2010), was introduced in 7 of 14 schools. This program allows teachers to highlight the relevance of learning required course content by infusing career examples into education. Orthner et al (2013) found that students in schools that had incorporated CareerStart reported valued school more highly than students in control schools, and students who reported greater career-relevant instruction scored higher on measures of school engagement. These findings support the need for career education at the junior high level, as students who participate in career education may be positioned to connect academic learning with real-life situations and therefore further engage with their education.

Kenny et al (2006) examined the relationship between career development and school engagement with a sample of 416 urban Grade 9 American students. Kenny et al found that elevated levels of career planfulness and expectations at the start of the school year were linked to increased levels of school engagement throughout the year. These results were noted with a sample of predominantly non-white, low-income students, who typically face inequities in career and educational success. Accordingly, the authors suggested that assisting students in career development at the junior high level may

facilitate enhanced school engagement. If students are engaged in their learning and see its relevance to their future careers, they are likely to be motivated to continue their education and thereby experience better career and life outcomes.

Sutherland, Levine and Barth (2005) assessed the impact of career education on student engagement with a Grade 5 and 6 sample of 33 Career Trek participants and 10 control students. Career Trek (Sutherland et al 2008), a program targeted toward inner-city Manitoban students with perceived barriers to postsecondary education, enabled participants to learn more about various career fields and associated academic requirements, forge new peer relationships, and increase their self-confidence and problem-solving skills. Career Trek participants reported themes of persistence, enhanced self-esteem and an increased ability to self-identify as students. Sutherland et al connected these findings to their associations with school retention and academic engagement in previous research (Evans and Burke 1992).

Despite the positive interview findings (Sutherland, Levine and Barth 2005), Career Trek students reported decreased perceptions of ability related to school tasks after participation. These results may echo a perceived disconnect between an out-of-school program and the students' typical educational context (Sutherland et al 2005). Therefore, it is critical to create career education programs that are directly integrated into classroom tasks. Integrated career education allows students to recognize the relevance of academic content to their future aspirations.

In their analysis of 10 integrated career education projects that had been delivered at the senior high school level in Alberta Welde et al (2015a) found that the majority of students involved in these projects reported that career education made them excited about what they could do with their lives. Furthermore, several teachers commented that students appeared to invest more effort into their work and increase their academic achievement through participation in career education. These findings suggest that career education can support students to become more emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively engaged in their studies.

Career education needs to occur throughout students' academic development. This would enable at-risk students to connect education with career options, meaningful employment and financial security (Sutherland, Levine and Barth 2005). Integrated career education may be used to enhance student engagement for all students, especially students who are disadvantaged by economic and/or social circumstances.

## Conclusion

Research at the elementary, junior high and senior high level recommends that career education be implemented early in students' academic careers to increase its effectiveness. A number of goals and practical recommendations for career education at each grade level have been outlined in this article. Career education has also been linked to student engagement, which underscores the importance of continuous career education throughout a student's academic career. If students can engage in ongoing career planning processes from a young age, then they may be better equipped to make ongoing career choices as they mature and prepare for the transition after graduation. In theory, integrating career education into mainstream education at all age levels will positively impact students; however, teachers may not feel adequately prepared to do this (Slomp, Gunn and Bernes 2014). Therefore, career education needs to be introduced into teacher training for subsequent career education to be effectively implemented in classrooms.

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# The Importance of Career Education in K–12 Classrooms: A Theoretical Review

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and Stanley A Ross*

## Abstract

Career is a complex, multifaceted description of the ongoing events and roles that constitute a person's life (Super 1976), and careers unfold across each person's lifespan as unique processes that are created through personal choice (Herr and Cramer 1996). Career education is used to help guide and shape students' career development through childhood, adolescence and adulthood, and there are a variety of theories that describe career development and its progression. This review examines career development theories through the lenses of developmental-, learning-, process- and systems-model perspectives. Overall, this review is designed to provide practical recommendations based on career development theory and support the argument that career education, a necessary part of students' development, should be made available to students of all ages and grade levels.

Career development, which comprises the behavioural processes and influencing factors that form a person's work-related values, occupational choice(s), decision-making style, sense of personal identity and educational literacy “proceeds—smoothly, jaggedly, positively, negatively—whether or not career guidance or career education exists; as such, career development is not an intervention but ‘the object of an intervention’” (Herr and Cramer 1996, 32). Career education facilitates students' smooth and positive lifelong career development. According to Super (1975), the aim of career education is twofold, as it should inform students about potential career options and equip students with a set of skills that will allow them to exert control over the gradual development of their careers. The aim of this article is to provide a theoretical rationale that career education across all grade levels is a valuable and meaningful endeavour.

## Career Education in Canada

Career education policies and approaches are not standardized between Canadian provinces and territories, which has resulted in a wide variation in career education programming across the country (Connelly, Blair and Ko 2013). In some provinces, students are required to complete a stand-alone career education course and engage in volunteer work or experiential learning to graduate and receive a high school diploma (ibid). Alternatively, other provinces leave career education policies and outcomes to the discretion of educators and school boards. Connelly, Blair and Ko (2013) reported that teachers typically offer career education, as counsellors may be unable to offer career guidance due to a lack of resources. Although this frees up valuable counselling resources, teachers may not have adequate training in this area to offer quality career education (Connelly, Blair and Ko 2013; Witko et al 2006). To mitigate the potential shortage of resources and expertise, recent research has advocated for career education training opportunities for teachers (Slomp, Bernes and Gunn 2012; Slomp, Gunn and Bernes 2014) to promote the integration of career education into mainstream academic coursework (Orthner et al 2013; Perry and Wallace 2012; Slomp, Bernes and Gunn 2012; Slomp, Gunn and Bernes 2014). This approach would make career education more accessible to students and encourage them to connect academic content with its real-world career applications. The delivery of integrated career education would be enhanced and informed through the review and application of the theories outlined within this article.

## Theories of Career Development

In this review, several prominent theories of career development will be described: developmental career theories, learning theories in career development, process

models of career development, and systems models and theories. Each category will be briefly examined to provide a context for the integration of career education in mainstream education.

## **Developmental Theories of Career Development**

This section addresses several well-known career theories that describe career development throughout childhood and adolescence. Each theory is discussed in terms of its application to school-aged students between the ages of 4 and 18.

### ***Erikson's Psychosocial Theory***

Erikson (1968) proposed that the human life cycle involves eight stages in ego growth, which correspond with a series of crises that children face as they grow and mature. Three of these stages are relevant to this review. In initiative versus guilt, children aged four to five develop tendencies toward initiative if they are free to explore, experiment and ask questions of parents and teachers. However, if children are limited and experience their questions as unimportant, they develop feelings of guilt about acting on their own (Snowman and McCown 2012). In industry versus inferiority, children aged 6 to 11 develop a sense of industry if they are encouraged to create, persevere and attempt difficult tasks. Children who are derided by others develop feelings of inferiority and never learn to enjoy intellectual tasks or take pride in their work (*ibid*). In identity versus role confusion, adolescents aged 12 to 18 are to develop the roles and skills that will allow them to take a meaningful place in adult society. Adolescents who are unsuccessful experience role confusion and do not have a clear sense of their identities and their future goals.

Erikson's (1968) life stages emphasize vocationally relevant dimensions of human development (Munley 1977). For young people, developing basic senses of initiative, industry and identity appear to be highly relevant to career development and planning. A sense of initiative allows career seekers to independently and confidently examine potential careers. Industrious people take pride in their abilities and bring their career goals to fruition. An understanding of one's identity—one's personal attributes, interests, skills and aspirations—is essential to determining meaningful career and life decisions. Erikson's theory is applicable to career education for students of all ages, and educators may tailor career-related activities to bolster students' development of initiative, industry and identity.

How could these developmental stages be put into practice? For young learners, teachers could create learning situations where students are encouraged to ask questions, persist in their efforts and achieve success. These

aspects of any learning situation would contribute toward students' senses of initiative and industry, as long as students were adequately encouraged and rewarded for their efforts. For older learners, it may be useful to create situations wherein they are encouraged to envision their life goals and critically examine their abilities, interests and passions. For example, students could be asked to write their future obituaries, and list the accomplishments that they hoped to achieve over the course of their lives. These types of activities would help students to gain a greater sense of their own identity and their areas of personal meaning within their lives, thereby increasing their chances of successfully navigating the life crisis of identity versus role confusion.

### ***Super's Life Span Theory***

The first two stages in Super's (1975) theory, the growth stage and the exploratory stage, apply to students. The growth stage, ranging from early childhood to early adolescence, involves the interaction between children and their homes, neighbourhoods, and school environments, which contributes to their development of abilities, interests and values. Super theorized that concepts of self and potential occupational goals begin to emerge during the growth stage as children internalize the information that is provided to them by their adult role models. Occupational preferences at this stage generally reflect emotional needs rather than aptitude or actual interest and may be either fixed or frequently changing. Educators may enhance students' development during the growth stage by ensuring that students have access to a variety of information about potential occupations. For example, it may be useful to create a career board that highlights different careers on a weekly basis, so that students are able to learn about a greater variety of careers than those that they see in their communities. Alternatively, educators may choose to incorporate career-based stories and books into students' story time. Students could then expand their career knowledge by responding to discussion questions such as What did you like about the main character's job? and What types of skills did the main character need to fulfill that job?

The subsequent exploratory stage (Super 1975) commences in adolescence, although the process of exploration begins much earlier and extends throughout the lifespan. During the exploratory stage, young people try out a variety of activities, roles and situations. Youth may specifically engage in activities to learn more about their occupational interests, aptitudes, plans for education and career opportunities. Teachers could facilitate this exploration by including career-research exercises within the context of academic content. For example, in a science-based course, students could be asked to research a course-relevant career of interest and then present basic

information about that career (for example, training required, job duties, salary) to their classmates. Students may also benefit from completing skill and interest inventories or surveys to critically evaluate the skills that they currently possess or would like to gain in the future, and determine how those skills and interests may be accentuated by potential career opportunities. Adolescents who engage in inadequate exploration may drift rather than systematically investigate their personal attributes and career prospects. In contrast, successful exploration allows adolescents to further develop their “abilities and interests, it confirms or contradicts the suitability of role models and of self-concepts, and it aids in their clarification and it eventually makes possible their translation into occupational preferences and their implementation in paid employment” (Super 1975, 29). In each of Super’s stages, career education allows students to learn more about themselves, develop their interests and abilities, and consider appropriate career options.

### ***Gottfredson’s Theory of Circumscription and Compromise***

Gottfredson (1981, 1996, 2002, 2005) created a developmental career theory wherein children exclude occupational options based on their perceived appropriateness to the child’s sense of self. According to Gottfredson, career choice arises from a process of elimination as children progressively circumscribe occupational options based on developmental aspects of self-concept. For children, career goals are shaped more by public aspects of self-concept such as gender and social class rather than private aspects such as skills and interests. As children mature, they may compromise their interests and select potential occupations that cater to their preferences for prestige and gender-type (Leung 2008).

Gottfredson proposed four developmental stages of circumscription: orientation to size and power, orientation to gender roles, orientation to social valuation and orientation to the internal, unique self. In the first stage, children aged three to five perceive occupations as roles taken up by adults (Leung 2008). In the second stage, gender-role norms and attitudes play an instrumental role in defining the self-concepts of children aged six to eight; children assess potential occupations in terms of whether they suit the child’s gender and eliminate options that are perceived to belong to the opposite gender-type. The third stage applies to children aged 9 to 13 as social class and status become influential to their self-concepts. Therefore, children at this stage tend to eliminate occupations that they perceive to have unacceptably low or unrealistically high levels of prestige for their social status. In the fourth stage, adolescents over the age of 14 begin to consider their personality, interests, values and skills in the occupation selection process.

At each of Gottfredson’s stages, the danger is that children will eliminate potential occupations based on inaccurate cognitive perceptions and limit themselves to an increasingly small pool of potential occupations. Therefore, career education should focus on expanding children’s knowledge about careers and developing their self-concept. For example, educators may choose to hold career days and invite guests into the classroom to describe their careers to the students, especially those that are unusual or atypical within the students’ communities. It may also be useful to invite guests who hold careers that are contrary to current gender stereotypes; for example, students may be interested to hear from male nurses and female carpenters, as these roles may be perceived as rigid and gender-specific for young children. With this expansion of opportunities, children are then less likely to prematurely foreclose potential career options or make decisions based on inaccurate perceptions.

### ***Summary***

Overall, developmental career theories are most concerned with the relationship between career development and children’s developmental stages. The exact nature of these stages varies depending on the theory, but in general theorists agree that supported learning, self-exploration and the provision of career-related information need to start at a young age so that children are better equipped to transition through developmental stages with awareness of themselves and their future career goals.

## **Learning Theories of Career Development**

The theories described in this section involve learning processes that are encountered by students at all levels. Special attention is placed on self-efficacy, learning experiences, and social and cognitive factors that shape students’ career development.

### ***Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory***

Bandura (1994, 71) defined self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over the events that affect their lives . . . [these] beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave.” People with a strong sense of efficacy view demanding tasks as challenges to be mastered, set challenging goals and stay committed to them, and attribute failure to inadequate effort or absent, yet obtainable skills (Bandura 1994). These people are resilient to adversity and productive in their successes. In contrast, Bandura proposed that individuals with a low sense of self-efficacy doubt their capabilities, avoid difficult tasks, set low goals and have weak goal commitment. In the face of failure, those with

low self-efficacy are more likely to dwell on personal shortcomings and lose faith in their capabilities.

Self-efficacy can affect a person's career choice and development, as people with higher perceptions of self-efficacy are more likely to consider a wide range of career options, better prepare themselves educationally for their chosen pursuits and experience greater career success (Bandura 1994). Leung (2008) alleged that students who have the potential to learn in school and succeed in future careers may be hampered by low perceptions of self-efficacy that prevent them from engaging in the learning processes required to develop their skills, interests and potentials. Bandura (1994) asserted that experiences of mastery in tasks, vicarious experiences provided by social models that succeed through sustained effort, appropriate social persuasion to reinforce one's capabilities and emotional self-regulation to reduce stress reactions can enhance one's levels of self-efficacy. Therefore, these areas should be targeted in career education to reinforce students' self-efficacy so that they are better prepared to experience future career successes.

Learning approaches that emphasize mastery will allow students to increase their self-efficacy, as they experience success through persistent effort. Educators must expose students to a wide range of career options so that they can feel better about their career prospects. As students learn more about their strengths and weaknesses, they benefit from viewing these traits within a broader career context. For example, students who struggle with intense theoretical material may recognize that they prefer to complete hands-on tasks. Educators can help students to link their strengths with potential career paths. With this knowledge, students may then develop their self-efficacy within an area of interest, recognize its connection to the world of work and strive toward personally meaningful and fulfilling careers based on their strengths and interests.

### ***Krumboltz's Happenstance Learning Theory (HLT)***

According to Krumboltz (2009), each person's career destiny develops through planned and unplanned learning experiences. It is essential to help people participate in a variety of learning experiences so that they can constantly develop their career destiny rather than make one career decision that only applies to their situations at a specific point in time. Krumboltz (2009, 135) described HLT as

an attempt to explain how and why individuals follow their different paths through life and to describe how counselors can facilitate that process. [Human behaviour is] the product of countless numbers of learning experiences made available by both planned and unplanned situations in which individuals find themselves . . . [these learning] outcomes include skills, interests, knowledge, beliefs, preferences, sensitivities, emotions, and future actions.

Educators can help students enhance their learning experiences by creating engaging activities and providing opportunities that allow students to advance their cognitive, physical and emotional skills. Creed, Patton and Prideaux (2007) highlighted career education and work experience as important components in adolescents' education. Educators must include activities to increase adolescents' career decision-making confidence with the understanding that these activities should be tailored to students of disparate levels of academic ability (Creed, Patton and Prideaux 2007). It is important to include a wide variety of learning experiences for young learners and encourage them to try new things, as younger students are less likely to have narrowed their career options and interests based on life experiences and accurate (or inaccurate) career-related information. After students complete a career-relevant activity, they can engage in a discussion to consider what they liked and did not like, and what they learned about themselves through participation. Students could then consider how the overall experience affected their life and career development. In accordance with HLT, students can have positive and negative experiences that affect their career development. Even if a job does not go as planned and the students strongly dislike it, it is still useful for the students to learn that the given job is not something that they would want to continue in the future. As educators help create meaningful opportunities for students to learn more about themselves and develop their skills, students will also evolve and develop the skills and attributes that will assist them throughout their career journeys.

### ***Social-Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)***

Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) combined elements of Bandura's (1986) and Krumboltz's (1996) learning theories to generate social-cognitive career theory (SCCT), which accentuates the role of learning in a person's development of interests. Specifically, Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) contended that behaviour occurs based on complex interactions between situational and domain-specific influences, dynamic aspects of a person's self-system and personal agency. Therefore, career choice is made based on the interactions between personal factors, learning experiences and contextual influences. Personal factors include such individual characteristics as gender, race/ethnicity, health status and socioeconomic status. Learning experiences contribute to the person's sense of self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which then influence the person's level of interest in a given domain, choice of goals, choice of actions and ultimate performance and attainment in that domain. Children must be exposed to a variety of learning experiences that relate to occupational behaviour. As children learn through practice, modelling and appropriate feedback from important adults, they will gradually



cultivate skills, develop personally meaningful standards and become adept at recognizing their abilities and estimating the outcomes of their actions (Palladino Schultheiss 2008). Career education with a SCCT background focuses on exposing students to relevant career-related learning experiences and assisting them in developing their interests and abilities.

### **Summary**

In general, the learning theories described above do not focus on a particular developmental stage or grade level for the implementation of career education. These theories highlight the need for educators to provide students at all levels with a variety of positive learning experiences to expand their views of themselves, their abilities and the purposeful application of their personal attributes to the world of work.

## **Process Models of Career Development**

Life career planning includes a series of sub-skills (Magnuson and Starr 2000). These skills include one's ability to generate and evaluate possible options, make informed decisions, develop action plans, and evaluate the process and outcomes of action plans. The process models of career development described in this section aim to describe career development and facilitate decision-making processes across other life domains. If students can develop and internalize the skills involved in these process models, they will be better equipped to facilitate and maximize their decision making, both proactively and reactively, later in their future career development (Magnuson and Starr 2000).

### ***Tiedeman and O'Hara's Theory***

Tiedeman and O'Hara (1963) created a two-phase model (anticipation and accommodation) that incorporates personal awareness and external information into the decision-making process. Anticipation comprises exploration, crystallization, choice and clarification stages wherein students prepare for action. In exploration, students examine potential educational, occupational and personal choices. They are involved in crystallization when they try to analyze and organize personal and career-related information. Through crystallization, more concrete choices and decisions are developed. They then clarify goals and start to develop action plans that outline how they will reach their objectives. This leads into the accommodation phase, as students engage in induction, reformation and integration to enact their plans. During induction, students are willing to learn from knowledgeable others. In reformation, they begin to assert themselves and influence their environment. Finally, in integration, students are able to match their goals with the objectives

of others in their environment. As a result of moving through these stages, students develop a sense of equilibrium and purpose. They may use this decision-making process many times over the course of their lives, as they develop new goals, enter new situations and synthesize their ongoing experiences to find meaning. This theory is especially applicable to junior and senior high school students who are considering specific career paths and developing concrete plans of action to attain further education and technical training for their future careers.

