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A thematic plan to promote college and career aspirations for low socioeconomic status students

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A THEMATIC PLAN TO PROMOTE COLLEGE AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS FOR LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS STUDENTS

by
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Dedication

To my mom, Lena Richardson-Kelsey,

who trusted my decisions, and granted me the opportunity to live out my adolescent life

with Misper, Patricia VanKirk.

To my colleague and sister in Christ, Crystle Roye-Gill,

who encouraged me to apply to Rowan University Doctoral Program,

and continuously challenged my educational experience with instructional pedagogical

debates.

To my husband and sparring partner, Kenneth Larry Chism,

who always suggests that I "Do my research" before concluding any decision.

To my sisters, Deena Kelsey-Roberts, Annette Kelsey, Jeanette Kelsey, Cheryl Kelsey,

and brothers, Curtis Kelsey, Robert Kelsey and late Leon Kelsey who provided in their

own special way, support during my educational journey.

To my rare collection of treasured friends,

who have always been extremely patient and given me the space to explore and complete

my endeavors.

Abstract

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A THEMATIC PLAN TO PROMOTE COLLEGE AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS
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Research has suggested higher education is the most prominent way to ensure mobility from one socioeconomic status to another (Siff, 2006). Just as important is the development of the educational aspirations of low socioeconomic status (SES) students; this is called the predisposition stage (Brown v. the Board of Education, 1954; Perna & Swail, 2001; Walpole, 2003; Wilt, 2006).

While much has been written on the subject of higher education of low SES student, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) discuss a three-phase college choice model that precludes the higher education of low SES students. The predisposition stage, as the first stage is termed, involves the development of occupational and educational aspirations. The remaining stages, two and three, address the emergence of intentions to further education beyond high school. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) contend the predisposition stage has been the focus of the least amount of research as it is often a black box of psychological and sociological functions (Hossler, Schmitt, & Vesper, 1999).

Walpole (2003) asserts students of low socioeconomic status (SES) have lower educational aspiration persistence rates and educational attainment than their peers from higher SES backgrounds. Our dependence upon schools to make a difference in the preparation of students for the future not only remains, but has increased as an

expectation to address the national issue of college access and retention (Perna & Swail, 2001). Additionally, underrepresented students often attend schools that provide counselors; however, the ratio of counselor to students is 1:457 as identified by College Board Advocacy and Policy Center (2007-08). These students also tend to live in homes where the level of education reached by parents influences the ways in which they raise their children and seek to improve the education of their children (Economic Mobility Project, 2009). As a result, our low SES students inevitably exhibit the need for schools to provide resources that are lacking for their optimum growth. Most significantly, Arnove and Clements (2009) contend the failure of lower socioeconomic groups and ethnic minorities to succeed in school often resides in the mismatch between the expectations of state curricula and school personnel.

The overview of the finds concludes that it is imperative that our low SES students are exposed to a curriculum tailored to increase their awareness of the attainability of higher education, connecting career choices through higher education or training, and making decisions on the types of higher education/training to pursue. The school is often expected to replace the typical role that parents should play when encouraging, advising, or ensuring the child has access to college (Tierney, Corwin, & Colyar, 2005). For some students, the dream of a college education is actualized through school personnel such as teachers, counselors, or administrators. Unfortunately, in many urban schools where students of low socioeconomic status possess the greatest need for this service, the ratio of student to counselors is 457:1 as identified by the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center (2007-08).

In an attempt to circumvent this disparity, developing a curriculum that can be implemented by any content area teacher has the potential to positively impact college/career aspirations and access for these students, as it increases the likelihood of their progression through the three stages of college choice (Hossler Gallagher, 1987). It also increases the adult to student ratio in the dissemination of vital information regarding higher education or training.

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Chapter I

Introduction and Problem Statement

It has been long understood that one of the most consistent ways of increasing

one's level of social mobility is through the attainment of education. In 1973, the United

States entered into what Mortenson (2009) refers to as the Human Capital Economy. He

explains that for the first time in this country's history, a person's willingness to work

hard to live by society's rules was no longer pertinent to one's ability to achieve the

American dream. It was then determined that anyone who wanted to live a middle-class

American lifestyle also had to obtain a higher education.

While education, and postsecondary education in particular, remains one of the

most effective tools our nation has for promoting upward mobility, Americans may not

have achieved equal opportunity in this regard. According to Walpole (2003), researchers

have found that low socioeconomic status (SES) students are less likely to attend college,

are more likely to attend less selective institutions, and have unique choice processes. It is

further stated that this group is less likely to remain through graduation, or to attend

graduate school (Walpole, 2003). I believe earning a college degree today can foster

upward mobility, and according to Jackson(2006), create the same level of opportunity

for students that earned a high school diploma15 years ago.

Walpole's (2003) research suggests the backgrounds of low socioeconomic status

(SES) students have lower educational aspiration persistence rates, and educational

attainment than their peers from higher SES backgrounds. Additionally, Wilt (2006)

speaks of the complex life situations that low-income individuals face, such as poverty,

low performing schools, crime infested communities, and a lack of resources, which play a pivotal role in their educational success. Walpole (2003) suggests, while there are low SES students who attend college after graduating from high school, this enrollment can represent success in overcoming many of these obstacles. However, Walpole (2003) further contends that in the four years following high school, these same students are less likely to achieve a bachelor's degree. Equally pertinent, Walpole (2003) adds, students from low SES backgrounds often enroll in institutions positioned lower in the higher education system.

The Brown v. the Board of Education (1954) desegregation mandates, which were perceived as a turning point in promoting equitable educational opportunities for historically underrepresented students, I perceive as a matter of equity. In an effort to address the ever present issue of educational equity on the playing field of higher education, several researchers view early intervention as a significant factor in the college and career aspirations of low socioeconomic status (SES) students (Perna & Swail, 2001).While they may be indecisive as to how our youth ready themselves, research points to interventions that may increase opportunity for our young adults to advance and become productive members of society. Fashola and Slavin (1977) stipulate that earlier career curriculum/interventions may prepare and foster in students the meaning of college success and compensate for their lack of birth advantages, including social capital as well as cultural capital.

During a higher education briefing in 2010 under Secretary Martha Kanter, the administration committed to increase access to and success in higher education by restructuring and dramatically expanding college financial aid. They further discussed

making federal aid programs simpler, more reliable, and more efficient for students. Tierney and Auerbach (2005) studied the selection process of first year college students ranging from least important to highest in importance, and found financial issues remained the most important factor for the low socioeconomic status (SES) students in terms of making a decision to attend college or to not. Attending to the needs of low SES students in navigating the process of college, retention through graduation and financial support must begin much earlier and involve more educators if we are going to reach the administration's goal as well as increase social mobility.

Research (Perna & Swail, 2001) maintains that both individuals and society at large benefit when an individual earns a college degree, and those benefits can be short-term and long-term. Short-term benefits are described as enjoyment of the learning experience, participation in athletic, cultural, and social events, as well as enhancement of social status. The research goes further to state the long-term benefits include higher lifetime earnings, more fulfilling work environment, and better health, resulting in longer life. I believe it is a matter of survival for low SES students to become involved in the higher education process, and agree with Wilt (2006), who suggests that being prepared for college is a cumulative process that occurs throughout the life of the student. The work done in this study was an attempt to positively impact that process in the lives of low SES students at one middle school in Camden in New Jersey.

Impetus of the Study

As an educator concerned with students of economically and academically underprivileged backgrounds, I have chosen to focus this study on ways to foster attending college and career aspirations for low SES students, which according to Stage

and Hossler (1989), is the predisposition stage. The predisposition stage involves the development of occupational and educational aspirations, as well as the emergence of intentions to further education beyond high school (Stage & Hossler, 1989).

Additionally, while the focal point of my study is not specifically on cultural capital, it is a strong predictor of academic achievement as it relates to the college choice process (Walpole, 2003),as well as the affects of the college experience and outcomes. According to Terenzini, Cabrera, and Bernal (2001), the presence of cultural capital in students of high socioeconomic status creates the development of the predisposition stage, which involves the development of occupational and educational aspirations as well as the emergence of intentions to continue education beyond the secondary level. This study sought to examine ways in which low socioeconomic (SES) students can enhance their cultural and social capital in hopes of developing occupational and educational aspirations beyond the secondary level.

Farquhar, Michael, and Wiggins (2005) maintain social capital is characterized by a sense of trust, shared norms and values, and interconnectedness. It is enhanced over time through positive interaction and assisting communities in achieving mutual goals and responding to crises. Arnove and Clements (2009) contend the failure of lower socioeconomic groups and ethnic minorities to succeed in school often resides in the mismatch between the expectations of state curricula and school personnel and what students actually know and value. The Economic Mobility Project (2009) states a number of relationships originating in the school setting generate social capital, some bolstering and others hindering children's success, some reinforcing or diluting the earlier parental influence. Also documented by the Economic Mobility Project (2009) is the thought that

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the level of education reached by parents influences the ways in which they raise their children and seek to improve the education of their children. Additionally, the dream of a college education for some students is actualized through parental aspirations and expectations. An example of such is the idea presented by the Economic Mobility Project (2009), which stipulates better educated parents tend to create homes that foster behaviors and cognitive development that are more consistent with academic achievement.

Considering the research stemming from the Economic Mobility Project (2009) points to the important role our schools play in the lives of low socioeconomic status (SES) students, and how the dream of college attainment is actualized through school personnel such as counselors, teachers, and administrators. Unfortunately, in many urban schools in which students of low socioeconomic status are in need of this service, the ratio of counselor to students is 1:457,as identified by College Board Advocacy and Policy Center (2011). With that in mind, the school becomes the primary educational source for most low socioeconomic students. It is my intention to put in place a curriculum addressing college and career aspirations for low SES middle school students that influences the point at which they determine whether or not they would like to continue their formal education beyond high school. According to Hossler and Gallagher (1987) this is considered the predisposition stage.

As teachers and administrators become more inundated with the demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), students are exhibiting the need for schools to provide resources that are simply not available on the home front. Additionally, to reinforce the significance of reaching the middle school student during their development of acquiring

self-concept and social skills, the United States Department of Education (2007) suggests that a college education builds on the knowledge and skills acquired in those earlier years of education. It further suggests that the planning of college exploration should begin in seventh or eighth grade.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study was to develop and expose middle school students to a college and career exploration curriculum at Woodbine Middle School. Utilizing an action research approach, I worked with teachers to develop a curriculum that was implemented in the classroom by content area teachers. This curriculum engaged low SES students in curriculum strategies and interventions that were specifically geared towards exploring the college admission process as well as possible career choices. The curriculum was specifically tailored to increase their awareness of the attainability of higher education, connect career choices through higher education or training, navigate the mounds of documents associated with pursuing college attainment, and make pertinent decisions on the types of higher education/training to pursue. Utilization of this curriculum meant reaching a greater number of students than the counselor intended practice under the parameters of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Additionally, according to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2009), their projected best practice intended to provide college readiness. However, what this looks like at Woodbine Middle School is a meeting with students, between October and November of their eighth grade year, prior to transitioning to high school, to help place them in a small learning community, related to their interests for freshman year.

Previous research indicates the need for increased exposure at an earlier stage in the college attainment process. The Career Interest Inventory, which was designed to assess students' career aspirations, was once utilized for the purpose of placing students in Small Learning Communities (SLC). The study chose to reinstate the Career Interest Inventory in hopes of creating interventions that would develop occupational and educational aspirations, as well as prompt the emergence of intentions that will further the students' education beyond high school (Stage & Hossler, 1989).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How did a middle school curriculum focus on college and career exploration to impact the predisposition stage of low SES students?

2. What were the most effective curriculum intervention strategies that promoted college and career aspirations among low SES students?

3. How did a middle school curriculum focus on career aspirations help to enhance social capital of its low SES students?

4. How did my leadership theory promote the development and implementation of a career and college exploration curriculum?

Significance of the Study

Given the fact that social mobility is hinged upon academic achievement, it reasonably follows that disparities in the achievement gap, high dropout, and low graduation rates play a role in hindering upward mobility. Despite the multi-billion dollar investment spent on college programs, a clear understanding of how Americans of underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds develop aspirations to attend college, ready

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themselves for college work, choose among institutions, and enroll and persist to graduation have eluded researchers and policymakers alike (Terenzini et al., 2001). We as educators cannot wait until the gaps in the college aspirations and attainment are fully understood before we recognize teachers as being salient in the process. My hope was to create collaborative teacher involvement in the college preparation practice. This collaboration would serve as a foundational resource to equalize the playing field between low socioeconomic status (SES) students and their high SES counterparts. I would like those of us in the middle school arena to actively engage low SES students in curriculum strategies and interventions where students participate in academic discourse, group processes, and cooperative learning to assist them in viewing themselves as college students. The goal of the curriculum strategies was to enhance the current practices of teaching and learning for the purpose of positively influencing the predisposition stage.

While the struggle and intended premise of the middle school is to address the mounting needs of the low SES students that stem from their demographic and social risk factors (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2000), African American and Latino students have demonstrated a greater need for the acquisition of the knowledge skills necessary to navigate the college application process. If students in low-support environments do not receive adequate and appropriate guidance, their likelihood of dropping out or not pursuing a college education rises significantly (Tierny, Corwin, & Colyar, 2005). Fallon (1997) contends first generation students are disproportionately affected by the failure of teachers and counselors to dispense appropriate information early to impact the college choice process. Fallon further states many students have not been encouraged by school counselors, teachers, or administrators to take part in the courses and guidance activities

that will assist them to successfully compete for college admission because they are not viewed as college material.

The research of Brown, Flick, and Williamson (2005) suggests schools should maintain an academic culture, which integrates a social learning environment where trust, mutual cooperation, information sharing, and respect are fostered. This creates an environment that promotes the development of social capital. Print and Coleman (2003) recommend designing curriculum to engage students in active participation to build trust, cooperation, and networking skills that can be influenced in several ways. They speak of academic discourse, group processes, and cooperative learning as those most relevant to curriculum design for student engagement.

While the association between levels of educational attainment and lifetime earning streams is substantial and becoming stronger, wage differences between those who have a higher education and those who do not remain a predictor of obtaining the American dream (Arnove & Clements, 2009). Research shows obtaining a college degree, or at least some form of education after high school, is the safest way of entering, and remaining in, the middle class (George & Aronson , 2002). Each level of increased education presents substantial additional income benefits (see Figure 1).
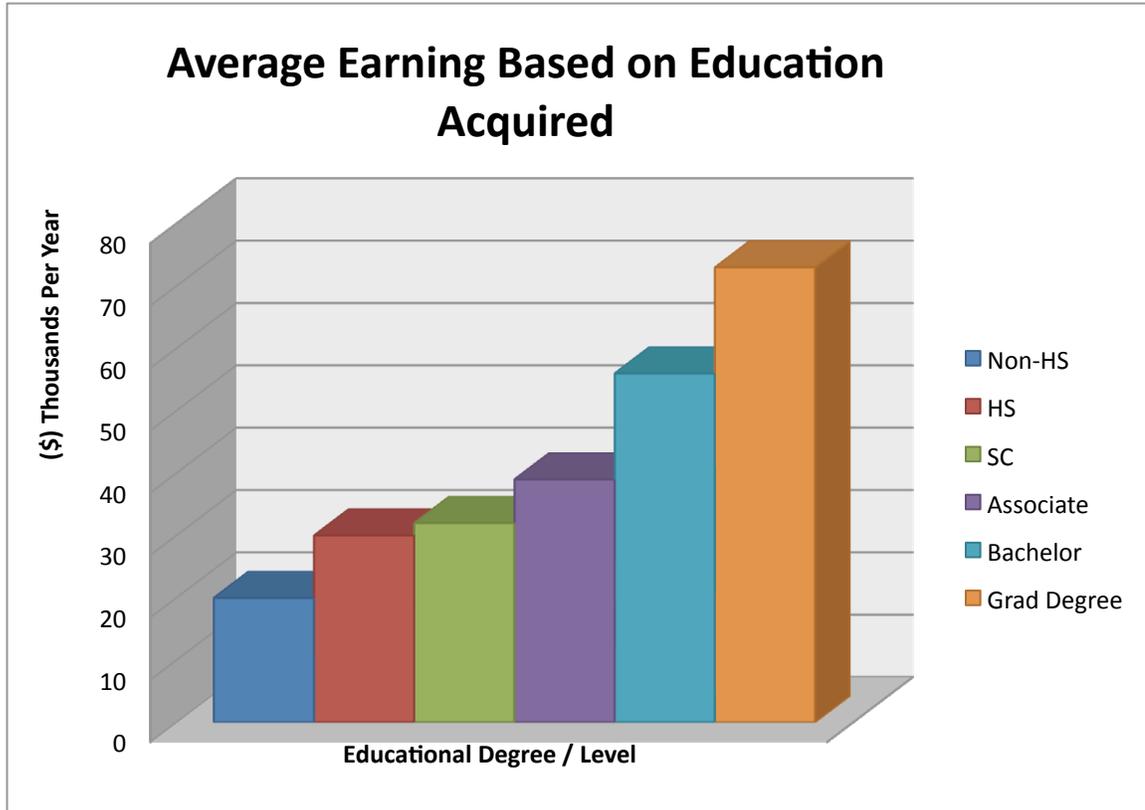
Figure 1. Average Earning based on Education Required

The U.S. Bureauof Labor Statistics (2012) delineates education attainment based on the current population survey of mean earnings of persons 25 years old and over. The report provides earnings relating to "All Persons," as well as the category of gender and race. The information in Figure 1reflects "All Persons." A non high school graduate is expected to only earn $20,241, in comparison to being a high school graduate, the possible earnings are $30,627. Individuals with some college, howeverwithout a degree, can expect to earn $32,295. A person holding an associate's degree will earn $39,771, while an individual with a bachelor's can gross in upwards of $56,665. With a master's, a person can earn up to $73,738.

At a time in which higher education has never been more important to the economy, nor the economic returns to its citizens any greater, the current generation of low-income young Americans must be exposed to college and career information, otherwise they will continue to lack access to a college education. Research stipulates that persons with higher levels of education enjoy better health and longer lives (Perna & Swail, 1998, as cited in Gandara, 2002). Similarly, Mortensen (2009) stated people who attended college are more likely to attend cultural arts activities, to vote, and provide leadership in their communities. Further, Bigler, Averhart, and Liben (2003) found that Black children, by the age of 6, have "developed racial schema that incorporate beliefs about occupations and that these schemas affect their perceptions of job and occupational aspirations in significant ways" (p. 578). Most importantly, those schemas also served as basic assumptions that provided a template for selecting, processing, and assessing the importance of a particular experience (Mosby, 2005).

Therefore, as a form of support, I utilized the action research process to collaborate with teachers in the development of modifications and various interventions tailored to reach students earlier in the educational pipeline, thereby increasing the number of low income and/or minority students prepared to navigate the college and career path process. Additionally, I hoped to bring awareness to the middle school administration, guidance counselors, and teachers regarding the importance of becoming proactive with the higher education and college preparation process for minorities and students of low socioeconomic status (SES) in early grades. Further, my study shed light on the fact that the current school curriculum/interventions addressing college or higher education as a choice for the students they serve is fragmented and needs improvement.

The data collected guided the development of curriculum/interventions which could be implemented through any content area teacher or classroom.

I strongly believed my study had the potential to demonstrate that sharing research based information with teachers of our underrepresented students would begin to build capacity in myself and teachers, as it relates to leadership skills. Additionally, the study showed an early exposure to a curriculum that extends to minority students the benefits of higher education might have an impact on their predisposition stage, encompassing their social capital. According to Haskins, Holzer, and Lerman (2009), social capital may appear to be the foundation for individual economic mobility in that it is a source of human and financial capital. Its meaning is inclusive of the non-financial resources available to individuals through the relationships available from others or institutions that can build their capacity to take advantage of the opportunities that are linked to mobility. In other words, social capital may provide minority students a foundation from which to begin making a personal connection to educational choices and goals.

Conclusion

The school is often expected to replace the typical role that parents should play when encouraging, advising, or ensuring the child has access to college (Tierney et al., 2005). For some students, the dream of a college education is actualized through school personnel such as teachers, counselors, or administrators. Unfortunately, in many urban schools where students of low socioeconomic status possess the greatest need for this service, the ratio of students to counselor is 457:1, as identified by the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center (College Board, 2011). In an attempt to circumvent this

disparity, developing a curriculum that can be implemented by any content area teacher has the potential to positively impact college/career access and aspirations for these students as it increases the adult to student ratio in the dissemination of information.

Inasmuch as the achievement gap, high dropout rate, and low graduation rates play a role in hampering social mobility, so too does a lack of cultural capital, which coincides with social capital. According to Maskell (1997) (as cited in Baron, Field, & Schuller, 2000), social capital refers to the values and beliefs that citizens share in their everyday dealings, and cultural capital, according to Arnove and Clements (2009), refers to the knowledge, linguistics skills, speech codes, and modes of behavior the students bring to school.

To develop a curriculum with modifications and interventions that instructed students on college aspirations and navigation of the college application process, was a vital step in moving toward increasing the number of low income students prepared to take advantage of the opportunities linked to mobility. The premise behind this thinking was assisting the students to create options for themselves to sustain and improve their way of life (Schneider, 2006). The curriculum was tailored to reach low SES students earlier in the K-12 pipeline and served as the information resource needed by them to equalize the higher education and career aspiration playing field. In the chapters to follow, I attempt to explain who I was as a leader and how that journey led to my interest in the research on social and cultural capital as each relates to the college and career aspirations for students of low socioeconomic status.

Chapter II

Literature Review

A college education has always been equated with an opportunity to increase one's socio-economic status. Scholars have found that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have lower educational attainment than their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds prior to and during college (Astin, 1993; DiMaggio, 1982;Macleod, 1987; McDonough, 1997; Walpole, 2003). There was a time when it was acceptable to tell a perspective employer that, "I have some college experience, but I didn't graduate." The lack of credentials was not reason enough to remove you from the prospective job pool. Currently, the economic recession, increased technology, and outsourcing have made a college degree necessary for individuals to compete in this global job market.

In 1973,72 percent of the work forces were comprised of those with a high a school diploma or less. Conversely, 28 percent possessed some college experience or degree. By 2007, that percentage decreased to 41 percent being a high school graduate or less; meaning 59 percent of America's work force now possesses some college experience or a degree (Hanford, 2012). According to the United States Census Bureau (2009), the median earnings of a person with some college education but no degree were $39,700 as compared to the median earnings of a high school graduate at $33,800, or high school dropout at $24,300. Hanford (2012) states, "This earnings data suggest people get something from college that gives them a leg-up in the job market even if they never get credentials" (p.2).

The focus of this literature review is to bring to light the inequality associated with the access to and attainment of a college degree. For some students, the school environment replaces the typical role parents should play when encouraging, advising, or ensuring the child has access to college. It is not surprising that parents' college knowledge, which is a proxy for high status cultural capital, is of major importance in how they become involved in college preparation (Tierney et al., 2005). However, for a large population of students, their parents may be unable or unknowledgeable of the process. In this instance, students again will look to school personnel or mentors to fill in the needed blanks.

Although the Brown v. the Board of Education (1954) desegregation mandates were perceived as a turning point in promoting equitable educational opportunities for historically underrepresented students, the disparity of college enrollment statistics on students' access and retention rates between economically advantaged students and disadvantaged students remain ever present as an issue today. The dream of a college education for some students is actualized through parental aspirations and expectations. Other students actualize their dream through school administrators, counselors, teachers, mentors, or community role models.

The role of the school must be re- examined as it relates to the development of curricular strategies to promote college and career aspirations for the low socioeconomic students (SES). Guided by a review of selected literature, I utilized empirical studies to describe the efforts and constraints affecting the lives of students with regard to the need for a change in career curriculum/interventions. According to Colleges and Universities (2009), modern colleges and universities evolved from western European institutions

attracting writers and scholars, promoting religious and secular intellectual pursuits. State University (2012) indicates there are three factors that influence a student's decision to attend college and remain until graduation. The factors are financial, psychological, and institutional. Unless more attention is focused on the quality of the students' educational experiences throughout the K-12 pipeline, as well as providing effective learning environments for all students, full educational access and educational success will remain an unfulfilled dream for many.

Low Socioeconomic Status Students and College Access

Despite there being a number of college preparation programs available, each comes with its own finite amount of time and resources thereby making it difficult to determine which activities are most likely to impact educational achievement for underrepresented youth (Tierney et al., 2005). Many states such as Indiana are working towards providing college access to underrepresented populations and increasing completion rates once underrepresented students enter college (State University, 2012). The research of State University (2012) further mentions, 14 states have initiated scholarship programs that pay all, or a portion of, tuition expenses for high school graduates.

Currently, Woodbine Middle School, and several other schools in districts in New Jersey, have partnered with programs such as Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). This Rutgers University based discretionary grant program's purpose is to provide early intervention components designed to increase college attendance, success, and raise the expectations of low-income students, as well as provide scholarship opportunities.

The program's main curriculum/interventions take place at designated worksites after school hours, including Saturdays for middle and high school students. GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) provides off-site academic instruction in mathematics, laboratory sciences, composition, and literature. The curriculum GEAR UP has a financial incentive, which stimulates enthusiasm when introduced, however many students fail to complete the application process necessary to enroll (United States Department of Education, 2007).

The Upward Bound program is another discretionary grant program targeting low-income high school students from families in which neither parent holds a bachelor's degree. The program provides opportunities for participants to succeed in their precollege performance and ultimately in their higher education pursuits. However, the difference lies in the servicing of first generation military veterans who are preparing to enter postsecondary education. While we understand the desire to focus direct services to populations that desperately need them, there is still no consensus on what makes a program successful (Tierney et al., 2005). Additionally, while the government initiated, early intervention programs may offer a glimmer of hope for those interested in success in college for all Americans, they can be expensive in terms of both support services costs and scholarship awards. Further, more research is required to evaluate the effectiveness of early intervention programs.

To further extend the quality of students' educational experience, I believe it is imperative to examine the predisposition stage. According to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), predisposition to college is defined as the "developmental phase in which students determine whether or not they would like to continue their formal education

beyond high school" (p.211) and is influenced by a variety of student background characteristics. Moreover, many studies take for granted the ways that traditional understandings of student characteristics account for student predisposition to participating in postsecondary education. Gilmour (1975) identified the junior year of high school as the typical end of the predisposition stage and the beginning of planning in the search stage. Currently, research points out the need for studies of middle school students and their subsequent enrollment in postsecondary education (Somers, Cofer, & Putten, 1999).

Significance of Teachers Role in Promoting College and Career Awareness

Leading the way are thousands of teachers who are rethinking every part of their jobs, their relationship with students, colleagues, their responsibilities, and the form and content of curriculum (Lanier, 2011). The teacher is the yardstick that measures the achievements and aspirations of the nation. The worth and potential of a country get evaluated in and through the work of the teacher (Walden University, 2011, p.1). Our daily objective is to create learners who are well educated, productive adults capable of functioning with an ever changing world. Research contends teaching is recognized as one of the most challenging and respected career choices, absolutely vital to the social, cultural, and economic health of our nation (Lanier, 2011). Chen (2010) states, "The positive, affirming, human contact between teachers and students is still the most powerful force in education" (p. 112). An atmosphere of collaboration and collegiality is what assists the teachers in feeling professional and part of a learning community (Wong & Wong, 2009). In short, teachers are reinventing themselves and their occupation to better serve schools and students. Moreover, teachers are reevaluating their professional

development, and the very structure of the schools in which they work (Lanier, 2011). During any school year, if he is effective, the teacher becomes the primary adult for the student to turn to for advocacy and support (Gordon, 2003). As a researcher and advocate for children, I consider teacher involvement to be the premise for the implementation of my curricular intervention.

Hagedorn and Tierney (2002) found that college and career preparation succeeded in helping students gain additional knowledge, skills, and attitudes to assist them in preparing for post secondary transition, due largely to the involvement of cooperating teachers. Research further indicates schools serve as a pipeline by encouraging students to develop the skills and self-confidence they need to pursue a college education due to the involvement and engagement of teachers (Orr et al., 2002). Other schools, through the implementation of academies, are models for career engagement, encompassing the workplace as a critical component for transitioning students into college and careers. However, this concept as a holistic student experience appears to be highly dependent upon teachers' engagement in the goals and purposes of the initiative (Orr et al., 2002).

To conclude, teachers serve as the intermediary between students and the counselor. Researchers Corwin, Venegas, Oliverez, and Colyar (2004) often speak of the counselor as the most important resource for college preparation. However, given that the ratio of the counselors to students in high school is 1 to 457 (CollegeBoard, 2011), he is often unable to meet individually with students thereby greatly minimizing the effectiveness of his role. Thus, according to Chen (2009), instead of having students directly rely solely on the counselor to discuss college preparation plans, the counselor

can collaborate with the teachers to inform students of current information regarding opportunities related to college and career planning.

