

# Career Development for Students

## Elementary to High School

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### *PRE-READING QUESTIONS*

1. At what grade levels do you think students need to engage in career awareness, career exploration, and career planning?
2. What do you see as the role of parents in guiding their children towards a career?

## Introduction and Learning Objectives

In a time of ever-changing patterns of work and education, students must have access to career education that equips them to plan and manage their learning and career pathways. Although **career education** should be aimed at a student's stage of development, a comprehensive career education program typically consists of the following components:

- self-awareness to help students identify their personal attributes;
- opportunity awareness to involve students in investigating, exploring, and experiencing the work world and the various pathways within it;
- decision learning to enhance informed decision making and planning;
- transition planning to develop skills for students to effectively move into new situations.

In a Canadian study of career development practices in the public school system (Malatest & Associates Ltd., 2009) one third of **school guidance counsellors** stated that their schools did not offer mandatory courses in career education. Mandatory programs were mainly at high schools, and usually one semester in length. Further, only one third of guidance counsellors reported that their schools offered career education workshops to parents or guardians, despite the influence that parents and guardians have in their children's education and career pathways (Bernes & Magnusson, 2004). Given the number of tasks required of guidance counsellors in schools and the very high ratio of students to counsellors (Malatest & Associates, 2009), "it has become the shared responsibility of all K–12 educators, parents/guardians and the communities" (p. v) to ensure that all students have the skills to make informed decisions about their futures and to pursue their interests and aptitudes.

The subject matter that teachers are required to convey to their students is staggering. One approach for adding career development curriculum to class time would be to "infuse" or integrate material with other subjects; for example, teach résumé preparation in an English class (Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006). Career education and guidance can be an integral part of school life when a wide range of people are involved. These include teachers, school staff, people assisting with extracurricular activities, parents and guardians, as well as community leaders.

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Outline the stages of career development as presented by career theorists.
2. Describe the typical structure of career development programs in schools.
3. Provide some developmentally appropriate career activities at the elementary, middle, and high school level.

## Career Development Theory and Design

*The elementary school years are not too early to begin to achieve a vision of what one desires to do in life contributing to the world of work.*

— M Ediger (Ediger, 2000, p. 3)

Schools provide a unique and significant context for promoting the educational and vocational development of students. Most research on career guidance in schools has focused on discrete age groups, with a heavy emphasis on how to enrich the learning and work experiences of the high school student. But career development is a lifelong process that can begin even earlier. When elementary and middle school students do not receive career development instruction, they may enter high school feeling unprepared for making career decisions and/or entering the world of work (Gray, 2009).

Career education and related activities in the elementary years focus on (a) developing learning/social skills (a sense of social responsibility and career planning); (b) understanding the concepts of lifelong learning (interpersonal relationships and career planning); and (c) applying this learning to their lives and work in the school and the community (Walls, 2000).

### Theorists

Although career theorists have not emphasized the importance of childhood career development, Donald Super (1990) realized that it is during childhood that crucial career-related concepts and attitudes are shaped. Theories of career development provide practitioners with some guidance in understanding the career paths of elementary-aged children. For example, Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Alexrad, and Herma (1951) emphasized that vocational behaviour has its roots in early childhood and develops through “fantasy” stages in childhood to “realistic” stages in late adolescence, when particular occupational choices are specified and crystallized. Children in the fantasy stage (aged 6 to 11) make choices without considering the actions needed to accomplish the goal. At about age 11, in the “tentative” stage, children begin to base their occupational choices on interests, and are aware that these interests may change and that, in the future, their choices could be different.

Gottfredson (1981) based her theory on the importance of self-concept in vocational development and explains that people pursue occupations that are congruent with their images of themselves. Gottfredson described a four-stage model of career development. The first stage, “orientation to size and power,” typically occurs from ages 3 to 5. During this stage children develop the ability to picture themselves in adult roles. During the second stage, “orientation to sex roles,” children between the ages of 6 and 8 start to expand their knowledge of careers beyond those they see in their family to those to which they have frequently been exposed. Sex-typing of occupations becomes highly influential. Orientation to “social valuation,” the third stage, occurs from about ages 9 to 13. Children become aware of the existence of different socioeconomic levels and realize that high-status jobs typically require increased educational requirements. In the final stage, “orientation to internal, unique self,” adolescents are able to describe their idealistic and realistic career aspirations.

Donald Super’s (1990) developmental approach emphasized nine concepts that he believed to contribute to career awareness and decision making: curiosity, exploration, information, key figures or role models, interests, locus of control, time perspective (how the past, present, and future can be used to plan future events), self-concept, and planfulness. Super’s main contribution to career education was his emphasis on the role of the self-concept in career development.

Schools and colleges therefore need to develop and carry out educational programs which have as their objectives: the development of adequate self-concepts in students, the orientation of students in the world of work, the translation of these self-concepts into occupational terms, and the testing of these vocational self-concepts against the realities of occupations. (Super, 1957, p. 310)

Super depicted the various phases of career development based on an individual's life stage. In the **growth stage** (ages 4 to 13), the main tasks are to develop a positive self-concept and build positive relationships with others. The **exploration stage** (ages 14 to 24) is about identifying opportunities for self-fulfillment given personal attributes. These opportunities may take many forms including summer jobs, co-op placements, or volunteer work.