### ***Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman's LifeCareer Theory***

Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman (1990) developed the concept of LifeCareer to recognize the unique relationship between life and career; that is, life is career and career is life (K Bernes, personal communication, September 6, 2013). A major life process for people is to detach their personal realities, the actions and beliefs that are uniquely theirs, from the common realities that are essentially dictated by society. Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman (1990) emphasized that students must make meaningful career decisions based on their personal realities. In LifeCareer, students align with their personal realities and liberate themselves from the restrictions and limitations of the common realities endorsed by society. Their ensuing careers thereby reflect meaning and purpose rather than drudgery. As people become better at recognizing and following their personal goals rather than those dictated by society, they are more likely to make personally meaningful decisions and competently adapt to career change (Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman 1990). Based on the premises of LifeCareer, career education must encourage students to (a) realize that life and career are inextricably intertwined; and (b) develop and consider their personal realities when they are contemplating career-related decisions. If students do not learn to make decisions based on personal fit, they may be more susceptible to the influences of their peers. Ultimately, following in their peers' footsteps only works well for students if they share highly similar interests and values with those peers; otherwise, students may be setting themselves up for lifetimes of disappointment and dissatisfaction.

### ***Magnusson's Five Processes Model***

Magnusson (1992) conceptualized career and life planning as a five-stage process that involves initiation, exploration, decision making, preparation and implementation. In a school context, Magnusson's steps assist students' career selection and decision-making processes across other domains of their lives. In initiation, students complete tasks and activities to foster self-discovery. This is followed by exploration as students take the knowledge gained from the initiation stage and analyze it to better understand their interests, strengths, weaknesses and life

aspirations. The goal of exploration is to allow students to gain a better understanding of who they are so that they can make educated decisions regarding their career interests. It is also crucial for students to research careers so that they can evaluate whether their careers of interest fit their personal abilities and lifestyle needs. Students then enter the decision-making stage, where they weigh the pros and cons associated with each career option and make decisions regarding their intended career path. In the subsequent preparation stage, students consider the steps that they must take to reach their intended career goals, such as specialized training or informational interviews with subject matter experts. Preparation is followed by implementation, as students commence their goal-oriented action plans. Magnusson's stages are not strictly linear; they may be started at any point and each stage can be returned to as needed.

Magnusson's (1992) model is relevant throughout students' development, as it can be implemented in Grade 1 or Grade 12 with positive effects for students. If students are repeatedly exposed to the series of planning and goal-setting skills outlined by Magnusson, then they will become more fluent and adept at career decision-making over time. Practice with career decision making from an early age sets students up for success, as they will not be postponing their career-related decisions to high school. Instead, students will have more time to consider their career options and how those options fit with their personal interests. As students' interests will likely change over time, it is not expected that they decide their lifelong career in elementary school. Instead, from a young age, they will acquaint themselves with the career decision-making process and learn to adjust it to suit their fluctuating interests and skills.

### ***Action-Oriented Hope Career Model***

Action-oriented hope plays a critical role in career development (Niles, Amundson and Neault 2011; Niles, In and Amundson 2014). Action-oriented hope is described as one's ability to imagine a meaningful goal and believe in one's ability to attain positive outcomes through action, even during adversity (Niles, In and Amundson 2014). Niles, Amundson and Neault (2011) presented seven action-oriented hope-centred career competencies: action-oriented hope, self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting/planning, implementing and adapting. Self-reflection and self-clarity are closely related, as self-reflection involves examining personal beliefs, actions, emotions and circumstances, and self-clarity is developed and refined through self-reflection (Niles, Amundson and Neault 2011). The remaining competencies are used as individuals combine self-awareness with career options to create informed and personally meaningful career plans (Niles, In and Amundson 2014).

The action-oriented hope approach to competencies can be applied to career education in K–12 schools, as it complements many of the theories that have been described above. Career education should inspire students to learn more about themselves (self-reflection, self-clarity) and apply this knowledge in a systematic way to potential career options (visioning, goal setting and planning), throughout both favourable and challenging life contexts (implementing, adapting). Educators can encourage students to reflect on their accomplishments and their past experiences of resilience through adversity to remind them of their potential to succeed. Ideally, students will develop a sense of action-oriented hope through career education so that they are motivated to engage in career-planning processes, continually self-reflect and adapt to career-related obstacles, and have faith in their abilities to reach the goals that they set for themselves.

### ***Summary***

The process models described in this section are applicable to many areas within students' lives. Instead of proposing a fixed set of developmental stages or ideal learning experiences that successful students must navigate, these theories emphasize the importance of teaching students to engage in functional, holistic decision-making patterns that can be applied to a wide range of career and life decisions.

## **Systems Models of Career Development**

This section briefly presents two systems models of career development that are connected to the dynamic interplay between individual, social and environmental-societal systems (McMahon 2011; McMahon and Patton 1995; Patton and McMahon 2006) and the chaotic nature of career development (Bright and Pryor 2011; Pryor and Bright 2011).

### ***Systems Theory Framework***

The Systems Theory Framework (STF) of career development is a metatheoretical framework that was created to incorporate multiple career development theories into one coherent framework (McMahon 2011; McMahon and Patton 1995; Patton and McMahon 2006). According to this framework, an individual's career development is a dynamic process that is affected by both content and process influences as it evolves over time (McMahon 2011). Content influences involve a person's holistic interactions within his or her individual, social and environmental-societal systems. Individual system influences include personal aspects such as one's personality, values, sexual orientation, abilities and gender (Patton and McMahon 2006). Social system influences include interactions with others' individual systems (for example, family members,

peers, colleagues, teachers), and environmental-societal system influences involve overarching themes such as globalization, media, geographical location and the employment market (Patton and McMahon 2006). Process influences refer to the dynamic influences, such as chance, that impact career development.

Educators can apply the STF to career counselling in a school context, as one premise of this theory is that applying change to one system will influence change in another (Patton and McMahon 2006). By recognizing that students' interactions with peers and teachers will inform their current and future career development, career educators can intentionally use this sphere of influence to positively impact students' career development. This could be accomplished through bolstering students' individual system influences (for example, fostering greater self-awareness using self-report inventories and journalling exercises), social system influences (for example, creating opportunities for students to discuss career-related information with peers, incorporating career education interventions into regular classroom activities, encouraging students to learn more about careers by conducting informational interviews), and environmental-societal system influences (for example, discuss career options that are available within particular geographical locations, teach students how to locate labour market information).

### *Chaos Theory of Careers*

Pryor and Bright (2011) developed the Chaos Theory of Careers (CTC). This theory views reality "in terms of complex dynamical systems in which there is a continual interplay of influences of stability and change" (Bright and Pryor 2011, 163). The four main concepts of CTC are complexity, change, chance and construction. Complexity involves the intricate and unpredictable contextual factors, such as social relationships and societal expectations, which influence a student's career development (Bright and Pryor 2011). Career development is also subject to unexpected deviation by sudden and dramatic change (for example, death of a family member) or more gradual change (for example, slowly shifting labour market patterns) within one's environment. Bright and Pryor noted that these chance events defy predictability; because of this lack of control, students benefit from constructing and creating their futures in response to complexity, change and chance.

The CTC is applicable to career education as it recognizes the complex and dynamic nature of career development and emphasizes the unique circumstances of each student. If educators teach students about the constantly shifting and chaotic state of career, then students may be better prepared to adjust and adapt to change as it occurs. This could be achieved through class discussion,

presentations about the shifting world of work and providing anecdotal evidence about the sudden shifts that have happened in students' careers based on chance and unpredictable events.

### *Summary*

Both of the models presented in this section reflect the complex and intricate systems evident within career development. These models move away from fixed stages of career development or decision-making patterns and pay greater attention to the unique set of circumstances that affect each student's career development.

## **Conclusion**

Each family of theories described in this review offers different perspectives on career development of school-aged children. By themselves, theories or models that focus on developmental stages (Erikson 1968; Gottfredson 1981, 1996, 2002, 2005; Super 1975), learning experiences (Bandura 1986, 1994; Krumboltz 1996, 2009; Lent, Brown and Hackett 1994) or decision-making processes (Magnusson 1992; Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman 1990; Niles, Amundson and Neault 2011; Niles, In and Amundson 2014; Tiedeman and O'Hara, 1963) may inadequately describe the complex process of career development. Systems theories (Bright and Pryor 2011; McMahon 2011; McMahon and Patton 1995; Patton and McMahon 2006; Pryor and Bright 2011) account for multiple influences on students' career development. When taken together, these theories or models provide a broad context and describe students' needs at specific age levels as well as ongoing learning experiences and decision-making processes that should be fostered and developed through carefully integrated career education.

The theories outlined in this review support the following practical recommendations for career education. Each recommendation is paired with practical career education interventions.

- Expose students from an early age to a variety of career options to discourage them from foreclosing potential career options (Gottfredson 1981, 1996, 2002, 2005). Profile unique careers during class time, invite speakers in unusual career roles to discuss their experiences with students, and encourage students to research and present unique careers to their classmates.
- Encourage students to engage in self-exploratory exercises from an early age to identify their interests, values and future aspirations (Erikson 1968; Magnusson 1992; McMahon 2011; Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman 1990; Niles, Amundson and Neault 2011; Niles, In and Amundson 2014; Super 1975; Tiedeman and O'Hara 1963). Ask students to describe themselves in terms of their unique traits, areas of personal meaning and

dreams for the future. Use journal prompts (for example, Who am I? What is important to me? What do I enjoy doing? What do I not enjoy doing? Who is my role model? What do I admire about this person?), or creative exercises (for example, students create posters or vision boards that represent their dreams and attributes; students imagine and describe what they would like to achieve over their lifetimes; students imagine and describe what a perfect day in their lives would look like). Distribute skill, interest and values inventories and encourage students to reflect on their results either independently or in small groups.

- Introduce students to new learning experiences and encourage students to persevere through difficulty; frame setbacks as learning opportunities (Bandura 1994; Erikson 1968; Lent, Brown and Hackett 1994; Niles, In and Amundson 2014; Super 1975). Reinforce that all students are unique, with unique characteristics and skills, and that perceived failure in one academic area does not preclude success through sustained effort or success in another area. Introduce stories of famous people who have tried and failed before finding their true passions or succeeding in their area of interest. Encourage coping language (for example, I can do this, I can ask for help, I'm trying my best) and discourage self-defeating language (for example, I can't do this, I'm not smart enough for this). Highlight students' strengths and encourage them to recognize their weaknesses (for example, ask students to describe which courses they enjoy most and least; ask students to describe which courses are most and least difficult).
- Teach students about the transitional nature of career planning and the necessity of using career-planning processes to make ongoing career decisions as part of a career destiny (Bright and Pryor 2011; Krumboltz 2009; Magnusson 1992; Patton and McMahon 2006). Describe the nature of the 21st century and the likelihood that students will shift careers throughout their lifetimes. Reinforce the importance of learning from ongoing experiences, whether they be academic or connected to other life situations (for example, volunteer or work experiences).
- Teach students specific career-planning processes and skills (Magnuson and Starr 2000; Magnusson 1992; Niles, Amundson and Neault 2011; Niles, In and Amundson 2014; Tiedeman and O'Hara 1963) such as goal setting, how to research careers of interest, where to find career-relevant information (for example, websites, online career quizzes, informational interviews), how to engage in decision-making processes (for example, create a pros and cons list, evaluate whether a career option fits with personal attributes) and how to explore career education and training options.

- Emphasize the importance of creating personally meaningful career goals rather than adopting societally prescribed goals (Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman 1990). Reinforce the necessity of congruence between personal interests, skills and aspirations and career options to enjoy career and life satisfaction.

If career educators incorporate the above recommendations into the delivery of career education, this would have a positive effect on students' career development. Ideally, this career education would be integrated into mainstream course content and offered by teachers who were adequately prepared to engage students in career education and career-planning processes.

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# Social Justice: Do Canadian School Counsellors Play a Role?

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*Shelley Skelton and Dawn Lorraine McBride*

## Abstract

It is our purpose to report the results of a nationwide survey of school counsellors regarding their current level of understanding of social justice, perceptions of marginalization in Canadian schools and different forms of advocacy within this profession. The role of school counsellors in Canada continues to evolve as school counselling becomes more professionalized. Advocating for marginalized student populations often falls under the unofficial responsibilities and ethical role of the school counsellor. This study found that the majority of school counsellors engage in a number of different forms of social justice. However, their conceptualizations of social justice and marginalization as well as their level of engagement in social justice vary considerably.

The prevailing goal of school counsellors is “to have a positive impact on schools and communities” (Ockerman and Mason 2012, 7). One way to generate such an impact is through promoting social justice. However, no research has reported Canadian school counsellors’ descriptions of their roles and responsibilities with respect to social justice activities. To address this gap, we undertook a national survey to determine if and how school counsellors in Canada are involved in social justice issues. In this paper, we define social justice and describe the skills necessary to promote it, describe the survey methodology and results, and discuss the implications of this research

## Social Justice: An Overview

Social justice is grounded in equity through the use of advocacy, often involving issues of equality, multiculturalism, ethical decision making, equity of resources and inclusion (Walker 2006). It is a process of human rights, fairness and access to resources and opportunities (National Pro Bono Research Centre 2011). According to the American Counseling Association (ACA 2014), social justice involves counsellors and community leaders

working toward ending oppression and injustices in such institutional systems as schools or places of employment. One significant common factor in the majority of social justice definitions is the concept of equity (ACA 2014; Gale 2000; Nastasi 2008; Walker 2006) and multiculturalism, each of which we introduce below.

Equity is about fairness and is not to be confused with equality. This distinction is particularly important when dominant and marginalized populations are involved. Marginalized populations are those who have been excluded from, or do not have equal access to, the benefits of mainstream social, economic, cultural or political life. Marginalization can be identified through a number of factors, including race, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, gender or socioeconomic status, to name a few (Givens 2008).

Social justice is an action that school counsellors and others take in response to oppression and injustices to marginalized populations. Therefore, social justice also requires a foundation in multicultural competence (Nastasi 2008). The underpinning of multicultural competence is awareness, both of self and others, particularly as it relates to attitudes and beliefs, knowledge and skills ... [to understand] the worldview of the other as well as to foster a working relationship that is sensitive to the person’s cultural (Arthur and Collins 2005, 48) albeit often marginalized group. According to Bruccoleri (2008), in order to foster the advocacy against oppression and injustices against marginalized populations, and to pursue equality for all, social justice involves four possible branches: legal, distributive, participative and liberative.

## Branches

Social justice practice can be deconstructed into these four branches, each with specific competencies (Bruccoleri 2008). The legal justice branch involves knowledge about how laws and regulations affect social justice practice. School counsellors practise legal

justice when they advocate that school staff and other professionals adhere to privacy legislation, regulations and laws defining professional standards of practice, and to the principles of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

On the other hand, distributive justice is based on skills and knowledge used to promote equity (Bruccoleri 2008). This involves the distribution of resources according to need. For example, in a school this could involve the allocation of funds to purchase materials for a program that supports a marginalized group of students, such as a remedial program for a small number of students.

The last two branches overlap in empowering the marginalized to have a voice and presence. Participative justice ensures those who need advocacy are given a voice to express their needs and offer input into decisions affecting them. Likewise, liberative justice focuses on empowering and helping marginalized populations reach their potential (Bruccoleri 2008). In a school context, liberative justice could take the form of students from lower socioeconomic statuses having equal access to advanced classes or programming in their schools.

## **Competencies**

To practise social justice, specific competencies, based on knowledge and awareness, are foundational. At the core of these competencies is self-awareness—understanding one’s cultural identity (Parikh, Post and Flowers 2011)—and how one’s identity has or has not contributed to privilege, power and oppression (Hunsaker 2011). This kind of intensive self-review supports multicultural competence and increases one’s awareness of how various cultures conceptualize struggles, healing and well-being. These competencies can be gained through personal and professional development (Kelly 2012). Also, reviewing one’s professional ethics (Nastasi 2008), using research (Carr 2008; Dahir and Stone 2009; Dowden 2010), becoming a leader (Walker 2006; Dowden 2010), collaborating and creating awareness (Hunsaker 2011) all play a role in social justice.

Given that some of these social justice competencies require political savvy (Singh et al 2010), it can be useful for school counsellors to study some of Ryan’s (2010) political tactics. Relationship building, organization, persuasion, experimentation, a subtle approach to advocacy and persistence are five political tactics that can be helpful to school counsellors.

### ***Relationship Building***

School counsellors have already learned skills in establishing relationships through their counselling training. These skills include active listening, maintaining objectivity, recognizing nonverbal communication, repairing ruptures in relationship, collaborating and

demonstrating empathy. These valuable competencies help facilitate relationships with students, parents, colleagues and administrators.

### ***Organization***

Walker (2006) believes it is essential to establish a framework that involves ethical considerations, leadership and accountability when school counsellors engage in social justice. Walker suggests that in developing a diversity plan of action, counsellors first list the social issues that are evident and what is needed to address inequalities. Then, effort can be directed to educating the school community about social justice issues through activities such as professional development, building community connections or facilitating student clubs. Conducting research in the school can provide the credibility needed to provide such leadership (Ryan 2010).

### ***Persuasion and Experimentation***

School counsellors can use action research to describe social inequities in their schools, and can both guide social justice work and support its legitimacy (Dowden 2010). The aim of action research is to find a solution to a specific issue or problem in a particular environment (Leedy and Ormrod 2005). Dahir and Stone (2009, 3) suggest the MEASURE method of counsellor-led action research; the first three letters of this acronym represent a mission, elements to be measured and analysis. Next, stakeholders, such as the principal, staff and members of the school community work together to create social change. The results of this social action are then assessed, and the school counsellor’s final step is educating others about the process.

### ***Subtle Approach to Advocacy***

Lewis et al (2011) recommend starting advocacy at the school level, beginning with the students (Dowden 2010) and then including staff, administrators and parents. Without the support of the principal, advocacy is unlikely to be successful (Ryan 2010). Moving onto a broader, more public platform, school counsellors may attempt to sway public opinion or impact municipal policy (Dowden 2010). This requires interdisciplinary collaboration (Bemak and Chung 2005; Lewis et al 2011) and involves shared decision making to redistribute power, visits to others’ workplaces to deconstruct boundaries, and a clear understanding of individual roles and responsibilities in the collaborative process (Schultz 2011).

### ***Persistence***

School counsellors who are prepared to face predictable barriers to social justice are more likely to be able to persevere through them. The most frequently noted obstacle to social justice work is attachment to the status

quo (Akos and Galassi 2004; Bruccoleri 2008; Dowden 2010; Higgenbottom and Friesen 2013). This can include resistant colleagues who lack knowledge about social justice (Lewis et al 2011), pre-existing norms and values about equity within the school (Nastasi 2008; Walker 2006), and one's desire to avoid conflict (Singh et al 2010). Navigating these potential obstacles requires relationship skills, communication, self-awareness and leadership.

The practical application of social justice through competencies and strategies can be summarized with five key points. First, knowledge precedes action. Second, social justice begins at the most conservative level working with students. Third, school counsellors already have some vital competencies for social justice. Fourth, advocating for social justice means becoming a leader. Fifth, because so many strategies are interdependent, the only way to move forward is to do so incrementally and intentionally by recognizing that small steps taken in the branches of social justice work builds simultaneous momentum within a number of competencies.

## Methodology

Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the University of Lethbridge where the second author is affiliated. The online survey was self-authored in English and available through SurveyMonkey. It was distributed to potential respondents through two routes. After receiving approval from the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, we e-mailed the School Counsellors' Chapter membership and asked the leaders of provincial school counselling associations to send our request to their members. In the fall of 2013, 196 surveys were completed.