Educational Interventions

Fashola and Slavin (1977) contend that educational interventions must begin earlier than high school, and the schools cannot wait until the problem is entirely understood to begin implementing preventive measures. The study examined programs over the past 10 years designed to positively impact dropout rates. They evaluated middle and high schools with Latino student populations. The study by Fashola and Slavin (1977) showed schools could make a dramatic difference in the dropout rate, academic achievement, and the college enrollment rates of at-risk Latino youth. The article sounds the alarm on college dropout rates and how the issue is deploying a huge challenge for Blacks and Latinos. The article/forum contends college dropouts face limited professional career opportunities in today's computerized economy. This concerns economists, because of the increasing demand for a skilled workforce. The research (Fashola & Slavin, 1977) also speaks to the importance of cultural capital by referring to the design of universities as a meritocracy, aiming to admit the best and brightest, but in all accounts, reinforcing many of the advantages of birth. The advantages of being born with success are based on robust preparation, financial support, and educated parents who embrace high standards and expect disciplined effort (Somers et al., 1999).

Krieger (2008) cites Mortenson, a senior scholar at the Pell Institute for the study of Opportunity in Higher Education in Washington, who states, "people inherit disadvantage" (p. 2). He further adds, "Low income kids are connected in low income high schools, and in families that know little about being successful in college and it

takes more than love to raise a child" (p. 2). The research of Fashola and Slavin (1977) maintains that earlier career curriculum/interventions may prepare students for college success.

For years it was assumed the initial signs of gaps in achievement between Black and White students presented by the fourth grade, around the same time students are being administered the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The National Education Association (NEA) (2004-2005) pointed to an alarming finding. Recent data reported by the United States Department of Education (2007), states the information is not correct. A national longitudinal, study, sampled 22,000 kindergarten students nationwide (Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian). They were given a reading assessment consisting of several types of tests. During one session, children were asked to identify letters and sounds. Researchers also read brief passages to children, followed by questions referring to the passages. The preliminary results of the study signified gaps in achievement before Black children enter school. Although the NEA (2004-2005) findings point to gaps in achievement, they caution utilizing the findings to blame parents or permitting educators to abdicate their responsibility to educate all children. The findings should be used as a wake-up call, informing educators in addition to reforming our schools, we need to make an effort to assist families and communities in curtailing the gaps in achievement before they surface. The NEA (2004-2005) warns of the propensity for educators to address the gap in achievement between Black and White students by adhering to past instructional practices and policies. They also warn the results of approaching the problem in such a manner are predictable. There are no improvements in the achievement indices for Black students. There is increased

frustration from teachers and Black students, and a widening of the gaps in achievement.

The NEA (2004-2005) further warns the school against becoming the focal point for

situational anxiety, as opposed to the safe haven for intervention. They offer several

suggestions to reduce learning anxiety and enhance instruction to administrators, and

school personnel:

- Hold on to giving teacher discussions on strategies to improve instruction, as well as share data on eliminating the gaps in achievement.

- Encourage administrators to give teachers the instructional training and resources they perceive they need to increase achievement levels.

- Address the gaps in achievement in the school improvement plan.

- Invite parents to get involved in the education of their children.

- Initiate community-wide forums and discussions on child rearing and early education strategies.

Former United States Secretary Spellings extensively spoke about understanding

the urgency to infuse a change in the curriculum/interventions for the underrepresented

students in our middle school during her 2008 conference in Las Vegas. She discussed

several points of action taken by the Administration to promote college accessibility,

affordability, and accountability. Her remarks included how students are facing a perfect

storm: growing admission anxieties, rising tuition cost, and a historic credit crisis.

Spelling (2008) refers to the dilemma as rough seas, and that an education is their lifeline

to a better future, urging, "We got to do everything we can to make sure it doesn't slip

away" (p. 1). Results from the conference further add, it is not unreasonable to expect our

K-12 education system to prepare these young students for college. She makes a point to

say "There is nothing sadder than seeing students graduate high school, sometimes with honors, only to learn that they must now take remedial courses to get up to speed" (p. 5). She identifies these students as African American or Hispanic students who have attended high-poverty, inner city public schools.

Spelling (2008) profoundly asked the question,

> What does it say about us when we still tolerate an achievement gap between these students and their peers, or when African Americans between age 25 and 29 are half as likely to earn a college degree, and Hispanics are about 3 times as less likely? (p. 5)

Furthermore, she states in the form of a question, "What does it say - that we are not challenging these schools to change their ways or close their doors?" (p. 5). Lastly, Spelling (2008) believes we are in a truly historic moment in the life of this country. The data are clearly calling for action towards a change in the school curriculum, while students are succumbing to their environment. I believe without a change in our curriculum standards, this path will only lead to discouragement and self-destruction. The reports from the FBI and former Secretary Spelling create a compelling argument for the intervention ideas suggested by Fashola and Slavin (1977), to answer the call for early career curriculum modifications and interventions for the middle school.

Klein (2006) wrote that New England states have joined together on a new initiative aimed at preparing more students for college. Governors of six states, including Vermont, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, are concerned about the possible shrinkage of their educated forces in the near future, and have all signed on to the goals embraced by the project, called College Ready New England. The project is committed to raising high school graduation rates, bolstering college readiness among high school graduates, increasing college enrollment, and

college-completion rates. The initiative is projected to facilitate states to band together to keep New England economically competitive in the wake of demographic shifts. Most significantly, the initiative is part of a national trend aimed at aligning K-12 schools more closely with higher education to prepare students for the increasing number of careers requiring a bachelor or associate's degree.

Role of Cultural Capital in the Lives of Low Socioeconomic Status Students

Researchers utilize the concept of cultural capital and habitus based on Bourdieu (1977, 1990) to provide insight to the African American and Latino college process as it interacts with student aspirations. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as a set of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities that are possessed and often inherited by certain groups in society, and suggests that families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not have the privileged opportunities families from higher socioeconomic background posses. Mauss (1936) terms habitus as those aspects of culture that are anchored in the body or daily practices of individuals, groups, societies, and other non-discursive knowledge's that might be said to "go without saying" for a specific group.

Each social class possesses social and cultural capital, which parents pass to children as attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that are invested for social profits (Lamount & Lareau, 1998). The Economic Mobility Project (2009) also contends parental education influences a child's academic prospects in a number of ways, as do certain parenting skills, such as the ability to develop strong bonds. Further, in particular, the level of education reached by parents influences the ways in which they raise their children and seek to improve the education of their children. Perhaps it is safe to assume

the current, progressive drive by the government encouraging adults to apply for grants and loans to return to school purpose lies in the research of social and cultural capital.

Examining race and class in educational decisions established that African American and Latinos use unique cultural capital and elements of habitus in their decisions regarding high school curricular offerings and college choice (Gandara, 2002; MacLeod, 1987). Educators differently value high status cultural capital, rewarding the students from dominant culture backgrounds who possess this capital, leaving those students with non dominant cultural capital at risk for lower school success (Hovart, 1995; McDonough, 1997). Walpole and McDonough (2005) further contend although cultural capital is knowledge, habitus can be considered as a tool kit of strategies and act as a web of perceptions regarding the possible and appropriate action to take in a certain setting in order to achieve a particular goal. The research further states a lack of knowledge or cultural capital, as it relates to college admission processes, places urban African American and Latino high school students at a disadvantage in the college choice process in relation to their peers. Additionally, the habitus of urban African American and Latino students may lead them to utilize strategies that may not be successful in gaining access to the colleges and universities they so desire.

Role of Social Capital in the Education of Low Socioeconomic Status Students

The concept of social capital was recently developed as a way to understand government and society (Orr, 1999). Coleman (1994) contends social capital is significant as it relates to understanding the relationship between educational achievement and social equality. Print and Coleman (2003) further suggest designing a

curriculum based on engaging our youth in active participation to build trust, cooperation, and networking skills.

Putman (1995) also weighs in on social capital, although much of Putman's analysis remains undeveloped. Putman's (1995) preliminary findings are that social capital in America is eroding. After analyzing longitudinal national survey data and examining membership records of major civic associations, Putman concludes that in the last three decades, Americans have experienced a diminished level of civic engagement and social connectedness. Virtually all leisure activities that involve doing something with someone else, from playing volleyball to playing chamber music, are declining (Putman, 1995).

School has replaced the role the community once held as the social hub for networking, building trust, and cooperation, but it to is experiencing decline in such associations such as Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs). In the attempt to educate our students, we are not simply addressing the academics, but also the social and emotional needs of the child. When low socioeconomic status (SES) students learn how to use their network of teachers, counselors, and administrators, it builds relationships of trust and tolerance and brings great benefit to them as a group. According to the World Bank (1999), social capital is not just the sum of the institutions that underpin a society; it is the glue that holds it together. The World Bank (1999) further stipulates the social and economic benefits of social capital. The research contends there is evidence that schools are more effective when parents and local citizens are actively involved. Additionally, teachers are committed, students achieve higher test scores, and better use is made of

school facilities in those communities where parents and citizens take an active interest in children's well-being.

While social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks, and the norms of reciprocity and the trustworthiness that arise from them, we are reminded by (Putman, 1995) that social capital is also closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." Putman (1995) strongly laments the erosion of American stock of social capital, believing that the existence and maintenance of civic engagement as a vibrant association life can lower the amount of drug use and criminal activity, increase the success of students in school, enhance economic development, and make government more effective. Most importantly, Putman asserts, just as joblessness, inadequate education, and poor heath clearly curtail the life chances of inner-city residents, "so do profound deficiencies in social capital" (p. 4).

Implications

While the education system and the role it plays in the college access process are vital to the students it serves, unless we bridge the gap between the disproportionate ratios of the underrepresented minority students and their higher economic status counterparts, we severely impede its purpose. If the research supporting the gaps that exist between the low socioeconomic students and the higher economic students is made available to them and their families in middle school, in preparing for college, chances of enrolling and remaining in a four-year college would increase. Also increasing the awareness of the issue through school initiatives, and political agendas and arenas may be a valid reason for policy reform.

College preparation programs neither can be blamed for the continuing disparities in educational achievement nor viewed as a cure-all for education inequity according to Tierney and Hagedorn (2002). However, programs such as Gear Up, and Upward Bound, are not only needed, but expected, as they provide a well deserved service for the underrepresented youth. Further, programs initiated and supported by committed states such as "College Ready New England" recognize the need for early college preparation (Klein, 2006). Although most of the college preparatory programs are designed to enhance and supplement school's designated activities to accommodate primarily low-income, minority youth who may otherwise not have the opportunity to attend college, schools should consider programs that focus on their culture. The role of culture in college preparation programs may become the driving force behind developing initiatives and opportunities for students to integrate their respective cultural and racial identities as a means to make academics more effective (Tierney et al., 2005). Acknowledging the research that supports the advantage of implementing strategies through the curriculum will in turn enhance cultural and social capital and possibly make an impact on the dropout rate.

Conclusion

Although current economic reports reflect progressive growth in the cost of college tuition and a decline in the job market, postsecondary education is still viewed as the means to move from one socioeconomic status to another. All the more reason to have early intervention education through curriculum modifications that could possibly lead to access to scholarships, which in turn could assist the student with the rising cost of obtaining a college degree. The low socioeconomic status student whose human,

social, and cultural capital may be compromised resulting in limited options (Schneider, 2006) and in need of enhancement through quality resources brought to "horizontal" relationships formed between communities (Farquhar et al., 2005) remains a concern. That enhancement could possibly come in the form of encouraging students to elect and successfully complete the necessary academic subjects that will allow them to pursue the widest range of career options (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002).

As more parents, teachers, school counselors, and administrators recommend college to high school students, attention must be given to the quality and amount of educational and career planning offered in elementary and middle schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Early intervention of academic preparation is the greatest predictor of success in college (Schwartz, 2009). In America, raising awareness to the importance of aligning K-12 schools more closely with higher education to prepare students for the growing number of careers that require a bachelor's or associate's degree is paramount.

Realizing the challenges encountered during the transition to college and how it affects low-income and minority students, the programs (once in place) must recognize the need for cultural inclusion, which can be proactive in increasing students' college persistence. Although looking through the cultural lens may seem complex for counselors, teachers, and administrators, a collective effort can incorporate specific cultural components. Considering the cultural integrity of a student shows a relation to equity while promoting excellence for all students (Tierney et al., 2005).

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

The legislative mandates from Brown v. the Board of Education (1954) were perceived as a turning point in promoting equitable educational opportunities for historically underrepresented students. I believe despite these mandates, the disparities of college enrollment statistics on the access and retention rates between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students remain as a stumbling block for social mobility, which is hinged upon educational attainment. The Federal Government has played a critical role in pre-college outreach and early intervention programs, allocating substantial amount of funds for students, however, despite the resources provided, the racial and gender gaps in access and completion of degrees have not been closed (Perna & Swail, 2001).

Dependence upon K-12 schools to make a difference in the preparation of students for the future not only remains, but has increased, as an expectation to address the national issue of college access and retention (Perna & Swail, 2001). However, educational standards, as well as curriculum, vary from one state to another. Over the past 20years, several school districts have experienced a shift in funding, which has had an impact on curriculum design, for example, dismantling courses that promoted career explorations (Ash, 2007). Our students deserve and may benefit from having those programs of study reinstated, leading K-12 education to a more comprehensive approach to closing the gap.

The former United States Secretary Margaret Spellings confirmed the urgency to infuse a change in curriculum/interventions for underrepresented students in middle school during the 2008 conference in Las Vegas. Spelling identified these students as African American or Hispanic, whom have attended high-poverty, inner city public schools, and refers to the dilemma as requiring immediate action to promote college accessibility, affordability, and accountability. Spelling (2008) profoundly asked the question during her press release,

> What does it say about us when we continue to tolerate an achievement gap between these students and their peers, or when African Americans between age 25 and 29 are half as likely to earn a college degree, and Hispanics are about three times as less likely? (p. 1)

Perhaps the skills, and resources required to obtain that degree, are linked to cultural and social capital.

Cultural capital which refers to a set of cultural knowledge skills and abilities that are possessed and often inherited by certain groups in society and suggest that families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not have the privileged opportunities that families from higher socioeconomic background posses (Bourdieu, 1997). Walpole (2003) adds cultural capital is also a strong predictor of academic achievement as it relates to the college process. Further, the research of Fashola and Slavin (1977) informs us that earlier career curriculum/interventions may prepare and foster in students the meaning of college success and contribute to their lack of birth advantages, including social capital as well as cultural capital. Social capital is non-financial resources available to individuals through their relationships to people or institutions that shape the capabilities of an individual to take advantage or not to take advantage of the opportunities that are linked to mobility (Economic Mobility Project, 2009). Conversely,

the absence of this foundation tends to minimize success. Therefore, the sooner the onset of pre-college programming during the K-12 pipeline, the better prepared disadvantaged students may become in taking advantage of the opportunities available.

I believe teachers of Woodbine school were willing and capable of bringing about the necessary change in curriculum to aid in college and career access. Research indicates schools serve as a pipeline by encouraging students to develop the skills and self-confidence they need to pursue a college education due to the involvement and engagement of teachers (Orr et al., 2002). For that reason, the school is often expected to replace the typical role that parents should play when encouraging, advising, or ensuring the child has access to college. The teacher participants in this study played a key role in guiding early preparation for postsecondary education through providing college and career planning, information, and helping students navigate the steps in the system.

The latter research of Orr et al. (2002) may give credence to Rumberger (2000), who contends children disengage from school as early as first grade. Perhaps early college/career curriculum interventions can create effective ways to engage students by viewing themselves as college and career participants, thereby connecting their current instruction to their future aspirations. This is in line with Schwartz (2009) who further contends many youth arrive at middle school with limited career aspirations, in addition to developing cognitive competencies related to career development: self-concept and perceptions about occupations. Gottfredson (2005) also maintains during the middle school years, adolescents have achieved an adult-level understanding of the sex type and prestige level of common occupations. Gottfredson further argues that adolescents begin to eliminate occupational choices based on sex types and prestige levels. For example,

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boys may have sex-stereotyped views of occupations by the time they reach adolescence, and the female students may avoid choosing occupations that are generally perceived as too masculine, such as a career as a coal miner. Further, the female student might consider eliminating choices that are perceived as low social prestige status such as a career as a housemaid (Gottfresdon, 2005).The earlier the intervention is initiated, the better the outcome (Schwartz, 2009).

The following research questions were addressed during the college/career aspirations study:

1. How did a middle school curriculum focus on college and career exploration to impact the predisposition stage of low SES students?

2. What were the most effective curriculum intervention strategies that promoted college and career aspirations among low SES students?

3. How did a middle school curriculum focus on career aspirations help to enhance social capital of its low SES students?

4. How did my leadership theory promote the development and implementation of a career and college exploration curriculum?

The purpose of the study was to reinstate the once used Career Interest Inventory in hopes of exposing our low SES students early to their career interests, and develop curriculum interventions that would inspire students to pursue higher learning. Research (College View, 2012) states a post secondary education is critical to personal economic stability and, subsequently, many desirable economic and social positions in United States society. The research further contends it is imperative to understand what bears

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upon the decision to go to college, as application, matriculation, and degree attainment is impossible without the initial decision to pursue postsecondary education.

Research Design

My research study was conducted as an action research project. Like that depicted in Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the process was both collaborative and inclusive of the individuals involved in the organization, while the researcher functioned as the facilitator. The data collected from surveys, observations, and interviews utilizing open-ended questions served as forms of significant data to be assessed at the end of the first through fourth cycle.

My purpose for employing action research was for the advancement of science and for the improvement of human welfare, to devise strategies in which research and action were closely linked (Whyte, 1991). I chose action research because its goal is to identify action that will generate some improvement (Hinchey, 2008). Because the process is cyclical, as the researcher I was given the opportunity to collect data, then analyze and reflect on the data prior to drawing conclusions. Both the research cited about career/college aspirations and my experiences with low SES and minority students validated the necessity of this form of research, recognizing that schools now have to take on the role of the parent (Chen, 2009). Moreover, in sharp agreement with Marzano (2007), who maintains teaching is a science that occurs as one decides what method to use when considering students' background knowledge, environment, and their learning goals. I intended to scientifically explore how early curricular interventions may possibly have an impact on students' capacity for perceiving themselves as college and career participants and link closely my findings from teachers, students, and designated

participants. Equally as profound are the curricular strategies' possible impact on the students' future lives; however, this requires further study as research shows education to be the most significant factor in determining social mobility.

Unsure exactly how to embark upon a new initiative, incorporating action research helped to sort the concerns in hopes of offering practical solutions. The practical approach of action research also facilitated better understanding of the current practices (Waters-Adams, 2006). Woodbine Middle School chose to stand as meeting the post secondary needs of our low SES students. While the study was open, honest, and at the same time rigorous, the approach was described as a deliberate attempt to understand the current practices and is accepted as traditional research (Waters-Adams, 2006).

Data Collection Strategies

In this mixed method study, I incorporated the fundamentals of action research to answer my research questions. Action research was utilized to help understand my own practice and how to make the practice at Woodbine School better (Whitehead, 1985). Further, action research aims to improve practice through cycles of self-study, action, and reflection (Hinchey, 2008). The data for the study included Career Interest Inventories, interviews, focus groups, written field-notes, e-mail communications, observations, and journal entries.

The use of the Career Interest Inventory with a group of students was utilized as a qualitative instrument containing 12 questions requiring statements that describe occupational activities, as well as subjects and activities. The information gathered from the inventory was collected as base line data that acted as qualitative and quantitative data, and the foundation for the research. Analysis and reflection of the emerging

outcomes of the students' interests shown on the inventories was also incorporated to assess and examine potential occupational aspirations. The inventories act as what Bogdan and Biklen (2007) include as analysis interpretation in qualitative research, as it is descriptive in nature and will help define the story.

Interviews were conducted as a great way to bring forward the voices that may play a significant role in the research and for gathering experiences in their own words, and to develop insights on how the subjects interpret sections of their world, and for this study, as a means to understanding the subjects' way of thinking (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Focus groups were a wonderful way of collecting data through fostering talk among participants about particular issues and to further stimulate dialogue from multiple perspectives, so as the researcher, I learned a range of views to promote conversation on a topic that informants may not be able to speak so thoughtfully about in individual interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Observations were exercised to validate what was happening in regards to the research questions. As the researcher, I gained the opportunity to study the setting and take note of the events, differentiating between special events and daily events. Additionally, as noted by Glense (2006), making observations allowed me to take note of the participants in their own settings at the same time viewing the differences from one setting to the other.

Field notes were used to objectively record the details of what had occurred in the field (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The notes provided a way to bring the research closer to the actual interaction between student and teacher in an ever-changing environment. I

wanted to hear and see their reactions over time, determining whether there were any relevant changes in their affects.

Journaling was useful in recording my own thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as the process progressed through the cycles. As a teacher leader, it is imperative that I be aware of my communication skills during this innovation. As noted by Kouzes and Posner (2006), being liked makes the job of a leader much easier. This form of recorded data helped me to reflect on my espoused theories, so I could more accurately glance back and see the obstacles I have crossed. This reflection helped to facilitate any changes I may have had to make, and assisted in my readjustment to projected cycles.

Context/Participants

The participants in the study consisted of five 6th grade teachers. The average class size was 15. The teachers were selected through the facilitation of a professional development during a scheduled in-service day at Woodbine Middle School. The participants were identified following a general e-mail to the faculty asking for volunteers. Based on time constraints, I choose the first five that responded to the e-mail (Fullan, 2001). Participants/respondents from the professional development met to discuss strategies to promote college/career aspirations for low SES through the development of curriculum interventions and modifications.

The Woodbine Middle School services grades 6 through 8 in the heart of Camden, New Jersey. The study consisted of 5 sixth grade classes. The population attending Woodbine is 51% African-American, 48% Hispanic, and 1% White, and falls into the low socioeconomic status sub-group. The students are supported by a rather large faculty, numbering over one hundred professionals. There are 40teachers in total, which serve

over 400 students in the four content areas of Math, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies. Approximately seven teachers are designated for each subject except Social Studies, where there are only three serving all grades. Of the forty teaching staff, 15% (6) are Caucasian, 5% (2) are Hispanic, and 80% (32) are African American.

The most dominant frame that emerged from my inspection of the organization is that of the political frame. This is a re-organization, as we have recently had a new principal appointed to our school, and she is completely committed to the (expectations) image of the school district. While our political ventures do not run as intensely as those described by Bolman and Deal (2003) when they used the space shuttle *Challenger* to depict the political assumptions, it is nonetheless disturbing to see political agendas prevail in the decision making for children. For example, the principal approached me with the idea that my behavioral disorder class will have to be moved from the second floor to make room for the alleged influx of bilingual students. Two ideas extend from this: (1) the students and I had already been asked to move from a larger classroom on the first floor to accommodate the reading specialist who services on average, two children at a time, and (2) no additional bilingual students have yet to come to Woodbine Middle. One could interpret this as the special education students not carrying as much political weight as some of the other sub-groups in the building.

In an attempt to transform Woodbine Middle School, there have been supports put in place that have forged coalitions within the building. For example, the idea of having teacher coaches in the building to support content areas is a district initiative that our new administrator rallied to acquire in support of student achievement. What has grown out of this effort is the development of coalitions throughout the building; each one viewing

their existence as the most important and the one that will provide the new principal with the transformation she desires. Therefore, they are each vying for opportunities at scheduling meetings with teams of teachers to spew out new information, assign new forms, or provide additional deadlines for documentation. So much so that teachers are running into each other with meetings that do not actually fit into the existing schedule.

Aligned with another of the political assumptions described by Bolman and Deal (2003) is the scarcity of resources. As the coaches present new instructional concepts to the teachers, they often are unable to provide them with the materials in a timely fashion for prompt turn-around and effective teaching. This causes frustration and leads to conflict within the coalitions as we are all still held to preparing students for assessments such as benchmark examinations and state testing. The teachers' inability to carry out the instructional duties is interpreted as incompetence, when in actuality it is the coach's inability to navigate the bureaucracy of the district that would release materials in an untimely fashion. But, because of this jockeying for position (Bolman & Deal, 2003), there is an inaccuracy in the administrative decisions that follow. The cycle continues as more frustration and conflict develop. I recall the teacher who was absolutely dissatisfied with the "hamster on a wheel" concept, and felt we were all experiencing it as well. She repeatedly called central office to complain about the math coach, and as a result, the existing coach was replaced with the staff that complained continuously to the district. None of these observations is intended to present the school, the faculty, or students in a negative light; it is simply to provide the picture of an organization with political overtures.

In her attempts to transform the academic status of Woodbine Middle, the principal continues meeting with the faculty to identify resources to sustain the school's AYP status. Additionally, the chairpersons of the departments and the coaches serving the subgroups currently meet to discuss strategies to assist the faculty and students in obtaining proficiency standards. While they struggle to address the achievement needs of the school, my own greatest challenge has been to encourage all students to defy the odds by aspiring towards higher education/career aspirations by any means necessary. I quickly learned, in order to accomplish this goal, I needed support from like minds, access to higher education, and a career curriculum intervention to meet our students' mounting needs.

The principal seems to be trying to take all the necessary steps to establish a culture of learning aligned to the district's initiative. She welcomes differences, communicates the urgency of the challenge we face on a daily basis, talks about broad possibilities in an inviting way, and creates mechanisms that motivate people to reach beyond themselves. This has created an atmosphere conducive to my initiative.

Vital participants will include the four sixth grade teachers and a Learning Support teacher whose class is a sixth/seventh grade split. The experience levels of the participants range from nine to 25 years, with all being highly qualified and some even dually certified. Four participants only had Woodbine Middle School as their instructional venue. It is clear that these individuals are committed to this school and the students they serve.

Change Framework

Through experience, observation, and being cognizant of the environment in which I am employed (Camden School District), the need to implement career curriculum modifications and interventions for the purpose of change was born out of the teachers' urgent plea for an initiative that would be conducive to improving the students' lives holistically, and not just for the sake of advancing test scores. Fullan's (2001) five components of leadership represent the forces for a positive change that this initiative requires. It was my hope the change would further advance students' attitudes about their educational future; this begins the moral purpose of which Fullan (2001) speaks. In relation to my action research, I intended to demonstrate the benefits of teachers being committed to increasing students' knowledge and skills in viewing themselves as college students or career candidates through the five components of this framework for leadership.

The first step is establishing a sense of moral purpose. In my study, I intended to provide a professional development that would extend the teachers' knowledge of the statistics surrounding college access, attainment, retention, and the importance of social and cultural capital. It was at this phase that I will drew on what I considered to be the heart of my teacher participants; acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of children.

The second step, understanding the change process, is the notion of combining the teachers' commitment to their moral purpose. I continued the ongoing informal dialogues between me and the participants to act on our desire to concern ourselves with the whole child. As a teacher leader it is understood that I do not have any positional power to enact

policy, but discoursing with the participants about the ups and downs that come with change, we would facilitate a healthy respect for the complexities of the change process and continue in our quest. The third step, establishing relationships, is the most vital because it is one where relationships improve. This is where individuals become team players and the goal is bigger than any one individual. This would be particularly important in an environment where a political agenda prevails.

The fourth step is knowledge creation and sharing. In relation to the previous three themes Fullan (2001) discusses, because people do not readily share information; and this is especially true with teachers, it would be up to me to model this expectation for the success of the initiative. I did this first through the facilitation a professional development, secondly through informal conversations. This helped to bring members into the external and internal commitment of which Fullan (2001) speaks. The fifth step is coherence making. To assure coherence, I made frequent check-ins in the form of open dialogue to assess where the participants were with the process or their view of the progression. Building on the internal commitment hopefully already generated. Receiving feedback from the students built on the internal commitment and assisted with coherence. To conclude, we celebrated small wins, while keeping in mind change is never a checklist but elusive and complex (Fullan, 2001). The idea of starting these five steps was critical in making this initiative a second order change. According to Evans (1996), second order changes aim to modify the very way an organization is put together. Woodbine Middle School currently addresses the career/college aspirations of its students, however the attempts are fragmented at best. The research of Terenzini et al. (2001) indicates we must begin to encourage, advise, and ensure that children have access to college, as schools are

replacing the typical roles of the parents. The result of using the Fullan (2001) framework

for leadership is more good things happening and fewer bad things happening. In

essence, we would be completing the middle school experience with additional real world

skills than any high stakes test could ever assess. More low SES students might begin to

view themselves as college material because the steps have been presented to them and

connected to them as obtainable.

Conceptual Framework

The significance of targeting the 6th grade level is in line with earlier studies that

suggest early intervention to affect long-term systematic change in the culture and

climate of schools has positive outcomes (Somer et al., 1999). This then signifies the

bases for focusing on influences surrounding the predisposition stage, with this particular

age cohort, within this study. The choice of this framework is derived from a review of

the research on aspirations and factors that influence the predisposition stage. Extant are

several models that broadly identify the components of decision-making processes

concerning postsecondary education participation (see Figure 2). Each of the models

includes the student's initial decision of whether to go to college, research colleges and

programs, apply, and then finally choose a postsecondary institution.

