



DEVELOPING 'THE EARLY YEARS'

Can a school-aged child have a career goal? What about a preschooler? Research at MUN proves that engagement in the future can start at a very young age

When you think of the term career development, chances are you think of upcoming career planning, and the focus on selecting a career or subject to undertake in the future. You'd assume career development pertains to high schoolers, post-secondary students, or even recent graduates from college or university.

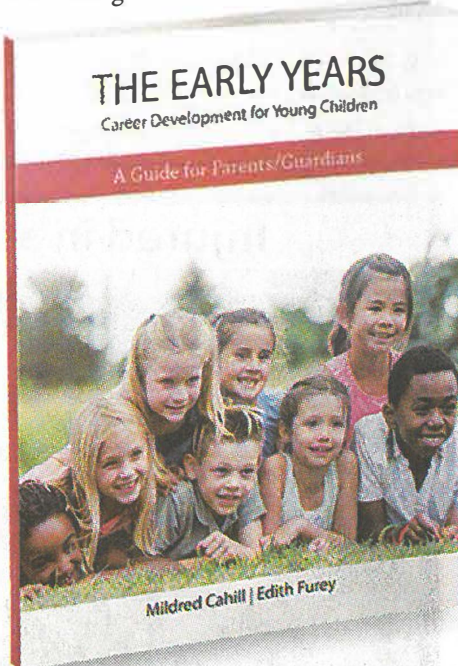
While that's not wrong, career development is more simply described as managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In recent studies, scientists found that career development starts at a very young age. CERIC is a Canadian charitable organization that advances education and research in career development. It funds many projects, including a recent study done by Newfoundland and Labrador's very own Dr. Mildred Cahill.

"It was a three year project. Basically, as a straight forward purpose, the purpose was to determine the career de-

velopment of very young children," Dr. Cahill began.



"We focus on character development, risk taking, problem solving, and decision making."
— Dr. Mildred Cahill

"When I'm saying young, I'm talking about ages three to eight. We went to preschools, nursery schools, some of the family centres, and the primary schools which are K-3. In line with going to the children and getting them to talk about career development, we also went to the parents, guardians and educators of the children."

MISCONCEPTIONS

With the primary focus on young children, the study didn't focus on them choosing specific jobs, occupations and careers. Instead, it focused on young children becoming engaged and excited in activities in their lives, and acknowledging what it is that they're engaged in and excited about.

"We focus on character development, risk taking, problem solving, and decision making. Children are learning through play base, about themselves and their world. They're learning critical thinking and problem solving. They're learning about diversity and living in a diverse world, interacting with diverse situations and people. They're learning their strengths, they're developing inter-

ests, and of course, their abilities," Dr. Cahill explained.

"The whole focus in career development is working with young children so that they can become very happy, productive persons themselves. How they do that, is they imagine, they create, all of these kinds of things. What did the children know about concepts of work? What did they know about concepts of self? Did they have dreams?"

GOALS & DREAMS

Through the use of surveys collecting quantitative and qualitative data, the study found that children do in fact begin having goals, dreams and knowledge of concepts at a very, very young age. This development is strongly impacted by outside influences like parents or guardians, siblings, educators, and media.

"Rather than squashing the Spiderman or the Princess dream, you realize that that's their world, that is the world they live in. Later, they will have different role models like a family member, or their teachers. When we went out to interview our first children, the Stanley Cup was on and you could see in their hopes and dreams, and in their drawings, they were drawing what was happening in the media at the time. There was a fire in the news, and some firefighters had to rescue, and there was a lot of children wanting to become firefighters. Technology and media are critical and significant forces at play," Dr. Cahill shared.

"With parents and guardians, we're talking about how they can support their children with building confident relationships in acquiring self-confidence, confidence in trying new things, and being open to change."

Career development in one sentence would be a lifelong process in which each of us begin in childhood, pertaining to self-discovery. Our lives will be filled with events and influence, both negative and positive, so it is up to us to teach our children how to react, how to have confidence, and how to make personal decisions.

Dr. Mildred Cahill's research has been published by CERIC into two sep-



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

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arate booklets based on the study. The publication goes by the name "The Early Years", and there are two versions of it, one for the educators and one for the parents.

For more information on The Early



Years: Career Development for Young Children, visit www.ceric.ca and coming soon to amazon.ca and chapters.indigo.ca

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