To be included in the study, participants were currently or recently employed in Canada as a school counsellor, or in a school position in which providing counselling was part of the job description. Demographically, the respondents were from Alberta (32.1 per cent), New Brunswick (20.4 per cent), British Columbia (18.4 per cent), and Newfoundland and Labrador (16.8 per cent), and Saskatchewan (5.1 per cent), with other provinces and territories contributing fewer than 5 per cent of the respondent pool. Professionally, 156 (79.6 per cent) described themselves as school counsellors; the rest described themselves as school psychologists (7), family-school liaison workers (5), social workers (2), resource teachers (5), career practitioners (1) and "other" (20). In terms of employment status, 140 (71.4 per cent) worked full time, 45 (23 per cent) worked part time, and 11 (5.6 per cent) described themselves as "no longer working." Seventy-nine (40.3 per cent) worked in elementary schools, 65 (33.1 per cent) in junior high, 92 (46.9 per cent) in senior high and 44 (22.5 per cent) at a combination of

grade levels. One hundred and nine (56 per cent) respondents stated that they worked in an urban area, 78 (40 per cent) in a rural setting and 9 (4 per cent) reported "other." Although we attempted to distribute the survey to all Canadian provinces and territories, no one from Nunavut, Ontario or Quebec responded.

The survey comprised 19 questions. Six were demographic. Eleven questions focused on social justice. These explored participants' understanding of social justice, which we introduce in this way: "Within the school context, social justice involves the advocacy for marginalized populations so that they may benefit as fully as the dominant population from the resources and opportunities within a society." We also inquired of their beliefs about social justice as part of their role in the schools, if they consider promoting the social justice part of their job, the social justice activities they have been involved in, obstacles to participating in social justice activities, their perceived level of success, and possible contributors to their success.

Two questions concerned marginalization, which we defined as unfair access to resources and opportunities in the school. One question required participants to give their definition; the other asked them to identify student populations they believed to be marginalized.

## Data Analysis

Data were collected through SurveyMonkey in which 196 participants responded to multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Data shown in bar graphs represent multiple-choice questions that allowed participants to choose more than one answer from a list compiled by the authors. Data in either pie graphs or tables correspond to multiple-choice questions in which only one answer was permitted.

We employed a qualitative content analysis methodology for this study. We chose this method for its flexibility, in that researchers have the opportunity to read through the data, identify patterns to create clusters of data and draw inferences (Marsh and White 2006). Data representing definitions of restorative justice was set aside and not further analyzed. The remaining data was clustered into the two following categories: nouns and verbs. Frequently used nouns and verbs were then further subcategorized.

## Social Justice

### Definition

Participants were asked to define social justice. We identified the following themes from the participants' definitions. First, approximately 8 per cent of participants wrote definitions of restorative justice. Second, the word choice in the definitions was significant; nouns such as



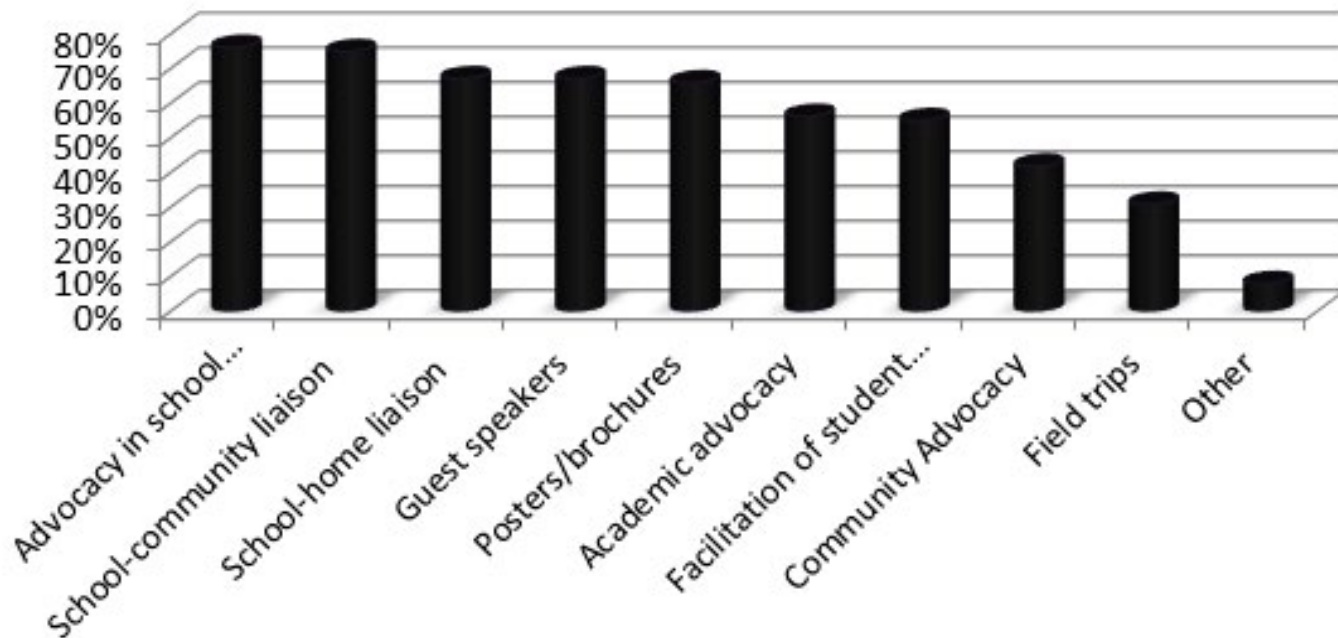
fairness, equality and awareness appeared in 44 per cent of the responses. In addition, the frequency of verbs that were present in participants' definitions were advocating (23 per cent), supporting (16 per cent), working toward (15 per cent) and empowering (6 per cent). Subsequently, participants were given a definition of social justice in order to answer the following questions.

The next cluster of questions asked about respondents' participation in social justice activities. Question 14 asked, In your role as a school counsellor, have you ever been involved in social justice activities? Eighty-nine percent of respondents reported in the affirmative, 4 per cent stated they did not and 7 per cent were not sure. Question 15 asked the varieties of social justice activities in which respondents had participated. The participants who stated that they engage in social justice promotion identified a variety of activities both inside their schools and in the community. Ninety-one per cent stated that they thought social justice was, to some extent, part of their current job description. Under the category of other, participants gave examples of curriculum and

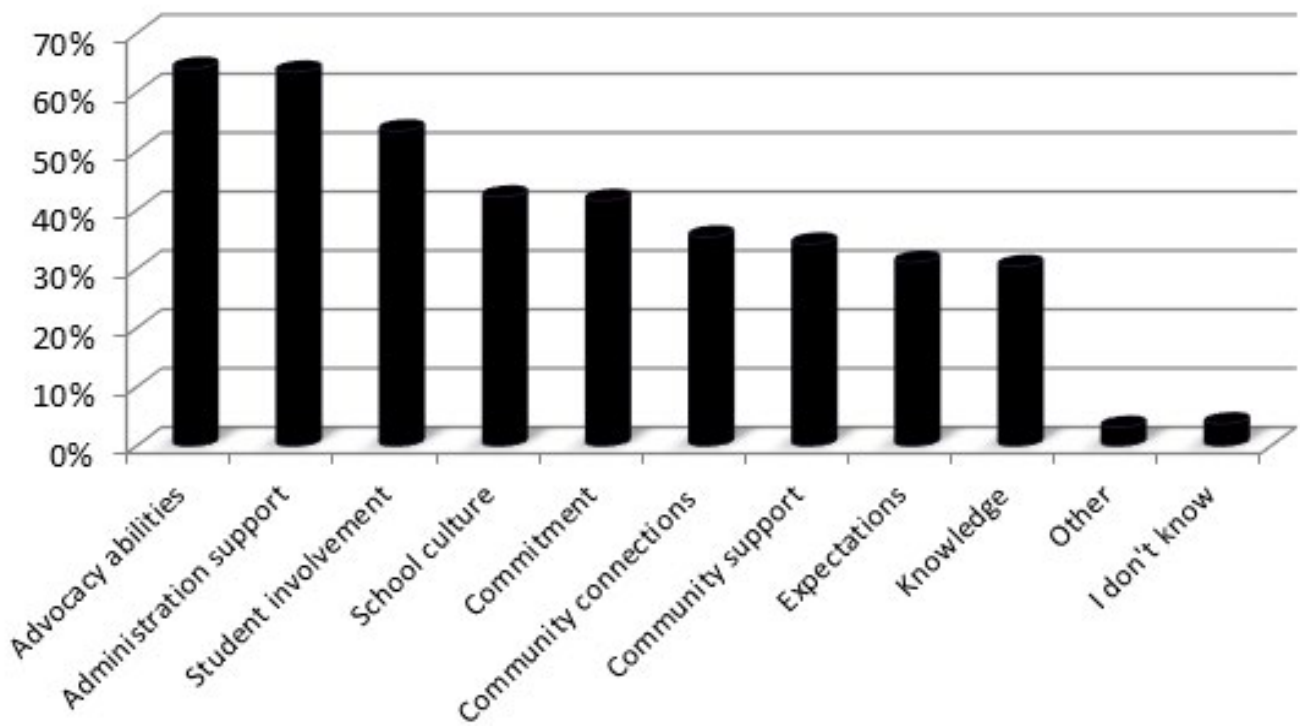
policy development, fundraising and group counselling as additional forms of social justice activities. More than 99 per cent reported some level of success with the majority of 96 per cent falling in the range of sometimes and often. The following questions further addressed school counsellors' success in this area. A comprehensive listing of these activities is found in Figure 1.

Question 16 asked respondents, If you identified any activities from question 13, overall, how successful were you? If this question does not apply to you, please skip this question. Forty-eight per cent of respondents thought that their efforts were sometimes successful, and an identical 48 per cent reported that their efforts were often successful, 3.5 per cent reported their efforts were always successful and .5 per cent reported not at all. Question 17 queried, If you did have some success with social justice activities, what contributed to your success? If this question does not apply to you, please skip this question. Respondents reported a number of substantial factors that contribute to a successful social justice activity. The most prominent are having skills in advocacy, the support of

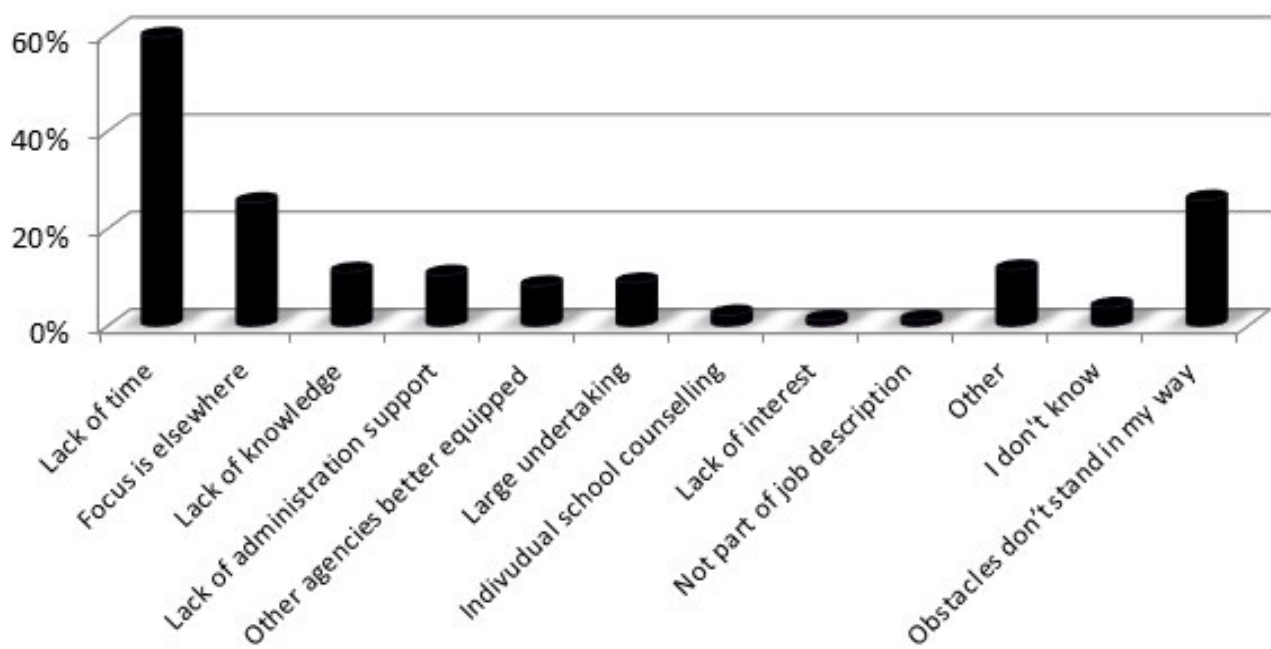
**Figure 1. Social Justice Activities Identified by Participants**



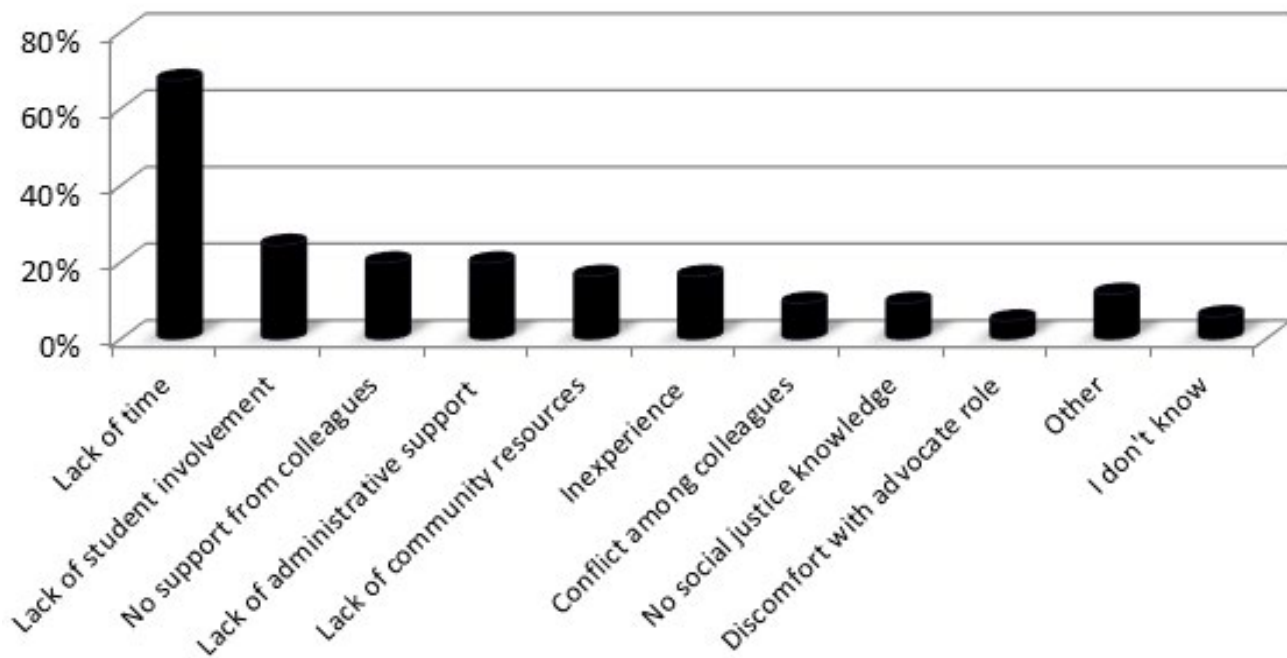
**Figure 2. Contributors to the Success of Social Justice Efforts**



**Figure 3. Conditions Preventing or Interfering with Social Justice Initiatives**



**Figure 4. Inhibitors to the Success of Social Justice Initiatives**



the school administration and student involvement. An exhaustive list is found in Figure 2.

Two questions examined impediments to social justice activities. Question 13 asked, What challenges/obstacles keep from engaging in social justice? Check all that apply. Conditions that prevented the respondents from taking action altogether are listed in Figure 3.

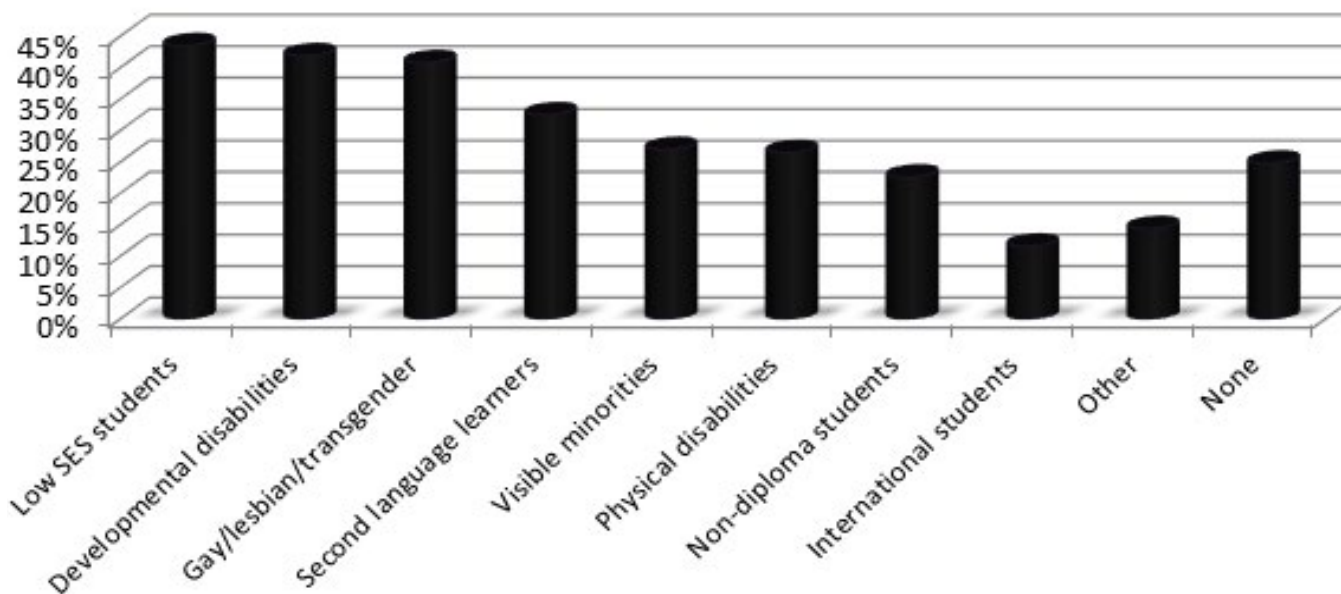
Similarly, Question 18 asked, If you were unsuccessful in social justice activities, what stopped you from being successful? If this question does not apply to you, please skip this question. In terms of the obstacles preventing school counsellors from implementing social justice initiatives, 67 per cent identified time constraints as the principle cause of unsuccessful social justice activities. Many other inhibitors of success are noted, which can be found in Figure 4.

## Marginalization

When asked to define marginalization, school counsellors repeatedly identified common themes of a minority status, disadvantage and being on the outside. Word choice, again, demonstrated school counsellors'

beliefs and perceived impact of marginalization. The actions associated with marginalization in these definitions ranged from the absence of action ("not include") to unintentional action ("forget"), followed by added intention ("discriminate," "exclude" and "unfairly treat"), to the extreme of hostile intention ("banish," "shove aside" and "reduce"). Question 12 asked, Are there any student population groups in your school system that you think are treated unfairly in terms of resources and opportunities? If so, please identify. Check off all that apply. Among the marginalized student populations identified, participants stated that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those with developmental or cognitive delays and students who identify as nonheterosexual are the most likely to receive unfair treatment in their schools. The 14 per cent who responded with "other" offered examples of students with mental health issues, students not yet diagnosed with learning difficulties and students in the criminal justice and foster care programs. Forty-five participants chose "none" to this question. A detailed list of populations respondents consider marginalized is found in Figure 5.

**Figure 5. Responses to Question 12**



## Discussion

Canadian school counsellors clearly play a role in social justice. They are engaged in social justice for two main reasons: they think that it is part of their job description, and they are aware of marginalized students in their schools who need their help. School counsellors' social justice activities span the participative, liberative and distributive branches, meaning that social justice in Canadian schools is broad in both scope and practice.