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            ╲         │ education beyond the   │       ╱
             ╲        │   secondary level      │      ╱
              ╲       │                        │     ╱
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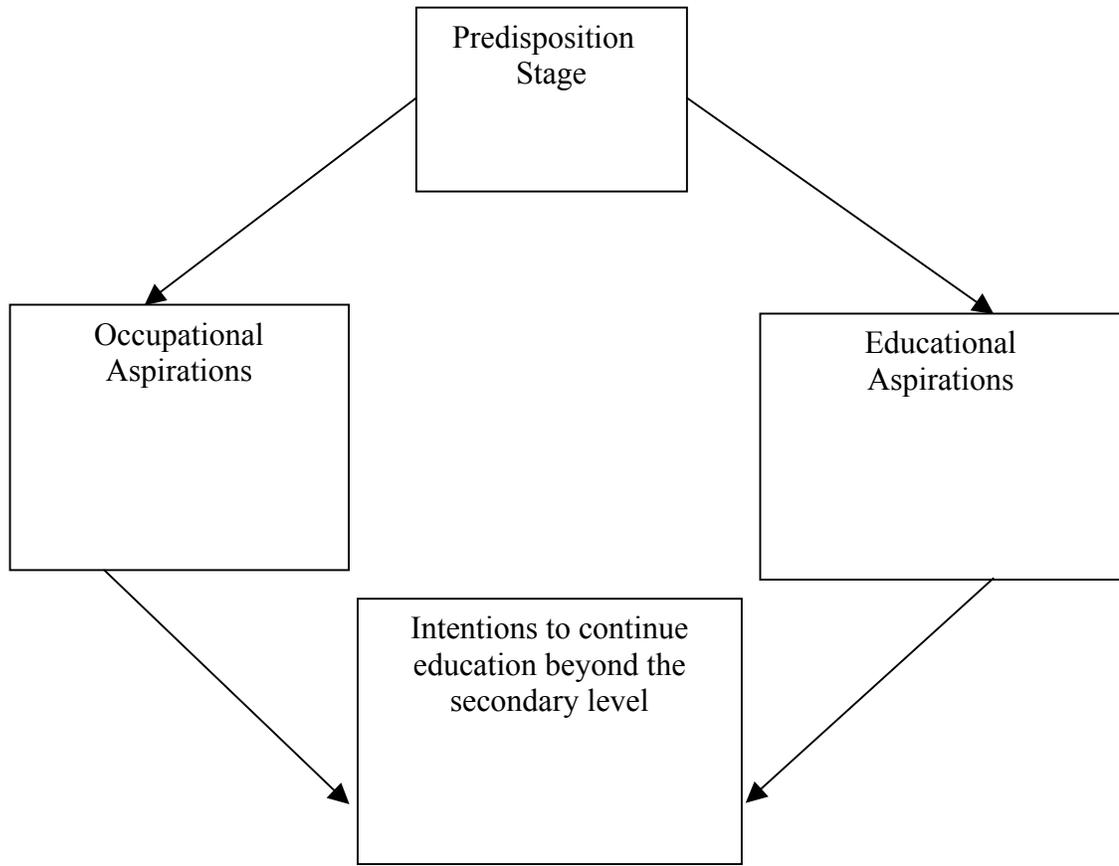
Figure 2.

Guiding Conceptual Framework for Aspirations Surrounding Postsecondary Education

The Don Hossler and Karen Gallagher (1987) three-phase college choice model, which divides the process into the phases of predisposition, search and choice, has been the focal point of much of the existing research. A great deal of the latter research, unfortunately, has concentrated primarily on the stages after predisposition-search and choice. Of all three phases in the Hossler and Gallagher model (1987), predisposition has been the focus of the least amount of research and is often a black box of psychological and sociological functions (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). Traditionally, an abundance of concentration has been given to literature on influencing the types of higher

education institutions students attend based on race, gender, and privilege, therefore conscientious attention was given over to understanding the influential factors that have affective outcomes regarding the predisposition stage. A more in depth discussion and rationale for focusing on a particular phase in this study is detailed in the next chapter.

Action Research Cycles

Cycle I. I began by administering a career interest inventory on February 2, 2009. This instrument (Appendix A) had once been used by Woodbine to determine placement in the small learning communities. However, since 2006 it has been discontinued and nothing has been put in its place to continue the process. The Career Interest Inventory served as a personal survey for each student to identify academic likes and dislikes, career and hobby interest, strengths and personal values and role models available to them.

Cycle II. In addition to the career interest inventories, interviews will be conducted with school counselors at the middle (Appendix B) and high school level (Appendix C). The interviews with the counselors were each approximately 25-30 minutes. Early in the process, the counselors were informed that the purpose of the interview was to gather information to inform my research. In conclusion, I informed the subjects their responses would be treated confidentially. The reason for the inclusion of the counselors was that at each level these are the individuals responsible for transitioning the students to the next level of education. The information gathered from the student interest inventories and interviews were used to develop curriculum/interventions and rationale in succeeding cycles.

In addition to the interviews with counselors, I facilitated a focus group (Appendix D) on March 12, 2009. It included counselors, teachers, and an administrator of the building. The focus group for this study was utilized to facilitate discussion about curriculum development, bringing forth ideas from their experiences and observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) on the topic of what was being done for low SES students and their college/career aspirations. Their multiple perspectives were used to inform the development of curriculum modifications and interventions.

In order to solicit teachers for my research study, I held a professional development workshop. The professional development workshop took place on March 23, 2009 during a scheduled in-service day. I presented a 20-minute power point presentation designated to facilitate strategies to promote college and career aspirations for low SES students. Approximately 70 faculty members were expected to be present during the professional development, 62 signed in as participants. The positive response to the professional development prompted me to send out a general e-mail to all staff asking for those who were interested in participating in developing curriculum strategies to promote college and career aspirations, to please respond as soon as possible. The respondents were selected by grade level, as I was hoping for lower grades. Four sixth grade and one 6/7th grade teacher showed continued interest in the research. The six of us met after dismissal on Monday, April 6, 2009.

Cycle III. The action portion of the third cycle consisted of developing the college/career aspirations curriculum *sample* (Appendix E) with the involvement of 6th grade teachers, as a result of the input from middle and high school counselor interviews, and educators at each level of K-12 pipeline as members of the focus group. The

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curriculum was created to be utilized by any content area teachers. The lessons were aligned with the district wide lesson plan policy, which was to have instruction engage students on all levels of learning. The curriculum was primarily based on the (Print & Coleman, 2003) suggestions, which incorporate academic discourse, group processes, and cooperative learning. Further, a self-esteem component (based on Reasoner) was also embedded in the curriculum. The research recommendations were derived from Reasoner (1992), who is known to serve in countless leadership roles in the arena of curriculum development and instruction.

     Cycle IV. The purpose of the fourth cycle was to implement the curriculum/interventions, which began on September 21, 2009 until March 4, 2010. Instruction occurred once per week during the first and second marking periods to facilitate my observations of the classroom. I had informal conversations with teachers at the close of each week to dialogue about the process as well as their discoveries in reference to the teaching experience. To gain additional feedback about the effectiveness of the curriculum, I interviewed a sampling of the students using questions from Appendix F. Each of these proceedings provided me with the additional information as knowledge for my leadership as it relates to building capacity in my teacher colleagues. I endeavored to encourage the teachers to step out of their comfort zone in support of our students. I continued to record notes in my journal to reflect upon my effectiveness and the communication process between myself and the research participants. Simultaneously, I remained cognizant of the aforementioned five steps of change strategy designed by Fullan (2001).

Cycle V. To examine the impact of the career/college curriculum and to supplement my observations, I administered a teacher (Appendix G) and student (Appendix F) survey. The purpose of the survey was to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum, and evidence of outcomes of everyone involved. To obtain feedback from the curriculum, I interviewed several students from each class. The data collected during this cycle were utilized to weigh in on my leadership abilities as they specifically relate to authentic communication. This communication, in essence, required me to shift beyond the "downloading" stage that Scharmer (2005) discusses. The degree to which I am able to transfer my vision of this project onto the other participants, while building their capacity to recognize and accept the lead on a project, would be manifested in their authentic communication, eagerness, and ability to carry through the lesson planning themselves. My journaling served as an on-going record of self reflection during each phase of the cycle.

Leadership Study

My intended plan for studying my leadership theory was through the utilization of the reflective journaling. The onset of writing in a journal prior to reading Hiefetz and Linsky (2002), was simply recording what seemed to be endless statements chronologizing the days and events. As a result of the research, I now perceive it as rich leadership data, and am able to fully understand the value of its content. Hieftz and Linsky (2002) were instrumental in assisting me in capturing what I have come to know as "operating from the future as it emerges" as stated by (Scharmer, 2009, p. 8). Further, to reassure my documentation, Scharmer (2009) also notably depicts a process called "sensing." The premise is that there is a thread that runs through all stories of deep

gathering. The participants sensing was displayed as they submerged themselves into concrete experiences; listening for key phrases from the students as well as the silence that opened the circle to redirect their attention from operating inside their own heads to happening from the whole field. It was my hope to effectively model how to recognize leadership as data that was valuable once a relationship with its presence was established within them and would hopefully transfer to benefit the students. Lewin and Regine (2000) (as cited in Fullan, 2001) make the case that there is a new style of leadership among organizations; one that focuses on people and relationships as essential to obtaining sustained results.

Data Analysis

By analyzing data from student interest inventories, and aligning their responses to the United States Bureau of Labor search, I identified emergent themes in the students' responses to the current manner of gaining access and my leadership theory. To increase the confidence and validity of the data collected from the interest inventories; I utilized the Microsoft Excel application to conduct a quantitative data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The recording of interviews with student alumni and counselors was also collected as data. The interviews were analyzed by reviewing written recordings and identifying similarities, differences, and common themes. According to Glense (2006), the use of interviews aids in the exploration of individuals' understanding an experience. Focus groups were analyzed by obtaining rich qualitative data to supplement data already gathered. Glense (2006) suggests using focus groups, because topics are better discussed with more than one person. The responses from teachers, counselors, and the

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administrator were transcribed and coded. The data collected from my leadership

journaling were analyzed by assessing espoused theories that emerged. Additionally, the

assessment allowed me to peer back and reflect on the hurdles I had crossed, as well as

the changes I had to make and readjust. These adjustments assisted in my modifications

to the projected cycles.

Conclusion

Several factors support the necessity to implement a college and career aspiration

curriculum for middle school students. For example, the study conducted by Corwin et al.

(2004) highlights the harmful effects that could occur if academic decisions are made,

that assign a student to a non-college track before he reaches high school. Often these

decisions are derived as an outgrowth of the exasperating case loads of school

counselors; which is another such factor. Through the development of curricular

modifications/interventions that can be implemented by a classroom teacher in any

content area, I expect to serve a greater number of students in preparation of navigation

through the higher education/career exploration process.

My action research project consisted of five cycles. The purpose of the first cycle

was specifically to collect data on the current career aspirations of our students, the

expectations and efforts of counselors regarding higher education and career aspirations,

and the perceptions of the experiences of former middle school students. The action

portion of the next cycle consisted of facilitating a professional development workshop to

develop the college/career aspirations curriculum with the involvement of teachers and

facilitated a focus group. The third cycle consisted of implementing the

curriculum/intervention strategies developed by the teachers chosen from the professional

development workshop. The forth cycle examined the impact of the career/college

curriculum, supplement observations, as well as administering a student and teacher

survey. The final cycle was the assessment of my leadership from the beginning to the

end of the process of examining and implementing a college and career

curriculum/intervention. As a teacher leader, my leadership was closely associated with

that which Lewin and Regine (2000) (as cited in Fullan 2001) reference as a new style of

leadership among organizations, one that focuses on people and relationships.

Chapter IV

Cycle I – Testing the Waters of Change

Introduction

The purpose of the first cycle was to determine how one middle school curriculum prepared low socioeconomic status (SES) students for college preparation and career readiness. America School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2010) direct their efforts into assisting students to focus on academic, personal, social, and career development. The organization considers middle school students as the next generation of workers, leaders, and citizens. I concur with the ASCA. Furthermore, I found it important to start a career readiness curriculum early in a student's middle school experience. Career readiness is commonly focused at the 8th grade level for low SES students (Wimberly & Noeth, 2003). But, I believe it is important to provide 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students with a career readiness program as well. It is paramount to their future. Adhering to this idea, I developed a proposal to have Woodbine students participate in a career readiness program that utilized a career interest inventory as the foundation of developing such a program. Research suggests that completing a career interest inventory measure can be used as a tool to assist students in their post secondary planning (Wimberly & Noeth, 2003). Therefore, I decided to search for an inventory that would provide me with baseline data on students' level of career interest at Woodbine, as well as skills that would help them to make career choices. The inventory would also be a starting point for identifying or developing an appropriate curriculum.

The Career Interest Inventory questionnaire was developed by the Psychological Corporation (1990). It consisted of 12questions. It was designed to serve as a tool for career guidance in school-age populations. The instrument ascertains information about student goals, interests in a variety of post-secondary school subjects, and interest in a variety of fields of work. The results can help students explore careers, educational choices, and job opportunities. It also informs students of the skills and experiences that may be needed to achieve their career goals. For this study, the Career Interest Inventory (Appendix A) served as a personal survey for each student to identify academic likes and dislikes, career and hobby interests, strengths and personal values.

Woodbine Middle School initially used the Career Interest Inventory (CII) until the 2005-2006 school years. In those years, the Career Interest Inventory was given to 7th graders exclusively. The results were used to place the students in the new Small Learning Community (SLC) initiative that was in place for their eighth grade year. A SLC is a program authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 with the purpose of improving student achievement in large public schools by building a curriculum based upon student career interest/academic themes (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). The inventory was discontinued for the next three years and no career development program was put in its place. As part of my dissertation, I reinstated the inventory for 2009-2010 school year to include 6th grade students. My primary focus was for the sixth graders, because my goal was to make them aware of the need for preparation for their career goals. I also wanted them to realize that careers requiring college coursework were not impossible or out of reach for them. Supplying them this information before 8th grade

would offer them more time to consider their future career choices and to explore workplace possibilities, which is what Wimberly and Noeth (2003) suggest.

Further, Perna and Swail (2001) noted the 1992 government initiative that authorized the National Early Intervention Scholarship Program (NEISP) to states for providing college related programs to disadvantaged students. These scholarship funds were used towards programs such as Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduates (GEAR UP/CHAMP) programs throughout the country.

Woodbine Middle School participated in the Gear Up/Champ programs for two years (2007-2009). My concern was that programs such as the Gear Up/Champ program at Woodbine Middle School lacked any formal evaluation tool or survey instrument such as an interest inventory to be used as a foundation for curriculum planning and determining the success of the program.

Administration of the Career Interest Inventory

On February 2, 2009, I obtained 90 copies of the career interest inventory from the guidance office. On February 3, 2009 I prepared and distributed a set of 18 inventories to five of the seven6th grades classes. Two bi-lingual classrooms received special permission not to participate. Ms. Sanchez, the 6th grade bi-lingual and spokesperson expressed her point of view saying:

> We already have too much to do to prepare our students for the incoming year. Besides, we talk to our bi-lingual students throughout the year about what they like and want to do with their lives. I will speak to Ms. West about it, and I'm sure she'll agree with what I'm saying.

I replied, "Fine Ms. Sanchez. If you should change your mind, please let me know so that I can provide you with the inventories in a timely matter."

Quantitative Data

The career interest inventories were collected on February 10, 2009. The process resulted in a return of 90 inventories. The data from the Career Interest Inventory were analyzed and organized in a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet to quantify the data. As a result of quantifying the data, I was able to identify correlations among the questions. Some of the questions prompted students to identify their interest and strongest abilities, in each instance; I tallied the number of participants that responded to each question. When ever possible, I sought to identify discrepancies and or connections, as this would determine students' understanding of their connection between education and career interest.

Some other questions spoke about students' further plans for higher learning and values. Again I attempted to identify connections, correlations, and emerging discrepancies contained in the data. In another specific question, I found a great deal of data embedded in one question. I used Micro Excel software to demonstrate the frequency of responses, because the questioning provided multiple choices from which the students could make. The categories that developed from this question were, Highest Frequency Values, Work Related Practices, Intrinsic/Extrinsic Vales and Intrinsic Values. I then categorized the responses and ranged them from least to greatest.

The baseline data from questions one and two, shown in Table 1, is a reflection of an open-ended question that asked students to name their most favorite and least favorite subject in school. Out of 90 students, 74 responded. Of the nine subjects selected, students choose math/science as their favorite subject. Math was named 53 times and science was named 45 times for a total of 98 or 34%.

Table 1

Results from Question 1 & 2

Subjects	Most Favorite	Least Favorite
Art	34	10
Computer Technology	32	10
Gym	48	6
Language Arts Literacy	28	38
Math	53	24
Science	45	16
Social Studies	13	48
Foreign Language	11	0
Music	22	4

The results of questions 1 and 2 are a direct correlation between questions 6, 8, and question 12, where students were required to identify careers or jobs of the people they knew and in which they would be most interested. There was also a correlation with the subjects most favored in questions 1 and 2 and question 12. Question 12 asked students if they knew any jobs or careers that might involve the work values they felt were most important to them. Here, students identified the medical or health care field with the work values they felt were most important to them. Based on these correlations, it is very possible to say that if given the appropriate guidance and opportunity our low SES students who lack cultural capital, would perhaps move in the direction of those careers that would place them in a higher socioeconomic status.

The open-ended question 8 asked, "Among the people you know, whose job or career would you most like to have and why?" The responses were assessed by way of a "Who," a "What," and a "Why" of student statements. Meaning, whom students identified with, what the careers were, and why they selected the careers.

The "Who" students identified most often, 24 times, were people in careers that were unknown or disconnected to them, such as high profile professional athletes and celebrities. However, the next highest career/profession identified was that of the teacher, nine times; next was that of a distant relative, seven times, and parents were last at being mentioned five times. These numbers were disappointingly low in each area with only 50% of the students having responded to the question. While we do not know the reason for such a depleted response, we can perhaps reference the elevated indication of high profile athletes and celebrities. According to Flora (2004), America's fascination with celebrity is a symptom of a larger cultural obsession with affluence, attractiveness and achievement. He went further to say, while these attributes may be desirable, they can sometimes divert our children from other values. Moreover, Scharnberg (2006) suggests if we want our children to grow up with a realistic understanding, and deconstruct the mixed messages they get from celebrity crazed media, critical thinking skills must be taught and modeled. This research supports the need for a school level initiative that addresses the misconceptions developed by students. As part of the social development of emerging adolescents, research shows they are influenced by adults, and have the propensity to identify with adults other than their parents (Wiles & Bondi, 1998).

The "What" or job/career listed by students, again as in question 12, indicated the medical and health care field as the one they would most like to have. Twenty six percent

of students selected this particular field. Similarly, the next highest field students said they would most like to have from among the people they knew was the music/arts field at 22%. Again, the same areas continue to rise as those most adopted by our low SES students. If we consider the third prong of the results of this question, which is the why, we see students identifying more with the person than the field. Thirty nine of 45 students, or 86%, said they made their selection based on the person they knew who was already in the field verses, 17% who referenced the love of the profession, and 13% who stated financial gain was their rationale. Early adolescents make early career decisions in the form of curriculum choices for high school, and it is these choices that can influence future postsecondary education and career paths (American School Counselor Association, 2007). However, my data show the students making decisions based on the individual person as opposed to the field itself. Additional research by Wilt (2006) states, the success of low SES students in higher education is a complex issue influenced by many interdependent variables, and there is no single solution. However, the study suggests because low income students may not have career role models to emulate, that career counseling is an important component to consider.

Question number 3 asks students to list their hobbies. According to the Psychology Corporation (1990), understanding that interests often develop from experiences we may have had from hobbies, I found it pertinent to include the results of student hobbies. The hobbies will be discussed qualitatively within the area strengths. The area of sports was shown to be listed as a hobby for many students. Athleticism/sports were also shown to be the highest strength possessed by the students yielding a direct correlation between students' strengths and hobbies.

Table 2 shows the results of students responding to question 9. This question asked students to identify the work values they found most important to them as they ponder the idea of a career. The analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of responses students identified as important work values.

Table 2

Frequency of Work Values

Question	Responses	Percentage
Having time to relax	66	73
Working as a member of a team	51	56
Solving problems	44	48
Being happy with what I do	76	84
Having the ability to change people's lives	42	46
Not being bored	68	75
Making a lot of money	77	85
Having daily contact with the public	31	34
Helping people get well	44	48
Spending time by myself	38	42
Being able to see the results of what I do	51	56
Traveling to other places	63	70
Having the time to do the things I enjoy most	67	74
Having opportunities for adventure and excitement	54	60
Working with people or animals	53	58
Working with machines or tools	34	37
Helping to make the world a better place	51	56
Finding a job easily	39	43
Receiving rewards	57	63
Being successful	71	78
Having a secure job	55	61
Being able to be creative or inventive	49	54
Being respected by others	63	70
Being my own boss	55	61
Being able to use physical strength while I work	37	41
Working outdoors	37	41
Managing and making decisions for other people	31	34
Doing work that is not complicated	35	38
Being able to use my mental abilities	44	48
Working under the direction of others	26	28
Having opportunities to learn new things	61	67
Performance a variety of work activities	44	48

After analyzing the data, the subsequent results show those responses selected

which range from 65% to 85% as identified by the 90 students surveyed (see Table 3).

These students were required to check as many of the 32 items presented as they felt were

relevant. Their top eight areas of importance are as follows: Making a lot of money which

was checked 77 times; being happy with what I did was checked 76 times; being

successful was identified 71 times; not being bored was identified 68 times; having time

to do what I enjoy most was checked 67 times; having time to relax was checked by

students 66 times; traveling to other places was identified 63 times and being respected

by others was identified 63 times as being important to students.

Table 3

Highest Frequency Values

Question	Responses
Making a lot of money	77
Being happy with what I do	76
Being successful	71
Not being bored	68
Having time to do the things I enjoy most	67
Having time to relax	66
Traveling to other places	63
Being respected by others	63

Also as a result of the data collection process of responses to question 9, the work

values with the highest frequency are shown in Table 3. The most frequently identified

work related responses considered important ranged from 63 times or 70% to 77 times or

85%. They were: traveling to other places was named 63 times; being respected by others

was also noted at 63 times; having time to relax was checked 66 times; having time to do

things I enjoy most was identified 67 times; not being bored was checked 68 times; being successful was noted 71 times; being happy with what I do was checked 76 times; and making a lot of money was identified 77 times.

After further analysis of question 9, additional data were identified as the concept of work related practices the students found important (see Table 4), however, the students' responses were significantly lower. These responses ranged from being checked 26 times or 29% to 55 times or 61%. They are being my own boss at 55 times; working with animals or people was checked 53 times; working as a team was checked 51 times; helping people get well was identified 44 times; working outdoors was checked by students 37 times; working with machines or tools was identified 34 times; daily contact with the public and managing and making decisions for others were each checked 31 times; and working under the direction of others were checked 26 times.

Table 4

Work Related Practices

Question	Responses
Being my own boss	55
Working with animals	53
Working as a team	51
Helping people get well	44
Working outdoors	37
Working with machines or tools	34
Daily contact with the public	31
Managing and making decisions for other people	31
Working under the direction of others	26

Another fragment of data derived from question 9 was prepared in Table 5 and was identified as two residual categories: intrinsic/extrinsic motivation and intrinsic

values. The motivational responses ranged from 35 times or 39% to 57 times or 63%. They were receiving rewards (extrinsic) at 57 times; adventure and excitement was checked 54 times; see results of what I do was identified 51 times; able to be creative and inventive were checked 49 times; performing a variety of work activities at 44 times; spending time by myself was checked 38 times; able to use my physical strength was identified 37 times; and doing uncomplicated work was checked 35 times. According to Purkey and Stanley (1991), intrinsic motivation is described as a motivation to engage in activities that enhance or maintain a person's self-concept.

Table 5

Intrinsic/Extrinsic Values

Question	Responses
Receiving rewards	57
Having opportunities/adventure & excitement	54
Seeing results of what I do	51
Being able to be creative & inventive	49
Performing a variety of work activities	44
Being able to use my mental abilities	44
Spending time by myself	38
Being able to use physical strength while I work	37
Doing work that is not complicated	35

The last element of data emerging from question nine suggested responses related to intrinsic values. Table 6 presents responses and their ranges of intrinsic values from 51 times or 57% to 39 times or 43%. The most identified was 'Making the world a better place' which entered at 51 times; changing peoples' lives was checked 42 times; and finding a job easily was identified 39 times. According to O, Neil (1992), intrinsic value has traditionally been thought to lie at the heart of ethics, and Dewey (1902) confirms

ethics as the science that contracts with conduct insofar as this is considered as right or wrong, good or bad.

Table 6

Intrinsic Values

Question	Responses
Changing peoples' lives	42
Helping to make the world a better place	51
Finding a job easily	39

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data were then disaggregated into two general themes. The survey respondents' comments were then linked with corresponding specific themes. The specific themes were identified as emerging themes from the qualitative data in order to provide more detail and greater level of understanding to the premise of a career interest inventory. This type of analysis lends itself to constant comparison/grounded theory, which was widely used and developed in the late 1960s by Anselm Strauss. The method allowed me to compare codes to find consistencies and differences among the data. Additionally, provided similar meanings or pointing to a basic idea and revealing categories (Strauss, 1987). The proceeding section will show key factors from the data and the relationship among them (Wolcott, 1994). Each theme that revealed itself through the data was addressed in its specific correlating category, in respect to its major theme that was found to correlate with the inventory questioning, such as student strengths and

career interest. The factors identified through this Cycle I analysis were shared with the teacher participants and utilized as bases in which to develop interventions and modifications for career and college preparation.

Themes

The narrative survey responses from the four open ended questions were initially coded to designate overall field of interest. Where responses of redundancy occurred, then categories were generated. Then themes were applied to reflect the categories. This was necessary due to the fact that the student responses, while different for each student, sometimes overlapped when coded. The qualitative data primarily suit two major themes: strengths and career interest.

The first theme focused on what students perceived to be their strengths in various academic and extracurricular activities. Of the 90 students surveyed, 89 of them responded. This theme is particularly important because the first step to understanding a career path is knowing areas of strength, which primarily correspond to four areas: 1) Art/Music, 2) Athletic, 3) Mathematical/Science, and 4) Mechanical.

Art/Music. The most dominant area of strength was repeated in the responses to question 5. The question asked students what they felt were their strongest abilities, while providing examples such as, are you artistic to athletic? Additionally, the students were asked if they wrote or spoke well, and if they had the abilities to be a good leader, or actor. The overall results to the question, was that of Art and Music.

What students perceived to be their career interest and what they felt was their strength showed a direct correlation. For example, their responses seemed to ask for the opportunity to learn more about the field of cosmetology. Cosmetology is a growth

industry that constantly needs highly trained cosmetology professionals argues Schoeneman (2011), who further states, the increasing demand for personal appearance services combined with population growth, the cosmetology industry encompasses nearly two million professionals across the country who wake up every day loving what they do. Student participants expressed their interest in the field of cosmetology in the following ways:"I want to do hair, it's fun," and, "I want to have a salon; my mom is a hair stylist."

According to the latest figures from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), employment of hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists should increase by 12 percent because many now cut and style both men and women's hair. Most significantly, the demand for hair treatment by teens and aging baby boomers is expected to remain steady or expand.

The student responses showed the desire to further develop their artistic abilities that specifically pointed to the area of becoming an artist. When exploring the history of art, several individuals are worthy to be mentioned. E.H. Gombrich (1996) has been deemed the most famous and popular writer of art, whose work was intended for teen-agers, but due to its insights and superb style, it was soon accepted by universities as a textbook. His text, *Art and Illusion* was declared in 1972 as one of the five greatest and most influential books published in the 20th century.

> Indeed, the true miracle of the language of art is not that it enables the artist to create the illusion of reality. It is that under the hands of a great master the image becomes translucent. In teaching us to see the visible world afresh, he gives us the illusion of looking into the invisible realms of the mind - if only we know, as Philostratus says, how to use our eyes. (Gombich, 1996, p. 1)

Additionally, well known to the art field is Ellen Dissanayake (Barcott, 2009) for presenting and answering the question: Why do we need art? Dissanayake began asking

that question and a few others nearly a half -century ago, and continues to answer them. Her challenge during the onset of her quest was applying Darwinian (1859) impulses to human behavior, which was a concept too untested for general consumption. However, still wondering about the role of art in human evolution, Dissanayake asked the following questions: Why did people make it? What evolutionary purpose did it serve? And, did art evolve? She extensively and most intriguingly answers these questions in her foundational texts in the field of evolutionary aesthetics. Long before interdisciplinary studies became trendy, Dissanayake synthesized art history, anthropology, psychology, and ethnology to develop a paradigm-changing theory. As a result of her work, it is accepted in the profession that art-making evolved as a behavior that contained advantages for human survival, and those advantages have reached far beyond what Charles Darwin ever imagined (Barcott, 2009).