### Three Stages

Within the school system, career planning and development programs are roughly based on Super's ideas on stages: career awareness (kindergarten to Grade 6); career exploration (middle schools typically over two to three grades (Grades 6, 7, and 8, depending on the province), and career preparation (Grades 9 to 12). Guidance programs are typically built around this structure and more emphasis is placed on one of the three sub-organizers at different developmental levels. However, it is understood that career development is an ongoing cycle of awareness, exploration, and preparation.

KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 6	GRADES 6 TO 8	GRADES 9 TO 12
Career Awareness	Career Exploration	Career Preparation
Elementary School	Middle School	High School

Table 1: Stages in Career Development: Kindergarten to Grade 12.

### Career Awareness

In this stage during the elementary grades, children describe various opportunities, options, and roles that interest them in their communities, family, and the world of work. They use adult role models and other resources to learn about different occupations and gain awareness of the importance of personal responsibility and good work habits. Children develop awareness of how people work together, and depend on each other, to accomplish work in their community. The focus is on developing a sense of competence, promoting self-awareness, developing personal skills, contributing to the world around them (e.g., through their chores), linking interests to future activities, expanding options, and exploring roles.

### *Career Exploration*

Career exploration helps young people learn about the wide variety of careers available to them, as well as the types of jobs that might best fit their skills, interests, and abilities. Extracurricular activities and volunteering contribute to the development of career management competencies. Under direction of their parents and school counsellors, they choose programs, classes, and work experiences to take in high school that will teach them skills needed to enter the workforce. The focus is on (a) building their awareness of their strengths and interests; (b) developing transferable skills in research, goal setting, evaluating options, and decision making; (c) linking abilities to future activities; (d) expanding options; (e) experiencing roles; and (f) engaging in initial career-planning skill development. As youth succeed in the exploration phase, they develop a sense of autonomy and of being in control of the present and even, to some degree, the future. Exploration also leads to the development of new interests. This is a time for learning how to access resources to achieve goals and to develop skills for making career decisions. Part of the career exploration phase is the identification of key figures, people who serve in some way as role models.

### *Career Preparation*

At this level, high school students apply knowledge of their personal interests, strengths, abilities, and accomplishments to choosing and planning a post-secondary education or career path. In some schools, students develop a three- or four-year plan that assists them in relating their career interests and post-secondary education aspirations to academic and co-curricular achievements. This plan of action is updated annually and provides tentative career goals, identifies the courses that are required to achieve that goal, and reinforces the commitment and responsibility of the student to take charge of his or her career. This written document is developed jointly by the student, parents, and counsellors and can be stored in the student's career portfolio. The focus is on helping the young person integrate values, interests, and abilities into career planning, and perceive a greater range of options. Through the exercises, the student builds career-related skills, cultivates a positive work attitude, and demonstrates planning and decision-making abilities.

### **Blueprint for Life/Work Designs**

The *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* (2000) presents competencies and indicators that can be used as a general framework for schools establishing or redesigning a K–12 career development program. The Blueprint provides planning, development/redesign, and implementation activities. It lays out three areas of competence, each with a set of competencies. These are listed below.

### Personal Management

1. Build a positive self-image while discovering its influence on self and others.
2. Develop abilities for building positive relationships in one's life.
3. Discover that change and growth are part of life.

### Learning and Work Exploration

4. Discover lifelong learning and its contributions to one's life and work.
5. Discover and understand life/work information.
6. Discover how work contributes to individuals and the community.

### Life/Work Development

7. Explore effective work strategies.
8. Explore and improve decision making.
9. Explore and understand the interrelationship of life role(s).
10. Discover the nature of life/work roles.
11. Explore the underlying concepts of the life/work building process.

The 11 competencies represent the basic skills and attitudes that children and adolescents need as they begin the process of developing an educational plan for academic growth and career development.

In addition to understanding the Blueprint competencies, guidance counsellors can build curriculum and activities on the “High Five” messages of career development (Redekopp, Day, & Robb, 1995).

1. *Change is constant*: Cultivate an attitude of “positive uncertainty” (Gelatt, 1989) or a curiosity about what opportunities will arise as a result.
2. *Follow your heart*: When change is constant, relatively stable guideposts become all the more important. The “heart” is the set of characteristics that include values, beliefs, and interests. Skills, knowledge, and attitudes are simply tools that allow the path to be followed.
3. *Focus on the journey*: Career development is not about making the right decision about a job (“What should I be?”); it is the understanding that every decision is a career development decision (“What do I want to be doing now and in the future?”). Setting goals is important, but don't forget to live in, learn from, and enjoy the present.
4. *Stay learning*: If change is constant then learning will need to be constant. Opportunities for learning are everywhere, but to make the most of these opportunities it is important for people to know how to pursue and track their learning experiences.
5. *Build relationships*: Community is important and others around us have already had experiences that can support our learning.

## Career Education in Elementary School Years

In the following sections we assume an “integrative lifespan perspective” as we follow Baha, a fictional young girl, through her school years from elementary grades to completion of high school.

*Baha arrived in Canada from India seven years ago. Her mother and father are very anxious that she does well in school and learns about opportunities in Canada. Baha enjoys all of her classes and has a small circle of friends. Her father has his own business and her mother is staying at home to raise Baha’s two younger sisters. Her school creates and supports a career development climate including infusion throughout curricula. Teaching objectives in Grades 1 and 2 at her school have students learn about different jobs and how they are important in their community.*

In the primary grades, Baha increased her self-awareness and awareness of others as she did her household chores and school work. She interviewed her parents about their favourite school subjects, careers they thought about when they were young, those who helped them make their career decisions, what they like and don’t like about their work, and the skills that they learned in elementary school that they use in their work and home lives.