More than 96 per cent of the participants stated that their efforts are often or sometimes successful. This suggests that many of the social justice competencies, such as knowledge, relationship building and organization are already in the respondents' repertoires. Knowledge, a precursor to action-based competencies, was identified by 34 per cent as a contributor for success; however, it still remains an obstacle for 11 per cent, who do not feel adequately knowledgeable. It is not clear if the knowledge being referred to is cultural competency, self-awareness or political savvy. The social justice activities listed by school counsellors represents the many ways in which relationships are being fostered with students, community members and staff. Also, the 135 (69 per cent) participants who identified liaison work, the 91 (46 per cent) who facilitate clubs and the 69 (35 per cent) who engage in community advocacy are examples of school counsellors demonstrating the competency of organization.

What is absent from the data is school counsellors' involvement in action research. This makes sense given that research requires a time commitment, and time was the most significant obstacle to social justice work, listed by 64 per cent of the participants. Knowing that administrative support is needed for action research to progress, and given that 10 per cent identified lack of administrative support as an obstacle, this implies that the remaining 90 per cent of the respondents regard their administrators as at least somewhat supportive. This means that if time can somehow be reallocated for action research, 90 per cent of school counsellors would likely receive the support of their administration.

The use of language in the participants' definitions of social justice was noteworthy. The use of verbs rather than nouns may suggest a higher level of engagement in social justice. In addition, the verb chosen, such as *working toward* or *supporting*, may suggest less clarity and commitment to social justice than verbs like *empowering* or *advocating*. Overall, how participants defined social justice implies a wide range of engagement and understanding.

The language used in the definitions of marginalization was also quite telling. Approximately half of the participants defined marginalization as a state of being and the other half described an action done to specific populations. This may reflect a similar finding in the social justice literature, implying that some school counsellors perceive

these phenomena from a more static or passive lens, while others view marginalization as resulting from concrete actions. For those who defined marginalization as an action, the verb choices ranged in levels of destructiveness from *forget* and *not include*, to *banish*, *reduce* and *shove aside*. This may also reflect the extent to which marginalization occurs in different school environments.

Absent from school counsellors' conceptualizations of marginalization is the perpetrator. Could the answer be that elusive that not one participant named it in their definitions? Perhaps school counsellors are not accustomed to working through a systemic lens, or approaching social justice at a systems level is beyond the parameters of their position. Finding the answers to these questions may provide further direction for school counsellors.

### Limitations of the Study

The most significant limitation to this study was a lack of uniform representation of participants. Alberta was overrepresented with 32 per cent of the participants, whereas there was no representation from Ontario or Quebec. Also, 92 of the 196 participants (47 per cent) had five years or less experience as a school counsellor, so the respondent pool may not be representative of the school counselling profession. In addition, the researchers' interpretation of syntax in the content analysis is but one way to interpret the data. Last, participation was voluntary, and it is possible that participants who chose to complete the survey were more interested in social justice than those who did not.

### Implications and Future Directions

There is a wealth of experience and competence among Canadian school counsellors advocating for social justice. Many in the profession engage in social justice in ways that are meaningful and manageable in their particular practice. Many school counsellors already experience success in this area, regardless of the many obstacles; it stands to reason that they have the potential to guide their colleagues to the same level of success. School counsellors already provide leadership in their schools, and perhaps it is time to extend that leadership outward to their colleagues.

It is our belief that a shift from working with students on an individual basis to group interventions may be a way in which to effectively and efficiently engage in social justice. This would alter the time structure of the school counsellor's day and ideally address the largest barrier to social justice work. This would also allow for the opportunity to implement action research because a stronger connection and understanding would develop with regards to social injustices. This, in turn, could provide a

stronger platform to address inequities at a higher systemic level.

There are plenty of future research possibilities in this area. Canadian school boards who are innovators in social justice could be studied to provide direction for others. Case studies in individual schools could be conducted to determine if the perspective of the school counsellor is aligned with students in terms of marginalized populations. Pre- and postassessment could be part of a research study to evaluate the effectiveness of action research in a school setting. Twenty-four per cent of participants stated that they did not believe that any student populations were marginalized in their school. Have these schools managed student equity and if so, what was their method? In order for this area of research to continue to move forward, its value must be recognized. Perhaps that can be part of the advocacy work that school counsellors propel forward in Canadian schools.

### Conclusion

In this article, we defined social justice and reviewed the literature on social justice as it relates to school counsellors. Our survey of 196 school counsellors found that the vast majority of school counsellors promote social justice in the course of their work through a variety of means and generally feel supported. Respondents described barriers to their participation in promoting social justice and factors that interfere with the success of their efforts. Finally, we advocated for revising the role of school counsellors toward a systemic, rather than individual intervention, and recommended action research, descriptions of exemplary social justice activities, and pre- and postevaluation to measure the effects of social justice initiatives as potential avenues for future research.

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# Follow Your Dream: Integrating Career Education into English Language Arts 20-2

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and Jonathan L Roque*

## Abstract

A career education unit, Follow Your Dream, was integrated with the Alberta Learning (2003) English Language Arts 20-2 program and delivered to 68 Grade 11 students at an urban middle school in Calgary. The nine-lesson career education unit encouraged students to complete structured career-planning activities and analyze a variety of poems related to self-awareness, perseverance and ambition. According to student feedback after the final lesson, 96 per cent of students somewhat or fully agreed that the unit had helped them to identify their personal values on self-fulfillment, 95 per cent indicated that the unit had allowed them to discover their strengths and attributes, and 100 per cent felt that the unit had enabled them to (1) identify meaningful goals to pursue, (2) explore meaningful career options that promoted their individuality and strengths, and (3) evaluate their career options and their support systems to pursue their goals. On average, 90 per cent of the students rated the activities as “helpful” or “very helpful.” Overall, the career-planning unit was successful in its use of English language arts to engage students in career-planning activities.

Career exploration is critical during senior high school as students begin to engage in self-exploration and evaluate their future career options (Garg et al 2010; Porfeli and Lee 2012; Super 1990). The process of career exploration and decision making can be particularly stressful for adolescents, as they are influenced by multiple social networks and pressured to make long-term career decisions (Garg et al 2010; Porfeli and Lee 2012). Adolescents may attempt to place the responsibility for making a career decision onto others and may even delay or avoid making a choice, which could ultimately lead to a less than optimal decision (Gati and Saka 2001; Witko et al 2005). Therefore, senior high school students must be provided with the necessary career education, counselling and tools to make meaningful choices for themselves and effectively

transition into postsecondary education or the world of work. However, career counselling research also indicates a lack of resources for these students, as high schools are challenged to provide graduates with the knowledge and skills to pursue individual career goals (Bloxom et al 2008).

Career education that is offered as a separate, stand-alone course has not been favourably received by high school students in Alberta (Bloxom et al 2008; Witko et al 2006), which may reflect the general lack of training that teachers have in this area (Witko et al 2006). Furthermore, students may receive a limited amount of individualized career-planning support from guidance counsellors, as there are often shortfalls between counselling resources and student demand (Connelly, Blair and Ko 2013; Slomp, Gunn and Bernes 2014). To address these concerns, multiple researchers have recommended that career education be integrated into mainstream curriculum (Code et al 2006; Hiebert 2011; Perry and Wallace 2012; Slomp, Gunn and Bernes 2014; Truong 2011; Welde et al 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Witko et al 2005). This integration would reduce the burden on guidance counsellors, as students would be able to engage in career-planning processes within mainstream coursework under the direction of their teachers. It would also make course material more relevant and engaging by encouraging students to see the connections between academic content and real-world career applications.

This paper outlines a cross-curricular method to deliver career education to senior high school students through the study of English poetry. The unit presented in this article was created and implemented as part of a larger study, which has been described elsewhere (Slomp, Gunn and Bernes 2014; Welde et al 2015a, 2015b, 2016). In addition to meeting English language arts (Alberta Learning 2003) objectives and addressing English as a second language<sup>1</sup> (ESL) (Alberta Learning 1997) outcomes, this poetry unit provided students with career knowledge and skills that they may directly implement in their lives after high school.

## Context of Teaching Environment

### Demographics

The career-planning unit was implemented in two English Language Arts 20-2 classrooms at a large urban Catholic school in Calgary. The sample consisted of 46 male and 22 female Grade 11 students who ranged in age from 16 to 19 and originated from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. There were 26 ESL students in both classes ranging from levels 3 to 5 in English language proficiency. Eighteen students coped with learning, behavioural, medical or physical disabilities.

### Rationale

To facilitate career education and exploration, eight poems that focused on themes of self-awareness, ambition and perseverance were selected for study (Appendix A). In the first week of the unit, students engaged in self-awareness activities and questionnaires to discover their interests, values, personal attributes, strengths and weaknesses. The theme of self-awareness is crucial to career planning because students must first be aware of their individuality to determine what careers best suit their personal characteristics. The second week of the unit focused on ambition by allowing students to determine their individual goals and recognize potential challenges to these goals, such as financial obstacles. Exploring ambition and its associated challenges helped students to realize the importance of setting goals that are personally meaningful. The theme of the final week was perseverance, as students were encouraged to explore career options, create resumes and develop a personal support system. The unit is entitled Follow Your Dream to encompass these three significant aspects of career planning: self-awareness, ambition and perseverance.

This unit met the career-development needs of high school students in transition to postsecondary education or the world of work, because it focused on the reflection of their individuality, values, support systems, dreams and career options. As they explored the given texts, culture, media and society around them, students were able to affirm themselves as unique individuals and use their strengths and capabilities toward the exploration of personally meaningful career goals. In summary, the learning outcomes of the unit were to

- identify their personal values on self-fulfillment,
- discover their individual strengths and attributes,
- identify meaningful goals to pursue,
- explore meaningful career options that promoted their individuality and strengths and
- evaluate career options and available support systems.

## Detailed Description of the Unit Plan

The career unit was delivered in conjunction with the English Language Arts 20-2 poetry unit through a series of nine 85-minute lessons over a period of three weeks. The schedule of career education lessons and their associated activities are described in the following paragraphs.

### Lesson 1: Being Somebody

This introductory class included the study of two poems to meet both English Language Arts 20-2 and career education outcomes. The first poem, "Introduction to Poetry," by Billy Collins (1988), was examined for imagery and other literary devices. This poem highlights the idea that readers may over-analyze literature when the purpose of certain texts is for readers to simply enjoy the art and engage in self-reflection. Expanding on the message of self-reflection, Emily Dickinson's (1891) poem "I'm Nobody! Who Are You?," was studied to understand the meaning of being a somebody versus being a nobody in society. In this poem, Dickinson emphasized being a unique, independent person, rather than merely an ostentatious somebody in one's social context. Students discussed different ways of becoming their own somebody in society, especially with their career goals and plans. The quote "Do what you love, love what you do" was mentioned to explain how one's interests strongly shapes the person he or she is.

Students then completed a guided imagery activity (Appendix B), in which they imagined their ideal workday from morning to evening. Students were asked to close their eyes and imagine a perfect day 10 to 15 years into the future. The teacher then led them through imagining virtually every aspect of this day, including where the students were, who they were with, what types of tasks they were doing and so forth. Upon completion of the guided imagery activity, students wrote down the details of their ideal day and shared these details with a partner. The details they noted illuminated their specific interests, which were related back to the quote "Do what you love, love what you do."

After completing the activity, students then independently completed an interests questionnaire (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 1999) to further determine other interests that could help in their career planning. This questionnaire first asked students to determine various interests that they associated with their hands, feet, heart, ears, mouth and eyes, such as playing soccer with one's feet and knees. Students were then asked to consider which additional interests they would like to develop or rediscover. The students also identified interests that had always been important to



them and then considered which of these interests could be applied lucratively to start a business or bring in cash. They collected their responses to the questionnaire and the activity in their portfolios.

## **Lesson 2: Going Against the Grain**

This lesson focused on individuality and self-fulfillment under the constant challenge of conformity. Students examined the poem “1958,” by Gwendolyn MacEwen (1987), which discusses the issues of blind acceptance and peer pressure in a high school environment. The descriptions of cliques and stereotypes in the poem led to an insightful class discussion on the importance of staying true to one’s self, personal values and beliefs. Students then transformed the “1958” poem into a 2013 version to identify current and relevant challenges with individuality, such as the peer pressures of staying up-to-date with the most recent trends.

After updating their poems, students then completed a values test (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 1999) to add to their portfolios. This values test listed 36 values, such as security, variety, creativity and stability, and asked students to rate each value as “not important,” “important” or “extremely important.” After rating the importance of each value, students were asked to select and rate their top six values that they would want to incorporate in their future work. Students’ responses to these tasks helped them to identify their most meaningful values and understand the significance of prioritizing these values in future career plans and goals.

## **Lesson 3: Loud and Proud**

In this lesson, students examined the poem “Litany,” by Billy Collins (2002), to appreciate the effective use of imagery and metaphors. The poem uses unusual imagery and metaphors to describe and highlight an individual’s special qualities and characteristics. After reading the poem, students watched a video of Billy Collins performing “Litany” on YouTube ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=56Iq3PbSWZY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56Iq3PbSWZY)). The performance brought students’ attention to the poem’s elements, devices and techniques, which achieved English Language Arts 20-2 outcomes. By experiencing the performance, students were better able to gain an appreciation for the effectiveness and artistry of “Litany.”

The purpose of examining “Litany” was to invite students to identify attributes and skills that made each of them unique. After experiencing the poem, students shared pride stories with partners, describing a life experience that evoked a strong sense of pride. For example, some students described personal accomplishments such as earning a scholarship or victory in a sports tournament.

After students finished sharing their pride stories, their peers wrote down a list of specific skills that were required for the speaker to achieve such success. The speakers then read the list of skills their peers attributed to them and picked the top five skills that resonated most with them. Students included their written pride stories and peers’ feedback in their portfolios for further reference. This activity enabled students to feel affirmed in skills they possessed that could be transferable to career goals.

To further their understanding of themselves as capable individuals, students also completed a “What kind of person are you?” quiz (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 1999) to reflect on personal attributes they were happy about or would like to improve on. This quiz provided students with a list of 23 positive characteristics, such as courteous, dependable, tolerant and self-directed. Students indicated whether they were happy with their current level of each positive characteristic or if they would like to improve their ability to reflect each characteristic. Afterward, students were asked to reflect on which characteristics they would want to improve and how they could work on these characteristics. These reflections were also included in students’ portfolios.

## **Lesson 4: Life Regrets**

The purpose of this lesson was to encourage students to be self-aware and proactive about their goals and dreams, especially given the finite scope of life. Students were shown an infographic, “The Top 10 Regrets in Life by Those About to Die” (nd), which was created based on interviews with residents in palliative care facilities. This infographic depicts senior citizens thinking about regrets that they have, such as “I should have made more time for my friends,” and “Happiness is always a choice, I wish I knew that a lot earlier.” According to the infographic, the greatest life regret on the list was never having the courage to pursue one’s dreams.

The poems “Harlem” (Hughes 1994) and “The Road Not Taken” (Frost 1920) were read to address the topics of choices and regrets and further the theme of ambition in career planning. “Harlem” is a brief poem that invites the reader to consider what happens to dreams that are deferred and to imagine whether these dreams wither, rot or explode. In “The Road Not Taken,” the speaker describes a past decision to select one road over another at a fork in the path and muses about the road that was not taken. The speaker acknowledges that the chances of revisiting the path are very slim but wonders what the other path would have been like. The poems were studied and contrasted to allow students to develop critical responses and achieve English Language Arts 20-2 outcomes. These texts easily lent themselves to the career education theme of Follow Your Dream since they

discuss the importance of developing courage to pursue one's aspirations.

After engaging with the two poems, the class completed the 99-year-old question. In this activity, each student was asked by the teacher, "If I ran into you later in life when you are 99 years old, and everything in your life had gone perfectly according to plan, what would you tell me you've done and accomplished?" Students responded to this question by listing the goals they wished to pursue in their lives. After completing their lists, they classified their goals into short-, intermediate- and long-term pursuits. The teacher explained short-term goals take one year or less to accomplish, intermediate-term goals take one to five years to achieve and long-term goals take more than five years to complete. Students shared these goals with a partner and included their lists in their portfolios for future reference.

### **Lesson 5: Skills to Sell**

In this lesson, students read John Updike's (1993) poem "Ex-Basketball Player" to discuss the importance of maximizing one's talents and abilities for as many options as possible in life. The poem describes a former athlete who was renowned for his exceptional basketball talent but did not go on to further his skills or seek other related career options. Instead, he now works as a gas station attendant. This poem was intended for students to realize how important their skills and strengths are in a dynamic and rapidly changing society.

After analyzing the poem, students completed an individual skills test (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 1999) to examine the skills that they could transfer to various work situations. Students assessed the skills they possessed in several skill categories: numerical, communication, leadership, sense awareness, using logical thinking, service, organization, technical, self-management and being innovative. Each category involved several specific skills, and students checked off the skills that they currently possessed. After checking off relevant skills, students were asked to create lists of the 10 skills they did best, the 10 skills they most enjoyed using and the 10 skills that they would like to develop. Students then added these lists to their career-planning portfolios.

### **Lesson 6: Multiple Choices**

This lesson allowed students to take an online career matchmaker quiz that generated recommended careers based on students' responses to questions about their values, beliefs, interests and skills. This activity helped them to explore the wide variety of career options available to them and gain information about particular

occupations of interest. This class was held in a computer lab where students were able to access the Career Cruising website ([www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com)). Students were able to create personalized planning accounts, complete a career matchmaker quiz, explore careers of interest and qualifications, inquire about programs and apprenticeships in different postsecondary institutions and develop skills for employment such as resume building. The class was spent exploring multiple career choices by reading and comparing work descriptions from people who work in specific professions.

After reading about a number of different career options, students picked their top three careers and printed all available information from the website, especially the details on required education and training. They compared the details between each career and included this information in their portfolio. Students then reread their interests, values, beliefs, skills set and goals, and matched them against each career to carefully evaluate their options. The purpose of this activity was to convey why careers of interest should be self-gratifying. For example, one student stated that travelling is an interest and goal, so the career choice of being a flight attendant was understandably fitting and meaningful to her.

### **Lesson 7: Taking Steps**

This lesson was designed to allow students to identify the steps they could take toward reaching their short- and intermediate-term goals, including the pursuit of one of the three career options they had researched. Many students realized the important step of gaining experience through a part-time job or volunteer position. This led to the exploration of the Resumes section in the Employment tab of the Career Cruising website. Students added all of the information about themselves from their portfolio to the resume-builder, generated a resume, printed two copies and saved the file in their account. They then took one copy of their resume and swapped with a classmate for peer review and feedback. This was a very effective exercise, as students took charge of their work and helped each other. It also identified how important it was to save money or budget more wisely for their goals, especially in the case of postsecondary education. Students engaged in a short budgeting exercise (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 1999) where they tracked their daily spending in a given chart. With some math, students determined the annual cost of their current spending and gained an idea of how much they could possibly save now to meet the tuition or apprenticeship fees of postsecondary programs they wished to pursue after high school.

Students were then provided with an article entitled "Tips to Help You Save Money" (Money Mentors 2004)

to review. This article outlined numerous ways for people to save money on the needs and wants in their budget, such as housing, utilities, food, transportation and recreation. Students then completed a short written reflection describing ways to personally save for their career goals and included this response in their portfolios.

### **Lesson 8: Portfolio Day**

In this lesson, students worked in pairs to share their portfolios with one another. Students had 10 minutes with two peers to share what they had learned about themselves by briefly discussing their ideal day and their responses to the interests questionnaire, values, skills and daily spending tests. They briefly described the careers they were most interested in and how they were prioritizing short- and intermediate-term career goals. While each student was presenting, peers filled out a completion sheet that indicated which tasks the presenter had completed in their portfolio. To receive full completion marks for their ELA grade, students must have completed the nine unit tasks. Students were also held accountable for making the best of the unit by engaging in all activities and exercises that were available.