In reflection of the aforementioned historical art information and the evolutionary perspective from artist Dissanyake (Barcott, 2011), I feel any student who believes they have artistic abilities should by all means have the opportunity to explore their perceived talent, and possibly bring closer what lies beyond.

Another student expressed her desire to explore the world of fashion:"I want to be like those fashion designers so I can make my own outfits and make clothes for people who can't afford clothes." From a historical perspective, clothes were worn to protect the body from the elements or to provide covering for modesty's sake, which came much later in the time line. Nonetheless, as civilizations developed, so styles of dress also evolved. In the classical world, the toga, worn not only by rulers, but also by philosophers and teachers, was regarded as a symbol of civilization (Ameer, 2012). But,

the idea of fashion, with its ever changing succession of styles and trends, first took hold in the mid 1300s in Paris, London, and the Italian city-states, when the elite rejected their flowing garments for tight fitting clothes. In fact, early fashion belonged to the elite, who tried to preserve their social superiority with 'sumptuary laws' forbidding tradesmen and yeomen from wearing expensive and lavishly embroidered fabrics (Ameer, 2012).

Strengths theme continued. Being an artist is not just about quirky outfits, chin-stroking, and abstract terminology. It is about building a business and career from one's creative talents aimed at becoming culturepreneurs (Artwork Alliance, 2011). It is my hope that students interested in the fashion industry receive the opportunity to experience that ever-evolving field of fashion, to contribute to its historical origin, embrace it as a talent that carries the potential to be a culturepreneur, and come to utilize the art for the good of all mankind.

As the students' strengths and interest are presented, the categories overlap and tend to show various perspectives such as the art industry stemming from the perspective of fashion as well as the culinary arts, or the owning of a restaurant embarking on entrepreneurship. The overlapping is not only indicative of qualitative analysis (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000), it also shows the urgency to expose our next generation to their competitive and global world of opportunity.

Several students made mention of having a passion for cooking and food service, which is historically and currently connected to the hospitality industry:

"I would like to bake and cook in my own restaurant."

"I would like to have my mom's job because she works in food service."

Answers Corporation (2012) contends early history of hospitality industry dates from ancient Greece, chronicling the practice of providing food and lodging to strangers; whether these travelers were out for religious, trade, military, or diplomatic purposes, they needed to eat and rest. The research further adds, as a result, the food industry flourished in many locations such as railroads, highways, sea cruising ships, and air transports (Answers Corporation, 2012).

Dye et al. (2000) describe qualitative data as evolving categories that require deciding which fragments of data can or cannot be assigned. The students' individually perceived abilities portrayed within the category of Art/Music are the delicate desires and dreams they possess for their futures and therefore valuable data.

Participants responded to question 12, which asked students if they knew of any jobs or careers that might involve the work values they felt were most important to them, and then identify the jobs. The responses to question 12 demonstrated their desire to take a part in the music industry by stating:

"I would like to have my uncle's job. He works with music."

"I want my Cousin Mark's job. He works with music producers."

An additional direction of data was revealed due to the responses provided by the students responding to the wording of question 12. The mentioning of the term 'job' is twofold, and led to correlating research of Marshal and Weisner (2004). The investigation maintains the commitment to work can be a source of internal satisfaction and will be performed voluntarily, or it can be avoided. Researchers (Gordon, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1960) address definitional concerns and examine the linkages between work-relevant values and interests. Tyler theorized that relative patterns of interests and values serve as

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possibility-processing structures for shaping one's identity. She asserted, "There is some overlap between the two concepts, but they are not identical" (Tyler, 1978, p. 147).

The students' interest in the music industry embarked upon an educational institution that offered education in Arts and Sciences that is inclusive of designing video games, audio recording for video, or film. The administrator of the Conservatory of Recording Arts and Sciences (CRAS) organization assures potential students of providing a unique and innovative curriculum focused on merging creativity and technology to prepare them for future careers in the entertainment and media industry. The majority of the CRAS Conservatory of Recording Arts Science curriculum is dedicated to music and audio production.

The history of music is depicted in the reporting by Full Sail (2010). The literature thoroughly explains how in the beginning (1890) music was considered as sound recording on phonograph discs, and today it is referred to as recording technology. However, it was during the 1950s, when new technologies emerged. The major players in the industry were Victor, Columbia, and HMV (which originally stood for His Master's Voice). Thomas Edison's 1877 invention of the phonograph was followed by many imitators, most notably the 'graphophone,' which became the basis of the Columbia company. Both inventions used a cylinder record, which captured sound in a grove. Just as the graphophone of 1887 borrowed many ideas from Edison, so too did Edison's 'improved phonograph' of 1888 borrow back from the graphophone. Ultimately, both machines were for sale or lease to the public. The market was intended to be businessman, lawyers, court reporters, and others who currently used stenography to capture important thoughts or compose letters. Although the sound recorder as a business

machine has its own history, it is the entertainment uses of sound recording that made the most significant impact.

In reflection of the aforementioned music background, the recording industry has consistently evolved and interestingly was intended for businessman, lawyers, and court reporters. The point of impact was shown to stem from those whose talent was recognized, as well as determined individuals who needed their voice to be heard, that ultimately proved the intended purpose to be revised. I perceive similarities and correlations in the history of music as relating to the low SES student. Formally, one way of acknowledging students' interest was to prepare them for college, although this intended purpose was forged in the right direction, to benefit from this type of intervention, the person(s) would need to be enrolled in a private school during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Wiles& Bondi, 1998). Here, the concept of providing for the potential and interest of the students was in place; however, the intended purpose was for private school students.

Further training. As the individual student's perceived abilities were portrayed within the category of Art/Music, the data reflected the work of Dey (1993) that asserts qualitative data as evolving categories that require deciding which fragment of the data can or cannot be assigned. With that being the case, students' perceived abilities in the field of Art necessitate further training in educational institutions such as the Art Institute. Students attending, for example, the Art Institute, can obtain an associates or bachelor degree, or enroll in certificate programs that specialize in the creative arts and design (Art Institutes, 2012). Moreover, the institution also provides scholarship opportunities, which can become more obtainable to students who are aware of their talent, and are cognizant

of how to navigate the overall process. Without initiatives that prepare our low SES students for higher educational institutions, scholarships and other opportunities will never become a part of their future as a career or college plan.

Art ranked as the third highest among student listed hobbies. According to Everyday Guide (2012), engaging in a favorite hobby gives you time to relax, acquire new skills, and discover hidden talents. The Guide suggests cultivating hobbies will eventually lead to meeting new people (social capital), improve your overall self (self-esteem), and lastly, enhance employment prospects. Everyday Guide (2012) contends the traits and skills that employers often look for are reflected in hobbies.

Athletics. The second area of strength, athletics, included skills in playing football, baseball, basketball, gymnastics, and skate boarding. The following student responses demonstrated that they identified themselves as athletic and some included additional skills:

"My strongest ability is running."

"I'm athletic. I like to run track and lift weights."

"I am athletic because I am good at sports and working out."

"I am a good athlete and after the games I like sportsmanship."

The main availability and exposure of a sports activity for the students at Woodbine Middle, is that of scheduled gym classes. A track team existed, however, I found most of the students required several conversations to encourage them to apply, and went further to advocate for the student by notifying the coach of their perceived ability. Research shows while participation in youth sports or physical activities does not make the child more 'intellectual,' participating in sports supports the child's overall

development (Hillman, 2010). Further, this includes the development of the brain, which in turn, can subsequently lead to better overall academic performance.

The remaining students' responses are a reflection of their self-confidence and potential leadership within their perceived athletic abilities:

"My strongest ability is being athletic."

"I am athletic, a good leader, and speak well."

"I'm athletic and can play football very well."

A study conducted by Murphy and Johnson (2011) explored how sports may benefit in developing leadership potential in children. As a result of the study, they believe that youth sports foster leadership qualities in children, build initiative, teamwork skills, and ability to regulate emotions. Moreover, the research contends, children in sports may develop increased self-confidence, a competitive nature, and a task focus that will serve them well in future leadership roles.

With respect to the students' perceived athletic abilities, the teacher participants felt it necessary to have the students cognizant of the educational steps that lead to that career path of professional athletics. The teachers wanted the students to know that most professional athletics, although talent driven, have come through a college or university. Although research (Gerdy, 2002) states the marriage of athletics and American higher education has become strained, and because the athletic programs profoundly influence the ability of colleges and universities, they are being distracted from their broader public purpose. Nonetheless, the students were directed to, for example, Brian Westbrook, who prior to becoming a professional football player, earned his bachelor's degree in management information systems from Villanova University and has since, pursued a

Masters in Business Administration (MBA) (Brian Westbrook, 2009). As a result of reviewing the biography of the professional football player, the students learned Westbrook has an organization entitled 'Brian's Blessings,' which aims to help underprivileged children foster a sense of self worth by providing tools they need to achieve their dreams.

The example provided the students a purposeful connection between their present perceived abilities and interest, and how each may influence their educational path. Statements such as, "That means I can go to college and still play football?" Another said, "Oh that's cool, I get to do both," were evident to this fact. Research confirms how adolescence is a pivotal developmental period in which youth begin to form an enduring sense of personal identity and are subject to changing aspirations based on the beliefs they hold about their capabilities (Bandura, 2006).

Strengths theme continued. The field of sports ranked the highest among student-listed hobbies. Murphy and Johnson (2011) maintain that children show an inclination for a particular activity from the onset of childhood. She further states, hobbies and interests can be as diverse as the individuals pursuing them. Moreover, the research suggests, while it may be impossible to categorize hobbies according to social, economical, or physical aspects, they have considered a few hobbies to be children oriented: horse riding, collecting things, and playing a musical instrument.

The students that implied having the ability to speak well were suggested to explore a career in communications, which led to sports broadcasting. Madden (2009) informatively describes sports announcing as a field where, generally, your networking, communication, writing, and people skills will benefit you far better than a college

degree. He further suggested networking to be placed at the forefront of the pursuit, and added those who break into the business have done so through their own network of industry contacts. This field of communication was also found to be further studied under the umbrella of art. The Academy of Art University offers Associates, Bachelors, a Masters, as well as certificate programs that consist of classes covering multimedia communications and television (Academy of Art University, 2008).

Mathematics/Science. The area that composed the third area of strength was that of mathematics/science. Students evidenced a point of view that they had the abilities to be veterinarians, pediatricians, and entrepreneurs. The decision to assign student career interest to the emergent theme math/science is according to Dye et al. (2000), fitting between data and categories, which call for continuous refinement. These quotes support student abilities that they believed would sustain their aspirations:

"I'm mathematical and scientific."

"I feel my strongest abilities are mathematical, and being scientific. I have the ability to teach others and be a good leader."

The students alleged strength (math/science) and career interest in caring for animals, guided the exploratory towards veterinarian medicine. The search led to cites that provided useful information. The Laboratory Animal Services (2010) advocated the students to have a basic background in biology, physical sciences, and math. They further suggested having the ability to communicate with other human beings. Moreover, specified required courses in biology and science were recommended and advised the classes to be rigorous and particularly designed for science majors.

As a result of students' perceived abilities in math and science, the correlation to career interest yield a profession of pediatrics that led to knowledge suggesting pediatricians to devote their first two years to classroom and laboratory instruction in the basic sciences (Answer Corporation, 2012). The conglomerate specifically noted the sciences would consist of anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, history, pathology, and pharmacology, with a robust clinical correlation. Additionally, the time line and requirements to pursue becoming a pediatrician is as for becoming a medical physician. According to Blair (2008), the requirements consist of completing medical school, three years of pediatric training, and the Unites States Medical Licensing examination. The American Corporation (2012) forewarned of the potential pressure of medical school and that it would be different from that in college, but added, the workload is manageable.

The following responses from the participating students penetrated the hearts of their teachers and as a result were encouraged to seek out advocates for math and science.

"I'm good with math and showing others how to do algebra."

"I love math."

"I am good at working with figuring things out."

Our nation's leaders decided in 1990 that American students would be first in the world in Math and Science achievement by 2000. The urgency was spawned by the realization that our nation was rapidly shifting to a society based on information and technology (Rich, 2012). More importantly, the index acknowledges that our students were performing below world-class standards at various grade levels on the international tests in spite of our scientists continued lead in world achievements. Although the

Department of Education decision was well intended, the challenge to meet that goal continues despite the number of initiatives put in place.

Fortunately, the participating students that voiced their compassion for math found themselves in the company of a scientist via internet exploration. The search for math and higher education steered them to Dr. Keith Black, who had a keen interest in science since childhood. His early fascination with medicine and the brain led him to perform more than 5,000 operations for resection of brain tumors since 1987 (Cedars-Sinai, 2012). In the students' exploration, it was discovered that Dr. Black was not only awarded for his unique ability to combine cutting-edge research and surgical practice, but for encouraging students to be involved in science through a program called 'Brain Works.' The program is spearheaded by Dr. Black for kids in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Perceived abilities continued. When a student states, "My strongest abilities is baking and cooking," the image of a young chef comes to mind. To increase the students' vision for this perceived ability, looking at others in this age group with similar talent, was encouraged. The expedition led to cookbooks written by kids for kids. Hernandez (2009) suggests every kitchen that has kids should have a couple of kid's books to keep them interested and excited about learning– what he considers to be a necessary skill.

Like many careers, the possibility of obtaining success in a particular field has the potential for one to venture into entrepreneurship. With that being said, it was not uncommon for the student to project lucrative earnings for the sale of cookbooks and having their own restaurant. The inquiry led to the search for understanding how a person perceiving to have the ability to bake and cook could pursue bigger dreams. As a result,

the initial point of advice derived from Mathews (2009). The author warns expanding

operations does not always mean profit, and could yield more volume to one's

responsibility, one may work harder with additional overhead, and worst of all, lose

profits. He further states the decision to extend the scope of a business must be a result of

thoughtful consideration, including financial, logistical, and even one's emotional

readiness.

      My strongest abilities is baking and cooking continued. The student gave the

advice careful thought and retreated to his peers who were conversing about music and

basketball stars. The teacher listening to the dialogue reminded the student who had

aspirations for the food industry that the individuals his peers were mentioning were

currently professional stars and successful entrepreneurs. The participating teacher was

referring to one individual in particular, who happened to be a National Basketball

Association (NBA) player, Michael Jordan, and now owner of the Bobcats. According to

Black Entrepreneur Profile (2008), Jordan is the first former NBA player to own an NBA

team. The report further notes, since the inception of NBA team ownership, Jordan has

launched his Jordan Brand: innovating athletic shoes and apparel. Moreover, Jordan has

grown to become a market leader under his creative design input and has earned in

upwards of $55 million dollars. Michael Jordan encourages his fans, by stating, "There is

no achievement beyond your reach" (Black Entrepreneur Profile, 2008, p. 1).

      The student collaborated with the teacher, and was also advised to place the

higher learning institution, Penn Foster, on his flash drive as a continued reference. This

institution also seemed to speak to his perceived ability of cooking and baking. Penn

Foster Career School offered a Career Diploma in Hotel Restaurant Management, which

provides for example, skills in marketing, menu planning, food preparation, food sanitation and storage (Penn Foster College, 2009). The organization further added that the tuition includes textbooks, learning aids, study guides, examinations, software, and tools. The student was intrigued by the schools aforementioned attributes and looked forward to sharing the mirage of information with his family

Mechanics. The fourth area, mechanics, also emerged as a perceived strength among the students surveyed. Careers that require mechanical abilities evidenced in the data included automotive, electrical, and construction. Students exhibited their abilities that once again they felt supported their choice:

"I'm mechanical and creative. I like inventing things."

"I'm really good at fixing things, thinking, and I like showing people my projects."

For these students, the closest mechanical opportunities they most commonly become involved in are science fairs, which often presents chemistry or physics projects such as volcano eruptions, or the inertia of eggs. Students become persuaded to do similar projects and are not made aware of, or encouraged, to present mechanical projects, which are in the technology category.

Although the purpose of science projects is to help develop an interest and understanding in knowing about the scientific laws and principles that constitute our world (Science Fair Projects, 2012), very seldom are low SES students encouraged to not wait for a science fair to start on a passion for chemical, physical, or technical science.

Furthermore, very few of our students perceive their inner desires as a talent or a potential invention. The president of the United States, Barack Obama, invited students to

the White House to display and demonstrate their inventions. Students Ma'Kese, 12 years old, and 11 year old Isis Thompson, heard about the deadly bacteria outbreaks on cantaloupe melons in 2011 and created a high tech (highly technical) lunch box that zaps fruits and vegetables using UV light, making them safe to eat. Senior White House correspondent, Jake Tapper, referred to the students as little geniuses and felt they were future Steve Jobs or Albert Einstein (ABC News, 2012).

Several students perceived having the ability of a mechanical nature, in conjunction with technology being indicated as the second highest hobby to sports.

"I'm into fixing cars."

"I am mechanical and mathematical."

"I am mechanical. I like working with cars."

It was during the implementation of the curriculum that one of the students interested in building cars was able to better understand how advances in technology includes the mechanics of cars. The insight led this student to Pennco Technical School, where he would learn of the possibilities of scholarships to pursue mechanical drafting and automotive technology as a career. Upon completing the courses, a certificate for Mechanical Drafting can be awarded (Pennco Tech, 2009). Most significantly, there have been dramatic changes in the field of mechanical engineering, which as a result, has provided us with highly technical, personal transportation automobiles. According to Snadhyarani (2011), advanced technologies have manufactured cars that drive themselves; therefore, a driver is not required. The Automatic Vehicle Operation System (A.V.O.S.) consists of advanced robotic features as well as a navigation system.

There were also students, who perceived having the ability for construction,

however, understandably unaware of the comprehensive field of mechanics.

"I would someday build houses for people."

The construction field carries with it academic qualifications, for example, mechanical and electrical engineering (Gold Group Construction, 2009). This particular student was receptive to the information and felt he was part of the group of students that expressed having their strengths in mechanics. He went further to discover the academic qualifications to be available at several universities.

Additionally, to perceive having the ability to build houses for people, shows a correlation to several work values such as wanting to change people's lives, make the world a better place, working outdoors, performing a variety of work activities, and able to be creative or inventive. Student work values are depicted in the quantitative data (Table 2).

The students surveyed showed the hobby, technology, to be second to the interest in sports. Research shows hobbies give sense or intelligence to our existence and are greatly influenced by factors such as, age, gender, region, family background, education, or personality (Pakhare, 2011). Moreover, a person's physical surroundings and finances may also dictate the choice of hobby. The financial aspects of a hobby may be a deterrent for many of our low SES students, however, I believe hobbies deserve the same encouragement as their interest, for their hobbies may develop into an interest (Psychological Corporation, 1990).

Career Interest

The second major theme focused on careers in which students had an interest. To ascertain students' career interests, questions 6 and 8 were utilized. What seemed

interesting is that the students' career interests correlated with their strengths, although there is no statistical method for proving this is in my study. The qualitative results suggest a relationship. Question 6 asked specifically, "What kind of work would you like to do?" Question 8 asked, "Among the people you know, whose job or career would you most like to have and why?" Students who took part in the survey seemed to be most interested in careers that had a focus on the medical or health care industry. This will be known as theme one under career interest. Other emergent themes included artistic/music (theme two), computer technology (theme three), and athletics (theme four).

Medical. Of the 90 students surveyed, one student indicated interest in the practice of family medicine."I want to become a doctor because my grandma is always sick."The student's interest led her to some very informative electronic sources, that clarified that, without declaring a specific area of medical expertise, the position would be deemed a General Practitioner(GP), or to serve as a family doctor, the title would be known has a Primary Care Physician(PCP). The student was also privy to practical advice from Apprentice Doctor (2009-2012), which recommends that regardless of the type of medical doctor one chooses to enter, one should be capable of various skills such as: identify methods to make an accurate diagnosis, learn and practice the methods for examining patients, and how to identify abnormalities.

To continue the search, the student chose general practitioner (GP) and discovered a general practitioner is a licensed physician who specializes primarily in family medicine, which means that he treats patients of all ages for illnesses and injuries (Nichols, 1999-2014). The student further learned that a GP also practices preventive medicine, and usually maintains private practices. Excited about the information thus far,

the student inquired about the requirements of becoming a GP, and discovered, in addition to a high school diploma, one would need higher education. Nichols (1999-2014) suggests a Bachelor's degree from an accredited educational institution, apply and attend a medical school, which may consume an additional 3 years. Lastly, the student was informed to observe a three-year residency with a general practitioner, in order to become eligible for a Board Certification. In summary, the student would attend a total of 10 years beyond high school to become a general practitioner.

As a result of the information reviewed by the undeterred student, excitement for the medical profession remained evident. The teacher encouraged the student to remain confident in her career interests and offered continued assistance throughout the exploration. Fallon (1997) contends first generation students are disproportionately affected by the failure to dispense appropriate information early in the students' school careers and the teachers' and counselors' perceptions of their abilities. Fallon further states many students have not been encouraged by school counselors, teachers, or administrators to take part in the courses and guidance activities that would assist them to successfully compete for college admission, because they are not viewed as college material.

The students surveyed also expressed sensitivity and passion for animals and connected the desire to take care of them or be kind to them into becoming veterinarians. The data explain wanting to be a veterinarian and encompasses why the theme of highest interest was the field of medicine and science. These students in particular have articulated their passion to work with animals, and in doing so, their career interest

guided them to the potential of earning an Associate's Degree as a Veterinary

Technician:

"I would like to take care of animals."

"I would like to work with the animals."

"I want to be a veterinarian and a scientist."

"I want to be a veterinarian because I will save the lives of animals."

"My mom is a nurse and I want to follow her footsteps but to nurse for animals

not humans."

The program consisted of learning skills such as animal anatomy and physiology,

medical mathematics, veterinary office management, animal nutrition, reproduction,

genetics, and aging (Penn Foster College, 2009). The institution informs potential higher

learning candidates that employment in this particular field provides the option to work at

a private veterinary practice or an animal hospital. Further, with the Associates of

Science Degree, the option to work for a diagnostic laboratory or humane society is

promising. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), which has projected

statistics, the veterinarian technician field is expected to grow nearly 36% by 2018.

This particular student's career interest also encompassed a work value (Traveling

to other places) as indicated on the interest inventory (Psychology Corporation,

1990):"My aunt's job because she travels around the world helping people with medical

needs and earn a lot of money."

Career interest theme continued. The electronic search pointed to the field of

Occupational Therapy; which (Khalilifar, 2008) frankly asks, "Do you have what it takes

to become an Occupational Therapist Registered" (p.1). The title occupational therapist,

if one should become employed in the field, entails assessing patient problems and needs; developing and implementing plans of care; as well as maintaining clinical documentation (Occupational Therapy, 2012). The company appeals to those who want to love their job, receive great income, and enjoy traveling to places around the world that they have always wanted to visit. The organization further states, a person working in this capacity may advise patients on health maintenance and prevention, or provide case management.

According to Articles Base (2005-2012), to obtain the status of an Occupational Therapist, certification is required, and can be acquired at several Occupational University Programs. Additionally, the official title is Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA), for which the student of higher learning, upon entry, is considered operating at a professional entry-level master's at several of the university programs. In particular, the University of South Alabama, as well as Dominican University of California, offer the master's degree combined baccalaureate for masters.

Art/Music. The next highest area of interest to students who participated in the survey was that of art/music. This area of interest was directly correlated to students' perceived abilities, therefore was discussed in the area of strength. According to the Psychology Corporation (1990), students' interests and skills are related, and the University of Wollongong (2011) maintains one's personal interest can assist one in deciding what career path to pursue, however, it is the person's skills that largely determine whether one achieves what one desires or not. (See strength area for student responses and discussion).

Nonetheless, a particular individual was a person of interest to the students who have perceived abilities and or interest in art/music. Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, better known by her stage name, Lady Gaga (L.G.), attended New York University's Tisch School of Arts before withdrawing to focus on her musical career (Wikepedia, 2012a). L.G. rose to prominence as a recording artist and is recognized for diverse contributions to the music industry, winning 13 Movie Television (MTV) video awards and consecutively appearing on Billboard magazine's Artist of the Year. L.G. was named one of the most influential people in the world by Time Magazine. Most importantly, L.G. credits Collaborative Arts Project 21 (CAP21), for preparing her for her future career focus in music and art. She is, and will forever be known for, encouraging all students of music/art to hold fast to their dreams, and states, "Once you learn how to think about art, you can teach yourself" (Lady Gaga, 2012, p. 1).

Computer Technology. The third area of interest, computer technology, pointed out that students noted they were interested in careers related to computer technology. According to Psychological Corporation (1990), some interests develop from the experiences we have had, such as from our hobbies, our occupations, or from what people tell us. Student interest in computers was captured in the following remarks: "I want to fix computers for people.""Playing on the computer is lots of fun. I would like to be the next Bill Gates."

School Net Forum (2009) briefly describes the history of computer technology as including multiple diverse devices that range from the ancient Chinese abacus developed in c3000 BC to Charles Babbage's "analytical engine" of 1834. It would also include discussion of mechanical, analog, and digital computing architectures. In the late 1960s,

analog computers were routinely used to solve systems of limited difference equations pertaining to oil reservoir modeling. In the end, digital computing devices proved to have the power, economics, and scalability necessary to handle large-scale computations. Digital computers now dominate the computing world in all areas ranging from the hand calculator to the supercomputer and are persistent throughout society. The evolution of digital computing is often divided into generations. Each generation is characterized by dramatic improvements over the previous generation in the technology used to develop the unit, including the internal organization of computer systems to programming languages. School Net Forum (2009) identifies the current age bracket as the sixth generation, dating from 1990 to the present.

A multi-phase innovation study was conducted asking children age 12 and under, "What would you like your computer or Internet to do that it can't do right now?" Three themes reoccurred across kids' ideas for new technology. The first theme showed the digital vs. physical divide is disappearing, meaning they live in a technical world. Secondly, they wanted to know why computers were not more human. Lastly, they thought technology could improve and empower them as children, to the point they would be equal to the world (Latitude, 2011).

The students' compelling interest in computers led the search to ITT Technical Institute (2009-2011). The organization offers Associate's and Bachelor's Degrees to prepare students for career opportunities in various fields, such as Computer and Electronics Engineering Technology, Computer Drafting and Design, or Software Applications and Programming.

Career interest theme continued*.* The responses from the career interest

inventory seem to reflect correlating imaginations for the cutting-edge possibilities of the

technology field:

"I want to be a video game creator"

"I like playing video games. Being a video game designer would be the best job

ever."

This quote from a nine year old as a result of the phase one to two Latitude (2011)

study:"I want to play a 3D game while earning real money at the same time."

Research shows kids expect their online activities to have real-world impact and

vice versa. Web (internet), mobile (wireless communication), and game developers are

bridging online with offline experiences for both kids and adults. The games are designed

to motivate personal wellness through technically capable tracking, tangible real world

rewards like saving money, and forming new social connections (Latitude, 2011). It is

with technology social connections are today more prevalent and lends itself to social

capital. Mitchneff (2011) recommends social feeds as a natural way to increase one's

inner circle and the more social capital one has, the more value becomes available when

one needs it.

Students' responses to the career interest inventory continue to show their desire

to have technology to be more interactive and human, better integrated with their physical

lives (Lattitude, 2011). "I would like to be a technician. I like working with computers."

"I want to work with graphics on the computer." "I want to work with computers and

photography."

As a result of this student's responses above, the School of Arts (SOA) at Rhinelander was discovered and the students of Woodbine Middle wanted to know more once the SOA students' responses were reviewed:

> School of the Arts-Rhinelander always takes me to a place inside myself I've never been. It is a chance to immerse myself in subjects of interest to me, without outside distractions. I get a chance to pursue activities I probably wouldn't otherwise. (Board of Regents, University of Wisconsin System, 2009-2012)

The SOA features the idea of making a new masterpiece by using a camera or an ordinary picture. Although SOA is primarily a series of workshops for high school students as well as adults, it is also an extension of the University of Wisconsin, continuing studies (Board of Regents, University of Wisconsin, 2009-2012). It was at the University the students explored the various courses in Art and Design, and discovered with continued enthusiasm, they could obtain a design certificate as an undergraduate student, and a Master's of Science as a graduate student (Board of Regents, University of Wisconsin Systems, 2006).

Also during the exploration, the students' interest in computers expressed a desire to use the computer to record music. The students' inquiry led to an informative technical background. According to Dekker (2012), a revolution in recording technology took place a few years ago. He further explained, as computers became more powerful, they started to replace traditional tape recorders that were the heart of most recording studios. Dekker (2012) went further stating today computers designed for home use are powerful enough to emulate an entire recording studio, and can be used for everything from multitrack recording to audio editing and scoring music for videos. Recording Academy President and CEO, Neil Portnow expressed, "Being exposed to the Arts is not optional but a cultural necessity." Portnow is also an advocate for artist basic needs, creating

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MusiCares Relief Fund in response to the devastating floods that unexpectedly hit

Nashville in May 2010 (Recording Academy, 2011).