Knowing that parents play an influential role in their children’s career plans, the school sent brochures with ideas on how Baha’s parents could help her learn valuable career and life skills. Elementary school programs can assist students in creating connections between their academic studies and actual life situations (Magnuson & Starr, 2000), particularly when teachers have specific training in career planning (Slomp, Bernes, & Gunn, 2012). Baha’s teachers and school counsellor used career education principles to stress the significance of school subjects. For example, in social studies, she gained understanding about other countries, languages, cultures, and the aspects of living in a global marketplace. She discovered how science is involved in distinct industries, such as food, media, agricultural, and automotive. Her teachers read books on various careers and the class took a field trip to observe the variety of businesses in their community and the workers involved. In her Grade 4 class, her teacher presented a strengths-based career classroom guidance unit to help Baha progress through steps to identify her personal strengths, make the link between classroom learning and potential careers, explore a variety of careers, and discuss how gender and race might influence career choices (Augst & Akos, 2012).

Baha particularly enjoyed *The Play Real Game*, (Career Cruising, n.d.), in which the class took on adult work roles, earned and spent money, chose a home, and created a town in the classroom! In teacher-led groups, students travelled to the future and imagined their lives and careers in 5–10 years. As Baha moves on to middle school, she has already been exposed to learning activities that are helping her to develop a positive self-image, build positive relationships, and understand the importance of

lifelong learning. She has seen a range of life/work roles and appreciates how work benefits individuals and their community.

There are benefits to addressing the career needs of students as early as possible. Studies have shown cases of students becoming psychologically disengaged from school as early as third and sixth grade (Balfanz, Herzog, & MacIver, 2007; Looker, 2002), and of students becoming academically and socially disengaged during their middle school years (Looker, 2002). This underscores the importance of engaging young students from the beginning, motivating them academically and encouraging them to stay in school.

### Career Education in Middle School

*Baha is excited, but nervous, about entering middle school. She will have to adjust to a larger class size, contend with a more competitive environment and different grading and testing practices, and learn more challenging course material. Baha is hoping that she will learn how to select courses that will lay the foundation for her high school and post-high-school plans because she is feeling a bit directionless. Baha's parents are putting pressure on her to make a career decision before entering high school. The parents are eager to attend the parent-student career workshop offered by the school district.*

The transition to middle school is marked by several changes in educational expectations and practices. In most elementary schools, children belong to a single classroom with classmates through the term and one or two teachers. When students reach middle schools, however, they must interact with more peers, more teachers, and with intensified expectations for both performance and individual responsibility. Social, developmental, and academic experiences are affected, requiring them to adjust to new settings, structures, and expectations (Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2007). All of this occurs at a time when they are also experiencing a host of changes associated with the transition from childhood to adolescence. Their attentions turn to exercising independence and developing strong relationships with peers. The atmosphere at home may become strained as both parents and children struggle with redefining roles and relationships. This complicated period of transition has often been associated with a decline in academic achievement, performance motivation, and self-perceptions (Lohaus, Ev-Elban, Ball, & Klein-Hessling, 2004). It is a time when young adolescents are most likely to experiment with risky behaviours. It is also the point at which children begin to make pivotal decisions regarding their academic and career choices — precisely at a time when they may be distracted or turned off by academic endeavours.

Certainly sociodemographic variables such as parental income, rural living, physical disabilities, single parent families, low academic performance, and negative

attitudes about education contribute to being disengaged at the middle school level and not finishing high school. As an example, in British Columbia high school completion rates for all students is 80.3%, but only 54.1% for Aboriginal students (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2011). Knowing the factors that influence career progress of middle school students is important as it may help teachers and guidance counsellors keep students in school, and provide them with more purpose by establishing a linkage between their schooling experiences and employment.

During middle school the focus is on career exploration, where students seek out information on various occupations and identify their personal interests, values, and skills. Specifically, career development focuses on (a) understanding the concepts of lifelong learning, interpersonal relationships, and career planning; (b) developing learning and social skills, a sense of social responsibility, and the ability to formulate and pursue educational and career goals; and (c) applying this learning to their lives and work in the school and the community. Students are also taught ways to manage life transitions including the one from middle to high school.

### Career Education in High School

*Baha finds the transition to high school to be relatively smooth as she has been prepared by her school guidance counsellor for this next step. Baha knows the career cluster or distinct grouping of occupations that most interests her (i.e., business, marketing, and management). She is concerned about which specific courses she will need in order to go on to a postsecondary institution after graduation. She hopes that she can gain some experience in her area of interest before graduating from high school.*

Expansion of postsecondary options and multiple work alternatives available to high school students in the 21st century makes career-planning and postsecondary choices more complex (Patton & McMahon, 2006; Truong, 2011). However, many students are leaving high school without the skills they need to make postsecondary plans (Code, Bernes, & Gunn, 2006). Employers believe that high schools do not teach the information and skills needed in the workplace, and that students do not link coursework to life beyond high school (Magnifico, 2007). To help students along their desired career paths, it is important that career guidance practice in schools integrates the developmental needs of high school students in conjunction with the changing expectations encountered in the workplace (Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006; Government of Alberta, 2012; Truong, 2011).