### **Lesson 9: Rally Your Allies**

This final lesson focused on the development of personal and professional support systems, especially in the pursuit of dreams and goals. The class read the poem “Alone” by Maya Angelou (1975) which highlights the essential theme that people need each other to illuminate their strengths and overcome obstacles. The poem helped show how success in our complex world depends partly on having a support system of people who can provide information and help when you need it. Students discussed how such people can serve as allies who can help them on their career path. The class made a list of potential allies which included parents, teachers, counselors, friends, coworkers and so on. They engaged in the final Relationship Assets activity (Alberta Human Resources and Employment 1999) to strengthen and expand their support system. Students first read a definition of how potential allies should act, such as sharing information, helping others to succeed and offering support to others. The students then identified potential allies in their lives and planned a time to contact them, share their portfolios and ask if they could serve as a reference on their resumes.

Students were encouraged to keep their portfolios and continue expanding them with certificates, awards and testimonials. They were encouraged to view their portfolios as reflections of who they were as capable people.

## **Methods of Assessment**

### **Formative Assessment**

Each lesson was closely observed by the teacher for student engagement, responses and suggestions. A formative assessment strategy that was frequently used at the end of lessons was having students rate the quality level with a show of fingers on a scale of one to three, where one was unsatisfactory, two was helpful and three was very helpful. During the fourth lesson of the unit, students were asked to complete a mid-unit survey about the activities they had completed to that point. They rated each activity using the same three-point scale as described above. Students also provided written suggestions which were immediately considered to guide instruction and ensure an appropriate balance between poetry content and career education.

### **Summative Assessment**

At the end of the unit in Lesson 9, students completed a unit evaluation form. The summative evaluation was divided into several sections. In the first section of the survey, students were asked to indicate whether they had completed each of the lesson activities. In the second section of the survey, students were asked to rate the activities in terms of helpfulness on a three-point scale which included “unhelpful,” “helpful” and “very helpful.” Students were also asked to comment on the most useful aspects of the unit and aspects that could be improved. In the final section of the survey, students were asked to indicate their agreement with whether the unit’s five learning objectives had been achieved. Students were informed that their responses would be extremely helpful in making the unit as effective, relevant and deliverable as possible for other students in their grade level.

## **Assessment Results**

### **Formative Assessment**

During the brief formative assessment at the end of each lesson, the majority of lessons were rated by students as helpful or very helpful. After the midterm evaluation, student feedback regarding lessons up to that point was taken into account. At this point, students suggested that they share their discoveries with their peers. The teacher implemented this suggestion in the subsequent lessons, especially in Lesson 8: Portfolio Day where students shared their portfolio with two other peers and requested feedback.

**Table 1. Completion of Activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>I Did It</b>	<b>I Didn't Do It</b>
My Ideal Day	55 (95%)	3 (5%)
Interests Response	54 (93%)	4 (7%)
Values Questionnaire	56 (97%)	2 (3%)
Pride Story	54 (93%)	4 (7%)
“What Kind of Person Are You?” Questionnaire	54 (93%)	4 (7%)
Goals by 99	51 (88%)	7 (12%)
Transferrable Skills Questionnaire	48 (83%)	10 (17%)
Three Researched Career Options/Comparisons	52 (90%)	6 (10%)
Saving Money	47 (81%)	11 (19%)
Allies Activity	45 (78%)	13 (22%)

**Table 2. Perceived Helpfulness of Activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Unhelpful</b>	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Very Helpful</b>
My Ideal Day	12 (22%)	32 (58%)	11 (20%)
Interests Response	3 (6%)	32 (60%)	18 (34%)
Values Questionnaire	3 (5%)	23 (42%)	29 (53%)
Pride Story	12 (23%)	18 (34%)	23 (43%)
“What Kind of Person Are You?” Questionnaire	2 (4%)	29 (54%)	23 (43%)
Goals by 99	6 (12%)	19 (37%)	26 (51%)
Transferable Skills Questionnaire	7 (14%)	23 (47%)	19 (39%)
Three Researched Career Options/Comparisons	0 (0%)	16 (31%)	36 (69%)
Saving Money	2 (4%)	14 (30%)	31 (66%)
Allies Activity	3 (7%)	19 (44%)	21 (49%)

**Table 3. Learning Outcomes Fulfilled as Determined by the Student**

	<b>I Don't Agree</b>	<b>I Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>I Agree</b>
1. This unit plan helped me identify my personal values on self-fulfillment.	2 (4%)	18 (32%)	37 (65%)
2. This unit plan helped me discover my strengths and attributes.	3 (5%)	19 (33%)	35 (61%)
3. This unit helped me identify meaningful goals to pursue.	0 (0%)	20 (35%)	37 (65%)
4. This unit helped me explore meaningful career options that promote my individuality and strengths.	0 (0%)	17 (30%)	40 (70%)
5. This unit helped me evaluate my career options and my support system to pursue my goals.	0 (0%)	20 (35%)	37 (65%)

## Summative Assessment

Fifty-eight out of the 68 students in the class completed the survey. Ten students were absent the day it was administered.

### *Part 1: Participation and Completion*

Participation information is presented in the following table. On average, 88 per cent of students indicated that they had completed each activity.

### *Part 2: Perceived Helpfulness of Activities*

Students' ratings of helpfulness for each activity are presented in the following table. On average, 90 per cent of students rated activities as "helpful" or "very helpful." Students' comments regarding the most useful aspects of the unit and aspects that could be improved are described in the Discussion section.

### *Part 3: Determining If Learning Outcomes Were Met*

As shown in the following table, students indicated the extent to which they agreed that each of the five learning outcomes had been met by the career education unit. Ninety-eight per cent of students somewhat or fully agreed that the unit plan had met all of the learning objectives.

## Discussion

Ninety-eight per cent of students either "somewhat agreed" or "fully agreed" that the five learning objectives

of the unit were achieved. Seventy per cent of students fully agreed that the unit objective of "[exploring] meaningful career options that promote individuality and strengths" was met, and 65 per cent fully agreed that they were able to identify their personal values, meaningful goals and a support system through this unit. Overall, these results suggest that students found the unit extremely helpful in allowing them to gain a greater sense of self-awareness and a better understanding of their future career options.

The activities rated by students as most helpful were determining their personal values, researching three careers and making comparisons, and saving money. This implies that these Grade 11 students have a general sense of their personal values, strengths and attributes as unique individuals. At this point in their lives, students prefer activities that provide them with information, tools and support to pursue their meaningful goals, especially as they finish senior high school and transition into postsecondary education or the world of work. One student highlights this point with her comment, "I really liked the research of career options and making comparisons. It really helped me choose what I'd like to do as a future job." Another student expressed a similar opinion, as she "liked how it helped [her] see and realize what [she] want[s] to do after high school and [recognize available] job opportunities."

Students provided suggestions for unit improvement in the written feedback portion of the survey. A majority of the suggestions involved having more class time and doing

fewer activities to enhance the quality of career planning. Students rated the guided imagery activity and Pride Story exercises as being the least helpful activities in the unit. These activities were less structured than the questionnaires, and some students had difficulty with the abstract nature of these exercises. Given that this unit was incorporated in a less academic classroom with a diverse student population in terms of learning abilities and English language proficiency, difficulties with abstract exercises are to be expected. However, with greater exposure to these abstract concepts and activities, students will grow more proficient and these types of activities will become more helpful for them. At this point in time, students expressed how they could have better identified their strengths and goals through more interactive and hands-on work, such as perhaps meeting with professionals in their careers of interest.

The high number of students who were studying English as an additional language significantly enriched the unit's content by providing a variety of different worldviews, cultural experiences and understandings. In future renditions of this project, it would be meaningful to build on this momentum, incorporate more diverse poems and thereby encourage students to explore a variety of cultural perspectives on growth, learning and development.

Integrating career planning into the study of poetry was advantageous because it brought the content to life for students. They showed increased participation in classroom activities as they were able to personally relate to the meaningful themes of self-awareness, ambition and perseverance in the texts. The evident enthusiasm was channelled in students' work, especially in their writing. Students showed eagerness to complete poetry tasks that they found purposeful and meaningful, which was reflected in improved English language arts marks. Career planning overall increased students' engagement through the exploration and application of meaningful themes mentioned above. By engaging in a variety of activities, questionnaires and writing responses, students were able to personally and practically apply their learning by compiling a portfolio for future employment.

## Challenges and Future Directions

The biggest challenge with this career education unit was ensuring that there was enough time in the three weeks to achieve English language arts poetry outcomes and career education outcomes effectively. The unit was originally designed to study 12 thematic poems to provide more breadth and opportunities for literary analysis. However, after the first two days of the unit, it became clear that students needed more time to examine and relate to the poems. The number of poems was then reduced to ensure thorough study of terms, detailed analyses and the

close examination of the career education theme Follow Your Dream. Another challenge in the unit was student engagement with certain poems and literary terms. While the majority of poems chosen appealed to most students, some had difficulty engaging with the texts at a personal level. An alternative strategy to this challenge is to include an English language arts assignment where students choose a familiar song to analyze the relevant theme of following one's dreams. This would give students an opportunity to engage with poetry in lyrics and literary terms in a more interesting and meaningful way.

Although students rated this unit favourably, it is important to remember that it was implemented with 68 students. This small sample size precluded the use of inferential statistics, and analysis was therefore restricted to descriptive statistics of student participation and ratings of agreement with each learning outcome. It would be interesting to examine the results of this unit if it were integrated with a greater sample size of ELA 20 students. This would allow for more in-depth analysis and greater generalizability of this project's findings. Future research could also incorporate pre- and post-tests of career knowledge and self-awareness to quantify changes in students' career development that occurred as a result of participation in the unit.

Future versions of this unit would do well to incorporate a larger selection of poems, including more visual and multimedia texts relating to the theme Follow Your Dream. This would enable differentiation for other grade levels in achieving poetry outcomes in the English language arts program of studies. The theme of Follow Your Dream can be carried forward to other English language arts units such as film studies or the exploration of nonfiction texts. For example, films such as *The Pursuit of Happyness* (Smith 2006) could be viewed to examine the protagonist's perseverance and ambition during his struggle to reach his life and career goals. Students could respond to the film by writing an analysis of how the themes of perseverance, ambition and self-awareness were exhibited throughout the plot. Alternatively, students could combine an analysis of the film with personal reflections about their own personal goals and how they would overcome obstacles to those goals. These activities would allow students to engage in self-exploration and career planning using an English medium other than poetry.

## Conclusion

This paper outlined a cross-curricular means to implement career planning and services for students through the study of thematic poetry on self-awareness, ambition and perseverance. The integration of career education into the academic curriculum enlivens course content, reduces the

overall strain on guidance and counselling resources, and promotes career exploration and growth. This career unit, Follow Your Dream, was designed to foster self-awareness in students as unique individuals with different strengths and skills to contribute in a dynamic society. Students were able to learn more about themselves, explore career options and tools from a variety of resources, and recognize their strengths and individuality. As the unit progressed, students were empowered to set personal goals for self-fulfillment and acknowledge the need to persevere through upcoming financial and emotional obstacles. Such a unit is essential for students at a critical point in their lives to enable an effective transition into postsecondary education or the world of work they wish to pursue.

## Note

1. Although the term *English as an Additional Language (EAL)* is replacing English as a Second Language (ESL), we use the latter to be consistent with terminology used in Alberta curriculum.

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## Appendix A

### List of Poems for Analysis

- “Introduction to Poetry,” by Billy Collins
- “I’m Nobody! Who Are You?,” by Emily Dickinson
- “1958,” by Gwendolyn MacEwen
- “Litany,” by Billy Collins
- “Oral Performance,” by Billy Collins:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=56Iq3PbSWZY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56Iq3PbSWZY)
- “Harlem (A Dream Deferred),” by Langston Hughes
- “The Road Not Taken,” by Robert Frost
- “Ex-Basketball Player,” by John Updike
- “Alone,” by Maya Angelou

## Appendix B

### Guided Fantasy: My Ideal Day Activity

#### *Script*

This is your fantasy. It will help you to dream of what you really want in your career and lifestyle. Try not to put up barriers for yourself. You will have a chance after the fantasy to come back to reality. For now, let yourself enjoy!

Close your eyes and allow yourself to get as comfortable as possible. Take some deep breaths and relax. Let go of any tensions and worries that you may have at this moment.

Think of yourself, somewhere 10 to 15 years in the future. This will be enough time to have taken necessary education toward a career, begin working in an occupation or make any career changes.

See yourself waking up in the morning. Look around the room before you even get out of bed. Now it is time to get up. Look around your home as you go to the kitchen for breakfast. What does it look like? Is there anyone else in your home?

Now it is time to get ready for work. Return to your bedroom and look through your wardrobe considering what you will wear today. Is it something quite casual or will you wear a business suit? Maybe you have a uniform to wear. See yourself getting dressed for work.

You leave now to go to work or maybe you stay at home. If you stay at home to work, imagine the place in your home where you will work. See yourself going to that place. If you leave your home, think about what type of transportation you will use to get to work. Think about the scenery you pass on your way to work. Think about how long it takes you to get to your place of employment.

Now you have arrived at work. Before going in, look around at your place of work. Is it a large or small building? Do you work inside or outside? Is it an institution, such as a school or a hospital that you are going into? As you go in, see who is there, what is the atmosphere like? Is it fast paced and hectic, or slow and relaxed? Are there lots of people or just one or two others, or are you alone? Who greets you? Who do you talk to?

As you start your day’s activities, think about what you will do at work that day. Do not try to think of a specific job title, but think more of the kind of skills you will be using and the tasks you will be doing. Will you work with people: teaching, consulting, helping? Are you designing, writing, working with your hands, drawing? Do you work with numbers? Do you work on a computer? Do you work alone or is there a group of people working with you? Imagine yourself going through your morning activities.

Now it is time for lunch. How will you spend your lunch hour? Consider the ways you could spend your time. Have you brought lunch with you or will you meet someone for lunch? Maybe you are so busy that you work right through your lunch hour, or do you have an activity that you do over the lunch hour? Imagine yourself enjoying your lunch time.

The afternoon is here. Will you return to work? Will you return to the same place of work? If not, consider what you will do and where you will go. Do you do the same activities in the afternoon as you did in the morning? Do you have a major project that you are completing or do you do different tasks in the afternoon? Think about who you are working with. Are they young or old? Mostly males or females? What is your supervisor like or are you the supervisor? See yourself going through the afternoon’s activities.

It is the end of the working day. See yourself getting ready to leave. Think back over your day and think of



one thing you did that day that gives you a sense of accomplishment.

How will you spend your evening? Will you go out to dinner or go home? Do you spend your time with others or are you alone? Think about the activities that you could do in the evening. Have you brought work home? Will you take a course or maybe teach a class? Imagine yourself enjoying the evening's activities.

Now it is time for bed. As you turn off the lights in your home, have one last look around. Just as you drift off to sleep, think about the one thing you are really looking forward to doing tomorrow.

Now that fantasy is over. Take a few minutes to become oriented to the room again. When you are ready, open your eyes and write out what you imagined in your ideal fantasy.

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# Beyond Self-Awareness: Career Goal Formation in Integrated Career Education

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*Clayton Montoya, Kerry B Bernes, Jonathan L Roque, Annelise M J Lyseng and Lana Draper-Caldwell*

## Abstract

This paper presents and discusses the results of integrating a career planning unit within Alberta's Grade 6 Science and Health and Life Skills curricula. Clear lesson descriptions and examples of each lesson activity are provided. Of the students who participated in the unit, 99 per cent indicated that the activities were either good or great. Objectives of the unit were met with 53 per cent of the students reporting that the unit plan helped them to learn a lot about themselves, 35 per cent stating that this unit plan helped them to learn a lot about careers, 82 per cent noting that this unit plan made them excited about what they could do with their life, and 47 per cent reporting that this unit plan made them want to learn more about different careers. Discussion surrounding the effectiveness of this unit will clarify how the unit was successful, even though collected data may appear to implicate otherwise. Recommended alterations to the unit to improve student feedback will also be discussed. Students were able to demonstrate increased self-awareness regarding their unique interests and passions, as well as how their self-knowledge was applied to making decisions regarding their future lives.

Students on the cusp of their teen years will undoubtedly face a variety of challenges and pressures. As they develop and define their unique roles as functional members of society, they must distinguish their personal values and interests apart from competing social pressures (that is, media, family and peer expectations, monetary concerns) in order to achieve meaningful life goals. Without adequate career guidance and self-exploration, elementary school students may eliminate potential career options based on an over-reliance on societal expectations regarding their gender roles and social class, and an underappreciation for their own skills and interests (Gottfredson 2005; Leung 2008). Therefore, a central aim of implementing a career planning (CP) unit with an emphasis on building CP skills

is to provide students with an opportunity to define their unique, individual identities by exploring personal themes related to self-concept and self-knowledge (Gottfredson 2005; Magnusson 1992; Porfeli and Lee 2012). The successful formulation of these two dimensions has been described as important factors in attaining meaningful career goals (Nasir and Lee Shiang 2013; Schiegel 2013).

Targeting CP skills at an early, impressionable age during elementary school is an effective means to aid students attaining meaningful future life goals (Magnuson and Starr 2000; Palladino Schultheiss 2008; Porfeli and Lee 2012). For this reason, a self-awareness-themed unit was implemented with the core premise of building on elementary school students' self-knowledge and self-concept. When students are engaged in lesson material that requires them to reflect on their self-knowledge, identify their personal strengths, pursue their interests, and capitalize on their skills and aspirations, they are consequently developing decision-making and goal-setting skills that will set them up for success in a future career (Harkins 2000; Hiebert 1993; Magnusson 1992; Rivera and Schaefer 2009).

## Integrated Career Education

Integrated career education, the process of delivering career education within academic subjects across multiple grade levels, has been supported by numerous researchers (Hiebert 1993; Kozlowski 2013; Orthner et al 2013; Perry and Wallace 2012; Slomp, Bernes and Gunn 2014; Slomp, Gunn and Bernes 2012; Welde et al 2015a, 2015b, 2016). Rather than occurring within a stand-alone career education course, integrated career education offers teachers an opportunity to connect career-relevant information with course content (Perry and Wallace 2012), thereby increasing student engagement with course material (Orthner et al 2013).

The University of Lethbridge created a kindergarten to Grade 12 teacher training program to provide the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to deliver integrated career education (Slomp, Bernes and Gunn 2012; Slomp, Gunn and Bernes 2014; Welde et al 2015a, 2015b, 2016). In this program, intern teachers were exposed to career development theory and taught to incorporate career education into academic course content. Special attention was paid to Magnusson's (1995) five steps of career counselling, as intern teachers were taught to engage students in the career development process to promote self-awareness, attain career planning skills, and create and pursue career goals. To complete the course, intern teachers designed and implemented career education projects in their final practicum placements. This article presents one of the projects that was carried out in fulfillment of this training program.

### **Rationale for Unit**

This project received ethical clearance through the University of Lethbridge. The CP unit was implemented by an intern teacher during the final 12-week practicum placement of his undergraduate career. As this was a final practicum placement, the intern teacher was responsible for demonstrating independence and mastery in his teaching and delivering a high quality of education. The intern teacher had access to support from his mentor teacher and faculty supervisor if needed. On completion of the CP unit, the intern teacher submitted standardized student evaluation surveys and a final project report to his instructor. This article is based on the intern teacher's findings as presented in his project report.

### **Context of the Teaching Environment**

The CP unit was implemented in a rural kindergarten to Grade 9 school of 300 students in southeastern Alberta. The majority of families in the community belonged to either lower to mid-range socioeconomic status brackets. The unit was integrated within the Science and Health and Life Skills curricula in a Grade 6 classroom of 18 students. The classroom's diversity in terms of scholastic ability was wide-ranging and markedly apparent through teacher observation, as three students presented with learning difficulties and five students demonstrated exceptional academic abilities.