Athletic Sports. The remaining highest field of interest was athletic/sports (theme

four). Some interests develop from what we do in school, and some develop from what

we read, or from what we watch on television (Psychological Corporation, 1990). I

believe Woodbine Middle School students participating in the interest inventory have had

ample exposure to sports through all the aforementioned. Several of the students

expressed their aspiration to become professional players of football, baseball, soccer,

and/or skateboarders. The following responses document those developing interests, as a

result of answering the specific question, "Among the people you know, whose job or

career would you most like to have and why?"

"I would like to have Michael Vick's job because he's a good quarterback. I can

be like M. Vick."

"A baseball player because it's a really fun sport, and I'm really good at it."

More specifically, the students' responses seem to reference the independent

research (Messner, Hunt, & Dunbar, 1999) that states the significant role sports

programming plays in the media massages that American boys receive currently. Further,

a recent study (as cited by Messner et al., 1999), conducted by the Amateur Athletic

Foundation of Los Angeles, contends 98% of United States boys ages 8 to 17 consume

some form of sports-related media, 82% do so at least a few times a week, and 90%

watch television sports.

In continuation with the interest in sports, some students expressed a motivating

factor of financial gain:

"I would like to have Brian Westbrook's job because I know that job would make you rich."

"I want Tom Brody or Michael Vick's job because I like making a lot of money and throwing the ball."

"I want to have the job of a wrestler because they get paid and it's exciting and unpredictable."

Professional sports, according to Money and Sports (2003), generate billions of United States dollars annually, and possess the potential to generate even more revenue. The paying fans and their revered teams have enjoyed an exceptional relationship over more than a century to present. The report further states, players once used to play the game for the love of it, now they are increasingly demanding a compensation package equivalent to a CEO of a large multinational corporation.

The students who voiced their desire to play professional sports were encouraged by the teacher participants to research the career path of a few players, who prior to fame, began their career in college. The career emulation of Michael Vick led to a search of his sports path. It was discovered that M. Vick's career started at Virginia Tech College (Wikipedia, 2009-2012) very similar to Brian Westbrook, whose career also started at a college/university, as indicated in athletics area of strength.

After the M. Vick search, then a few new comments were: "I didn't know Vick went to a college before he played for the Eagles." An additional response, "That's going to be me; I can go to Temple University, study business, and still get to play football." The students were better able to place their interest in the context of education, and remain enthusiastic about their career interest.

Athletics continued. A promising student voiced his passion to swim. In response to the next student's career interest, we know not whether this student will hold a place in the record books for Olympic swimming, therefore must provide opportunity to explore his interest:

"I want to be a lifeguard, I like swimming."

According to the American Lifeguard Association (2004), the candidate must be at least 15 years of age and demonstrate skills such as, perform a front crawl for 100 yards, use rhythmic breathing and a stabilizing, propellant kick. Additionally, he must swim 20 yards back to the starting point with an object and exit the water without using a ladder or steps, within 1 minute, 40 seconds.

It is the requirements of the American Lifeguard Association that will prepare this individual for the challenge of considering competing for the Olympics. With access to his dream early, this student could be the next Michael Phelps, who continues to hold eight medals obtained from the Summer Olympics of 2004, held in Athens, of which six were gold (Putatunda, 2010). Further, M. Phelps was named the World Swimmer of the Year in 2003, 2004, 2006, and 2007. The student learned through the American Lifeguard Association (2004) that for a basic certification for water safety, a few courses in First Aid and Lifeguard Training is required. However, advanced training will require becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) (CollegeBound Network, 1996-2012).

The male student was apprehensive about the title, nurse, which lends itself to the research that many boys may have sex-stereotyped views of occupations by the time they reach adolescence (Schwartz, 2009). The reluctance of becoming a nurse was brought to the attention of Woodbine School's male nurse. The nurse, Mr. Gray, seemed to act as an

appropriate example, and encouraged the student to consider the nursing field, and further stated, "Obtaining a nursing degree can provide opportunities such as, becoming a school or community nurse or work in a hospital setting." I believe without the exposure or the opportunity for low SES students to explore their interests, while at the critical stage of adolescence, we as educators stand to lose the manifestations of students' dreams, families, and a generation.

Students' passion and determination for the sport of baseball showed a connection to a now famous basketball player, Jeremy Lin, and Harvard University graduate. Student: "I want my uncle's job because he plays baseball. He plays in the minors. I like baseball a lot" J. Lin stated, "I have a degree from Harvard, but I love basketball. I always have" (Personal communication, February 15, 2012). Of further importance to our low SES students, is the fact that J. Lin was not offered an athletic scholarship out of high school and was not drafted out of college. Harvard University offered J. Lin a partially guaranteed contract with his hometown team, the Golden State Warriors. J. Lin is now one of the few Asian Americans in NBA history, and the first American player in the league to be of Chinese or of Taiwanese descent (Wikipedia, 2012b).

Jeremy Lin's story, as well as others, was utilized for a few reasons. One was to help students view the differences in people's career path, and dispel the idea that one particular path will lead to guaranteed success. The other purpose was to effect students' predisposition to college. According to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), predisposition to college is defined as the "developmental phase in which students determine whether or not they would like to continue their formal education beyond high school" (p.211) and is influenced by a variety of student background characteristics. Moreover, given the fact

that our low SES students lack the cultural capital that higher socioeconomic students posses, educators must put forth early intervention strategies to compensate for this disparity.

Discussion

After further analysis of the items from the survey, question 8 asked students to make a choice from among the people they knew whose job or career they would most like to have and why. This was an open-ended question that only 34/90 responded. Of that 34, five identified teaching as the career they would most like to have because of their teachers. The other 29 answered with careers of people who were either only vaguely known to them or distantly connected through fantasy more than reality: for example, a well-known establishment, or the girl who identified wanting to have Jennifer Lopez' life, or the boy who wanted to be a football player like Michael Vick. In this realm, it appeared students were at a loss for someone in their immediate circle whose career they could connect. It is safe to assume that with the absence of career role-models, low SES students will have little chance to realistically develop aspirations of their own. This is also likely to be true for the college aspirations that could assist them in pursuing their desired career. The College Board (2011) advocates the building of a college going culture through early college awareness by nurturing in students the confidence to aspire to college and the reliance to overcome challenges along the way.

When using the information obtained from question 6 of the career interest inventory, where students were identifying those careers they were most interested in pursuing, and question 9 where they ranked those things they most valued, there demonstrated a connection. The connection was between what students most valued

about work or career choices and the actual career desired. For example, the fact that what students most valued in life was being able to relax, as an outcome of their chosen career, is indicative of the most chosen career category being the in the field of Arts. The second highest interest career category was that of Athletics.

While each of these may seem to be at opposite ends of the spectrum, however, in all actuality, the commonalty lies in the benefits of each. Engaging in the activity of art reduces stress, improves emotional well-being, and self-esteem (Art Therapy, 2012); while being athletic can maintain your physical and mental well-being and enhance your personality (Oak, 2012). The benefits of both the fields of art and athletics hold an overall medical advantage to potential employers, especially since they pay a large share of health care premiums for medical benefits. The students indicating having time to relax as most valued, may play a significant role in career satisfaction. Many of the companies are advocating incentive based heath programs. Forty eight percent of surveyed companies either already offer incentives, or plan to offer them to employees who take part in company-sponsored health programs (Ventresca, 2007).

An additional connection emerged as students identified problem solving as their least satisfying work value. It is possible that the fields of art and sports present the least problems in comparison to other fields such as managing and making decisions for others, and daily contact with the public, which were less indicated as a work value (see Table 2). Research (National Art Museum of Sport, 2002-2012) shows sports as providing us an opportunity to practice with fun on a manageable scale, helps us to survive, and brings self-discipline. It is these characteristics that carry over to the 'real world' and help to bridge the world of art, which captures emotion and the anxiety of

competition (National Art Museum of Sport, 2002-2012). When using the information from question 1 of the career interest inventory, where students were asked to identify their most favorite school subjects, the students indicated math as the highest favorite, and the subject of science was shown to be the third highest. This evidence of students choosing the subjects math and science as favorites correlates to their interest in careers that have a focus on the medical or health care industry.

Students' responses to the question 6, "What kinds of work would you like to do?" regarding their career area of choice identified the medical field, with an emphasis in veterinarian medicine at 26%. Second to the medical field was Art/Fashion at 21%, and those interested in Sports another 14%. These top three responses conclude that over 60% of the careers chosen required post secondary education. On average, the least amount of post secondary education needed to fulfill the students' aspirations would be 2years or the equivalence of an associate's degree (see Figure 3).
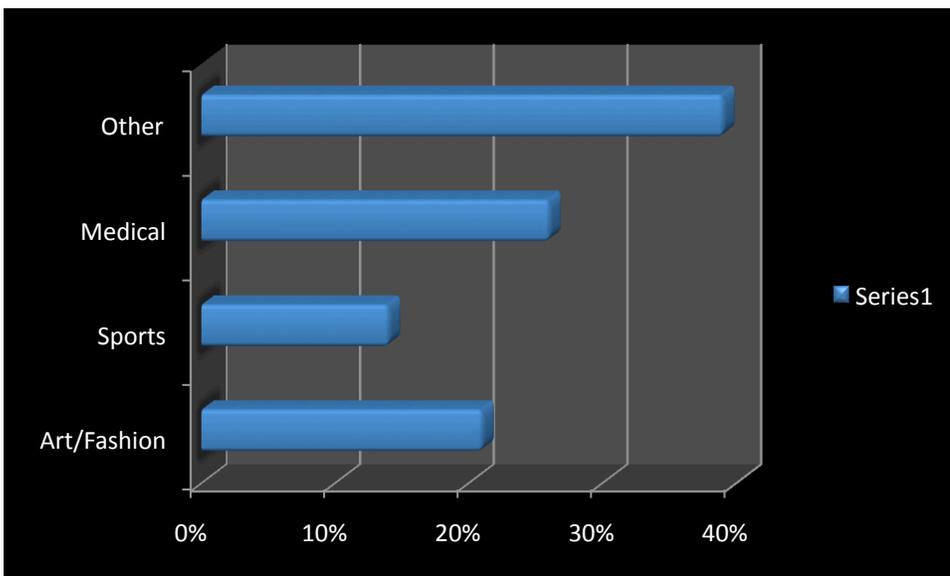
Figure 3. Post Secondary Education Required for Career Chosen

Conclusion

Cycle I reflects the results of the Career Interest Inventory given to five 6th grade classes at Woodbine Middle School. The Career Interest Inventory served as a personal survey for each student to identify academic likes and dislikes, career and hobby interest, strengths and personal values, and role models available to them. The survey consisted of 12 questions, some of which were open ended, others required multiple responses. Questions 1, 2, 9, 10, and 11 provided the quantitative data, while questions 3 through 8 and 12 provided qualitative data. The two major themes that emerged from the qualitative data were students' general aptitude and career interest. Their propensities were shown to be in art/music and athletics. Their most notable career interests were in the Arts, Athletics, and thirdly, Medical or Health Care industry.

Several correlations emerged as the analysis of the data progressed. For example, the first connection was between the chosen value of having time to relax, and the career interest in the field of Arts. The second connection was between the same value: having time to relax, and the field of Athletics. The third connection was found to be with the students choosing math and science as favorite subjects, while desiring to work in the medical or health care industry, which was one of the three most popular career interests identified by students.

A frequency chart was created to demonstrate the categories of data derived from question 9. Specifically, a table was used to chart the frequency of work values identified by students. The data showed "making money" had the highest occurrence from students as they were asked their most important work value. The next highest occurrence was "being happy with what I do," which was identified 76 times. Conversely, the two lowest

frequencies were "traveling to other places" and "being respected by others," each occurred 63 times.

Additional data resulting from question 9 was a frequency chart identifying work related practices. The outcome identified most often by students was the desire to "be my own boss," which occurred 55 times. Conversely, the least identified work practice was "working under the direction of others."

Data also derived from question 9 were intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. "Receiving rewards" was identified 57 times, while "doing uncomplicated work" was shown as the motivator occurring least often.

The last frequency chart identified as what this evaluator considers intrinsic values. Research shows that intrinsic values lie at the heart of ethics (O'Neil , 1992 2010). There were only two categories:"changing peoples' lives" and "making the world a better place." They occurred 42 and 51 times respectively.

From the data collected, the connections and correlations reaffirmed the need for early intervention to influence our students' predisposition stage, which involves the development of occupational and educational aspirations along with the emergence of intentions to continue education beyond the secondary level as postulated by Stage and Hossler (1989). While the predisposition stage may begin as early as the seventh grade (Stage & Hossler,1989) the concern is with low SES students whose lack of social and cultural capital decreases, and can radically differ in the range of choices available to them as potential college students (Duncan, 1994). Moreover, research suggests early intervention to affect long-term systematic change in the culture and climate of schools in order to have positive outcomes (Somer et al., 1999).

It was encouraging to see alleged students' career interest in the medical field was consistent with that which they deemed to be their stronger subject. Aligned with this thinking is the fact that the medical field was one of the student's top three career choices. Each of those top three, medical, art/fashion, and sports, required at least two years of post secondary education.

There was also a question on the inventory, which in my opinion, was not deemed as appropriate for this particular age group. The inventory asked the students if they have had any jobs, and if so what type. Plausibly, the students in the study did not have much work experience. They are low SES students, and in this instance they are from communities where jobs for the adults are often scarce.

Chapter V

Cycle II – Seeking Clarity From the Perspective of Counselors

Introduction

The purpose of Cycle II was to expand the scope of the study by conducting interviews with two counselors from Woodbine Middle School (WMS) and a high school counselor from the neighboring high school. The purpose for conducting interviews with the counselors was primarily to gain their perspective on what was currently in place for students regarding college and career aspirations. Counselors are the individuals responsible for transitioning students from one level of education to the next (Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, & Trickett, 1991).

In addition to the interviews, I set out to facilitate a focus group consisting of two teachers, one counselor, and one administrator, all of whom served in the capacity of middle and high, city public schools. This was an attempt to gather additional experiences and ideas about curriculum development. I sought teacher participants for the study by asking for volunteers after the professional development. I held the professional development during a scheduled in-service day at Woodbine Middle School. The professional development consisted of a power point presentation, which facilitated strategies to promote college and career aspirations for low SES students. In this cycle, I embarked upon three endeavors: interviews, a focus group, and a professional development. My hopes were positioned in identifying common threads, and or similarities, related to supporting the college and career aspirations of low SES students, as well as to petition teachers for the research.

Interview Protocol

I was conscious of the limited time the counselors would have to participate in an interview due to their own demanding schedules; therefore, I decided to be as skilled a listener as possible. I believed that skilled listening would allow me to get as much information from the interviewee as possible. According to Glense (2006), a number of things occur simultaneously during interviewing, first and foremost is the importance of listening. Therefore, every word spoken should be treated as having the potential to unlock the mystery (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) of how to better serve the students. I coded the data included in the transcripts of the interviews to find emerging themes. The two themes that emerged were: 1) the need for a career curriculum, and 2) support for parents.

The Need for a Career Curriculum

Research argues an essential middle school curriculum should consist of an exploratory program that offers students a chance to explore many areas of interest (Wiles & Bondi, 1998). Both middle school counselors interviewed took no responsibility for the absence of a career/college curriculum. A counselor hired in 2008 stated, "There is no curriculum!" She claimed limited ability to affect curriculum because of her previous work experience with at risk youth and present administrative difficulties. She stated:

> I spent 10 years as a middle school counselor working with adjudicated individuals in a detention center prior to coming to Woodbine Middle School. I worked more with individual planning for high school and beyond. However, I was less engaged in classroom instruction. (Ms. Benntly, Counselor Interview, February 3, 2009)

She supported her background experience and knowledge of the curriculum at Woodbine Middle School by saying:

The American School of Counseling (ASC) is my curriculum. I contacted ASC for help with students' experiencing severe peer pressure and bullying as these situations often created emotional issues causing low self-esteem and poor academic performance. Unfortunately, I found it difficult to execute the ASC recommendations due to authority issues from the administration.

The other middle school counselor, hired in 2007, carried a despondent affect. Her job frustration came through verbally when she responded to the curriculum question adding: "Counselors are consumed with intake and test preparation. Would I like to follow a curriculum and be exempt from testing- sure! But it's like this. I'm simply carrying out the wishes of the administration" (Ms. Stein, Counselor Interview, February 4, 2009).

This counselor did not offer any websites or counseling associations that she might use or view as a college/career curriculum. However, I did get the impression that she would like to do more than just intake and test preparation. At one point she said, "A curriculum would be nice."

Research indicates that if emphasis were placed on attending college starting in grade school, students and families would have more time to consider the possibility of college attendance (Martin, 1999). During the interviews both counselors emphasized the need to provide the 7th and 8th grades with career information. As one counselor affirmed,

> I usually try my best to spend time on vocational exploration with the seventh and eighth grade students as they prepare for high school. However, I often feel my efforts are hampered due to the transient population. The Gear Up/Champ program already provides our students with pre-college awareness.

Similarly, the second counselor suggested, "Small workshops (vocational) for 7th and 8th graders could help ready them for the college/career path."

Research recommends middle school to have courses taught by specialists to include industrial technology, music, art, business, foreign language, agriculture, computer technology, and others. Research further states counselors should contribute to these exploratory activities (Wiles & Bondi, 1998). Although both middle school counselors seem to draw from a different counseling premise for their work, ASC and /or administrative directives, they both agreed on ways the counselor could impress upon middle school students the importance of pursuing higher education. One counselor passionately suggested: "I think our 8th graders would benefit from being exposed to a Career Day, and I would like to help in the planning." I was encouraged by the commitment. I was then surprised by her additional statement, "They also could benefit from visiting college campuses of all types because it is very possible that none of them have ever been on a college campus, but again this is covered through the Champ/Gear Up program." The high school counselor stated:

> Middle school students need more exposure to potential careers, perhaps through a Career Day that includes a variety of people to characterize the current fields of study as well as a diverse representation. They also could benefit from visiting four-year colleges and higher education facilities. (Ms. Williams, High School Counselor Interview, February 5, 2009)

The high school counselor further added, "I feel there is a need for 8th graders to have a profile on file or in their cumulative folder depicting their future plans." I interpreted her statement as her rationale for supporting the use of a career interest inventory to assign students to the Small Learning Communities.

Support for Parents

Research indicates schools serve as a pipeline for encouraging students to develop the skills and self-confidence they need to pursue a college education due to the

involvement and engagement of teachers (Orr et al., 2002). The high school counselor

suggested, "Teachers should begin to implement some form of assessment to identify the

student's interests." One middle school counselor agreed stating, "Teachers could also

implement some sort of assessment." Apparently, this particular middle school counselor

was not aware that prior to her arrival, the Career Interest Inventory was being given

through the guidance office.

According to the Economic Mobility Project (2009), the first source of social

capital is the family. Research indicates parental education influences a child's academic

prospects in a number of ways, as do certain parenting skills such as the ability to

develop strong bonds. The quality of the relationships between parents and their children,

meaning their shared values and attitudes among family members, and the non-material

types of investment that parents make in their children are examples of social capital

within the family. Importantly, family social capital often enables a child to access other

resources that are available within as well as outside the family (Economic Mobility

Project, 2009). The middle school counselor mentioned a reality in Woodbine, stating,

> I think small workshops for the parents may be most beneficial in helping them to
> focus on the college path for their child. Especially given the high population of
> Hispanics, there is a language barrier. And sometimes the parents would like to
> see their child take advantage of opportunities, but the lack of communication
> often places the student at a disadvantage.

After listening to the counselor's genuine concern for the parents, I could strongly relate

and agree with her statement. She continued to dialogue stating, "Most of our students,

especially our Hispanic population, require vigilant communication to convey to their

parents and other family members the importance of signing documents such as trip slips

and applications to attend places of opportunity." Interview responses seem to support the idea of schools taking additional steps to support low SES students and their families.

Summary of Counselor Interviews

As a result of conducting the interviews with the middle school counselors from Woodbine Middle, I sensed the counselors were portraying a hands-off approach when it came to taking responsibility for college/career readiness for the students. Perhaps their stance stemmed from not having substantial guidelines to follow. Although each of them was cognizant of the absence of a curriculum, neither of them was willing to take the initiative to address the need for a curriculum. Conceivably, their satisfaction with the way students were being served was mainly due to the counselors' conviction that the Champ/Gear-Up program was providing college/career readiness for Woodbine Middle School. Interestingly, one counselor implied if there were a curriculum, perhaps she would be exempted from other obligations such as testing.

Adhering to the authority of the administration was a major focus of the job description for the Woodbine Middle School counselors. Despite a hands-off type of counselors' attitude towards the lack of a college/career readiness curriculum, the counselors seemed to agree on the need to have activities such as career day, visits to college campuses and small workshops for parents. Unfortunately, however, these suggestions were pointed in the direction of the 8th grade students. Further, the counselors appeared to be cognizant of the necessary action that needed to be in place in order to influence career/college aspirations.

Interestingly, the high school counselor and one of the middle school counselors suggested having the teachers administer a career assessment. Perhaps they were

insinuating the use of a career interest inventory, in which one of the middle school counselors did not seem to be aware of its one time use in WMS. The high school counselors' suggestions were very similar in that they mentioned career day and the exposure to college campuses. Here again, I was compelled to assume the 6th and 7th grade level was not included in the high school counselors' suggestions, given the fact she specifically indicated exposing the 8th grade students to the aforementioned activities. Similarly, each of the counselors advocated workshops for parents to bring awareness of the college/career process. Their proposal speaks to the research stating parents of low SES students are unable or unknowledgeable of the college attainment process (Tierney et al., 2005).

What seemed to emerge from the interviewing of a high school and middle school counselors was the importance of collaboration. If there had ever been an opportunity for communication among the three counselors, they would have realized the value of implementing the Career Interest Inventory as part of the Woodbine Middle School (WMS) policy. This implementation would have led to a more purposeful action on their part, and not simply placing 8th graders in small learning communities. It would have meant addressing students' needs by aligning a purpose to their academia. The three counselors seemed to be aware of the importance of our low SES students pursuing higher education, however, they did not seem to be cognizant of the importance of including the 6th and 7th grade students in the early planning. This focus on preparing the 8th graders as opposed to starting with the 6th grade age group motivated me to draw upon the view of other educators through a focus group.

Focus Group Rationale

As a result of the data gathered from the interviews with the middle and high school counselors, I felt as if I had embarked upon an area that called for further investigation. Therefore, I sought to inquire the input of other educators. I contacted five educators to participate in a focus group. In order to form a focus group, I made several calls and left voice mails and e-mails to colleagues I believed would be good candidates to discuss this issue. By March 5, 2009 I was able to gain the confirmation from two teachers, one counselor, and one administrator, all of whom continue to serve in public middle and high schools. The volunteer participants agreed to meet on March 12, 2009 at the home of the administrator at 5p.m.

Given the research that shows the urgent need for college/career readiness (U. S. Department of Education, 2007), I assumed at Woodbine our youth were not receiving the knowledge or skills to navigate the process that should be mastered in order to be college and/or career savvy.

I prepared questions for the focus group discussion (Appendix D). Although the focus group began in a rather formal manner with me reading the disclaimer from the informed consent form, it continued as a very informal dialogue. I listened attentively to the focus group members discussing how they felt they had affected the students' perceptions of themselves as college students through the teachable moment technique. Each of their efforts, opinions, and experiences with using teachable moments is described below.

Teachable moments. A teachable moment, according to Cain, Cummings, and Stanchfield (2008), is not something that you can plan for; rather, it is a fleeting

opportunity that must be sensed and seized by the teacher. It may also require a brief

digression from the original lesson plan so that the teacher can explain a concept that has

inadvertently captured the students' interest. Mr. Gee, a teacher-leader in the high school

shared, "I found telling them about the importance of pursuing a college degree did not

affect their performance and it seems the concept remained abstract to them." Mr. Gee

spoke adamantly about the parents being the significant role model for aspirations. He

expressed that parents were pivotal to the students' education and that parents must

present education as a significant pursuit.

Ms. Dela, an administrator, expressed the importance of inspiring students by

exposing them to their interest, she stated:

> We know our low SES students receive less exposure to developmentally
> enriching activities… that's why it's so important to get them fired up about
> learning in all subject areas because you don't know what will ignite that spark. I
> have also found sharing your own story can be influential. (Ms. Dela, Focus
> Group Meeting, March 12, 2009)

Akerheilm, Berger, Hooker, and Wise (1998) suggest there are many instances

where low-income students are significantly less likely to attend college than upper

income students, despite similarity in their test scores, therefore, it is imperative that we

as educators seek options that foster their path to higher education. Research indicates

support of aspirations could also come in the form of encouraging students to elect and

successfully complete the necessary academic subjects that will allow them to pursue the

widest range of career options (Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002).

Ms. Gen, a counselor in the School District of Philadelphia, shared this supporting

sentiment and stated: "This is why cultivating our students thinking is important by

asking students what they would like to be in the future and encouraging them to sign up

for programs such as Champ/Gear Up." The overall comment from the School District of Philadelphia counselor seemed to give the impression that any attempt to influence students to view themselves as college students would help.

Ms. Gen said that their counseling objectives were in place. Much of it on the K-8 level dealt with duties such as testing coordination, crisis management, and transfer to special admit schools. "Even GEAR-UP which was concentrated more at the high school level than at the lower grades was generally poorly attended by students." Her comment was consistent with the attitudes Woodbine Middle students had toward these programs. Interestingly, research depicting government pre-college programs (Perna & Swail, 2001) supports this type of student response.

Ms. Gen sighed as she explained how the School District of Philadelphia recognized the need to increase the ratio of counselors to students to help reduce the 50% drop out rate. Ms. Gen continued,

> I guess I'm lucky. Title I has allowed many K-8 schools in Philadelphia to have 2 counselors making the ratio of counselors to students 400:1; where it used to be 800: 1 in some schools. And, the district has also allocated funds for a person to administer testing. That particular position comes with the title, School Based Leader. This relieves counselors from testing duties and therefore allows more time for the counselors to spend with students.

Ms. Gen further mentioned that one of the greatest advantages of the extra support is that she is now able to counsel all students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. She can also zero in on the 6th graders by administering the Career Decision Inventory, review their responses, have a defined focus for when she counsels them, and follow up with a potential sustainable path. Her most daunting fear was that the funding may cease and the work in progress may become a thing of the past.

Ms. Gen went further to add a very enlightening suggestion:

I'm sure you do not foresee your district obtaining a grant, or any funding from a Title I program, which would possibly bring about a change in providing adequate needs to each of the grade levels. And I'm saying that to state, perhaps you could consider developing a curriculum that would include exposing the 6th graders to information that could career or college ready them.

The other members also agreed and chimed in with statements such as:

Schools are suppose to exist for societal improvement, and the only way we are going to improve is to expose these students with practice on how to explore that spark of interest. And I agree, a curriculum just may be the way to go. (Ms. Gen

Mr. Gee then interjected, "Because we realistically can't wait for the parents to

provide the information, or encourage their child to aspire towards higher leaning, then

that leaves the responsibility in the hands of the school."

Ms. Mar, a third year elementary reading specialist/teacher reiterated:

That's why I feel so strongly about starting them early in the pipeline. I have waited long enough for an intervention or instruction that would allow me the tools to implement this experience. I honestly assumed it would one day come along. Therefore I had to do something. I think developing a curriculum would not only demonstrate to the students how their education is connected to their dreams, but it would restore the teachers' purpose for being in education. I look forward to allowing those kids to search on the computer for different colleges or universities, and answering their most honest questions. I believe that experience opens up their entire world.

Ms. Mar's comments were in line with Crone and Tashakkori (1992), who

contend schooling is a social experience and the higher the social economic status of the

student (SES), the greater his or her educational achievement.

Ms. Gen concluded by saying, "If there is any way I, and I'm sure the others that

are here can help, we would be glad to collaborate in this endeavor."

Never too early. Ms. Mar emphasized the importance of exposing our low SES

students early in the educational pipeline. She felt her actions served to plant a seed in the

lives of the very young. Ms. Mar stated:

In my classroom, I made my students aware of the idea of attending college by allowing them to explore schools on the internet. I also showcased different schools via college T-shirts in hopes of broadening their horizons. In fact, I refer to my students as 'little college freshman.' (Ms. Mar, Focus Group Session, February 12, 2009)

This teacher had a clear concrete method of affecting students' perceptions of themselves as college students. Her technique stayed with me beyond this meeting. The following quote supports the notion and importance of the need for teachers and students to take turns leading the educational process. "If the goal is to educate all students so they have an all-American shot at realizing their dreams, we must find a way to disrupt the monolithic classroom and move toward a student-centric model" (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008, p. 1).