As students transition into high school, they focus more directly on the task of identifying occupational preferences, clarifying career choices, and developing skills in career planning. **Career maturity** is demonstrated by high school students when they do the following:

- show they understand the importance of narrowing career interests as a basis for post-high-school planning;
- identify one or more tentative career interests after an objective evaluation of their likes, dislikes, and aptitudes;
- engage in various activities within and outside the school environment to verify these choices;
- use their outside and within school experiences to help inform making post-high-school decisions;
- explore alternatives and plans for preparing to pursue these interests after high school. (Gray, 2009)

To raise their career maturity, high school students need to engage in career exploration that encompasses experiences within the school and outside. Work experience programs, volunteer requirements, co-op programs, and youth apprenticeship programs can provide the type of experience to prepare students for success beyond high school.

In Baha's school, counsellors help students develop career maturity and make tentative decisions regarding their career interests, rather than pushing them to select particular jobs or careers. Baha uses a student-learning career planner to help her learn about and apply the career-planning process and the principles considered important for career planning. Baha is fortunate that the school she attends has mapped out career-related programs and services to ensure that the programs meet the needs of every student. The programs and courses ensure that every student has access to personal career advice and coaching, is provided with opportunities to reflect on and consider their options and opportunities (both formal and informal learning experiences), and is exposed to career-related activities including how to write résumés.

Her high school has a work-experience component built into the program that provides students experiential learning opportunities outside of the school environment. Engaging in work experience will allow her to discover or confirm her career interests and aptitudes as well as further develop her career planning and employability skills. In addition, Baha will be required to develop an **e-portfolio** in which she can record her strengths, competencies, and accomplishments, and collect such materials as résumés, application forms, correspondence with businesses, and examples of job interview questions and responses. Baha is told that her portfolio must be presented in a way similar to how she would present it to a job interviewer (Bloxom et al., 2008).

In Grade 9, Baha takes part in the *Take Our Kids to Work*<sup>TM</sup> event. Annually, more than 200,000 Grade 9 students and over 75,000 businesses and organizations nationwide participate in Take Our Kids to Work Day. Baha was excited to go with her dad to his place of business and learn about the various aspects from accounting to product promotion. In reflecting on this experience, Baha had a better apprecia-

**SPOTLIGHT: CHINOOK REGIONAL FOUNDATION FOR CAREER TRANSITION**

by Margaret Vennard

Remember when you were in school and how many times people asked what you were going to do? Figuring out the answer can be a daunting task.

Chinook Regional Foundation for Career Transitions was formed to support the career development process for secondary students in southern Alberta. Six core school divisions along with several private schools partnered with Alberta Human Services, Lethbridge College, the University of Lethbridge, local business, and industry to support students making career decisions. Over 9,000 students from 50 schools have access to the career services provided by Career Transitions.

The staff of five provides a diverse menu of services ranging from regional skills competitions, divisional career events, school workshops, classroom presentations, and parent information nights. All of the career development programs are group-based and designed to engage youth in self-awareness and career path investigation. The power of partnership means programs that would be overwhelming for a single teacher to implement can be co-ordinated through Career Transitions to the benefit of all school partners.

More information is available at <<http://www.careersteps.ca>>.

tion of her dad's role in making a living and supporting his family. She believed that by understanding her father's job, she could make more informed decisions about her own future. Over the summer, she also went with her mother to her place of work in a long-term care home.

Baha found Career Cruising, an online career guidance website, to be very user friendly and helpful. Career Cruising <<http://careercruising.com>> has career assessment tools, over 550 occupational profiles, comprehensive postsecondary information, an employment section with a job search tool, student/client portfolios with résumé builders, and administrative tools.

The Youth Canada site (<<http://www.youthcanada.ca/>>) was also useful and very practical. Developed by two Vancouver high school students, Alex Shipillo and Michael Gelbart in 2006, the site provides a database for every program, competition, and conference for Canadian high school students and has articles on topics such as scholarships, postsecondary education, volunteering, enrichment opportunities, and so on.

Some of Baha's friends are undecided as to what to do at the end of high school and

## Stories of Transition: What Happens in the Decade After High School

by Lara Shepard

The transition from high school into further education and employment is a bewildering process for many young people and their parents. Funded by CERIC, the Stories of Transition Project examined the educational and occupational pathways that high school students took after graduation and the factors that helped or hindered in the process.

The two publications — *The Decade After High School: A Professional's Guide* and *The Decade After High School: A Parent's Guide* — are available from CERIC <<http://www.ceric.ca/?q=en/node/136>>.

want to postpone continued study in order to explore areas of work that may be of interest to them. The school counsellor provides them with tips on how to plan for a successful “gap” year. A **gap year** can provide students with experiences that help them gain more insight into themselves and their career goals. For others, a break from studying will renew their enthusiasm for their studies. Students can gain real-world understanding of their classroom-based learning while taking time away from school, and they can earn money for tuition and other expenses prior to attending post-secondary education (Tropey, 2009).

Baha knows that not all her peers want to complete high school. Her school has implemented the innovative and much-acclaimed Pathways to Education program to encourage students in lower income neighbourhoods to finish high school and continue at a postsecondary school. Volunteer teacher candidates, university students, and older high school students tutor and mentor the students in Grades 9 to 12 so that they can achieve academically. The program offers

some financial supports in the form of bus tickets and lunch vouchers. As a financial incentive, students graduating from the program are awarded a scholarship of up to \$4,000 to continue in postsecondary education or training.