### **Cross-Curricular Integration**

The primary focus of the unit was to improve student self-awareness by infusing the topics of study with themes of self-exploration. The unit employed Alberta's Grade 6 Science and Health and Life Skills curriculum as a means

to introduce CP. Students were required to engage in a substantial degree of self-exploration and paid special emphasis on the topics of (1) discovering aspects of one's personal identity, (2) exploring one's personal strengths and characteristics and (3) making educated inferences based on the evidence provided. Moreover, the unit sought to enable students to develop and employ investigative skills in scholastic as well as personal (that is, self-explorative) subject matter (for example, within the evidence and investigation topic of the science unit), students were taught to identify a possible suspect based on physical evidence.

### **Health and Life Skills Objectives Achieved**

Due to the career planning unit's emphasis on expanding the student's self-knowledge, the unit targeted the following outcomes of the Health and Life Skills 6 curriculum:

- L-6.2 identify personal skills, and skill areas, for development in the future
- L-6.3 analyze influences on decision making; for example, family, peers, values, cultural beliefs, quality of information gathered
- L-6.6 analyze and apply effective age-appropriate strategies to manage change; for example, predict, plan and prepare for transition to next school level (Alberta Learning 2002).

### **Science Objectives Achieved**

CP skills were introduced through the Science unit's topics of evidence: (1) individual evidence—that which can be traced back, or attributed to a specific individual; (b) and class evidence—that which can be traced to back, or attributed to a class, or number of individuals. The unit thus achieved the following objectives of the Science curriculum:

- 9.3 Recognize that evidence found at the scene of an activity may have unique characteristics that allow an investigator to make inferences about the participants and the nature of the activity, and give examples of how specific evidence may be used.
- 9.4 Investigate evidence and link it to a possible source (Science Alberta Foundation 2006).

### **Objectives of the Career Planning Skills Unit**

The overarching purpose of this unit was to allow students to discover and define aspects of their personal identity by recognizing these aspects, and thereon share their self-knowledge with each other. With respect to the Science and Health curricula, the unit targeted the following outcomes:

- I can observe and identify unique qualities within myself and others.
- I can develop an educated inference about possible outcomes based on the observations recorded.
- I can assess my values, interests and influences, based on these observations.

## Detailed Description of the Unit Plan

The career unit centred on the completion of a final product: a poster called the Alias Project. The unit's activities were designed to eventually be combined together in order to create the poster. The poster was to include facets of the student's individuality; it was a collection of evidence samples; that is, fingerprints, shoe prints and handwriting analyses. These evidence samples were used as catalysts for discussion on the uniqueness of each student's individuality. Self-exploration and self-knowledge were emphasized throughout each activity. Students were to engage in an investigation of their identity and collect evidence of what made them unique. Furthermore, students were encouraged to make inferences about possible life goals and career choices based on the personal evidence they discovered. The following is a detailed description of the elements needed to complete the project.

### *Activity 1—Fingerprint Analysis*

The purpose of this activity was for students to begin developing an awareness of their individuality. The lesson began with a circle discussion on the collection of fingerprints as forensic evidence and why fingerprints were important in an investigation as individual evidence. Moreover, the teacher heavily emphasized the idea that each student was unique not only as a result of his or her fingerprints but also in personal qualities, interests and goals. Following the discussion, the students took notes of the four main types of fingerprints: whorl, loop, arch and composite. Once the definition of these fingerprint types was established, the students were given a mini visual test of multiple fingerprints: the teacher displayed a fingerprint on the Smart Board, and in teams of three, students were tasked to provide the correct name of the fingerprint.

Once the students appeared to have a proficient understanding of the fingerprint types, they were assigned the task of recording their own fingerprints. To do this, students used the *It's a Print* worksheet<sup>1</sup> to record and organize their prints. Students rubbed graphite from a pencil onto a piece of paper, rubbed their finger across the graphite, then placed a piece of adhesive tape across their dirtied finger. The graphite print adhered to the tape and showed up clearly when it was placed on the *It's a Print* chart.

When the students completed their fingerprint charts, they were tasked to find another class member with a similar fingerprint pattern as theirs. When a similar pattern was found, they were to closely compare the two

prints (using magnifying glasses) in order to find unique differences in the valleys and ridges of those prints. At the end of this activity, the teacher reiterated the idea that all fingerprints are unique to an individual, and, just like fingerprints, each student possessed a unique individuality. Moreover, just as there were commonalities between fingerprints, the teacher explained that there were also commonalities between personal interests and characteristics, but that each student's traits were personally unique. The teacher aided his students to identify their distinctive characteristics by engaging each group of three in a discussion of each member's individuality. Each student was to reflect on his or her unique talents, interests and personal characteristics. Students were allowed to attach their self-reflections onto their worksheet.

### *Activity 2 – Shoe Prints and Impressions*

The class began with the teacher explaining how shoe prints and impressions were used by investigators to solve crimes. Students were to complete the Impressions worksheet throughout the teacher's presentation. On completing the worksheet, the teacher demonstrated how students could record and analyze their own shoe print. Vegetable oil was applied to the sole of the shoe. Once the shoe was well covered, the students stepped onto a piece of white paper. When the foot was lifted, an oily image of the print was left (students were also reminded to thoroughly clean their shoe with a paper towel). Next, pencil shavings were sprinkled over the oil-print, and thus the image of the shoe tread became clear as the shavings adhered to the oil. The page was then placed in a plastic sleeve and labelled according to the shoe's brand, size, length (heel to toe) and any other unique markings (that is nicks, wear marks, gouges). Students completed this task with the help of a partner.

The central idea in this lesson was that shoe prints could be compared to the impression people leave in their interactions with friends, family and the local community. In the same way that people leave shoe prints wherever they go, students leave impressions when interacting with others in their sphere of influence. A brainstorming session over this principle included the following examples: (1) teachers teach students how to read, and in turn these students are able to enjoy books, newspapers and magazines; (2) doctors save lives; and (3) carpenters build houses for families to live in.

Through engagement in this activity, students were to reflect on their personal impact on the community and expand their self-exploration by thinking of what sort of impact they would like to have on the community in the future as adults. Students referred back to the previous lesson's activity, where they identified personal strengths and interests, using their self-knowledge to sharpen their understanding of how their personal characteristics influenced their communities.

Students were allowed to write and attach their reflections onto their Impressions worksheet.

### ***Activity 3—Making Inferences from a To-Do List***

Prior to this activity, the teacher explained the difference between an observation and an inference. A corresponding handout was also distributed to the class. A handout entitled *My Super Awesome To-Do List* was also provided to the students. The purpose of this activity was to encourage students to employ their observational skills, then use their collected observations to construct an inference. In relation to CP skills, students' observations could include personal facets of their identity, which would then be used to make inferences to justify items listed on their list. In order to complete the to-do list, students were asked to imagine what activities they might be doing 5, 10 and 15 years in the future. Students were encouraged to list their aspirational goals. The teacher explained that the list could include such items as sports, activities, hobbies, careers, volunteer work and inventions. With each step, students were asked to calculate how old they would be as they achieved each item on the list.

Because the purpose of this activity is to explore interests and aspirations, initially, students were not required to give realistic responses. The activity was designed to elicit an understanding of the students' unique interests, values and passions that in turn would lead to goal formation. For instance, one student wanted to create the world's largest marshmallow in 10 years and recreate a family of flubbers with Robin Williams in 15 years. As outlandish as this seemed, after some thought the student was able to identify a personal strength: his creativity and desire to invent new and exciting ideas. The teacher then discussed how these strengths could be applied to the world of work. The teacher emphasized the idea of identifying a possible future career. The teacher led a brainstorming session where students were to generate as many career options as possible.

Once all students completed the assignment, the teacher invited them to share items from their list, which he wrote on the board. As a large list of possibilities developed, the students were able to find similarities and differences between their choices and the choices of others. If they were intrigued by another student's idea, they were encouraged to copy it down for themselves to diversify their selection.

On completing the to-do list, students were paired with partners to read each other's ideas. They were asked to read over the page carefully, using their observation skills to look for evidence: repeated ideas or themes that could lead them to infer some of their partner's interests or values. The students were then asked to write an inference about their partner's interests and values based on the gathered evidence, on the back of their partner's to-do

list. The original student reviewed the partner's comments and informed the partner if the inference was correct or needed refinement, then each partner modified their lists.

The teacher wrote a personalized note on the back of each to-do list. Rather than being critical, the teacher sought to suggest or identify the students' emergent values, interests and passions. (Incomplete work was returned to the student for completion.) This, in turn, helped to guide students in the creation of an alias—a fictional representation of themselves and the core values behind each of the student's hopes and dreams.

### ***Activity 4—Inspiring Aliases***

After reviewing what was covered during the to-do list activity, the students were asked to name three people who they considered positive role models or personal heroes. This could include family, friends, celebrities, fictional characters, historical figures and so on. Once students wrote the names of their role models, they were asked to write two or three sentences describing their important characteristics, and share their role models and key attributes with the class.

The students were then tasked to create an alias—a fictional conceptualization of how the students envisioned their ideal selves 15 years in the future—and name the alias with a portmanteau of the names of their three heroes. For example, Ellena Rosandi is a portmanteau of Helen Keller, Rosa Parks and Mahatma Ghandi. Students were to generate as many portmanteaus as possible and select the name combination they liked best. The teacher then handed out the *Project: Alias Creation* sheet. The students began by describing their alias in general terms. Students were allowed to invent a number of details but were asked to keep their physical descriptions and birthdays the same. This meant that ideas on their to-do list were available to be incorporated.

Students then moved on to complete the *Personal and Professional Life* section of this handout. In this space, students were encouraged to refer to their to-do list for guidance. This section required students to provide specific details on their alias's career, place of residence, hobbies and activities. As they filled out the section, they were advised to consider the hopes and dreams about which they were passionate. This activity invited a greater depth of exploration of the student's interests and values.

### ***Activity 5—Alias Poster and Presentation***

This activity sought to aggregate all of the themes and concepts from the previous activities into a single lesson. On a large piece of poster paper, students attached their finger and shoe print worksheets, their to-do list, as well as their alias creation project. The title of the poster was simply their alias name accompanied by a picture of

themselves dressed as their alias. To connect the unit's theme of investigation, the posters were to appear as a character profile of aggregated evidence samples.

On completion, students paired up and learned about their partner's alias. Once they were familiar with their partner's information, they presented their partner's alias to the class. This allowed each project to be showcased, and provided students with the opportunity to collaborate with classmates. Students were given time to review other students' projects and give feedback about what made their partners unique.

## Method of Evaluation

The unit evaluation involved formative and summative assessment. Throughout each activity, the teacher formatively assessed students through observation to determine their level of engagement and understanding by monitoring their progress through each assignment. In addition to classroom observations, oral feedback was solicited from the students regarding each assignment, which sought to identify any unit content in need of clarification and improvement.

Summative assessment involved grading the students' final projects and administering unit evaluation forms. To complete the summative evaluation for the alias project, a rubric for the alias poster was used. The alias project was evaluated based on the quality of the descriptions provided. The documentation of physical evidence was also assessed based on the accuracy and clarity of the recorded observations. The poster was also marked for spelling, grammar and clarity of communication. Last, the organization and appearance of the project was assessed. Each of the aforementioned categories could receive an evaluation grade of limited, developing, proficient or mastery.

On completion of the unit, students completed a brief self-evaluation form, prepared by the University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education, specifically for the purpose of evaluating a career unit. The form was designed at a Grade 6 reading level, which was manageable for all the students participating in the unit. Students rated their participation in each activity and indicated the extent to which the unit objectives had been achieved. Students were asked to describe parts of the unit they found especially useful as well as possible improvements.

## Description of Data

### Formative Assessment

The teacher's observation indicated the students were eager to share their ideas and demonstrate their natural creativity. Most students had little trouble expanding on their ideas regarding their interests and values, but some struggled to elaborate beyond single details and descriptors for their alias. This was usually the case for the students who had struggled to complete the to-do list properly.

### Summative Assessment

After allowing students to share their projects and reflect on the importance of self-awareness when making career and life choices, the class participated in an anonymous evaluation of the unit. The following is a breakdown of the results from the evaluation form given to the class after the completion of the unit.

#### *Part 1: Participation and Completion*

Ninety-seven per cent of students completed all of the activities within the unit (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Part 1. Completion of Activities**

Activity	I didn't do it	I did it
Finger and Shoe Prints	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
My Super Awesome To-Do List	1 (6%)	17 (94%)
Alias Creation Project	1 (6%)	17 (94%)
Alias Poster	0 (0%)	18 (100%)

Note: On average 97% of the students completed all of the activities.

### **Part 2: Perceived Helpfulness of Activities**

Overall, the project as a whole was very well received with 99 per cent of the students rating the activities as “good” or “great” (Table 2). One student expressed a negative opinion regarding one of the projects (the to-do list). Aside from comments that personally addressed the teacher, written feedback contained a significant number of comments praising the topic of investigation techniques (that is, finger and shoe prints) and its connection to developing goals or interests. For example, three students commented, “I liked how much fun it was and how much we got to do hands-on work to see for ourselves,” “I like how [the teacher] is helping us to prepare for a specific thing in junior high,” and “I found out what I might do in the future.” About half of the respondents did not provide detailed feedback; the other provided valuable feedback. Many of the comments reflected a strong desire to carry this project further with the addition of another project or activity. As two students commented, “The unit could

have been made better by doing more activities,” and “I would have liked to have written a story about our lives.” Student-suggested learning activities included ideas such as student-led investigations to solve a mystery (using student information from the poster), alias creation for peers and written, fictional life stories. Furthermore, students also suggested that the super awesome to-do list be shortened to only a 5- and 10-year list.

### **Part 3: Determining If Learning Outcomes Were Met**

On average, 54 per cent of the students agreed that the unit achieved all of its objectives (one student was absent when this data was collected; see Table 3). This third section of the evaluation was revealing since most of the class was neutral, or not sure, as to whether or not they believed the unit achieved its objectives. It is acknowledged that this project did not focus on researching various career possibilities, as its emphasis was instead placed on self-exploration and self-awareness.

**Table 2**  
**Part 2. Perceived Helpfulness of the Activity**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Not good at all</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Great</b>
Finger and Shoe Prints	0 (0%)	7 (39%)	11 (61%)
My Super Awesome To-Do List	1 (6%)	7 (41%)	9 (53%)
Alias Creation Project	0 (0%)	5 (29%)	12 (71%)
Alias Poster	0 (0%)	5 (28%)	13 (72%)

Note: On average 99% of the students rated the activities as either good or great.

**Table 3**  
**Part 3. Outcomes Fulfilled as Determined by the Student**

	<b>I don't agree</b>	<b>I'm not sure</b>	<b>I agree</b>
This unit helped me to learn a lot about myself	0 (0%)	8 (47%)	9 (53%)
This unit helped me to learn a lot about careers	1 (6%)	10 (59%)	6 (35%)
This unit made me excited about what I could do with my life	0 (0%)	3 (18%)	14 (82%)
This unit made me want to learn more about different careers	1 (6%)	8 (47%)	8 (47%)

The majority of students (82 per cent) agreed that “this unit plan made [them] excited about what [they] could do with [their] life,” and 52 per cent indicated, “this unit plan helped [them] to learn a lot about [themselves].” Throughout the unit’s activities, the teacher received student responses similar to these statements. At least half of the students seemed eager to share and explore their identity and abilities, while the rest seemed either indifferent or inconvenienced with having to imagine their version of an ideal future.

## Discussion

The major goal of the unit was to introduce students to the process of investigation, then direct this process of investigation inward to broaden students’ self-knowledge. Although we had assumed that the activities designed to promote self-awareness and self-knowledge would be intrinsically rewarding, not all of the students found the process to be particularly engaging. The unit was well received by many of the students, but a considerable number of students met the unit’s content with lukewarm reception.

An underlying theme concerning how the unit was received emerged during informal discussions with individual students about the unit’s content after the unit was completed and students had submitted their evaluations. Students who were eager to expand their self-knowledge were committed to doing so with the understanding that they would apply this knowledge to form future goals and explore future possibilities. These students requested that the unit be extended in order to actually explore these future possibilities. They suggested that they should be able to write stories about their future life and career, and on the life of their alias. Essentially, these students were seeking to apply their self-knowledge and to carry this new-found knowledge to its fulfillment: to better their future prospects.

Students who seemed uninterested in self-exploration implied that gaining self-knowledge was no different than learning any other school subject. They found self-exploration helpful but were unsure why. This could explain discrepancy between summative evaluations of Parts 2 and 3, in which a large majority of students found the unit’s activities helpful, but approximately half the class was unsure or disagreed that they gained a sufficient degree of self-knowledge or knowledge of careers. When asked about how this unit could have been improved, these students reiterated the suggestion of extending the unit to expound on future careers. They revealed that their self-knowledge was useless without being able to effectively apply it. Accordingly, they were less motivated to commit wholeheartedly to the unit. We are led to believe that if the unit had infused more career explorative

activities, it would have been better received by the students. Nevertheless, both enthusiastic and unenthusiastic students expressed the same notion—they not only wanted to gain in-depth knowledge of themselves but desired to apply this self-knowledge to future careers and goals.

## Future Implications

Although this unit focused on fostering self-exploration and self-awareness, on reflection it became apparent that the unit’s lack of career explorative activities was its most significant limitation. Students at the Grade 6 level are abundantly capable of reflecting on their future careers (Gottfredson 2005; Magnuson and Starr 2000; Palladino Schultheiss 2008; Porfeli and Lee 2012); furthermore, this developmental period “may be the ideal time for career exploration because it is fairly absent of the burden of making an immediate commitment” (Porfeli and Lee 2012, 20). As reflected by students in this project, Grade 6 students are ready and willing to move beyond self-awareness and explore potential career options. Although teaching discrete CP skills such as self-awareness may seem justifiable, we found that CP skills do not act independently; rather, they interact and coalesce with other CP dimensions—in this case, the dimension of goal formation. Students must therefore exercise and learn to apply these skills beyond mere self-reflection.

For future implementation, more career exploration activities should be added into the unit, which would allow the students to direct their investigative skills, not only inward but also toward a future-oriented, personal career. Mere speculation about themselves within a single activity was insufficient. Actual in-depth exploration of careers—not just skills in exploration and investigation—is thus a critical requisite to teaching a CP unit. To address this limitation, such activities as allotting time to discuss career opportunities within science and assigning career research exercises for students to identify and describe careers of interest, could be added to future versions of this unit.

Another considerable limitation was the study’s small sample size. The results may have been skewed due to the small number of participants. To resolve this limitation, it would be interesting to implement an updated version of this unit into additional classrooms to look for themes among student experiences and responses. This would allow for a more in-depth analysis and a greater understanding of which lesson activities were most connected with the attainment of the unit’s learning objectives.

A final limitation of this unit was that it was implemented by an intern teacher. With greater teaching experience and wider exposure to the career planning needs of students at the Grade 6 level, this unit could have been executed with more of an emphasis on career goal formation. However, it is promising that a new teacher could



incorporate self-exploration exercises with relative success. It is expected that the results of this unit would improve over time as the teacher gained greater experience and recognition of how career planning activities could balance self-exploration with career research and goal formation. If more teachers were to participate in similar career education training, then it would be meaningful to see the effect that this combination of training and experience could have on students' experiences of integrated career education.