I was undertaking something new for the students in my school. I felt honored to have brought school leaders together who willingly sacrificed their time to participate in the focus group. These individuals reinforced my belief in team effort and how the work goes far beyond talking. This is described by Kezar, Carducci, and McGavin (2009), who state, "Leaders foster collaboration and exemplary leaders enable others to act" (p. 68). My focus group set the stage for collaboration and offered the participants an opportunity to act.

I realized my study was not only about promoting strategies to prepare low socioeconomic students for college/career aspirations, but was also a living testimony of servant leadership theory. I watched my own growth as a leader.

I felt confident in what I would learn from these educational leaders. I held them in high esteem. I believed they provided genuine responses and affirmed that my value as a teacher leader was needed to do the work I was doing. I realized it takes teams of

people to collaborate and accomplish truly great things. I wrote the following in my journal:

> I knew once I made a voice to voice contact with my focus group constituents that the commitment to meet was imminent. I do realize I can't expect others to be as adamant as I am about responding to others' needs; especially when it comes to adding one more thing to your "To do" list. (Leadership Journal, March7, 2009)

Focus Group Summary

The focus group offered information about present practices, occurrences within their educational environment towards the development of college/career awareness, and most importantly, suggestions towards developing a curriculum. Their passion for our youth showed the potential in exposing low SES students to information early in the pipeline, and how the exposure could support and spark aspirations. The group agreed that simple actions such as asking a student, "What they would like to be" and referring to them as "Little college freshmen" also had the potential to cultivate their thinking and affect their perceptions of themselves as college students.

Similar to the counselor interviews, one of the members in focus group mentioned the importance of parents being involved in encouraging their child's career aspirations. Although parental involvement was not this study's focus, the research contends successful parental involvement is correlated to personal regard for the children especially low SES parents who are vulnerable and unconfident in their relationship to schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). I strongly believed the teachers involved in the study would exemplify high regard to the students of the initiative, and if contact with a parent should occur, the parent would experience a prompting to become involved in their child's future.

Further, unlike any of the prior counselors, a counselor and member of the group spoke admiration for her district as they recognized the need to increase the ratio of counselors to students. Additionally, her district designated personnel to administer testing. As a result of the change, she was able to counsel each grade level in career planning and most importantly, administer to the 6th graders a Career Decision Inventory.

Having the opportunity to facilitate the focus group provided further determination and belief that an intervention to address the gaps in college /career preparation for our low SES students was paramount. Therefore, I sought colleagues willing to commit to developing as part of the research, a program to prepare our low SES in the pursuit of higher education. To acquire access to my colleagues, I set forth to facilitate a professional development at Woodbine Middle School.

The Professional Development

The Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) requires that all professional development involve sustained, articulated learning activities that can be directly linked to improving student learning. During this second cycle of the study, I facilitated a professional development session on March 23, 2009 during a regularly scheduled in-service for the faculty at Woodbine Middle School. The purpose for this professional development session at Woodbine Middle School was to solicit teacher participants for the development of a career curriculum to be implemented in Cycle IV. A 20-minute presentation during a 45-minute time frame was outlined to inform potential teacher participants of the research that supported the middle school's role in college/career readiness and aspirations for low SES students. Aspirations according to

Akos, Lambie, Glenn, Milson, and Gilbert (2007) are the educational and vocational 'dreams' that students have for their future. Sixty-two of the 70 faculty members signed up to participate.

In order to be in alignment with the NCLB mandates, I facilitated a professional development program. The goal of my program was to reinstate the Woodbine Middle School's Career Interest Inventory (CII) tool. The results of this tool were to be used as the foundation for writing a Career Interest Inventory Curriculum that included specific student learning activities.

I exposed Woodbine Middle School's staff to research-based information that supported the urgency to offer the Career Interest Inventory Curriculum before 7th grade. I believed that sharing this information would have the capacity to motivate the staff responsible for preparing this generation of students. I also accept as true that academic sharing influences educators to see the significance of their role.

Sounding the Alarm with Research

The professional development session consisted of sharing research via PowerPoint which opened explaining how the school has replaced the parents' role in ensuring, encouraging, and advising that their child have access to college (Tierney et al., 2005). I heard quite a few sounds that seem to reflect agreement such as "Tell me about it." I continued to present research that showed while other factors influence one's mobility, education has risen to the top of the list, along with savings and family background (Haskins et al., 2009). Although I was facilitating the wording from the power point, I could not help but hear, "As well as the cost." I in no way wanted to ignore the comments therefore I stated, "I share your same sentiment, and we will talk about it."

I proceeded to present terms such as predisposition stage, mobility, social/cultural capital, and the research in relation to our low SES students. The terms were in many ways a refresher and at times an eye opener, such as the research that supports the predisposition stage. According to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), predisposition to college is defined as the "developmental phase in which students determine whether or not they would like to continue their formal education beyond high school" (p.211) and is influenced by a variety of student background characteristics. While allowing the audience to absorb the information, a question was asked: "But why are we, as educators, replacing the role of the parent?" To address the staff member's concern, I exhibited the slide that reflected the research stating how the parent's level of education influences a child's academic prospect and can foster behavioral skills and cognitive development (Economic Mobility Project, 2009). Additionally, I stated, "While parents are influential in the child's development, research indicates the level of education reached by parents influences the ways in which they raise their children and seek to improve the education of their children" (Economic Mobility Project, 2009, p.10). I further added, "In other words, I hope you take away from this particular piece of research, how important your level of education is to our students' lives, in the absence of their parents' level of education." The research was instrumental in reinforcing to the staff that education is paramount to a child's future and if she is not being raised in a home with educated parents, we are respectfully in position to influence their child's academic outcome.

The presentation continued with the Mortenson (2009) study, which contends that low income kids are enrolled in low income high schools and live in families that know little about being successful in college. I added in response to the research,

Here again, most of us in this room have children who have had and remain having the privilege of being advised by a parent who has been through the attainment of higher education. *Perhaps I have not given enough thought about those parents who have obtained a higher education level, and as a result, must rely on the school to prepare their child for all aspects of their education.

A comment from one teacher, "I admit, I have taken the process (as difficult as it can be) for granted. However, I also feel it is never too late to improve upon your status." Before I could respond, another teacher interjected, "But we know how once you have a child prior to establishing an education for some people it becomes virtually impossible." I thanked that first member for being honest and added,

I would just like to add to virtually the word seemingly, and I say that because when you're in a situation that seems overwhelming and as a result you feel defeated, you tend to not see the resources that are at your reach, such as people. This common experience speaks to a statement that we are all accustomed to hearing.

I then went about reviewing the Mortenson research. Mortenson (2009) states, "It takes more than a village to raise a child." One member stated, "And that village continues to be the school." I added, "Yes, meaning entire staff in the school."

Mortenson's (2009) research promoted a discussion of current programs at Woodbine Middle School such as Gear Up and College Ready New England. I stated, "These programs are committed to preparing youth to address a future that includes postsecondary education and a desired career path. Most importantly, these are considered early intervention initiatives that have the potential to increase a child's life opportunities."

One of the teachers commented, "I thought the school has basically addressed this issue of preparing the students for college or careers by contracting with the Champ/Gear- Up program." I replied, "This is true, however many of our students for

whatever reason, are not following through with their applications." I continued saying,

"I see Ms. Benntly from the guidance department is present, maybe she would like to

comment on this matter." Ms. Benntly promptly stated,

> Yes, unfortunately, our students are not taking advantage of the opportunities the Champ/Gear-Up program has to offer. The program offers all sorts of financial incentives for them, but to no avail. We have had an ample amount of students retrieve the applications, however, they seldom return.

I thanked Ms. Benntly for providing that information and returned my attention to the

audience, for there was a relating comment to follow:"So I'm hearing for the first time

that our students are not taking advantage of the Champ/Gear-Up program and the

financial aspect is showing to have no effect upon their participating." I responded:

> Yes, that is correct, and that is why am presenting to staff what the research says about our low SES students and the path to higher education in hopes of my colleagues to become aware of the possible difference we can make regardless of what subject you teach. As you can see, we cannot wait for students to sign up for what they don't know about.

One member bellowed out while raising her hand, "I assumed the program was a success

and I never would have guessed the financial incentives were not be enough to convince

them to enroll." I stated at that point,

> I understand the significance of the Champ/Gear Up program placing the financial package first in their proposition because research states for first year college students financial issues remain the most important dynamic for low SES students when making a decision to attend or not to attend college.(Tierney & Auerbach, 2005).

> **Seizing the moment.** As the audience seemed to reflect a sense of concern

coupled with despair, I was compelled to address the staff by further stating,

> Many of us typically speak to our students during class time about what they should be involved in academically, however we tend to forget the purpose for attending school; which is to discover your strengths in hopes of cultivating them by all means necessary.

I then presented a question to the audience, "How many of you, with a show of hands, have had a teachable moment and experienced students actually listening and you feeling as if you deposited some motivating factors into the students?" The term teachable moment is best described by Christensen (2003), who states it is a time when a child (or an adult) seems most receptive to learning and a person is on hand to take advantage of the receptivity or interest of a child. At that juncture, I asked a member who volunteered to expound on one of their moments. The male participant replied, "These moments don't happen often enough and when they do, I believe this is what teaching is all about." I responded, "Exactly, and if we are fortunate enough to take advantage of those teachable moments, it is those moments that offer an opportunity to spark aspirations." I thanked that member for his input and stated, "We cannot allow these moments to escape us anymore. The students' typical roster does not specifically have a class that allots time to explore their dreams. We have to seize those moments." Before I could go any further, a faculty member asked if she could make a comment, "Since it seems the Champ/Gear Up program is contracted to "college ready" our students and they are not taking advantage of the opportunity, then maybe there is a need for us to take more of an advantage of those teachable moments." Another member added, "I think we should also look into why our students are not completing the applications. This piece of information or data in itself may help us to develop ways to assist our students in aspiring towards higher education." The audience clapped in response to their colleagues' comments, and seemed to all be in agreement with their propositions. Realizing the audience was at their peak of motivation, I chanced stating:

> If I am allowed to further discuss the need to do more with the research, and what
> it says. For example, about parent's level of education, predisposition stage, and

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teachable moments, perhaps this information and forum can be utilized to develop an intervention/ initiative our students can truly benefit from and we as teachers can experience students engaged in learning. I'm going to ask, if you are thinking on these lines, and you would like to further discuss the research, I will be available through my district e-mail address.

Aware of the duration of time allotted for the presentation, which was 45 minutes total, I attempted to bring the presentation to a close. However, a member was apparently still in disbelief about the financial aspects of the Champ /Gear-Up program. She asked if I could shed some light on the CHAMP/GEAR UP program. I explained, "A representative was not present at this time, however the program is a pre-college program that is federally funded and has made financial aid available for students, such as ours, to attend college." One constituent said, "Money is always going to be a problem." Another co-worker stated, "And with our kids, most of their parents do not earn nearly the amount of money that is required to enter some of these institutions." I responded,

> Each of your comments are true and on point. That's why we need to bring a better understanding of how college/career aspirations can be attainable regardless of financial concerns. For example, our students need to be exposed to how to apply for scholarships and grants.

Before closing the meeting, I offered one more point to be considered. According to Perna and Swail (2001), funds are not enough to ensure that all students complete a degree due to disparities associated with gaining access to student support resources. In theory, they do. But in reality, most low SES students struggle with the process of accessing the campus resources available to help them. I asked if anyone had any further comments before I concluded the session. No one presented a question or offered a comment.

I thanked my staff for partaking in the professional development, and reminded them to direct any further comments via the district e-mail. It was my hope that the

research presented and reviewed during the professional development made an indelible impression among the attending staff.

Cycle II Summary

The interest from my faculty coupled with what I learned from the focus group and interviews, assured me that to address this issue was the right thing to do. Despite the counselors' liaise-faire demeanor, fostered by placing the responsibility on the principal and the current program (CHAMP/GEAR UP), they still seemed aware that more could be done. Colleagues in the focus group also demonstrated the necessity to do more in this area, recognizing the importance of exposure and how they often replaced the role of the parent (Guardian, 2008). These were all willing participants that agreed on the urgency, but needed a vehicle to carry it through. I knew at this juncture, I had to be that vehicle.

The Economic Mobility Project (2009) strongly urges education, post secondary education in particular, is one of the most effective tools our nation has for promoting upward mobility. Nonetheless, I believe we have yet to achieve equal opportunity in this regard. Only one-third of children from families in the bottom income quintile enroll in college, and of those, only a portion graduate. It is important that we focus our attention on boosting college enrollment and completion, specifically for the disadvantaged children (Economic Mobility Project, 2009).

Chapter VI

Cycle III – Towards A College and Career Aspirations Curriculum

The purpose of this cycle was to develop strategies, modifications, and interventions that would enhance students on college and career aspirations and help navigate the college application process. I have come to realize teachers do best when they have a framework from which to operate. This understanding came as a result of meeting with the focus group during Cycle II. The focus group was comprised of two teachers, one counselor, and one administrator; all of who serve in public middle and high schools. The individuals offered information about present practices in developing career awareness and the possibility of including college aspirations in student K through 12 experiences. The forum in which these practices would be fostered is through the development of career interest.

Although the concept of curriculum has an extensive history and has been widely debated, Dewey (1902) set the stage for defining curriculum parameters in relation to the educational process. The parameters were identified as fundamental factors: the child, the society, and then organized subject matter. These factors were echoed in 1926 by Dewey's former student, Harold Rugg, who also maintains three critical factors in the educational process. Like his respected teacher, Rugg places the child first, then contemporary American society, and positioning between them, the school. Most interesting, is another one of Dewey's students,' Boyd Bode, in 1931 renewed the former three factors. Bode contends the difference in curriculum stems from three points of

view; first being the standpoint of the subject matter specialist, secondly, from the standpoint of the practical man, and finally, the interest of the learner.

As an outgrowth of the professional development, seven teachers of various grade levels demonstrated interest. Five of the seven respondents became participants; unfortunately the two bi-lingual classes were given permission to be exempt from the study by administration. Grade levels taught were a primary consideration for selection. Four sixth grade and one sixth-seventh grade split teacher agreed to meet after dismissal on Monday, April 6, 2009.

Participants

The teacher participants in the study consisted of five 6th grade teachers; one of whom was responsible for 6th as well as 7th graders. The average class size for each teacher was 15. The five teachers consisted of three females and two males. The female volunteers were Ms. Suder, bi-lingual and entrepreneur; Ms. Canon, technology certified and track coach; Ms. Val, who had a law enforcement background. The two males were Mr. Smit, former inter scholastic chess coach; and, Mr. Allen, who volunteers with the Big Brothers organization, which help youth reach their potential through one-to-one relationship. As a result of the professional development, the teacher participants agreed to meet and discuss strategies to promote college/career aspirations for low SES students on May 5, 2009.

From a leaders stand point, the arrival of May 5, 2009 was met with the mind set to continue the knowledge creation and sharing aspect for two purposes; relationships and moral commitment (Fullan, 2001). As the participants filed in, I welcomed them with smiles, greetings, and the understanding that people will refuse to share information

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unless they feel a moral commitment to do so, and reluctant to share if the dynamics of change is without an exchange (Fullan, 2001). Ms. Suder was the first to make a comment, "I'm looking forward to whatever it takes to get this ball rolling." Her energized statement set the tone for the meeting. Mr. Smit added, "Just think, we potentially have the opportunity to actually put in place a plan that we can call our own; where do we start?" I stated, "I'm glad you asked. I would like to clarify why we are here. Our purpose and challenge this afternoon is to simply decide what type of plan we can agree upon, that will best fit a middle school setting."

The research of Wiles and Bondi (1998) strongly suggests emerging adolescent learners in the middle school represent the most diverse group of students at any organizational level of schooling. Ms. Val interjected, "I'm ready to develop a plan that will allow me to interact with my students, and foster relevancy." Ms. Suder chimed in stating, "And I'm ready to have my students benefit from content organized according to the strategy and the learning intended." Ms. Canon remarked,

> We can aspire to all the above, however we must decide on the approach. Whether or not we have something on the line of a pilot program, or an initiative of some sort, we will still need to outline our ideas and objectives. Fortunately it will ultimately be designed by the each of us.

"That factor is the driving force behind this endeavor," Ms. Val added. The members clapped while shouting yes, showing a sign of agreement in this process of change.

I promptly added, "It seems you guys, in total, represent a team that is willing to move forward in this exchange of knowledge process. If I am incorrect with this inclination, I will not hesitate to retreat and revise." An observation made by Dixon (2000) reveals the exchange of knowledge happens only in organizations that have a

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noncompetitive or collaborative culture. I continued stating, "To concur with Ms. Canon, whatever the venue we settle upon, whether it is for example, in the realm of a pilot program, I am confident in your decision and commitment." Mr. Allen commented to the group,

> Don't anyone run for the door, but if we espouse to have any of the inquiries mentioned, we may need to consider actually writing a curriculum that may require some intense planning and collaboration. Let's not everyone respond at once.

Ms. Val was the first to brave her colleagues mental storming, "I think it's only fair to say, if we were afraid of hard work we would not be in this room attempting to address the needs of our students. Ms. Val is right," stated Ms. Canon. "Developing a curriculum may be the way to go with this venture." "What is your take on the idea of developing a curriculum Mr. Smit?" asked Ms. Val. Mr. Smit replied to the question:

> Oh, I think it's doable, needed, and most importantly, it will be designed by us. I have never had that opportunity. I'm like most of us in this room. We are so accustomed to implementing someone else's 'here today gone tomorrow' initiatives or programs, that we had no input with.

"We all can say your right with that Mr. Smit," said Mr. Allen.

Ms. Val was instrumental in evoking a consensus on the idea of developing a curriculum stating, "Ok everyone, are we putting on the table the idea of writing a curriculum for our most deserving middle schoolers?" The participants unanimously responded yes, and as a result agreed to develop a curriculum for the 6th grade students at Woodbine Middle School. Although elated with the way in which the team was progressing, I was cognizant of the fact it was not enough to have the best ideas, you must work through a process where others assess and come to find collective meaning and commitment (Fullan, 2001). I decided to thank the members for arriving to this

juncture of my research project. I suggested they take a few moments to themselves before committing to a start date to begin developing the curriculum. The members (now participants) agreed to meet on May 5, 2009 to set the course of developing a curriculum aimed to career/college ready the 6th grade students at Woodbine Middle School.

Curriculum Development

On May 5, 2009 the team members were eager to get started. We greeted each other with enthusiasm, and expressed how excited we were to begin developing the curriculum modifications and/or interventions that would promote college/career aspirations for our low SES students. Although the team was the designers of the curriculum blue print, the decision to adhere to the district's lesson planning policy was advisable. To comply with the district wide, lesson plan accountability policy, this requires all instruction to engage students on all levels of learning. Therefore, the team discussed several components of a curriculum that they felt would meet those requirements and secure their goals and objectives.

This group became affectionately known as the Five Disciples. Discipleship is defined as one who embraces and assist in spreading the teaching of another (Christian Discipleship, 2002-2014). Their suggestions seemed to be aligned with Print and Coleman's (2003) recommendations for guiding lesson delivery. I brought this to their attention. As a result, the team adopted Print and Coleman's (2003) suggestions to guide lessons. Print and Coleman (2003) suggest academic discourse that includes student-student and student–teacher interaction, group processes that facilitate communication utilizing diagrams, and the development of cooperative learning group skills. These structures offer students a form of classroom interaction that works toward building trust,

cooperation, and acquiring networking skills. These suggestions engage students in interactive learning environments that develop social capital and the skills and behaviors necessary to be effective and productive citizens.

The curriculum plan was developed to be utilized in any content area. More importantly, the plan was in direct response to the data collected and analyzed during Cycle I. The research pertaining to homework was discussed. The assignments would be the same for each class as opposed to being specific to each student (Kohn, 2006). To provide consistency with the development/writing of the curriculum, the team decided to discuss components of the curriculum. They established that each lesson needed specific objectives, pre-class preparation, a primary and follow-up activity, a closing, and a homework assignment.

Using this format, it was believed that teachers would feel more confident during the implementation process. The discussions may not necessarily follow a particular order; however, an attempt to develop comprehensive objectives for the overall educational experience drove the purpose. Seven weeks were scheduled to write the curriculum. The time frame would be the week of May 5, 2009 until the end of June, 2009.

The Five Disciples (Strategically Planning)

During our first meeting on May 5, 2009, we began by addressing the overall purpose of the lessons. The purpose was to develop curricular modifications/interventions in order to promote career/college aspirations of low socioeconomic status students (SES). Teachers in the Camden district are expected to plan lessons that infuse technology into the classroom and promote student engagement, exploration and

interaction in cooperative learning groups, and/ or in learning centers. A rubric must be posted in the class to show how all are assessed and correlated to the objective.

The participants' common thread of teacher perspective helped promote consensus on the need to adapt the curriculum to align with Print and Coleman (2003), who suggest instruction should be based on engaging students in active participation to build trust, cooperation, and networking skills. Print and Coleman's suggestions are also in line with social capital, which according to Munasinghe (2007), is a resource that people draw upon in pursuit of their aspirations and is developed through networks, connections, and relationships of trust. The aforementioned research is adapted in hopes of fostering the predisposition stage, which involves the development of educational and occupational aspirations as well as the emergence of intentions to continue education beyond the secondary level (Stage & Hossler, 1989).

Taking the outcomes of the student's career interest inventory into account, and after viewing the suggestions, three domains were chosen as a standard of practice for the curriculum: Academic Discourse, Group Processes, and Cooperative Learning. Academic discourse consists of student-student and student-teacher interactions. Group process incorporates concept mapping as a learning tool, which allows students to practice communicating verbally and with diagrams. Cooperative learning contributes to the development of group skills and a sense of civic duty (Print & Coleman, 2003).

Prior to forging ahead with writing the curriculum, I shared with the participants the outcomes of the focus group facilitated during Cycle II. I explained how although Woodbine Middle School counselors were cognizant of the absence of a college/career curriculum, neither were willing to initiate any action towards its development, because

they felt the Champ/Gear Up program was providing that service. I further enlightened the group by saying, "Middle school as well as the high school counselor, agreed students could benefit from exposure to college campuses and a Career Day."

I then informed the participants that the purpose for the focus group was to ascertain any standard practices that may have currently existed, and hear the views of other educators. I further explained how the group provided examples of their present practices and proposed a way in which to address exposing our low SES students to the higher education process, would be through development of a curriculum. I was able to communicate to the participants that the time spent with the counselors and focus group was genuine in nature. In actuality, this was an attempt to provide our students with what Bourdieu (1997) identifies as cultural capital, which he contends is a symbolic good that is most useful when it is converted into economic capital.

I continued the sharing of information by providing the example of a teachable moment (as touched upon during the professional development) as speaking to students about preparing for college entry. One particular participant stated, "Which is what I continuously do." The other participants chimed in, "We sometimes do!" I supported their statements by saying, "And that's why we are here, to put in place a curriculum that will harness these moments into a thematic plan specifically tailored to meet the students earlier in the K-12 pipeline." I continued, "Remember the student inventories demonstrated several connections between what they perceived were their abilities, and their actual career interest." "Yeah, tell us about that again" said Mr. Smit. I clarified by saying:

> A large number of them wanted a career that would be relaxing, and the careers such Art /Music and Sports, that were highly chosen, were found to be not only

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growth industries, but these careers have the benefit of reducing stress (Art Therapy, 2012) and sports provide survival skills and self-discipline (National Art Museum of Sport, 2002-2012). Additionally, they each have potential to produce a substantial income; which students indicated as a value (making a lot of money).

I continued, "I believe it is also worthy to mention, the fact that, there was no tangible person besides we teachers, that they could identify having direct knowledge of as a career." "Ok, I'm beginning to see where we need to start, although I bet half of them want to be athletic stars or rappers." In light of what the teacher participants believe they are consistently or sometimes doing, I suggested as we review the research by the Print and Coleman (2003) and Reasoner (1992) to act as viable guides in conjunction with the charts developed from the Career Interest Inventories. Confident in the direction the team seemed to be moving towards, we agreed to meet to begin writing the curriculum on our next meeting date of May 12, 2009.

Identifying Requirements

Lesson 1. During our second meeting, May 12, 2009 we reviewed the notes from the first meeting (May, 5th) and our guides from Print and Coleman (2003) and Reasoner (1992), the district's expectations, and the student interest inventories, prior to writing first lesson. The team was able to adapt to the district's lesson plan format consisting of Objective, Pre-class/Activity, Closing, and Follow-up/Homework which was recommended and accepted by the school district. One member, Ms. Val, asked, "Since homework is important in bringing parents into the process, are we going to include homework?" Ms. Suder expressed, "I'm content with the lesson format and the Print and Coleman guide, but ultimately what we are trying to accomplish when we talk about improving students' view of themselves as college students, we're embarking upon their self concept." Ms. Val said, "You're right, we need to help them recognize that not

everyone becomes an athlete or a doctor or a lawyer, but they can still be happy being

contributing members of society." She went further stating, "I didn't like seeing from the

inventories that our students don't know enough about intermediate careers or jobs,

which they could be happy with and do well with." "That's right, everybody can't be a

star athlete or a doctor, but there are other occupations in the field of athletics and health

care that our students should be aware of." In response to Ms. Suder's comment,

Mr. Allen spoke about his son:

> That's like my son and I, I want him to know he's good enough to be a college
> student or career person, and I try my best to cultivate a level of caring to help
> him develop in that sense of awareness and acceptance of himself.

 Mr. Smit replied, "In seems were also working on their self image for the most

part." Ms. Suder responded, "Yes that too, but how do we do that while making college

and career our emphasis. To not interrupt the dialogue, but capture the essence of the

collaboration?" I asked, "So what could the environment look like that will address

students' concept? I guess what I am saying is, we need to ask ourselves what does self

concept/esteem look like and sound like." As I approached the large chart paper, I was

prompted to utilize a T-chart to provide a visual of our thinking. A T-Chart is a graphic

organizer that is often used by teachers to delineate concepts and/or to examine two

facets of a topic (Saphier & Haley, 1993). The following T- chart was generated as a

result of our discussion (see Figure 4).

Looks Like	Sounds Like
One on one interaction	Positive Praise
Eye Contact	Calling students by their career/college name
	Ex. Veterinarian/Harvard
Touches (positive)	Respectful language tone of voice
Caring	
Differentiating skill material	Teacher sharing personal experience

Figure 4. T- Chart

As a result of the meeting, the self-esteem concept was more thoroughly

examined by the team. The collaboration lead the team to seek research based

information that was shown to be, Robert Reasoner, author, speaker, and consultant in

building self-esteem. He is known to have served in numerous other leadership roles in

the area of curriculum development and instruction. Reasoner's (1992) work was

unanimously adopted and embedded in the curriculum.

Mr. Allen made the comment:

Now I really feel my efforts are positioned in the appropriate place. I am honored
to be on the forefront of not only creating a curriculum guide that I have the
opportunity to implement, but will be research based and relevant to our students
and in turn, bring awareness to the parents.

Other members echoed Mr. Allen's comments. Ms. Canon bought to the team's

attention the idea "of reminding the students to bring their flash drives with them to each

class so the entire unit will be saved in one location." She continued, "After all, the flash

drive is already a required material for all students attending technology classes."

The goal for each meeting was to yield two lessons, this unleashed team potential

(Stowell & Mead, 2007) and I saw individuals become team players. These conditions

allowed the goal to be larger than any one individual (Fullan, 2001). This feeling was

particularity important for this group because we were coming to the end of a school year. The end of a school year requires endurance from everyone.

After conversing with laughter about some events that took place at Woodbine Middle on May 12, 2009, I refocused the group by asking, "What are we going to do to get accessibility across to the students?" Mr. Smit stated, "I know for myself, I was a low SES student, and I didn't see myself beyond sitting in that 6th grade classroom." Ms. Val said, "I thought of myself as child who wanted to be somebody but didn't know I was in school to cultivate that desire." Mr. Allen replied, "Maybe it will be helpful to share our stories of becoming teachers with them." The team listened to their colleague's rationale and felt sharing their scholarly journey would be an appropriate fit for the lesson objective. At this point, the team decided the first lesson objective should be identifying requirements to become a teacher (Appendix E). I thought that was a great place to get started.

Mr. Smit was our first responder. "I think the instructional activity should encompass students being teacher assisted in searching on the computer (exploration and academic discourse), the required credentials to become a teacher." Mr. Allen chimed in, "It may be helpful to walk students through summarizing the similarities in their responses, while asking how they obtained this knowledge." As the team listened, the suggestions continued. Ms. Val stated, "Perhaps we could record on large paper or generate a list on the computer, the students' sources as well as identifying those students who are interested in entering the teaching field." To provide a visual, Ms. Canon volunteered to sketch out the suggestions on large chart paper. After the team viewed the recommendations, Mr. Smit proposed:

I found it helpful to my niece who was interested in becoming a teacher a website on the Bloomfield campus which offers a state approved Teacher Education Program. It may serve as a good example for teacher certification requirements for our students.