Pathways to Education was developed at The Regent Park Community Health Centre in Toronto in 2001 (with funding assistance from The Counselling Foundation of Canada) to address the high dropout rates and dimly poor future for young people in the low-income housing community of Regent Park. In 2007, the Pathways to Education Program received the Ruth Atkinson Hindmarsh Award, in recognition of its success in helping young people in Toronto do better in school and in replicating this program in other low-income communities in Canada (Pathways to Education, 2013). Over the first 10 years of the program, the high school dropout rate in Regent Park declined by over 70%, and postsecondary attendance grew from 20% to 80% (Pathways to Education, n.d.).

The completion of secondary school serves as a major transition point for many young adults (Arnett, 2007). In a 15-year longitudinal study that examined the educational and career pathways of high school students in British Columbia,

Andres and Adamuti-Trache (2008) found that participants did not progress linearly from high school to postsecondary education and then to work and other life-sphere activities. In fact, very few students followed a traditional route through the system, and trajectories became increasingly less traditional as students made their way through the postsecondary system. Gender, postsecondary completion status, parental education, and geographic region all contributed to the nature of each participant's trajectory.

At this transition point, Baha will need to contemplate the various educational pathways that exist for her, any of which will define her entry into young adulthood. These pathways may include: (a) employment; (b) a commerce program at a university; (c) an academic program at a community college that grants credits that are transferable to a university; and (d) a small business program at a community college that would lead to a certificate or diploma.

Today's 17-year-old secondary school student living in Canada can expect to participate in approximately three years of postsecondary education; and 10% to 20% of all young adults will participate in some form of education until their late 20s (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2006). Bell and O'Reilly (2008) showed in their study of school-to-work-transition that the journey takes longer today (on average 8 years to complete compared to 6 years

### **SPOTLIGHT: A NEW APPROACH TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN QUÉBEC**

by Sandra Salesas

In 1998, the Québec Ministry of Education, Sports, and Leisure implemented a new curriculum focusing on learning outcomes and cross-curricular competencies. In parallel, the Ministry introduced the Guidance-Oriented Approach to Learning (GOAL), which aims at infusing components of career development into subject areas. For example, a teacher may cover the job interview in an English class. Through experiential learning, students learn to make meaningful connections between school and work. The career counsellor, together with teachers and other professionals, work as a team in creating individualized units of learning and activities that encourage students to reflect on their talents and aspirations, and to explore different career possibilities. Thus, GOAL mobilizes all members of the school community to engage in guidance-oriented activities starting from elementary to the end of secondary school and even college.

As of 2012, GOAL is widely known and implemented in many high schools, Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP), and universities. It is a culture that elicits partners to work together in order to ensure student success and meaningful connections.

20 years ago), and that pursuing further education is needed to facilitate entry into the workforce. Baha will need to consider the amount of time she is willing to invest in her education prior to working, the financial investment needed to complete particular programs, and employment prospects upon graduating.

Institutions have designed programs that are more flexible and accommodate students' life-needs. Schools make it easier for students to complete their studies while also balancing work and family responsibilities.

### ❖ *Stop and Reflect*

1. After Baha finishes high school, what type of trajectories in education and lifestyle can you imagine for her? Would you see it as an uninterrupted journey to a career, a circuitous one, or prolonged? What processes could be involved in the transition when considering different lifestyle trajectories? Identify

individuals who might be perceived as important people in Baha's life who might impede or act as a support in the process.

2. How do the various educational and lifestyle trajectories that you considered for Baha reflect occupational status and gender-related aspects?

### CAREER TREK (WINNIPEG)

by Priya S. Mani

Career Trek is a not-for-profit organization that provides programming for youth (Grade 5 through 9) from marginalized communities. The objective is to educate students and their families about postsecondary career options. Each year selected schools and community groups nominate candidates to participate. Career Trek runs from October to April with participants rotating through four to eight career modules at the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, and Red River College. Every five weeks students move to a new set of departments/faculties where participants learn about admission requirements, career trajectories, and personal/social skill development.

To find out more, go to Career Trek <<http://www.careertrek.ca>>.

Some of Baha's classmates are introduced to *Career Trek*, innovative educational programming for young people Grades 5 through 9 who come from traditionally marginalized communities such as adolescent parents, Aboriginal youth, and youth who have been assessed as at-risk for leaving school because of family stress, poverty, and other social-emotional issues. Career Trek's objective is to educate students and their families about staying in school, to inspire students to continue on to postsecondary education, and to provide hands-on career exploration (see Career Trek sidebar).

Other children identified as at-risk in her school are invited to take part in *Gameworks*, which encourages young people to exercise and utilize their creativity while working towards a real-life goal in a collaborative environment. During the building activity, team members experience firsthand how co-operation is

essential to completing a project (see Gameworks sidebar on the next page).

Speakers — men and women in a wide variety of careers and from various ethnic groups — are invited to School Career Day (Rivera & Schaefer, 2009). Students talk with the guest speakers and learn from their personal and professional experiences in the field. Prior to career day, the students prepare various questions to ask the speakers in consultation with their home room teacher or the school counsellor. After the event, students report back to their home room or to the school counsellor on what they took away from the experience and what they learned about various careers.

In her social studies class, Baha developed a **community genogram**, a mapping activity in which she represented her community and the resources and supports within it. She learned about **role models** and was able to identify several from her life. Her class engages in the *Make It Real Game* (Career Cruising, n.d.), which shows students how their school courses, social life, work, and community experience contribute to the many opportunities open to them. Students examine their own aptitudes and interests and are able to test real-world decisions in a safe environment.