## Conclusion

Gaining self-knowledge and forming one's self-concept is an important aspect of career development (Gottfredson 2005; Kosine, Steger and Duncan 2008; Magnusson 1992; Nasir and Lee Shiang 2013; Porfeli and Lee 2012; Schiegel 2013). However, students ask a legitimate question when they wonder, "Why is this subject worth learning if I'm not going to apply it?" Students in this project found it difficult to recognize the value in completing self-awareness exercises without having a greater context to apply this new knowledge. Although the unit incorporated a variety of creative science-based career interventions, the unit's sole emphasis on self-awareness was a mistake and may serve as a cautionary tale to future career educators. The notion of enhancing self-knowledge alone without linking this dimension to future career prospects is insufficient. Teachers have a crucial role to play in fostering these connections, as they can use career-related learning to support students "to build awareness of their skills and values and their own identity, [enhance] their knowledge of employment and [inform] their attitudes to planning their futures, to make and implement career decisions" (Hutchinson 2012, 91). Career education can thereby empower students to explicitly recognize the connections between school and potential occupations, the relationship between current learning and its future applications, and the fit between academic strengths and potential career options (Porfeli and Lee 2012). Based on the results of this unit, future career educators should balance self-exploration with career exploration and decision-making processes. Career education truly begins when students can begin to build and exercise their self-knowledge, and are free to explore and pursue a potential path that is personally meaningful.

Note: On average, 54 per cent of students agreed that the unit achieved all of its objectives.

## Note

1. Readers can obtain copies of the worksheets, activities and evaluation form from the second author.

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# Barriers and Facilitators to Promoting Health in Schools: Lessons Learned from Educational Professionals

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*Shelly Russell-Mayhew, Alana Ireland and Kirsten Klinge*

## Abstract

Schools have long been recognized and touted as an invaluable arena to educate and socialize the citizens of tomorrow. However, education professionals lack preparation to promote health, and health promotion in schools continues to be an undersubscribed and challenging task. The purpose of this study was to understand educational professionals' perceptions of health promotion, potential barriers to health promotion and possible ways of overcoming barriers in the school setting. Six participants, including teachers and administrators, took part in semi-structured interviews, which were coded and analyzed using Thematic Analysis. From these interviews, four main themes were highlighted, including (1) clarifying the school's role in health promotion, (2) identifying the teacher's role in promoting health, (3) acknowledging lack of resources and (4) perceiving health-related training as relevant. The findings are discussed in light of previous research, and areas for further study are provided.

For years schools have been considered ideal sites for the prevention of disease and the promotion of health-related behaviours (Patton et al 2000). In more recent years, scholars have identified the need to address health promotion more comprehensively through a holistic approach that seeks to impact change or influence the health of not only individuals such as students but also the larger school and communities (Lee 2009). In Canada, this internationally recognized approach that seeks to support students' academic achievement, while enhancing whole-school health in a purposeful and integrated manner, is called comprehensive school health (CSH) (Veugelers and Schwartz 2010). The CSH approach consists of four components including (1) social and physical environment, (2) teaching and learning, (3) policy, and (4) partnerships and services (JCSH 2016). Health, within this framework, is understood as a broad, multidimensional construct that accounts for more than physical

health (JCSH 2016). Dimensions of health or wellness most often identified include physical, intellectual, mental, social, spiritual, occupational and environmental (Corbin and Pangrazi 2001).

Teachers play a significant role in the success of CSH (Grossman et al 2008), and although they may influence each component, they have a notable effect on the social and physical environment, and the teaching and learning components. Teachers are important contributors in establishing a positive social environment in schools. Their involvement in the social environment may be affected by their own attitudes and beliefs (Piran 2004), as well as training and educational experiences (Yearwood and Riley 2010). In addition to providing learning experiences consistent with those outlined in health curricula, teachers are socially positioned to influence health and provide positive role modelling in schools (St Leger 2000; Storey et al 2011; Veugelers and Schwartz 2010). Although they are responsible for health curriculum, many teachers are not provided with training in health education or CSH in their own educational experiences, as few university-level teacher preparation programs include such mandatory coursework (Russell-Mayhew and Ireland nd; Veugelers and Schwartz 2010).

Researchers have made efforts to recruit preservice or practising teachers to sensitize them to health promotion messages. However, these recruitment efforts have been largely unsuccessful, in that 10 per cent or less of the targeted groups actually self-select for this type of professional development (PD) (Ireland 2012; Russell-Mayhew, Arthur and Ewashen 2008; Russell-Mayhew et al 2015). Despite this lack of participation, researchers suggest that teachers experience discomfort with health-related curricula, have a difficult time reconciling mixed messages about health and perceive themselves as lacking training on health education (Russell-Mayhew, Arthur and Ewashen 2008; Vamos and Zhou 2009). Several researchers have emphasized the importance of providing more

training in university-level teacher preparation programs to better prepare preservice teachers to adopt health curriculum or health promotion in schools (Greenberg et al 2003; Jourdan et al 2008; Smith, Potts-Datema and Nolte 2005; Speller et al 2010). Not only are teachers provided limited training in university-level teacher preparation programs, but PD opportunities offered to teachers working within schools are undersubscribed (Vamos and Zhou 2009). As such, the current study sought to better understand the barriers to prioritizing health promotion within schools as well as potential ways of overcoming those barriers.

## Method

The current qualitative study gathered interview data regarding the importance of health education, health promotion in schools, barriers to health promotion for teachers and ways of overcoming barriers.

## Participants

An invitation to participate in a 30- to 60-minute interview was extended to teachers and other educational professionals including administrators, educators in university-level teacher preparation programs and individuals working in community organizations committed to CSH. Six interviews were conducted with stakeholders representing the following groups: administration, teachers, university educators and a provincial organization designed to support wellness in schools. Three participants identified as female and three identified as male.

## Interviews

A trained graduate student conducted semi-structured interviews that explored (1) how health is prioritized in the professional role of a teacher, (2) barriers to participating in health-related training, (3) ideas/brainstorming for solutions to filling the gap in university-level teacher preparation programs related to health and (4) brainstorming ideas for solutions to filling the gap in health promotion practices within schools.

## Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, a qualitative method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to code and analyze interview transcripts. Thematic analysis has been described as a method of “searching across a data set ... to find repeated patterns of meaning” (Braun and Clarke 2006, 86). Differing from other types of qualitative analysis (for example, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis) (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009), researchers are not

bound by a pre-existing theoretical framework embedded within the thematic analysis method. Instead, thematic analysis is used within a variety of theoretical frameworks, including a constructionist framework, whereby the discourses at play within a society are examined through the individual’s description of events, experiences and meaning-making systems (Braun and Clarke 2006). In keeping with this flexible analysis method, the researcher is an active sense-making agent, slated with the task and responsibility of representing and presenting the data in a coherent and cogent manner. When it comes to understanding health and wellness within a school setting, the use of thematic analysis within a constructionist framework enabled the researchers to consider and, when fitting, illuminate the individual and system-level influences at play in such an environment.

### *Steps in Data Analysis*

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis was composed of the following six steps, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Throughout the first phase of analysis, the researchers actively read and re-read the interview transcripts in an effort to gain familiarity with the data, and form initial thoughts about emerging patterns. Next, the researchers developed a list of initial codes from the transcribed data. These codes remained close to the data and were at a low level of abstraction. Coding at this level is best understood as a way to organize the raw data into meaningful groups or elements (Boyatzis 1998; Tuckett 2005). To help facilitate the organization and development of these codes, NVivo10, a qualitative software program, was used.

During the third phase of data analysis, the researchers amalgamated the list of codes and began categorizing the codes into potential themes. Further attention was paid to the appropriateness of each code as it related to the overall theme. Throughout the fourth phase, the researcher further developed, refined and reviewed the themes. As part of this process, the researchers engaged in critical and reflective thinking to further delineate codes and themes. This two-phase process ensured, first, careful review of the codes and the corresponding data and, second, consideration of the themes to ensure “accurate representation” of themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 91).

The fifth phase included defining and naming the themes. As part of this process, the researcher identified the “essence of what each theme is about” (Braun and Clarke 2006, 92), all the while remaining cognizant of both the parts (codes and themes) and the whole (that is, interviews). Last, the final phase of thematic analysis involved writing up the themes in a final report using the transcribed data as support for the development of the corresponding theme.

## Trustworthiness

For the purpose of this research, trustworthiness and confidence were gained by way of member-checking and external audits. Member-checking can be done throughout the initial interview, and in follow-up interview(s), if and when applicable (Kuzel and Like 1991). In this case, member-checking was demonstrated by assessing for accuracy of findings and interpretations (that is, asking participants clarifying questions, checking the researcher's assumptions, probing for greater detail throughout and after the interview). This is in keeping with qualitative research methods, where the aim is to establish rigour and confidence in one's findings (Creswell 2012).

Additionally, throughout the qualitative data analysis process, several audits were conducted with coresearchers. These audits were done to support theme development and refinement, while also allowing the researchers to check for consistency (Creswell 2012). Additionally, to increase transferability, or "the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other settings or groups" (Polit and Hungler 1999, 717), direct quotations from the transcript have been included in order to provide the reader with ample context from which to transfer these findings.

## Findings

On the topic of health-related professional development for teachers, researchers arrived at four main themes through data analysis process including (1) clarifying the school's role in health promotion, (2) identifying the teacher's role in promoting health, (3) acknowledging lack of resources and (4) perceiving health-related training as relevant.

### Clarifying the School's Role in Health Promotion

A major barrier to teacher training in health education was questioning the role schools ought to play in students' health. Participants all agreed that the primary role of schools is to educate or facilitate learning. Although all participants agreed that healthy students make better learners, several did not connect the priority of learning to prioritizing health (as personally understood by participants) in schools. Participants shared concern that placing greater emphasis on health would detract from the chief goal of educating students. Commenting on whose role it is to promote health, one participant stated, "There is so much that needs doing so [health promotion] has to happen in both places [in and out of school] but generally outside because learning is our central purpose."

Participants emphasized that what is considered part of the school's role or "job" is determined "from above"

(that is, administrators or schools boards) or by pedagogy in university-level teacher preparation programs. Although participants believed that the school might play a role in health promotion through a bottom-up approach (that is, student or teacher-led projects), they contended that these efforts are constrained by resources and lack of prioritization in system initiatives and school development plans. It was proposed that the schools' role in health is a reflection of administration, school boards and ultimately the provincial minister of education, who are currently not endorsing strategic plans related to health. Thus, schools were not perceived to play a significant role in health, but individuals might decide to promote health through personal efforts. This notion was illuminated as one participant explained, "The idea about the healthy student is not necessarily something that comes from above. It is something you have to deal with at your level in the classroom. So you have to make choices around that." Participants identified that health promotion efforts in schools often resulted from a particular teacher identifying a priority, given that resources for a systemic effort are often unavailable.

### Identifying the Teacher's Role in Promoting Health

Although participants struggled to determine the feasibility of schools or teachers assuming a health promoting role, all participants expressed a belief that teachers might act as role models for health. Participants believed that teachers are ideally situated to influence health or act as a first line of defense due to the amount of time they spend with students, and noted that students often confide in them. When commenting on the importance of role modelling in health promotion, one participant stated, "If I see my role as a teacher, or see it as a job to be done and not a part of a calling, then maybe [health] is not that important because then I don't have to model it, I don't have to make that an issue. However, if I see it as a part of my calling, then it becomes a far more holistic approach because it is no longer an 'if it happens;' it says, 'this is a part of what we do.'"

A paradox was apparent in which teachers expressed beliefs that they could affect students' and overall school health through formation of committees or individual initiatives dedicated to health. On the other hand, they reported an inability to engage in organized efforts due to limited resources, time and support from above. Health and health-related PD were perceived as another task that would be added to teachers' already full job descriptions. Participants suggested that in order to adopt health as a focus, administrators had to advocate for it, and "the main role modelling has to come from the top."

Consistent with the belief that the primary role of schools is learning is the notion that teachers have traditionally been responsible for teaching subject matter rather than supporting student growth in a more holistic way. As one participant explained, "There is a history in education whereby the industrial model has created a download and we're just here to provide information, to pass tests, and so on and so forth... The tools [students] need to live effectively in the 21st century aren't just academic knowledge." From this perspective, teachers are the emissaries of curricula, curricula that according to participants do not reflect a focus on health. Participants referenced potential shifts in curricula that might see health prioritized, as seen in one participant's comment, "I think Alberta Education is doing some of this with the wellness curriculum or curriculum re-design ... how can we embed wellness throughout the curriculum just to make it a priority?" Another participant expressed concern that the current messages regarding health in curricula are outdated:

I think current information, current philosophies, research, scientific fact needs to be shared. The myths need to be disbanded so that the correct information is out there. So that, especially from the point that this is going to be passed on to students, there is accuracy in the materials... [this] might come down to curriculum and whether or not that curriculum needs to be re-designed and changed.

Participants shared that not only do curricula shape their perceptions of their roles, but so do university-level teacher preparation programs and expectations set by administration. They asserted that teachers would be more likely to be interested in health-related PD if they were taught that health promotion is a part of their role. This became clear when one participant stated, "My sense is that if it's not talked about as part of what you do as a teacher, then it is not going to happen because it becomes an acquired thing. It's one of the things that the board is doing to me. It is not one of the roles that I feel I need to fill in."

### **Acknowledging Lack of Resources**

Participants connected health-related PD to subsequent enactment of health in schools and the resources necessary to engage in both. All six participants commented on the lack of time available to engage in health training. This limited time came in the form of (1) not having enough PD time to devote to health, and (2) not having enough time in the school day to address health. It was noted that PD is typically prioritized to focus on academic subjects. As one participant explained, "Finding time in the school day to do all that we could do is very challenging and then we have to think about our central purpose being focus[ed]

on learning for both staff and students. Most of our PD is focused on that." Additionally, participants expressed concerns that teachers themselves did not have the resources to take on another role. In this way, health promotion was seen as yet another hat that teachers needed to wear, as it was "one more thing we have to be aware of ... and be effective in how to do it."

Participants also stated that there may be a paucity of interest in health-related PD because teachers did not want to engage in health promotion because they feel unprepared or lack health education resources. Participants expressed concerns that they have not been trained in health and thus are not comfortable addressing it. This was linked to issues of liability, and as one participant stated, "We are always under the microscope ... put up for scrutiny. So that is one thing that I think would be a concern of whether or not you would be able to perform that job correctly and accurately, effectively, as the demands insist you do." Consequently, due to a lack of expertise and time, participants indicated that they would rely on community experts to provide resources or simply take on health instead given that "learning is the focus in school time" and without this delineated focus, teachers "would never get the learning done." In this way, health promotion was conceptualized as separate from "learning."

Finally, there was a belief that resources do not exist to support or promote the health of teachers as role models in the school community. According to one participant, "In a perfect world, with resources unlimited, I think that making sure that each and every staff member is super healthy would be ideal ... it takes money and it takes time. It takes resources." Several participants expressed that prioritizing health in schools and delivering PD on health promotion would require resource allocation by school boards and jurisdictional leads, in order to prioritize the health of teachers and educational staff as well as to offer programming time in schools.

### **Perceiving Health-Related Training as Relevant**

Making both a professional and personal connection to the importance of health-related training was perceived by participants as a way of overcoming barriers to participation in PD focusing on health. Participants shared that most teachers would not connect with health as important to their professional roles, as one participant stated, "I think that it would be very difficult to get the buy-in from certain committees and certain teachers to find the relevance in it. Unless they are teaching something very specific to that area, I don't think that you're going to get many people involved in it." Connecting the health of teachers and students to success in learning was perceived as a way to garner greater participation in PD, as was an

emphasis on cross-curricular learning and seeing health as relevant regardless of the subject taught. Additionally, as previously mentioned, school board and administrative endorsement of health as relevant was perceived as important to making a professional connection.

Perhaps most often suggested as a means of encouraging greater participation in health-related PD was the perception of personal relevance. Participants indicated they are more likely to adhere to the importance of university-level teacher preparation programs related to health if they have had personal health scares, or believe that modelling health in their personal lives affects students. Elaborating on this notion of personal priority and attending PD opportunities, one participant stated, "If [teachers] really value their own health and are really aware and it's a priority to them, then it's a priority. But if it's not a priority, then that's a barrier. If it's not a priority I won't necessarily go [to a PD event]."

## Discussion

Participants expressed views that reflected dissonance between the importance of health and the perceived lack of ability to address it in schools. Results confirmed previous research indicating that teachers feel unprepared to promote health (Russell-Mayhew, Arthur and Ewashen 2008; Vamos and Zhou 2009), and emphasizing the need for greater training (Greenberg et al 2003; Jourdan et al 2008; Smith, Potts-Datema and Nolte 2005; Speller et al 2010). Although participants believed they are ideally situated to both impart health knowledge and to model health, they felt limited by the narrow traditional definition of teachers' roles, and by resources and school development plans. Definitions of teaching that confine the role of teacher to imparting curricula and learning were thought to restrict interest and engagement in health-related PD, as it was no longer considered relevant to most job descriptions.

Results confirmed the importance CSH approaches in schools that seek to address not only individuals but also larger school communities and policy (Veugelers and Schwartz 2010). The majority of participants unequivocally expressed conviction that it is necessary for health promotion to be prioritized from above before it can be successfully taken up in schools. Participants' perceptions that the responsibilities of schools and teachers have become so vast support the notion that it is difficult, if not impossible, to add to teachers' duties. This speaks to the necessity of developing and adjusting existing policies and school development plans to place a greater emphasis on health in whole-school communities. Perhaps part of this change process means reconceptualizing the roles and responsibilities for all those involved in CSH. As Wechsler, Devereaux, Davis, and Collins (2000)

underscore, health promotion in schools ought to be thought of as a two-pronged approach: support in the form of policy mandates (that is, administrators, school boards and superintendent), as well as grassroots supporters (that is, teachers and school staff) to carry out these policies. However, an important third prong might be the support and buy-in from students, who may lend creative voice to the topic of health promotion in schools (Wechsler et al 2000). Considering the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in each of these prongs, as well as potential barriers and facilitators, is essential to promoting health from a perspective that accounts for each of the four components of CSH.

## Limitations and Strengths

One potential limitation of this study is that participant information, such as years of teaching experience, was not collected. While it can be argued that not collecting and reporting demographic information preserves participants' anonymity, this information could also be useful in better understanding the nuances shaping participants' perspectives and perceptions of barriers. Lack of demographic data also makes it difficult to situate the findings in the overall research on health promotion in education, and may make transferability somewhat challenging as little background information is known about the individual participants. Furthermore, while quantitative researchers might note the small sample size as a potential limitation, qualitative researchers stress the importance of a small sample size. Selecting fewer participants allows researchers to gain more in-depth accounts of experience, and takes into account the time-consuming and labour intensive nature of qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell 2012).

## Future Research

Further research is needed in order to explore system level change and to appeal to those within educational systems who are responsible for decision making and strategic planning that might impact health in schools. Additionally, although teachers' and administrators' perspectives are crucial in identifying barriers to health promotion within schools, researchers might also consider the experiences of preservice teachers as a homogenous group, particularly their perspectives on overcoming barriers within university-level teacher preparation programs. Preservice teachers' views might offer fresh perspectives, stimulating the conversation about what can be done to mitigate teachers' concerns. In the same vein, developing a deeper, more focused understanding of how university educators and administrators manage these barriers might also illuminate how health education can be strengthened within teacher preparation programs. Drawing on the

experiences and perspectives of preservice teachers and teacher educators may help them develop concrete proactive strategies for establishing health promotion as part of teachers' responsibility in the context of a supportive and adequately resourced school community.