The team excitedly agreed to the preceding notations. Cognizant of the need to have a pre-class, Ms. Suder paved the way stating, "The pre-class should consist of reviewing vocabulary with the students, who more than likely, may not be familiar with the verbiage, and will perhaps enhance the comprehension of the objective." The team listened to their colleague's rationale and felt it an appropriate fit for the lesson objective. Ms. Suder added, "The students may benefit from a review of terms such as; college, university, certification, and courses to serve as the pre-class activity." Each of the members agreed to the implication while referring back to the requirements of the district; which is to close all lessons. Mr. Allen thoughts were welcomed, "I think we should encourage students to journal their experience to track their aspirations in the event changes occur." The team seemed to agree with Mr. Allen's closing exercise but not before Ms. Val reminded everyone, "To verify whether or not we met our objective we may need to ask students a few questions such as, Can you name a few requirements to becoming a teacher." Mr. Smit interjected, "With that being the case, the closing will be to ask those pertinent questions and allow the original closing to serve as a suggested homework assignment." "Yes," replied Ms. Val, giving rise to a unanimous decision. The team confirmed the plan for the first lesson and the participants were confident, in the direction the writing was going. Therefore we proceeded to the objective for Lesson 2, within the same planning session.

Lesson 2:Exploring their interest. Mr. Smit opened the next discussion for Lesson 2 by asking, "Can we view the students' interest inventory again?" The members

became energized, and began making comments, "Oh yeah, they're going to have fun exploring where their interest is going to take them." Ms. Canon raised her voice, "Let me view these again- Oh we won't be able to get them off the computer with exploring interest like pediatrician…" Another member cut her off saying- "Veterinarian, lawyer…" While perusing the students' interest, Mr. Allen went on to say, "Well it looks like the most applicable thing to do is assist them in exploring their particular interest." Ms. Val stated, "And that could very well become the objective. Wouldn't you agree?" The team seemed to be satisfied with the outcome after reviewing the students' interest. Ms. Suder confirmed the idea saying, "I think the students will enjoy learning what is relevant to them and hopefully sharing in each others' exploration." Mr. Smit stated, "This is an example of academic discourse." Mr. Allen complimented Mr. Smith for recognizing the Print and Coleman (2003) suggestion and went on to ask, "Are you suggesting the students share their exploration after identifying their interest." The remaining members were actively listening and thought the idea of students exploring their particular interest then exchanging information could stand as the objective for Lesson 2. Ms. Val added, "Now that we have arrived at an objective, I think the pre-class should be of course to review the homework and most importantly, ask students to voluntarily state their career interest prior to venturing into the lesson." The team took a moment to reflect upon the suggestions and agreed to the indications. They then redirected their attention to the main activity.

Mr. Smit lead the group by stating, "Once the student is called upon to identify his career interest, and to let us not forget about our students' need for self-esteem, therefore to adhere to our adopted plan, we will make eye contact with the students in

conjunction with calling upon them." The team commended Mr. Smith for the self-esteem reminder, and agreed to the statement. To continue with the planning, Ms. Canon raised a few suggestions:

> To move the lesson along, I think we should verify the students' responses, and then ask them to predict what educational training may be required for a particular career interest. Then record the predictions on chart paper or on an over-head projector as well as the actual requirements; allowing time for the students to review the responses.

> While exploring Ms Canon's suggestions, Ms. Suder added, "To extend the discussion, and remaining with that idea, I think we should have the students identify the potential similarities in the requirements, chart them as well, and as a group activity, have them present their findings." The team took the time to digest the conversation surrounding the planning of the lesson.

> Mr. Allen was the first to reopen the continuing dialogue:

> I'm thinking once we evaluate the responses from the students, and the information seems fit to conclude, we can perhaps lead the students in a discussion about their career decisions. I say that because it may be useful to us to note some of the students' comments which could contain "sexist stereotyping" that can be addressed at a later time if time becomes a factor.

"Speaking of time," Suder replied, "this particular lesson may require more time than we have, therefore we must note an extension of time may lead into an extra homework assignment or as a follow up exercise." Accepting the possibility of needing extra time to implement this particular lesson, the team agreed to continue with the mind set of providing the students with a meaningful lesson although cognizant of the time. With that being said, Mr. Smit stated:

> I just wanted to add, while allowing students to 'share out' we should also listen for any reservations about that career choice. My reasoning behind my thought is a student's self-esteem could very be at the core of her hesitation.

Again the team was appreciative of the comment referencing the students' self-esteem, Mr. Allen stated:

> To chime in on the self-esteem issue, it may be wise to have the students download their interest on their flash drives, the requirements, and their reason for choosing that career. This may serve not only as a quick reference, but most importantly as maintaining their awareness and acceptance of themselves.

For the closing, Ms. Val noted, "We should review how to begin a particular career search, and the requirements to verify implementation of the objective." One member added, "Just to clarify, the purpose for a closing is to assess whether or not we met our objective. And we can do that by calling on students to state how they would go about beginning their career search." Everyone was in acceptance of the closing idea, and the comments led into a dialogue about the students' home activities as well. "As a team we agreed at the onset of writing the curriculum, to utilize homework as means to involve the parents," stated Mr. Smit. Ms. Canon suggested we encourage students to discuss their classroom exploration of their career choice with their family members. Mr. Allen added:

> I think to help students make a connection between what they are learning in the classroom and their career interest, we should ask students to make a note of any sign of the information explored, whether it is a spelling of a term, a title of a career, or using the terms in a conversation among their peers.

Mr. Smit further added, "And I think we should give extra recognition to students who ask family members about their career interest, and whether or not they are pursuing those career goals." The closing and homework portion of the lesson seemed to go over well with each of the members and was agreed upon as a team. As a result of the collaboration, the team expressed their enthusiasm and decided to meet again on May 19, 2009 to continue with Lessons3 and 4.

Lesson 3: Organizing required credentials for career interest. The team met

as planned on May 19, 2009 and proceeded to review prior lesson objectives. Ms. Val

welcomed everyone back and led the team by stating:

> To follow up on last week's plan/objective, I was thinking (on the way here), we
> should have the students save on the computer their exploration. Just like we
> needed a visual to recap our prior plans, I think the students should have a similar
> experience.

Ms. Canon, the technology teacher, reminded everyone, "Since the students are

required to bring their flash drives to class, they can simply place their exploration on

their thumb drive." One member added, "And perhaps once they download the

information, they can create on the computer, their individual schematic map/ time line

reflecting their particular college/career interest entry on their computer portfolio to

develop into a power point presentation."

The team exclaimed, "Way to go Mr. Allen!" "That's some brainstorm." Ms.

Suder solidified the suggestion, "That sounds as if we're embarking upon an objective." I

asked if any one objected; Mr. Smith raised a time issue. "I think we must be cognizant

of our short periods, therefore we have to allot time to verify the students' information on

their flash drives," he worried. The team concluded, "Ok." The team agreed that

verification of students placing information on a semantic map to provide a visual is a

reasonable suggestion. The team expressed that they felt the objectives for the curriculum

had the potential to make a difference, by providing students with cultural capital and

found the plan to be in line with DiMaggio (1982), who contends cultural capital not only

mediates the relationship between family background and school outcomes, but it also

may have its greatest impact on educational attainment through affecting the quality of

college one attends. One member suggested the students reflect on their interest via their

flash drive and post predictions as their pre-class assignment. Ms. Suder stated, "The term credentials should also be included with the pre-class." The members agreed with the suggestions and mentioned, "Our students need practice with predictions, they tend to fall short in that area of testing, which can also take its toll on their self-esteem." I commended the members for being proactive and not overlooking aspects that may seem minute, but have a significant impact on the students in the long term.

Mr. Allen led the way for Lesson 3, instructional activity reporting, "The prior lessons allowed the students to explore their interest with the teachers typically monitoring and assisting where necessary. My question is, what's different this go round?" Ms. Val gracefully reminded Mr. Allen by stating, "This time we seize the opportunity to work with the students one on one to not only help them grow in awareness of themselves, but ultimately build their self-esteem." Another member spoke, "I think they may obtain deeper sense of just how powerful they can become during their exploration of the credentials associated with their career choices." Ms. Canon commented, "Ok, then I suggest once the information is verified by the teacher, the student can begin to transfer the information to their either computer generated graphic organizer and/or paper." Each of the members shared the same mind, and several reminded the group, "All posted information is helpful to any student who may miss a class." One member who also agreed to keep track of the various ideas by posting suggestions on large chart paper as the meeting progressed, and verified the information to confirm the lesson's instructional activity. The team agreed the information will stand as the instructional activity and felt the group could move towards creating the closing and homework assignment. Ms. Suder was the first to volunteer stating:

Our closing is always verifying the objective, therefore we would need to review the students' responses on their graphic organizer by asking for volunteers to state their findings and time permitting, ask them to make a comment about one of their predictions. Is everyone comfortable with my suggestions?

The team seemed to concur with Ms. Suder's closing comments and proceeded to

the homework. Mr. Allen suggested:

I think we should ask the students to make a brief report as what they have learned new about their occupation as well as about themselves. This way they can hopefully develop, for one, a habit of journaling and experience that sense of accomplishment when they as they reflect on their exploration.

One member responded, "I like what you said Mr. Allen, and I believe we all

share that hope for our students." To confirm the team's closing and homework

suggestions, the member verified the information with the group and praised the group

for sticking with the task of completing two lessons per meet. Keeping with the energy

being generated thus far, the team continued to collaborate in an effort to plan Lesson 4

within the same planning session. Middle school curriculums are more exploratory in

nature than the elementary school and less specialized than the elementary school (Wiles

& Bondi, 1998).

Lesson 4: Identifying educational institutions. Each of the members took a

moment to review the information recorded on the large chart paper by their colleague.

Ms. Canon volunteered to summarize the prior objectives to ignite the teams

brainstorming for Lesson 4. She proudly stated:

Ok, for Lesson 1, the students would be able to identify the requirements to become a teacher, for Lesson 2, students would be able to explore their specific interest and requirements associated with career, for Lesson 3, the students will be able to create a semantic map/graphic organizer containing required credentials for their career interest.

Ms. Val eagerly interjects, "Now where do we go from here?" "Well," said Mr. Allen, I think it's time to allow the students to search for the institutions that best fit their interest." "Since they already have their career choice established at this point," said Ms. Canon, and continued, "That could be a good fit." Mr. Smit chimed in saying, "So the objective may sound something like, use their findings to select educational institution(s) that may serve their interest." While the team was giving the proposed objective some thought, one member added, "We know from experience, although there are numerous factors that surround college choosing, some things such as cost, population, state vs. out of state and urban or rural campus, are things they will have to take into consideration." Mr. Smit replied, "It sounds like we need to post a list of those factors for the students to remain cognizant of when choosing an institution." Ms. Val drafted each of the comments on the large paper for the team to decipher. As a result, the team decided to agree on the objective presented by Mr. Smit in addition to encouraging students to answer questions from a college/educational institution general list. This list will prompt students to consider cost, population, and other factors when making their educational selections. Wiles and Bondi (1998) view the curriculum as a desired goal or set of values, which can be activated through a development process culminating in experiences for students.

The team was willing to put forth the effort to develop a pre-class for Lesson 4. Ms. Canon opened the dialogue with a candid message, "Unfortunately, this is where the rubber meets the road." "How so?" asked one member. "Well as part of that list you have to mention GPA, records for testing, and transcripts." The team attentively listened to their colleague and sought to identify the pre-class as, "Review possible requirements for

college entry: GPA, and other testing records including past educational documents

contained in cumulative file, and/or high school transcripts." The team expressed to Ms.

Canon that her suggestion was of great importance and commended her for the input.

Stowell and Mead (2007) said it best, "Missions like going to the moon, or winning

World War II, gets accomplished because people work together" (p.54).

Ms. Val voiced to the team, "Ok, folks, we can't stop here. We are now in need of

an instructional activity that will coincide with our objective and pre-class." Ms. Suder

seemed to be in deep thought, but none the less, offered these words:

> I have a website called The Chronicle of Higher Education that I would like to
> pull up for you guys. I had a teacher who would always read the New York
> Times, and recommended his students to read it. We took one look at that paper
> and thought no way! I regret not taking his advice. This website reminds me of
> that newspaper. It's such a rich source of information. I think it could benefit our
> students.

The team perused the website and also found it to be quite resourceful. Mr. Allen

excitedly stated,

> I'm familiar with the Chronicle magazine, and yes, this would be a great link or
> magazine for the students to review. It will globalize their academic career and
> keep them abreast of changes pertaining to applications for admissions,
> scholarships, and so much more.

Ms. Val replied, "So it seems we have agreed to have the students access this

website as part of the lesson's activity." A unanimous "Yes" was hurled from the group.

One member, Ms. Canon, continued to add:

> I would like to revisit that general list. While the website may play a significant
> role in providing students with information, I think it is vitally important for us to
> monitor students as they navigate the educational institutions to seek answers
> about the cost, population, and whether it's a rural or urban campus. Our students
> will need that assistance, and one on one interaction to demonstrate to them, we
> care about them and their future.
> Mr. Smit retorted, "That suggestion seems valuable and doable."

"So what you think guys, is it a go?" Ms. Val responded, "Ok, let's look at what we have thus far and take it from there." The team reviewed each of the comments and decided the instructional activity for Lesson 4 would consist of allowing students to access the Higher Education Chronicle and assist students as they seek answers to the general list. I was elated to be a part of such hard working individuals, and recognized the sharing of information among the group. I reminded them how important sharing is in the arena of leadership and especially for teachers (Fullan, 2001). The closing and homework for Lesson 4 was fast approaching. Ms. Suder volunteered her opinion by stating, "To close the lesson, I would ask a few of the students to share with their peers the educational institution they found that best fit their career interest." Ms. Val interjected, "And don't forget to have them address at least one item from the general list…Any one object to our suggestions?" "Oh, no, sounds fitting," says one member. Mr. Allen stated:

> Before the thoughts escape my memory for the homework, I would like to run this by you guys. What about having the students write a brief statement as to why they chose the particular institution and what if any concerns they may have pending.

One member stated, "I think that will serve as useful information that the students will always have to refer to." "Yes, that's seems fair," said Ms. Suder. Ms. Val posted the closing and homework on the chart for each member to review before asking for a final approval. The team evaluated the information, and elected to allow the suggestions from their colleagues to function as a closing and homework for Lesson 4. Although it seemed overbearing to ask about our next opportunity to convene, the team committed to meeting the next week, May 26, 2009, for the arranging of Lessons 5 and 6.

Lesson 5: Navigating the application process for higher education. On May 26, 2009 the team of supporters (disciples) met to set in motion the overall scheme for Lessons 5 and 6. Mr. Allen opened the meeting advocating, "Now that the students have explored what college/educational institution matches their interest, this may be an appropriate time to introduce how to apply to those institutions. What do you say people?" Members, "Well we can tell who had a great day today." Ms. Canon replied, "And we are all candidates for those great days, by implementing this curriculum which I believe is an over due gift for the students as well as staff." Ms. Val remarked, "I agree with Mr. Allen, assisting our students in completing a college application can very well become the objective for Lesson 5. Does anyone object?" The team agreed to students experiencing the tedious task of answering questions on a college application. Ms. Canon added, "I'm pleased to have recommended the students to have flash drives because the application can be downloaded on their device and started during the onset of the lesson and worked on throughout the scheduled days." "Yes, that's a good point," stated one member, "Which brings to mind, the pre-class." Mr. Smit continues the conversation, "I think it may be constructive for the students to review their homework, which was to write a brief rationale for why they chose their particular institution." Ms. Val proposed, "It may be advantageous to also discuss with the students during the pre-class, why the educational institution they are applying to would like to know why they desire to attend their particular school." "I like that suggestion. How about it everyone?" asked Ms. Suder. Mr. Allen asked, "To shore up continuity, most educational institutions ask students why they chose their establishment of higher education, to see if you are aware of their history or reputation. Most importantly, they want to have some insight about

your character." "I think that about covers it all," said Mr. Smit. The remaining members were satisfied with Mr. Allen's reasoning and commended him for verifying with them their opinion, before assuming the team shared the same thinking. I was also delighted to see how the team was proactive and collaborative in their planning. I recognized how the dialoguing required deep listening for connecting to others with like minds and context (Scharmer, 2009).

Ms. Canon was instrumental in prompting the discussion for Lesson 5's instructional activity. "How about if we ask the students to first access the educational institution which they have chosen that best fits their career interest, and then have them download that particular school's application on to their flash drive?" Ms. Val volunteered to jot the suggestion on the large chart paper for everyone to contemplate. "Yes, that sounds reasonable," stated the members, giving rise to agreeing to the instructional activity, which contains thus far, students being provided the assistance to access their school of choice, then downloading that particular institution's application. Ms. Canon continues, "Now, although each application can contain different questions, we have the task of pointing out the similarities to avoid our students from becoming frustrated in the process." "That's true, so hold that thought," said Mr. Allen. "Therefore," Mr. Allen continuing his input:

> It will be ideal for us to review some of the basic questions to get them familiar with the questioning. This activity will more than likely provide us with the opportunity to work with the students one on one, which will help to build their self-esteem. (Reasoner, 1992)

Ms. Suder proceeded to suggest, "When it comes to these applications, we know the applications although are from the actual institutions, they are for practice. In other words, mock applications, therefore we have to make sure our students are aware of this

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fact." The members seemed quite satisfied with Ms. Suder's comments and proceeded to

include the aforementioned suggestion to the previous dialogue which formed a complete

instructional activity: students will access their educational institution via internet,

download the particular application, review the basic questions with one on one

assistance, and explain to the students the applications are for practice only. Mr. Smit

reminded the team in a professional manner stating, "No one can take a break until we

discuss the closing of the lesson and the homework." The team sighed with laugher, and

continued to work towards the closing. One member stated, "Since the objective is

verified in the closing, I would like to suggest we ask the students to state one of the

questions from their application." Mr. Allen stated, "Looking back on the objective for

this lesson, I think your suggestion could work for the sake of our deserving students."

The members were attentively listening to Mr. Allen, and agreed to allow asking the

students to state a few of the questions from their practice application to function as the

closing for this particular lesson. Ms. Suder soon stated, "Understanding how important

parents are in a child's life, I would like to suggest for homework, to encourage the

students to work on their application at home and allow their family to become a part of

the process." Ms. Val added, "I think we should remind the students to take notes as to

what they felt while completing the application, and think about volunteering to share

their experience with their peers during the next class." Ms. Val posted her idea on the

chart paper, which also gave the team an opportunity to review each of the suggestions.

The team returned with a favorable outcome towards the homework for Lesson 5, and

stated, "We are looking forward to implementing these ideas and working with the

students." The team-work was evident and I complimented them on their commitment

and coherence. To continue with the pre-set goal to accomplish two lessons per meeting, the team forged ahead with Lesson 6. A primary quality of a team is to have the ability to change and evolve as they grow and develop or as its mission evolves (Stowell & Mead, 2007).

Lesson 6: Accessing resources to obtain financial aid. Prior to venturing into Lesson 6 on the same planning day, May 26, 2009, the team made reference to the research of Gladieux and Swail (1998), that contends that the federal government's reliance upon financial aid as a means for increasing college access assumes that economic variables are among the primary determinants of college enrollment. Mr. Allen, with two boys in college, was the first to speak:

> I can contest to the financial obligations that come with pursuing higher education. If we are able to deliver this curriculum as planned, I believe our students will comprehend the importance of applying for financial aid, and with that process comes a sense of commitment to remain with the task until graduation.

Ms. Canon asked, "With that being said, I gather you're suggesting we have students complete a financial aid application as the objective?" "Yes," replied Mr. Allen, "and review the most common vocabulary and questions found on the form."

While the team seemed grateful for the first hand input from Allen, his suggestion prompted a discussion around the importance of schema (background knowledge) and advocated for relevant vocabulary/abbreviations that often appear on a financial aid form to be identified. Ms. Val said, "We also need to help them become familiar with abbreviations and words like D.O.B. (date of birth), siblings, and AHI (annual household income)." Cognizant of the confidentiality surrounding family income, one member asked, "Do you think we should model responding to the AHI and allow students to place

a figure that they are comfortable stating?" "Yes," replied several members.
"Demonstrating how to respond to the questions and reviewing the
vocabulary/abbreviations will help them to grow in confidence about completing these
sometimes intimidating, frustrating forms."

Ms. Val chimed in with marker in hand, "There's no doubt the goal/objective for
this lesson is to provide the opportunity for the students to explore as many financial
sources as possible and be familiar with the vocabulary. Is there anyone else who would
like add something?" Mr. Allen cleared his throat and said, "I just thought of something
else. Don't we have that Distance Learning set up in the building?" Ms. Val was quick to
respond, "Yes, that's right, we can use Distance Learning to allow our students to talk to
students on the college campus. And they will be able to see the other students; through
the camera mounted on the large monitor as an awesome way to infuse even more
technology into the classroom." Ms. Canon, the technology coordinator, swiftly stated:

> There's no doubt distance learning can be utilized as a way to infuse technology
> into the classroom, however, and unfortunately, the last time I checked, the person
> in charge, Mr. Rayon, was in the process of assigning a staff member to the
> distance learning technology and the occasion never took place.

Mr. Allen asked with great disappointment, "But why-don't we have all the
equipment?" Ms. Canon went on to explain, "Well what seemed to have happened is, a
part of the equipment was misplaced and Mr. Rayon was unable to locate it. However, I
will commit to looking into it nonetheless." The team, although excited at one point then
disappointed the next, all went well and was satisfied with Ms. Canon's promise to look
into the option of having distance learning for the students. Mr. Allen replied to the team,
"I hope I didn't take us off our mark by asking about that distance learning thing." "Oh

no," said Ms. Val and the others, "we're just brainstorming, that's all a part of planning." The team proceeded with agreeing on an objective.

The remaining members confirmed the dialogue and Ms. Canon continued the conversation by saying, "For this particular lesson, I think starting with completing a financial aid application sounds like a great place to launch." Mr. Smit reminded everyone, "Before we proceed to the content of the lesson, don't forget to review the previous lesson's homework, which according to our notes is check to see how they are progressing with their mock applications." Mr. Allen supported the follow up by saying, "We also have to allow time to check their assignment which was to write a brief rationale as to why they chose their particular educational institution; not to mention checking for signs of them using their general list." Ms. Val calculatedly stated, "Ok, time out, it sounds like we have a lot to accomplish in a short amount of time here." Realizing the plan's quality could be diminished if the team is feeling overwhelmed about the pre-class, I acknowledged the issue and offered the following suggestion. "What we will do is adopt the district's advice, which is 'Always extra plan' however be able to meet that objective. I have to admit, that advice has come in handy in more ways than one." Mr. Allen added:

> I can attest to that from experience also. I just want to make this point. We know each of us will ultimately need to make our own minor adjustments throughout curriculum implementation. Being good listeners to our students and encouraging them along the way may foster a positive self-concept. They are the ones that are going to reveal what is most important in this planning. For example, Mr. Smit may find his students progressing differently than Ms. Val's class or group. As we keep the dialogue open and collaborate from day to day, we have the authority to make the necessary adjustments.

One member responded, "You know, we are so accustomed to implementing someone else's initiative, we forget this is ours." The remaining members chimed in,

"You're right." The team seemed to gain a new perspective, and was reenergized to continue the planning process.

To recap the prior planning dialogue, Ms. Val said, "Ok, it looks like we are going to maintain that pre-class of reviewing the homework assignments and move forward with the objective which is to allowing students to search for financial aid." Members spoke in unison, "Yes, that's the plan." Ms. Cannon articulated, "Now that we have solidified the pre-class and objective, for the instructional activity itself, I think during the exploration of financial resources, we may find it necessary to explain the difference between a grant and loan." "Ok, that sounds simple enough," replied the team. Mr. Smit added:

> To make sure we are not getting ahead of ourselves, we probably need to ask how many students were able to complete their applications. And if they seem to need more time, I think that's fine, we may have to accept that as an on going process.

Ms. Suder exclaimed, "You know, that's a thought." The other team members were also giving Mr. Smit's idea some thought, and as a result decided to go with that strategy. One member stated, "This way we can assist them with the applications if need be, and still assist with helping them to access financial aid options, such as loans and grants." To confirm the team's decision, Ms. Val posted the team's plan for Lesson 6 and verbalized, "This is what we have thus far…if there are no objections we can proceed to the instructional activity." The members seemed to be without protest and one member confirmed that sentiment by saying, "I have a website the United States Department of Education has made available for students and families seeking financial aid for secondary education." The team was interested in Mr. Allen's resource, and suggested

they each take a look at the computer link. After a few minutes of positive responses,

"Wow, this is a great tool for our kids," and,

> Just imagine, by us exposing these kids early to the various options of financial aid, and how to navigate the application process, they will stop at nothing to get into a college, and remain because they will know how to keep up the financial battle.

With that being the case, the team voiced a definite "Yes" to add the Department of Education's website to the instructional activity. Ms. Canon brought to the group's attention, "Similar to the application strategy, we can again have the students download a financial form onto their flash drive and work on bringing it to completion as an on going assignment." The team found the suggestion to be convenient and accessible for the students and thanked Ms. Canon for the gesture before developing a closing for the lesson.

Mr. Allen beamed with excitement while stating:

> I think our hard work is beginning to pay off. Now that we have ironed out some of the sticking points, I think we can keep things moving by continuing to put in place closings that correlate to the objectives.

I asked Mr. Allen if he could be more specific in his recommendation. "In other words, to assess whether or not we have met our objective for this lesson, we must call on a few students (by career/college name) and ask if they can state a resource for financial aid." To further drive the point to clarity, Mr. Allen provided the team with one of the district's examples. The team accepted their colleagues offer as a means to close the lesson and to show their appreciation, gave him a sticker for his efforts. Mr. Allen knew his team members were being sarcastic; therefore, he joined in the fun by proudly accepting his reward and challenged them to create the homework. Ms. Val brought up the rear by saying, "I would like a smiley too, so I'm going to suggest the students ask

members of their family and friends about experiences they may have had applying for loans, or grants to further an education pursuit." Several of the members nodded their heads in agreement with Ms. Val and from the group I heard, "That sounds like a fantastic homework assignment. So what do you think guys, does she get a sticker too?" Mr. Smit said, "She deserves two stickers since she worked so diligently recording our plan as we contemplated on the curriculum contents." As Ms. Val humbly accepted her gift, she reviewed with the team the lesson's objective, pre-class, instructional activity, closing, and homework. The team seemed to have accomplished sharing knowledge to accomplish the task of designing Lesson 6 and have shown thus far throughout the planning process, to share similar military attributes. The best-known example of leveraging knowledge within a team is the U.S. Army's use of After Action Reviews. The AARs are held at the end of all team or unit actions with the intent of reusing what has been learned. The learning from these meetings is captured by both the members, who keep notes about what they need to do and possibly differently in the next engagement (Fullan, 2001).

Lesson 7: Expanding the search for financial aid. On June 2, 2009 the team gathered ready to channel their energy and set in motion the blue print for Lesson 7and 8. It was the prior objective for Lesson 6 that called for accessing resources via internet to obtain financial aid. I stated to the team, "Similar to the method to acquire an application for entry into a particular institution, we will need to examine a way our students can obtain an application for financial aid." Ms. Canon stated, "That's not a problem, if everyone agrees with this objective, we can simply assist students in downloading different government and private loans, and/or college grant sponsors, which provide

forms for financial assistance, for higher learning." The team members stated and

suggested, "Because things change so rapidly, we may want to access the computer at

this time to experience what the students will be interfacing as well."

The team spent approximately 20 minutes accessing as well as assessing different

websites, capturing knowledge that may be instrumental in making the students'

experience a rich and valuable lesson. The comments that were released during the search

included: "Everything is laid out for you. These government and private loans and

college grants are vying for these students' business. It has become such a shark-tank."

Ms. Val summoned everyone to provide feedback in order to confirm our objective.

Ms. Suder stated, "I would like to suggest we have the students download at least one out

of the four financial forms available from the Internet, as the objective." The team agreed

to Ms. Suder's recommendation, while seemingly still amazed at the eagerness of these

organizations for students to apply for financial aid, grants, and even scholarships.

Mr. Allen replied:

> Since the students will have had downloaded a mock application for entry into
> their school of choice at this point, for the pre-class, I think we should ask the
> students if there are any questions before we assign the task of downloading a
> financial aid form.

Mr. Smit confidently spoke, "That seems like a safe way to play it. Any one

else?" The remaining members stated, "Sounds resourceful and helps us to demonstrate

our genuine commitment to them receiving this information early" (Fallan, Bush, &

Pettersen, 1998). Ms. Canon replied, "Of course we will review the typical vocabulary

they may encounter: household, siblings, and perhaps family income." Ms. Val stated, "It

sounds like we need to include this vocabulary to the pre-class" The members confirmed

Ms. Val's statement, and proceeded to developing the instructional activity for Lesson 7.