Recognizing that secure parent-child relationships and high parental involvement are associated with progress in career decision making (Young, Valach, & Marshall, 2007), the school counsellors developed a series of two-hour parent-child workshops on career development. The workshops were based on the publications, *Career Coaching Your Teens: A Guide for Parents* (Government of Alberta, 2008); *A Career Development Resource for Parents: Helping Parents Explore the Role of Coach and Ally* (Canada Career

### SPOTLIGHT: *TRANSITIONING TO POSTSECONDARY*

by Kathy Dokis-Ranney

The Ontario Ministry of Education funds dual credit programs to enable students to complete secondary school and continue to postsecondary education or apprenticeship training.

Cambrian College in partnership with the Rainbow District School Board and the Sudbury Catholic District School Board offers a dual-credit program. There “the Dual Credit program is intended to encourage secondary school students to complete their secondary school education and to consider continuing on to post-secondary education; the program provides opportunities to explore career prospects; and it ensures a successful transition to College and apprenticeship programs.” (<<http://www.cambriancollege.ca/Programs/Pages/ProgramsDualCredit.aspx>>)

For students interested in apprenticeship, the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) offers the Co-operative Education program to Grades 11 and 12 students by which students may start training in a skilled trade while completing an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. (<<http://www.oyap.com>>)

## GAMEWORKS

by Lara Shepard

Gameworks is a “social board room” website where youth can build board games and take part in contests. Participants form teams to work on building a board game from conception to final packaging. Gameworks encourages participants to utilize their creativity while working towards a real life goal in a collaborative environment. Practicing negotiation, conducting research, and experiencing the pitfalls and successes of the choices they have made, youth realize that their needs can be met with the help of others. Participants receive a stronger learning experience by researching themes deeply and incorporating them into the concept of the game.

See <<http://goratemygame.com/>>.

Information Partnership, 2006); *Lasting Gifts: Helping Parents to Become Allies in Career Development Workshop Series* (CCDF, 2004); and *WorkBC Parents’ Guide: A Career Development Resource for Parents to Support Teens* (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2008). Baha’s parents learned various ways to assist their daughter in (a) discovering her career passion, (b) choosing the right career path, (c) selecting the type of training or education that would be appropriate post-high-school, and (d) accessing the best sources for informed and accurate advice. After attending the workshops, they could see the benefits of allowing Baha some time to discover those passions and had some ideas as to how to facilitate the process. They encouraged her to try new things, such as getting involved in other extracurricular activities, volunteering at a home for seniors, and job shadowing a friend who worked at the cancer clinic.

Career education in middle school is aimed at helping students become more self-aware and relate their growing knowledge of self to educational and occupational possibilities (Gray, 2009). Interests, skills, and values can be assessed informally or formally to provide a framework to help organize information about oneself and the world of work (Gray, 2009). Developing occupational lists could be a starting point for discussing the kinds of academic skills needed to pursue various career paths and to discover what career choices exist.

Junior high school students in Southern Alberta who completed the Comprehensive Career Needs Survey (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, & Witko, 2004) indicated that career planning was important to them. The researchers point out that career planning at this life stage could “increase students’ awareness of the relevance of career decision making and influence their willingness to explore possible options, rather than putting off career planning until they are forced to make a decision” (p. 113). An unexpected finding of the study showed that students at this age tended to rely on their parents and friends rather than the school counsellor for assistance with career planning. Training parents to assist their children with career-related decision making is important in order for them to provide the needed encouragement and direction. A balance between familial and external supports

may encourage young people to explore career options and increase their confidence in making career decisions (Bardick et al., 2004).

### Disadvantaged Students

Research has demonstrated the negative effects of poverty on youth (Shookner, 2002; TkMC, 2006). There is also evidence for the existence of certain protective factors that shield students from these effects and that guidance counsellors can use in the planning and implementation of career interventions. For example, Lee (1999) found that supportive adult relationships were instrumental in boosting the self-confidence of economically disadvantaged students, thereby enabling them to achieve greater academic and career success.

Aiding students to persist in school requires having teachers who are emotionally supportive and who believe the student can achieve academically (Samuel, Sondergeld, Fischer, & Patterson, 2011). Guidance counsellors are also in a position to establish consistent relationships with students by collaborating or creating mentoring opportunities in students' lives. While education can help individuals break the cycle of poverty, these students and families may need extra support and encouragement to ensure that they have equal access and an opportunity to succeed. Factors such as lack of support, contextual and structural barriers, socioeconomic status, and gender role-stereotypes can impede a student's ability to pursue their goals and aspirations.

For Baha, the guidance counsellor might be interested in exploring ideas about future opportunities, options available to her, and what may be considered appropriate careers in terms of her cultural/societal values and expectations. Baha may also be provided with information about current national employment trends and resources available (e.g., financial aid and scholarships) to assist her in developing a broader framework of possibilities from which to consider options. The guidance counsellor could also reach out to the community and ask women in business to share their personal career stories to help Baha navigate different career pathways and address her hopes and fears. Additionally, the guidance counsellor could offer a parent workshop geared towards helping parents understand how parents can support their children as they make the transition from secondary school to the world of work or postsecondary education. The guidance counsellor and her family might also review Baha's career portfolio with her. The portfolio would be a rich resource reflective of her development and growth and could assist her in deciding on an educational pathway and in later preparing a personal and professional statement for employment or postsecondary applications.