## Implications for Practice

Previous research has reinforced that health promoting schools ought to identify individuals within schools who are both capable and responsible for coordinating health promotion (Rowling and Jeffreys 2006). Given that the majority of the participants in the current study felt ill-prepared to promote health in schools, we suggest efforts should be made to both (1) enhance training, and (2) identify those within schools who are best situated to contribute to health promotion efforts. As a group with specialized training in mental health, school counsellors might also take up some responsibilities for health promotion. For instance, school counsellors could be involved in the development of small-group, class or schoolwide interventions, such as psycho-education. This might take the form of a regular intervention (for example, a weekly lunch club where students and staff meet to discuss how to enhance physical activity within the school) or periodic interventions (for example, addressing health as part of the monthly school assembly).

Further, as is currently practised in some schools across Alberta, school counsellors and staff might advocate for the implementation of programming aimed at promoting comprehensive school health. Take, for instance, the provincial initiative, Ever Active Schools ([www.everactive.org/who-we-are](http://www.everactive.org/who-we-are)), in which teachers, administrators, school counsellors and students can become involved in school-based changes focused on enhancing individual and schoolwide health and well-being. Projects include sporting events, community gardens, learning spaces, school symposia and professional development for teachers and administrators. Health promotion can be addressed using a team approach, where all members of a school become active agents in promoting health and well-being within the school system.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the roles of teacher and other education personnel in comprehensive school health. Using thematic analysis of interviews of six education professionals, four main themes were highlighted, including (1) clarifying the school's role in health promotion, (2) identifying the teacher's role in promoting health, (3) acknowledging lack of resources and (4) perceiving health-related training as relevant. Finally, we provided recommendations for further study and educational practice.

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## *Counselling in Schools: Comprehensive Programs of Responsive Services for All Students, 6th ed*

by John J Schmidt

New York: Pearson, 2014

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*Reviewed by Jennifer McIntee-Leinweber*

Unlike counselling in community practice, school counsellors are faced with the unique challenge to offer a variety of effective and timely services to a large, diverse population. At over 300 pages, this text provides an extensive analysis of the school counselling profession. This book will be of interest to school counsellors, school counselling consultants or administrators interested in developing a comprehensive counselling program or to further understand the vital role that school counsellors can play in the school at all divisional levels. However the length of the book may be a drawback for practising professionals who are pressed for time.

Given the title of the book, it is not surprising that there are a variety of models that one could follow when developing a comprehensive approach to school-based services. However, Schmidt emphasizes that ensuring that a structure and process exists to develop a quality comprehensive program is more important than following a particular model.

Throughout the text, Schmidt reinforces the key theme that school counsellors should become agents of social change. School counsellors are advised to address the many barriers that students may face when coming to school and must stay current on the ever-changing realities that students encounter at school. As such, counsellors are invited to complete an assessment of the school environment. A variety of practical formats are outlined in order for the school counsellor to better create a healthy and inviting school environment.

The author convincingly asserts that school counselling is still a relatively young profession and as such is still honing a clear identity. Schmidt advocates the use of *school counsellor* by all and suggests that the profession move away from the more traditional term of *guidance counsellor*. He writes that the entire school community plays some role in the guidance of students,

but school counsellors offer direct service to students, teachers and parents in schools (p 57).

Moreover, Schmidt suggests that school counsellors should not stay within the confines of the office. Instead, he urges school counsellors to take a leadership role in creating, implementing and evaluating thoughtful high-quality, comprehensive school counselling programs that are responsive to the needs of students. Furthermore, he offers a broad overview of the unique challenges that face the elementary, middle school and high school counsellor (p 71). In order to effectively lead the school counselling program, school counsellors are advised to be aware of their leadership capabilities while being responsive to the needs of the school community (p 79).

In terms of developing an effective school counselling program (Chapter 6), Schmidt highlights the need for counsellors to adequately assess the current program, seek feedback from school team members and evaluate the needs of students, parents and teachers. The author provides practical examples of frameworks for needs assessment that can be applied by school counsellors at all divisional levels. Schmidt stresses the importance of aligning feedback with recommended program goals and urges school counsellors to recognize that the goals of the comprehensive counselling program are the responsibility of many stakeholders in the school community, not just the school counsellor.

Schmidt also provides an insightful overview of the various modalities of counselling that can be offered in a school setting. Chapter 7 will be of interest to beginning school counsellors and provides a good review for more experienced ones. In particular, the section describing research on various kinds of counselling interventions is relevant to all counsellors. This section features a detailed examination of group

counselling, an often overlooked and underutilized intervention in schools. Although school counsellors are presented with unique challenges not found in other settings, the author provides evidence that counselling is typically effective in a small number of sessions, giving support for brief counselling interventions. Finally, Schmidt highlights that regardless of intervention modality, the most successful counselling relationships depend on the skilfulness of the counsellor implementing the intervention.

Another chapter of particular interest is “Evaluation of School Counselling Programs,” a topic often discussed but difficult to realize in many schools. Yet, Schmidt asserts “the future credibility and efficacy of the profession depend on counselors taking the lead and demonstrating their value to the school community and to the educational process” (p 269). Schmidt provides a concise overview of different approaches to program evaluation and provides detailed examples. Formats for the evaluation of school counsellor are also discussed. Specific samples of evidence to be included in a school counsellor’s portfolio will also be of interest to practising professionals.

Finally, the author suggests a variety of ways for school counsellors to maintain relevancy and effectively help students in the future. Here are some of them:

1. Develop a broad understanding of human development to be able to communicate with students and adults effectively.
2. Adapt to new technology.
3. Use group processes more frequently.
4. Seek out professional development.
5. Effectively measure outcomes of their services.
6. Become professionally and politically active by joining counselling associations. (p 339)

As this textbook is written for the American school system, several sections may not be as relevant to Canadian school counsellors. For instance, although the introductory sections on the historical origins of school counselling and the anthropological overview of social diversity may not speak completely to the Canadian experience, they are still worth a read. Moreover, the chapter on professional ethics and legal issues, though well written, should be read with caution by Canadian school counsellors, as laws, codes and policies will vary in Canada and across provinces and school divisions.

## About the Reviewer

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# *Brief Coaching with Children and Young People: A Solution Focused Approach*

by Harvey Ranter and Denise Yusuf

New York: Routledge, 2015

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*Reviewed by Gina Ko*

*Brief Coaching with Children and Young People: A Solution Focused Approach*, by Harvey Ratner and Denise Yusuf, is a practical new book for practitioners who wish to use a solution focused (SF) approach with young people. The SF emerged from the clinical approach of the Brief Family Therapy Centre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, founded in 1977 by Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg and colleagues. By the mid-1980s, they had laid the groundwork for an innovative approach they named Solution Focused Brief Therapy. The idea behind an SF approach is to explore a problem-free future (hypothetical solutions) to move toward solution-building, which is distinct from problem solving.

Since the early 1980s, other books have been written about SF therapy (Bannink 2010; de Shazer 1985, 1988; Duncan, Gul and Mousley 2007; George, Iveson and Ratner 1990; Iveson, George and Ratner 2012). There are SF books for mental distress (Duncan, Gul and Mousley 2007), suicide prevention (Hendon 2008), eating disorders (Jacob 2001), and in the field of positive psychology (Warner 2013), among others.

This book focuses on Solution Focused Brief Coaching (SFBC) a change-oriented approach that assists clients to discover their own solutions in the shortest time possible. The book is divided into eight chapters with a preface and index. The chapters, written by either Ratner or Yusuf, are solution focused brief coaching (Ratner), children (Yusuf), adolescents (Ratner), parents (Ratner), group work (Ratner), in the school (Yusuf), in different settings (Yusuf), and materials (Yusuf).

Chapter 1 provides an introduction, laying out the history, ideas and questions specific to SFBC. The authors highlight the exploration of solutions, rather than problems, and lay out the stages of a first session, follow-up sessions and ending sessions. They discuss clarifying the contract, questions to elicit description, being curious, the usefulness of the “other-person perspective” questions,

social constructionism and SFBC as a stand-alone approach. In Chapter 6, Yusuf reiterates, that solution-building “does not mean that the search to understand problems is invalid, but from a pragmatic point of view it is more productive to resolve problems as quickly as possible” (p 86). Working with young people in the fast-paced setting of a school, it makes sense to focus on solutions as soon as possible.

On the other hand, from an educational perspective, it is difficult to be convinced that SFBC can be a stand-alone method, given that students come in with many presenting concerns. In some cases, it is necessary to explore the problem more in-depth before focusing on solution focus. For instance, if a student continues to bring up things that happened in the past, the student may need an outlet for someone to listen to the story. An unskilled practitioner might negate this and move too quickly to solutions, leaving the student feeling unheard.

I found Chapter 2 on using SFBC with children enlightening. Using materials such as crayons and paper with children can be effective in drawing out the conversation in a lighter way. Chapter 8 provides many other useful ideas for materials such as strength cards, coaching cards, scales, lists, mind maps, record forms and certificates (pp 120–40). In my own work, I also have printed faces with different emotions and will ask children to share what emotion they feel for a specific event or thought. I rarely use role play but can imagine how it may work with some children to get their minds off solely talking. Hence, the specific tools and ideas are invaluable.

I agree with the authors that beginning the session should be comfortable and inviting. By engaging in “general talking and expressions of interest in them” (p 31), children may not equate themselves with their problems, and they are interesting people who matter. I often begin talking to children about what grade they are in, their teacher’s name, what they like and dislike about school, their friends and what they do, their interests and so on. More often than not, they open up within

minutes. I also use humour by asking, “How were you able to drag your mother here?” “Did you promise her to do all the chores?” Many laugh and feel less threatened, and, in turn, open up about other issues.

This book provides many practical examples of SF questions a practitioner can ask in the beginning of a session, during the session and at the end of the session. Yusef and Ratner give many useful case examples of how to work with children, adolescents and parents. I find the real examples and sample questions help me understand the method. I have been able to use these specific questions with my clients. In Chapter 3, Ratner provides an example of a session that did work as well as he had hoped. But a year later, he learned that the client found it helpful and had enrolled in college. Hence, as practitioners, we do not always know what we have done or said that made a difference in a client’s life. With adolescents, it can be particularly difficult if they answer many questions with “don’t know.” This chapter was well presented as it provided some solid strategies to work with this group.

A shortcoming of this book is that the authors have not mentioned the different cultural perspectives and strategies to engage others from various cultural backgrounds. I find the specific questions helpful as I have used many of them in my practice as a therapist in a single-session walk-in service (Clements et al 2011; Hoyt and Talmon 2015). Also, in my experience, some clients really do need to explore the past and their problems; by not acknowledging this, they may be disengaged. The question is how to balance this, because a SFBC approach may give the impression of not allowing much room for problem exploration. Since the authors claim this to be a stand-alone approach, some practitioners may find this problematic. Overall, I think this book is easy to read, user-friendly and provides good ideas in working with children, adolescents, parents and groups.

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## About the Reviewer

*Gina Ko is a doctoral student in educational leadership in the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, and registered provisional psychologist at Eastside Family Centre, Calgary.*

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# *Building School-Based Collaborative Mental Health Teams: A Systems Approach to Student Achievement*

by Kathleen C Laundy

Camp Hill, Pa: The Practice Institute, LLC, 2015

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*Reviewed by Kristy McConnell*

Kathleen Laundy's call on education to make use of collaborative teams to meet the mental health needs of students is timely, particularly in Alberta where we are currently exploring how the *Children First Act* will affect our ability to provide more comprehensive wraparound supports to students. Concurrently, it is not uncommon to hear counsellors discussing the feeling of isolation when it comes to supporting students' mental health in schools. Laundy argues that working in silos, indeed, is not beneficial. Rather, she considers a matrix of helping professionals that can be involved in collaborative teaming. Laundy acknowledges that the impetus of the book came from the licensure of marriage and family therapists (MFTs) in Connecticut, and, as such, purports that MFTs should become an integral part of a student's mental health team.

The book has 10 chapters and includes sections devoted to the relevance of a systems approach, a history of special education law in the US and two chapters on school-based systems theory. These two chapters explore two practical applications that could be used in collaborative teams: the Longitudinal Overview of Growth in Systems (LOGS) Model and medical family therapy influences. The following sections explored by Laundy are Response to Intervention, the DSM-5 and primary disability categories, assessment, challenges and constraints, and last, supervision of school-based mental health clinicians.

Admittedly, I was hoping for more practical strategies or approaches that could be utilized by collaborative teams. When I read Chapters 4 and 5, where the LOGS model and medical family therapy influences were illustrated with case examples, I found the rich content I had been looking for, material that, as a counsellor, I could take and apply in practice the following day. Rather, much of the book content was reserved for topics that could easily be explored by therapists through other books or

mediums, such as special education law and the DSM-5. Given that Laundy is a MFT with extensive experience, as a reader I was looking for more marriage and family therapy exercises or strategies that could be employed by teams, given that many of the professionals reading the book would probably come from various theoretical orientations and professional backgrounds. More detail about strategies would also assist professionals from different disciplines, such as guidance counsellors, family-school liaison workers, mental health therapists, special education teachers and others to carry out their distinct roles and coordinate seamlessly.

This all being said, if a reader is looking for a brief, concise and practical overview of current school-based approaches to supporting students' mental health needs, such as the Response to Intervention model, or how the DSM-5 is utilized, this book would be an ideal place to start. Additionally, this book would be extremely beneficial to school professionals who are not as well versed in the operation of collaborative mental health teams, or those who have limited knowledge of special education and how students with mental health concerns fit into a multi-tiered system of supports. For example, reading this book would provide a new school administrator with limited special education knowledge a solid understanding of what it means to be a part of the students' mental health team, and impart a foundational awareness of how that student would fit into the overall network of special education supports.

## **About the Reviewer**

*Kristy McConnell is a registered psychologist who works for Rocky View Schools. Additionally, she is the associate editor of the Canadian School Counselling Review, and is the webmaster for the Council of School Counsellors.*

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# *Solution-Focused Practice: An NSPCC Toolkit for Working with Children and Young People*

by National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

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*Reviewed by Ann Burkinshaw*

Trying to keep up with professional study is a challenge, as my list of books, articles and magazines grows much faster than the time I have to read them. However a new resource from the NSPCC, *A Solution-Focused Practice Toolkit*, is one book that was easy to access and offered practical and useful information.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) is a children's charity in the United Kingdom that offers a plethora of services to protect and care for children. One service is the Face-to-Face program that provides solution-focused therapy to children in care. This toolkit was developed by these practitioners and is now available for free download at [www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/solution-focused-practice-toolkit](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/solution-focused-practice-toolkit).

Solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) is an approach that stresses the client's strengths and abilities, rather than the client's mental disorder or issues. Thus the main question in solution-focused therapy is not, "What is wrong?" rather, "What is working?" The toolkit is intended for practitioners who have received training in SFBT, but, in my opinion, this resource is a perfect introduction to the solution-focused approach. It is short, free and practical—all qualities that commend it to a busy school counsellor.

First, this toolkit is short—about 146 pages including the appendix with various blank templates. Second, it is free. I downloaded it on my computer and my phone and read much of it waiting as my car received an oil change. I wish all professional development were so accessible!

Most important, it is practical and relevant. Each section includes suggested activities, games and exercises (and the corresponding blank worksheets are provided in the appendix) for each step of the solution-focused process. But most helpful are the shared stories of how practitioners used and adapted the theoretical steps in their sessions. These anecdotes illustrate best how SFBT

can be used in different settings, including schools. Many of the activities can be adapted for use in a larger group session or a classroom.

One activity I will be using with my junior high classes is a Letter from My Future Me, in which the young person writes a letter to him- or herself from the future, a future in which the person is in a good place, having achieved (or on track to achieving) their goals, hopes and dreams. The young person describes in detail what has changed for him or her, a detailed description of their preferred future and advice from the Future Me to the Present Me. This letter encourages students to consider strategies to achieve short-term goals (for example, attending regularly to pass the class) and how these steps lead to the fulfillment of long-term goals (graduation, postsecondary education or a satisfying job). And best of all, this advice is not coming from an authority figure; rather, it is coming from the student's Future Me.

The toolkit has also piqued my curiosity to learn more about SFBT. An extensive reading list offers suggestions for further study. The goal of SFBT is to encourage children to imagine a better future, take steps to achieve it by building on current strengths and work on developing further skills. Doesn't this describe a good deal of the work that teachers and school counsellors do with students? The strategies described in the toolkit have given me some new ideas to help students achieve their potential. It has also given me the desire to learn more about the solution-focused approach. I recommend it highly to my fellow colleagues.

## **About the Reviewer**

*Ann Burkinshaw is a school counsellor and teacher in a small kindergarten to Grade 9 school near Sherwood Park, Alberta.*

# Instructions for Authors

Please submit manuscripts to schoolcounsellingreview@gmail.com. Because manuscripts are reviewed anonymously, please submit two electronic copies in Microsoft Word format: one with authorship information and one without. Please remove identifying information from document “properties” from the anonymous copy before sending.

The title of the manuscript should appear on the first page of the identified copy of the manuscript. Also include on this page the name, credentials, institutional or school jurisdiction affiliation, and e-mail address of each author. In your covering e-mail, please confirm that the manuscript is not under consideration by any other publication. Please identify one author as the corresponding author.

Manuscripts must be accompanied by an abstract of 100 to 150 words and typically should not exceed 25 pages (one-inch margins, double-spaced, 12-point font Times New Roman) including references. Please ensure that references are complete and accurate, including year, volume number and pages numbers.

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The Council of School Counsellors (CSC) of the Alberta Teachers' Association provides leadership and support to counsellors in effecting comprehensive counselling programming that meets the educational, personal/social and career counselling needs of students in Alberta.

Council Objectives

- Lead relevant professional development
• Provide appropriate advocacy
• Facilitate communication

Benefits of Membership

The CSC has a reciprocal agreement with the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA). Any professional development opportunities of the CCPA can be accessed at membership costs for CSC members.

Conference and Miniconference

The annual conference is held every two years, and the miniconference is held every odd year. Prominent keynote speakers and a variety of workshop leaders provide information and motivation to delegates. A key function of the conference is to provide opportunities to interact with colleagues, presenters and friends.

Membership

Membership is not restricted to school counsellors in the province. Any professional who has a special interest in helping students to realize maximum benefit from school experiences will appreciate the professional learning community the CSC offers. Following are the four categories of membership:

Regular Membership—Active members of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and associate members who are ineligible for active membership as specified in ATA bylaws are eligible for regular membership in this council. All such members shall be entitled to full privileges of council membership, including the rights to vote and to hold office.

Student Membership—Undergraduate ATA members as specified in ATA bylaws may become student members of this council. Student members receive all the benefits and services of council membership except the right to hold office.

Publications

The Canadian School Counsellor Review (CSCR) is the official journal of the CSC. CSCR is Canada's sole peer-reviewed journal geared to the needs of school counsellors and other professionals involved in counselling services in schools. CSCR focuses on practice, research, professional issues and policy in school counselling. Counsellletter is a newsletter that contains information about council activities, regional meetings and ongoing professional development opportunities, and offers practical strategies and tips for school counsellors. CSC members are encouraged to submit articles to these publications. Editorial advice and assistance will be provided.

Awards

Honorary lifetime membership awards are presented to persons who have contributed significantly to guidance and counselling in Alberta.

In honour of the late Murray Jampolsky, an annual award is made to an outstanding practising school counsellor in the province. Information on submission of nominations for this award is available from the CSC staff advisor at Barnett House. Both awards are presented at the annual conference.

Life Membership—Retired members of the ATA as specified in ATA bylaws are eligible for life membership in the council and are entitled to all the benefits and services of the council membership except the right to hold office.

Subscription Service—Persons or organizations who are ineligible for active or associate membership in the ATA, such as school support staff, parents and libraries, as well as retired teachers and nonactive teachers, may connect with the council by paying a subscription fee. Subscriptions include entitlement to the council's publications as well as other services determined by the council, but does not provide membership in the council.

Application for Membership in the Council of School Counsellors—ATA

Make cheque payable to the Alberta Teachers' Association and mail with the application to the Alberta Teachers' Association, 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1.

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