### ❖ *Stop and Reflect*

1. Baha is torn between working in the family business, which is what she thinks her parents wish her to do, or leaving her parents to study at university. As a

## CAREERS: The Next Generation Health Services Youth Initiative

by Lara Shepard

CAREERS partners with Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services to offer high school students internship opportunities at health facilities. The goal is to attract young talent to hard-to-fill health occupations. The CAREERS Summer Internship program invites Grade 11 students to explore a health-related career and develop employability skills. During the summer, students work with a health services provider for about 6 weeks and earn one high school credit for every 25 hours worked. Most employers offer a salary or an honorarium. Some participating health service providers offer a second summer internship for Grade 12 students.

See <<http://www.nextgen.org>>.

career guidance practitioner, how would you help her navigate her dilemma?

2. Is the nature of the transition process different for high school students entering different kinds of institutions (universities, vocational colleges, technical training institutes, community colleges, nursing schools, research laboratories, centres of excellence, and distance learning centres)? Do you believe that the transition process to different forms of postsecondary education requires a redefinition of self and values for Baha?

### Community Engagement

Societal and personal bias influences the way in which stakeholders talk about the academic and vocational options available to students and how students perceive those options and occupations. The past two decades have seen a range of reforms aimed at the high school level regarding the issue of curricular tracking and addressing the vocational and academic divide (Rose, 2008). One manner in which high schools can address this divide

is by integrating academic and vocational education for both streams of students, thus providing students with a richer range of options for careers or education. In British Columbia, the Ministry of Education has mandated that secondary students participate in some form of community involvement for a set number of hours as part of their high school graduation requirements. By establishing local partnerships between schools, postsecondary institutions, colleges, and employers, schools can offer vocational and educational training opportunities to help increase the career pathways for students to consider (Taylor, 2007).

Community building within and outside of school can create situations in which young people are more successful in career development tasks. Research suggests that structured community-based experiences are critical developmental pathways through which young people can develop lifelong learning skills and become self-directed, socially competent, caring, and successful young adults (Larson, 2000). Structured activities such as service and civic activities, youth organizations like Girl

Scouts or Boy Scouts, and participating in a sport have been shown to help young people develop initiative and follow-through (Lapan, 2004). Community-school partnerships that provide career development opportunities for young people, such as work-based and service learning, help to introduce young people to broader career pathways.

Community engagement involves many stakeholders. Even financially disadvantaged communities have resources that can be used to support students. These might be elders, ethnic communities, church groups, sports organizations, businesses, and employers who can also serve as mentors and help students with their transition from school to employment or postsecondary education. Working from a strengths-based approach, school career counsellors can identify these potential supports and work with them in the best interest of the students and their community (Levin, 2011).

## Conclusion

Career development of students should be a major mission of all schools — a process too important to be only a by-product of scattered learning and activities that are inherently uneven from student to student. Career development in the schools should (a) be planned, (b) have content derived from research and theory, (c) be systematically executed, and (d) use methods that are relevant to the developmental levels of students throughout elementary, middle, and senior high schools. Career choices determine how we spend much of our lives and the contributions we make to our families, communities, and society. In order to make the best possible career choices, students need a strong foundation of learning, self-awareness, career exploration, work search, and transition skills. Career development acts as this foundation.

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## Glossary

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**Career education** is the curricula and programs that provide information and experiences that help students make meaningful career and education decisions. It facilitates adaptability in students and helps them make meaningful linkages between general education and work-life roles.

**Career maturity** expresses an individual's readiness to make educational and vocational choices including planfulness or time perspective, exploration, information, decision making, and reality orientation.

**Community genogram** is a versatile, graphic tool that places emphasis on the positive strengths and resources that can be brought to bear in examining the potential supports within one's community and culture, as well as family.

**E-portfolio**, also known as an **electronic portfolio** or **digital portfolio**, is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web. Such electronic evidence may include inputted text, electronic files, images, multimedia, blog entries, and hyperlinks. E-portfolios are both demonstrations of the user's abilities and platforms for self-expression, and, if they are online, can be maintained dynamically over time.

**Exploration stage** occurs during ages 15–20. The individual “tries things out” through classes, work experience, and/or hobbies. They collect relevant information and related skill development.

**Gap year** is associated with taking time out to travel between life stages. It refers to a period of time in which students disengage from curricular education and undertake non-curricular activities, such as travel, volunteering, or work.

**Growth stage** occurs from birth to age 14. The individual forms a self-concept, develops capacities, attitudes, interests, and needs, and forms a general understanding of the world of work.

**Role models** are people whom other individuals aspire to be like, either in the present or in the future. A role model may be someone you know and interact with on a regular basis, or someone you have never met, such as a celebrity.

**School guidance counsellors** are professionals who offer academic, career, university/college or postsecondary, social advice, and guidance to children in Grades K through 12.

**Student-learning career planner** is used as part of students' career planning. Students build a career "toolkit" to make career decisions and implement plans for further learning or workplace entry.

## Discussion and Activities

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### Discussion

#### Discussion Questions

1. What are the developmental milestones that children and youth contend with? How does an understanding of developmental milestones help us to create appropriate career resources for children and youth?
2. What do you believe should be the focus of career school guidance programs in order to best support children and youth?
3. Career development principles are often integrated into a school's core curriculum so that career education does not become one more course for teachers to instruct. What external or internal resources would you draw upon to foster the integration of career development as a school-wide initiative? Discuss the possible policy implications for integrating career development as part of the school curriculum and the impact it may have on the future training of career school guidance counsellors.

#### Career Practitioner Role

1. What does career readiness and maturity mean at different stages of development?
2. As a prospective career guidance practitioner in the schools, what do you see as challenges in integrating career interventions into regular school subjects? How might you work with the community and local businesses to develop a community-based school program?
3. At each of the three school levels, what types of experiential learning activities would you implement to promote student engagement and achievement with students who appear to be at-risk or off-track?
4. As a career guidance counsellor in the school, how would you encourage the unique strengths and abilities of children and/or youth, and encourage hope and optimism for their future?

### Personal Reflection

1. In your opinion, what can schools or faculties of education do to enhance career practitioners' sense of efficacy for integrating career interventions and programs within the school?
2. What would you do to enhance your sense of efficacy and your capacity as a career practitioner to integrate developmentally appropriate career development practices into a school setting?
3. Briefly examine the various career interventions described in this chapter. List the interventions that you consider the easiest to implement and those that you would consider the hardest. What steps would you take to learn more about the career interventions that you find most challenging to implement?
4. What external influences/messages have constrained or facilitated your navigation of various educational transitions and how has that contributed to your understanding of career development? What internal influences/messages have constrained or facilitated your management of various educational transitions that influenced your career identity? What strategies did you use or develop at different time periods to manage various transitions?
5. What do you hope to accomplish when working with students, parents, and people in your community as a career school guidance practitioner?

### Activities

1. **Create a virtual career centre for students or parents.**

For this exercise, you will work with a small group of students in your class.

Each group will be responsible for creating a virtual career centre that could be implemented within a school. The small group will need to determine the school level for which they will be aiming their virtual career centre (elementary, middle, or the secondary level) and the client group (students or parents). Please draw on career development theories as you consider which activities and resources you will include (e.g., what Internet sources might you use, provide links to websites and consider guidelines for evaluating and selecting websites for inclusion). How might you use social media in your centre? What printables might be available for your clientele (parents or students)?

2. **Movie analysis of Billy Elliott**

Billy Elliott is the story of a young boy and his dream of being a ballet dancer. His relentless pursuit of this goal allows him to overcome his economic hardship, societal pressures to conform to gender role expectations, and parental caution of the danger of pursuing his dreams. He confronts each obstacle with self-determination and accesses support along the way. As you view this movie please consider how the following themes unfold:

1. Becoming your own person.
2. Setting personal goals and planning for your future.
3. Following a new-found dream.

4. Being self-determined.
5. Persevering.
6. Overcoming obstacles and substantial odds.

## Resources and Readings

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### Resources

#### General

Bridges Transition Inc., a XAP Corporation company, offers education and planning tools for elementary, middle, and high school students. Choices Explorer is one of the products. In Canada <<http://www.bridges.com/cdn/home.html>>.

Career Cruising has several software products for students to use in exploring careers.

One of these is ccTheRealGame <<http://public.careercruising.com>>.

Career Exploration and Experiential Learning Fact Sheet <<http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/22000/283680.pdf>>

The Learning Partnership, Take Our Kids to Work

<<http://www.thelearningpartnership.ca/Page.aspx?pid=250>>

National Life/Work Centre. Blueprint for Life/Work Designs

<[www.blueprint4life.ca](http://www.blueprint4life.ca)>

*The Real Game Series*. Main page is <<http://public.careercruising.com/us/en/products/cctherealgame/features/>>. The following urls provide excellent background and

historical information on *The Real Game Series*: <<http://www.realgame.ca>>

(Canada), <<http://www.realgame.org>> (U.S.), <<http://www.realgame.com>>

(International)

#### Career Resources

##### British Columbia

Health and Career Education Integrated Resource Package <[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/health\\_career\\_education/2006hcek7.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/health_career_education/2006hcek7.pdf)>.

School District No 69 Qualicum

<<http://www.sd69.bc.ca/Programs-services/EducationPrograms/CEP/Pages/default.aspx>>.

##### Alberta

Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) <<http://alis.alberta.ca/>>. Site has a brochure on Resources for the Classroom <<http://alis.alberta.ca/pdf/PSWRnews/classroom.pdf>>.

Career Development Association of Alberta <<http://www.careerdevelopment.ab.ca/>>.

Government of Alberta Education. Career and Technology studies <<http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/cts/program-of-studies.aspx>>.

## Saskatchewan

Career Education: Core Learning Resources

<[https://www.edonline.sk.ca/bbcswebdav/library/resources/english/Core/Grade%206-9/Career%20Education/career\\_ed\\_7\\_core\\_resources.pdf](https://www.edonline.sk.ca/bbcswebdav/library/resources/english/Core/Grade%206-9/Career%20Education/career_ed_7_core_resources.pdf)>.

## Manitoba

Career Development <<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cardev/index.html>>.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth: Career Development, Kindergarten to Grade 12 <[www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cardev/resources.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cardev/resources.html)>.

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## Ontario

Ontario Ministry of Education <[http://www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/sjw/secondary\\_program.html](http://www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/sjw/secondary_program.html)>.

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board: Cooperative and Career Education <<http://www.ocdsb.ca/programs/sec/Pages/CooperativeEducation.aspx>>.

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