Ms. Suder seemed to be envisioning her class when suggested, "I think it may be helpful to provide the students with a display of a few sample financial aid forms, very similar to those we accessed on the internet." Ms. Val continued to monitor the team's input, "Ok people, Ms. Suder has presented us with a suggestion, any comments?" The members seemed pleased with the idea of providing students with the sample application, and made it known by stating, "We have agreed to provide samples of financial aid forms as well as college grant forms." One member said, "Since we will be assisting the students in down loading the financial aid forms, during that instructional activity, we will have the opportunity to work with them one on one (self-esteem)."

Ms. Canon suggested the team take a few minutes to pin point a web site for financial aid as a sample to familiarize each of them for the process. After a sufficient amount of time the team was able to provide a link for the students to access for financial aid. "With that being said," Ms. Suder stated, "I think while the students are seeking financial aid forms from the government and private organizations, they should also seek to download forms to apply for scholarships." Ms. Val sought to bring clarity to Ms. Canon's suggestion stating, "Therefore you're basically saying, since there are various forms of financial aid, and the students are being exposed to different ways to finance their career interest, some of them may happen to see that option." "Yes," replied Ms. Canon. I was then prompted to interject, "Understanding scholarships is a vital player in the arena of financial aid, time permitting, we can download information about how to apply for scholarships and sample requirements such as essays." Ms. Suder added, "I agree we may need to download a sample application to apply for a scholarship." I continued stating, "The notion of a scholarship is more involved than the government or

private loan, and therefore, as a team, you all may want to discuss that in more detail after completing the planning for Lesson 7." Mr. Allen responded, "I agree, applying for scholarships is a lesson within itself, and deserves separate attention." To help clarify the input from the members, Ms. Val announced the instructional activity was designated to consist of: providing a sample of different financial aid forms; assisting the students in downloading a financial aid form from either a government sponsor, private, or for a grant; and time permitting, downloading how to apply for scholarships, and the requirements such as sample essays.

The team seemed to be sustaining the energy level to proceed with the planning of Lesson 7 and was evident with one member stating, "Let's continue, I feel like we are in the process of making a difference." Ms. Canon replied:

> To bring the lesson to a close in conjunction with assessing whether or not we have met our objective, I say we ask a few of the students to identify some of the common questions found on a financial aid form.

Mr. Smit uttered, "That seems to correlate to the objective, anyone thinking differently?" Ms. Val confirmed all members agreed, and the team turned their focus to developing the homework assignment. Mr. Allen offered this statement and suggestion:

> Like we stated and agreed to before, bringing any application to completion requires consist follow up and this one is no different. Therefore we may want to encourage the students to continue answering the questions on the application for financial aid.

The members agreed with Mr. Allen, and then Ms. Suder articulated, "I think it's important for the students to share the process of answering the questions with their family members to encourage and prompt the higher education dialogue." The team was elated with Ms. Suder's advice, voicing, "We like that idea!" To confirm the homework, Ms. Val provided the visual of the projected scheme for the homework. The team agreed

to Mr. Allen's suggestion and seemed quite satisfied with the overall plan for the homework. Ms. Val showed her commitment to the team by reviewing the entire lay out for Lesson 7 with her colleagues. The team unanimously agreed to the plan, and gave each other high fives for meeting their goal to plan Lesson 7.

Lesson 8: Navigating the process for scholarships. The team had successfully planned Lesson 7 and was willing to proceed with Lesson 8 on the same planning session of June 2, 2009. Mr. Smit was the first to chime in. "Since we have generally put in place the major portions of the curriculum, I think at this point we may consider continuing the mock financial aid application." Ms. Canon replied, "That sounds reasonable." One member added, "And perhaps assist the students in searching for scholarships." The team took the time to reflect on the suggestions presented. As a result, the team decided to combine the continuation of the mock application with the search for scholarships. To verify the group decision, Ms. Val asked, "Am I correct in saying, the objective will be to continue the mock application and begin the search for scholarships?"

The team responded with a joyful, "Yes." Ms. Canon stated:

I don't want to put a damper on anyone's joy, but I think in order for us to follow up on what we have already set in place, we may need to verify the expected documents on the students' flash drives, such as their specific career interest, their chosen educational institution.

Mr. Smit added, "Their answers to the general list, and of course…" Ms. Suder completes Mr. Smit's thoughts saying, "Their mock financial aid application." Ms. Val states, "That should just about cover it, but we forgot the main one…a sample essay for the scholarships." "You're right," said the team. Ms. Val proceeded to pull together each of the suggestions, and asked the team to comment. Mr. Allen took a look at the frame work and said:

There's no doubt we need to consider these suggestions as the pre-class, but at the same time, we must be patient in this implementation because it seems taking our time will be beneficial to the students, although we may want to accomplish all aspects of the plan.

Ms. Val generously asked, "Are we in agreement with the suggestions from Mr. Allen to be designated as the pre-class?" The team overwhelmingly responded, "Yes."

Ms. Canon interjected:

If we check the students' flash drives and are satisfied with what we see, I think the instructional activity could perhaps become a matter of checking the progression of their mock application and if you are okay with that observation, with your discretion begin to help students in writing a mock essay for a scholarship.

The team gave Ms. Canon high marks for her input. Mr. Smit then suggested, "I think we should allow time for the students to actually work on their essays for scholarships as well as for college entry."

Ms. Val said, "It sounds like we have accomplished putting in place the instructional activity for Lesson 8." She went further to ask, "Anyone like to add or change any of these suggestions prior to bringing the lesson towards a closing?" No one spoke against utilizing the above suggestions as the instructional activity for Lesson 8. Ms. Suder provided the next suggestion, "After we complete the instructional activity, if everyone agrees, I think we should ask a few of the students to volunteer to share his sample essay." None of the members objected to the idea. Mr. Allen stated, "That sounds like a possible closing for this lesson." Ms. Suder responded, saying, "If there aren't any objections, it very well may be a closing." No team member spoke against the closing. Ms. Val went on to say, "At this point we have an objective, a pre-class, and an instructional activity." Before she could complete her words, Mr. Smith said, "That's great, and now to finalize the lesson, we need to assign homework." Ms. Canon spoke up,

"I think the students should continue to work on having all expected documents on their flash drives such as applications for their chosen institution." Others chimed in, "answers to the general list," "financial aid application." Lastly, Ms. Suder stated, "I know I'm thinking ahead. I think we should remind students to prepare questions they may have for the guest; that's if we are going to have Career Day." Mr. Allen said, "That's good, I think you're on the right track." Ms. Val stated, "I don't mean to ignore what you're suggesting, I just want to solidify this lesson…Are we in agreement with the suggestions for homework which are posted on the chart board?" Each of the team members voted yes, in favor of the homework, and stated they were looking forward to planning for the Career Day event as well as the visitation to a campus. The team planned to meet on June 9, 2011.

Lesson 9: Urban campus exploration. The June 9, 2011 meeting began with great excitement. The team was elated they were progressing as planned. I set the tone of the meeting by stating, "Our purpose today is to discuss exposing the students to an urban campus." Ms. Suder was the first to chime in. "That must mean we can plan what we would like to see take place, once we arrive on the campus." Before I could respond, Ms. Val stated, "That's if taking the students to the campus is approved." I was obliged to verify Ms. Val's point responding, "That's a real possibility. But nonetheless, we will plan for the best." With that being the case, the planning proceeded.

Mr. Allen asked, "Have we decided which campus we are going to visit?" Ms. Val responded, "No, that's why we're here." Mr. Allen stated, "Okay, let's get started." Ms. Canon replied, "Since Rutgers University is close by, we may want to consider their campus." "Rowan is also in the Camden downtown area," said Mr. Smit. Ms. Suder

replied, "I have a relative who is a student at Rutgers and I'm sure he would enjoy taking the students on a tour." Ms. Val responded, "Since Rutgers has an actual campus the students could walk through and experience, that campus may be the one." "Yeah, you're right," said the remaining team members. Ms. Val stated, "Anyone has any objections?" "No, sounds like a winner," replied the team. Ms. Val added, "With that being said, we can set in place the objective as, explore Rutgers University, urban campus." The team confirmed the objective verified by Ms. Val and proceeded with the discussion.

Ms. Canon, "I can only imagine how those students are going to react seeing how college students independently go to different classes, strategically placed throughout the campus." Mr. Allen, "I know I can't wait to take pictures." "I'm glad you mentioned that we will need to bring a camera, although I know the students will have their cell phones, taking photos of themselves," said Mr. Smit. Ms. Suder chimed in, "I think we should encourage the students to share any experience they may have already had from visiting a college campus." "Sounds good," said Ms. Val. "And it may be beneficial for us to review the definition of an urban campus verses a rural campus," replied Mr. Allen. Then Ms. Canon chimed in suggesting, "I think we should ask students to have at least two to three questions prepared to ask when they arrive to the campus." Mr. Allen then proposed, "I think we should remind the students to bring along a notepad to jot down their answers and any additional information they may obtain." Ms. Val interjected:

> To make sure I am keeping up with the plan, we are going to bring cameras and note pads. These items will be a part of the materials. And defining an urban and rural campus and asking students to volunteer any campus experience will serve as the pre-class.

"Yes, that's correct," replied the team.

It was at this juncture Mr. Allen suggested, "To make the most of the visitation, like most trips, staff are responsible for particular groups of students. We will serve as the assistant to the tour guide. Does that sound feasible thus far?" "Yep, keep going," said the team. Ms. Canon added:

> Since the tour guide will be pointing out to the students the various attributes of the campus, not to mention what the students will be observing and experiencing, I think it may be beneficial to encourage them to take notes in addition to getting their questions answered.

Ms. Suder commented, "I am visualizing the visitation. The trip will provide an excellent opportunity to interact with the students one on one; helping to build on their self-esteem." I chimed in stating, "I like what I hear thus far. I'm looking forward to the students having this experience." Ms. Val referred to the notes from the discussion stating:

> Let's recap. We have the staff being assigned to particular groups of students. While the tour guide is escorting us through the campus, we are assisting him; reinforcing the statements as well as answering students' questions. If we are in agreement, the aforementioned suggestions will serve as the instructional activity of the lesson. Am I accurate in my thinking?

"I think you have culminated that information correctly," stated Mr. Allen. The remaining members agreed with the instructional activity and went forward with developing the closing.

Ms. Canon offered the following suggestion as a closing. "Once we return to the school, time permitting, we should ask the students to volunteer one or two of their questions to discuss with their fellow classmates." Mr. Smit said, "I won't be surprised if several of them have the same questions." Ms. Canon replied, "And that's what they need to hear. Those Q+A will stir the dialogue they need to become accustomed to having." Mr. Allen added, "This may be a great follow up exercise for them." The team was

buzzing with enthusiasm and energy. Ms. Suder announced to the team, "Not so fast you guys, we forgot to discuss the homework for this lesson." "Not a problem," replied Allen. He continued by saying, "We may want to have the students write why they would like to attend an urban campus like Rutgers University." Ms. Canon added, "That seems like a perfect fit." Mr. Smit said, "They can place those reflections on their flash drive and when they return to class they can discuss their responses." Ms. Val faithfully reviewed the information:

> Thus far, we need a concurrence on the closing being a review of one to two questions and for the assignment to be utilized as a follow up to the visitation. Additionally, have homework to request students to write why they would like to attend an urban campus similar to Rutgers University. If there is someone who does not agree or concur with the closing and or homework plan, its okay, I'm sure we will think of something.

No one objected to the plan, hence the ideas were accepted by the team without a rebuff. Before the team proceeded to the plan of Lesson 10, Mr. Allen suggested, "I think we should add to the plan, to remind the students to begin thinking about what questions they would like to ask during the career day." The team gave Mr. Allen's suggestion some thought and decided the suggestion would be beneficial to the students in the overall scheme of the curriculum. The team seemed quite satisfied with Lesson 9 and moved forward with Lesson 10.

Lesson 10: Rural campus exploration. On the same planning day, June 9, 2009 the team continued developing their relationships, and fostering knowledge with energy, enthusiasm, and hopefulness (Fullan, 2001). Mr. Smit opened the meeting by stating, "Since we planned during our last meeting, to chaperone students to an urban campus such as Rutgers University, we need to plan for a visitation to a rural campus." Although the team members agreed with the thinking of Mr. Smit, they had their doubts about

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providing the students the opportunity to experience a rural campus. Some of the comments that developed from that conversation were, "I find it such a waste of time and effort to planning trips in the district that are beyond one to two miles from this school." Additionally, "My experience has been you think all is in order as far as a trip is concerned, until the day of. The bus either gets canceled or the district fails to fund the trip." After listening to what I knew to be the reality when it comes to organizing trips, I suggested to the team to give themselves some positive think time and if need be, we would take a recess and reconvene after several minutes.

The team returned from the break, and seemed enthused and ready to move forward. Ms. Canon acted as the spokes person for the team:

> We have an idea. In light of living in this high technology era, we can use the computer to visit a rural campus. We can direct the students to a rural campus via the Internet. In fact, let's check it out. Some schools have what you call virtual tours. For example, if a student is thinking about enrolling in a particular institution, they can get a realistic idea of the campus before they make that final decision.

In consideration of Ms. Canon's suggestion, the team gathered around the nearest computer and began to search for rural schools with a virtual tour. Ms. Val suggested the team place in the search box Millersville University located in Pennsylvania. As the exploration progressed, the comments were, "Look at this campus, it's beautiful." "It seems to be the perfect, peaceful place, to grow, and obtain a college degree." Mr. Allen replied, "From the looks of things, we can actually set in place our objective, which would be for students to explore a rural campus via virtual tour of Millersville University." "How about it?" asked Mr. Allen. The team agreed to the proposed objective, while being intrigued about what they were observing. One member stated, "I believe the students will enjoy this tour." Ms. Canon suggested:

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Since the lesson prior (9) to this one will assist the students during an actual campus visitation, I think it may be beneficial to have them reflect about the urban campus (Rutgers) and use their findings to compare with the rural campus tour as the pre-class.

Mr. Smit chimed in stating:

While we are contemplating on the pre-class, I know we did not get to the planning of the homework yet; however, before this idea slips my mind, I think we should have them compare the rural tour with the urban campus visitation and place the responses on their flash drive also as part of their reflection. How does that sound everyone?

The team gave the two suggestions some thought, and as a result was well pleased with the pre-class and homework. "Now that that's out of the way," said Ms. Suder, "I was wondering for the instructional activity, we can simply assist students during the access of the tour; providing that one on one interaction to help with their self esteem." Mr. Allen chimed in stating, "And referring to the students, using their career interest or college name." "Yes, that's so important," replied the team members.

Ms. Val interjected:

Okay, thus far we have assisting the students through the virtual tour, if no one else has anything to add, I would like to suggest, since they will be comparing the two types of campuses, perhaps they can identify the differences in the campuses.

"That sounds like a doable task," stated the team. Ms. Canon added, "I would like to propose we lead the students in discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the two campuses (urban and rural)." "Hey, that will work," said the members. Ms. Val verified the member's suggestions saying:

For the instructional activity we have basically three to four activities. The first being assists students with the virtual tour. The second compare the tours and identify the differences. And the third, lead a discussion as to the advantages and disadvantages of the two campuses. Does that reflect our input for the instructional activity?

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The team agreed with Ms. Val and proceeded to the closing. This should be rather easy since we already set the homework in place," replied Mr. Smit. "Okay, Mr. Smith, since you have the floor…" said Ms. Canon. "Alright, I can handle the closing," said Mr. Smit:

> In correlation with our objective, we should ask the students to provide a few of their campus comparisons; meaning urban vs. rural. Then ask if they could identify some of the differences they may have discovered between the two campuses. See I could handle it, no problem.

The team laughed and was happy to hear from Ms. Val. "Okay, you guys, it looks like we have solidified a closing if no one has any objections," stated Ms. Val. The team unanimously agreed to the closing and seemed proud to have completed Lesson 10. They discussed the possibility of having the next meeting, which could very well be the final meet. Ms. Suder stated, "In reflection of the prior lessons thus planned, we have covered most of the areas except…" Mr. Allen continued, "The career day." Ms. Suder replied, "Yes, Career Day, I'm glad to see we are on the right page." Mr. Allen then replied, "Oh yeah, we need to add to the homework, for Lesson 10, to remind the students again, to prepare questions they may have for the guest." I interceded stating:

> As time becomes closer to the implementation of the curriculum and the confirmations of the guest arrive, we will be able to provide to the students the guest biographies. This will give them some background on the guest, and help them with the writing of their questions.

The team agreed the biographies would be helpful and also set the date of June 16, 2009 as the final meet date. The team also discussed bringing refreshments to the final meet.

Lesson 11: Career Day planning. On June 16, 2009 the team met in Ms. Canon's room. She and Ms. Val surprised the team and decorated the room, celebrating our last meet. I brought in a few refreshments as a token of appreciation and celebration

also. With snacks in hand, the team enthusiastically agreed to set forth a discussion about Career Day. Students at risk, in particular girls and minority group children, often limit their career choices early (O'Brien, Dukstein, Jackson, Tomlinson, & Kamatuka, 1999).

Mr. Smit opened the meeting by saying, "After viewing the students' career interest, I think we should try to recruit a person in the medical field to come and speak to the students." Ms. Val said:

> We had a few students interested in law enforcement and many of them identified athletics as strength. I can contact one of my relatives, who is very athletic and found law enforcement to be a way to put his love of challenging his body to great use.

Ms. Canon stated:

> You know, Ms. Val, it's biographies and testimonies of people like that, our kids need to read and hopefully get a chance to meet. Most of our kids who are athletic would not think of pursuing a job in law enforcement because they are focused on being the next Michael Vick.

While I was thanking Ms. Val for sharing with the team that piece of information, Mr. Allen asked if we could return to the discussion of inviting person(s) in the medical field. He went on to say, "Since our students, in particular boys, have sex-stereotyped perceptions about certain occupations such as males not becoming nurses, I think it may be good idea to invite Woodbine's male school nurse to speak to the students on Career Day." Sex-role stereotypes, particularly about gender- appropriate occupations are formed early (Guss & Adams, 1998).

Ms. Val stated, "Okay, this is what we have suggested thus far. We plan to ask our male nurse to participate and I will ask my athletic relative who is in law enforcement. That will provide us with two speakers." Ms. Suder added, "We can perhaps ask one of the former students to speak." As I listened to Ms. Suder's comments,

I thought about a student who I personally taught a number of years back. Therefore I stated, "I remember a student by the name of Nieh, and how she would always express her interest in fashion (Art) and I heard she was pursuing a law degree. I will make contact with Ms. Nieh during the summer." "That will give us three speakers," stated Mr. Allen. I suggested we estimate the time for three speakers and plan accordingly. Ms. Canon stated, "I think each speaker should have approximately 10 minutes to speak and allocate another 10 minutes to answer our students' planned and unplanned questions." Ms. Val verified the suggestions by placing the potential speakers on the chart board. The team reviewed the information and soon afterwards, agreed to the timing and the contacts for the career day.

With that being the case, the team was ready to set in motion the actual planning of the career day. Mr. Smit spoke first:

> Before we begin our planning, I would like to ask if possible to remind those of us who are going to make contact with the potential speakers, to ask them to prepare an autobiography. This way, we can review with the students the speakers' background and utilize this information to help the students form their questions.

"That's an excellent idea Mr. Smit," Mr. Allen replied. The other team members were excited about how things were progressing and continued the planning while enjoying the refreshments.

Mr. Allen opened the dialogue by saying, "We will probably have a window of a day or two before the actual career day takes place, so I think for the lesson's pre-class, we should review with students the basic classroom rules as expectations for the event." The team was in agreement with Mr. Allen's suggestion and provided an overall "Yes." Ms. Canon chimed in saying, "Also as part of the pre-class, ask the students if they have any questions prior to the guest arriving." The team was fine with the suggestion,

prompting Ms. Val to add Ms. Canon's suggestion to the chart. Mr. Allen then said, "As far as the instructional activity is concerned, during the actual day, I think one of us should be designated as the host and introduce the guest speaker." Mr. Smit quickly nominated/volunteered Mr. Allen for the task. The team started chanting, "Go Allen, Go Allen, Go Allen!" Mr. Allen surrendered to the overwhelming vote and said, "Alright, no problem, consider it done." Ms. Suder then said, "This goes without saying, but I will make the point anyway. The rest of us should be monitoring the students as they are experiencing the event and give them support as they ask their questions." "That's correct thinking. We can do that," stated one of the members. Mr. Smit then said, "To reinforce the school rules, and build the students' self-esteem, I think we can maintain the same level of respect and motivation we have in the classroom by making eye contact with the students throughout the event." "Yes," replied Ms. Canon. And she further added, "This will also demonstrate our care and acceptance of them, and their aspirations." Ms. Val stated, "This may also encourage them to ask more questions." Mr. Allen replied, "With that being said, I will ask the students if there are any further questions prior to bringing the event to a close." I added to the planned close of the event by stating, "I will more than likely have refreshments for the guests and during that time I will extend our appreciation to them for participating in our career day."

"Fair enough," said Mr. Smit. The team looked to Ms. Val to review the instructional activity of the event. She proceeded by verifying what was written on the chart. "We will have Mr. Allen as the host. He will introduce the guest. The rest of us will monitor the students' responses, making eye contact throughout the event. Are we in agreement?" The team agreed to the instructional activity, and proceeded to the closing. I

reminded the team we had set in place the pre-class for the career day lesson. The instructional activity was for the actual event and we were now in the process of developing the closing and homework for the lesson in the classroom prior to the students attending the event. The team understood the particular organization of the lesson and provided the following suggestions for the closing. Ms. Canon stated, "I think we should discuss with the students the overall purpose of the career day. This may prompt more questions, therefore allowing them to add those questions to their existing ones." "Okay that sounds like a winner," stated one of the members. Ms. Val stated, "I'll jot that down." Ms. Val then added, "All we need now is the homework." Mr. Smit suggested, "For the homework, I think the students should reflect on their career day experience by writing out their comments." Ms. Suder added, "They can add their reflections on to their existing files on their flash drive." The team turned to Ms. Val for the overall picture before solidifying the closing and homework. She went on to say:

> Okay, this is what we have: A review of the overall purpose of the career day, and allowing the students to develop more questions for the speakers, to serve as the closing. Next we discussed having the students reflect on their experience by encouraging them to place reflections on their flash drive as part of the homework assignment. Does that resemble our plan and if so are we in agreement?

The team spoke as one, "Yes we are in agreement." Ms. Val congratulated each of the members and while doing so, she made a pivotal point:"Although each marking period at Woodbine averaged nine weeks in length, and we have planned for 11 lessons, we must consider developing a follow-up lesson for the career day." I replied to Ms. Val stating:

> Yes, this is true, and although we are aware of the fact that Woodbine has nine weeks in a semester, they tend to override the calendar in preparation of schedule changes. In light of the situation, what we can do perhaps is keep collaborating

with each member to monitor the progress. And to be prepared for the career day, we will nevertheless plan for a follow up for the career day; how's that sound?

The team seemed fine with the idea, and was enthused to develop a follow up plan as well as bringing the development of the curriculum to a close!

Ms. Canon lead the way by stating, "I would think the objective for the follow up would be to reflect on career day and perhaps be prepared to provide any additional information the students request." Ms. Suder chimed in saying, "Given that objective, we can allow students to express their reaction to the career day and explain the purpose for providing them additional information for the pre-class." Ms. Val asked if the team was in agreement thus far. The team was satisfied with the objective as well as the pre-class and proceeded to the final instruction activity.

Mr. Allen commented:

> I would like to suggest we ask students how many of them have asked the guidance counselor if they could see their cumulative folder. I'm suggesting this because, most of our children in the sixth grade are not aware of the importance of the guidance office or how it should be utilized. Therefore, if we could just encourage them to make contact with the counselor and develop that relationship, that is a building block for their social capital.

The team applauded Mr. Allen for his suggestion. I quickly reminded each of them:

> As you all work with our students, the interaction helps to develop relationships, and in turn, is considered social capital according to the researchers such as Field (2003) depicting social connections as a resource, and Putman (1995) who find social capital significant for educators, and Bourdieu (1997) emphasizing the value of social relations.

The team was gleaming with motivation to continue the follow up and bring development of the curriculum to a close. Mr. Smit added:

> If I understand correctly, we are advising the students to make contact with the guidance counselor. Then we should have a discussion with them, as to what a cumulative folder is. Also, expressing the importance for the meet which can be

to view their academic cumulative folders, in hopes of one day they will have their career interest inventory inside to have that discussion.

I added, "And in the process, hope that they will be congratulated for knowing their career interest and be encouraged to discuss their aspirations with the counselor." Ms. Suder then added, "Further, remind them again, that their career path or interest may change and the purpose of the curriculum is to expose them to the educational training that may precede their credentials." Ms. Val and the other team members were listening and prepared to reflect on the suggestions. She verified the comments by stating:

> For the instructional activity, we have encouraging students to make contact with the guidance counselor to review their cumulative folder. And discuss with them the purpose for the folder. Additionally, inform the students that they can also obtain information from the counselor about college and careers. Did I miss anything thus far?

The team gave a unanimous, "No!" Ms. Val replied:

> Okay I will continue. We would then remind students again, their career path or interest may change, and the purpose of the curriculum was to expose them to the educational training that may precede their credentials. If we are in agreement with what has been charted thus far, we can declare these suggestions as part of the instructional activity. Is there anyone objecting to the suggestions?

The team agreed to the suggestions submitted thus far. Mr. Allen added:

> I think it may be beneficial to remind the students to visit their web links to explore colleges linked to their interest/career as regularly as possible, in the event the counselor becomes consumed with other demands and cannot have that meet with our students.

Ms. Canon said, "I was going to suggest the same thing, in fact the link is…" Mr. Allen continued stating, "The link is provided through the Department of Labor. It has related occupations, earning potential and a number of other helpful information. That link and a few others the students will be given throughout their class sessions." The team

was showing no signs of slowing down and proceeded to plan the final closing and follow-up for Lesson 11 for Career day.

Ms. Suder commented to the team, "I would like to suggest we thank the students for participating in the lessons and ask if they would be willing to answer questions in the near future about what they have learned." Mr. Smit replied, "I think that's a good closing." Ms. Val announced, "If no one has any objections to the closing being to thank the students and ask if they would be willing to answer a few questions in the near future, we may have ourselves a completed curriculum." No one objected to the suggestion by team member Ms. Suder and the team threw up their hands, giving each other high fives and hugs of accomplishment! I thanked them all again, and wished them a safe, pleasant, wonderful, joyful summer. The team officially completed the development of the curriculum on June 16, 2009.

Cycle III Summary

As the team went about the challenge of deciding upon the most effective plan, they kept in mind, students of middle school age are coping with the challenges of cognitive, physiological, and psychological development associated with puberty (Cohen, 1996). Throughout the process, the participants collaborated consistently, displaying coherence among the group. Collaboration is the result of a concentrated effort to find the 'win-win' solution. Researchers further contend, when this level of collaboration occurs, the group is exhibiting an ability to integrate ideas and weave the creative thinking of two or more people (Stowell & Mead, 2007).

It was evident that the participants understood the importance to not simply innovate for the sake of innovating, but rather to innovate selectively, and they seemed to

do so with coherence (Stowell & Mead, 2007). Their rationality (coherence) was also shown during their ability to create knowledge. Building upon Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), who from a business point of view, explain knowledge creation as having the ability to create new knowledge, disseminate it throughout the organization, and embody it in products and services.

Although Fullan (2001) warns it is not enough to have the best ideas, and suggests a team must work through a process where others assess and come to find collective meaning and commitment to new ways, I found my team to have the ability to create sound ideas. Moreover, the participants were able to toil through the process, assess their ideas, and find collective meaning and commitment to new ways. According to Stowell and Mead (2007), team members who are committed stay on task, are focused on their roles, and do them above minimum standards.

More importantly, the team connected the objectives to the instructional activities and displayed a quality of care that is determined by what has happened in a person(s) life (Hesteren, 1992). Further, when this caliber of care is evident (Hesteren, 1992) it shows an understanding of others' life situation (perspective taking), and making decisions about what is the caring thing to do (moral judgment). The caring model is an invitation and an opportunity to interact with ideas, experiment with, and grow within the philosophy while living it out in one's personal or professional life (Watson, 2006).

Most interestingly, I observed the participants alternating leadership from one team member to another. Teams that realize leadership has to shift from one team member to another are considered high performing (Stowell & Mead, 2007). Also, I would like to think the way in which the process of curriculum development unfolded

with this team is a result of Orway (1935), who explains leadership as being the activity

of influencing people to cooperate towards some goal that they come to find desirable

and which motivates them over the long haul.

Chapter VII

Cycle IV – Curriculum Implementation

As the team leader, I have found it essential within the Camden School District to recognize that one must depend upon the teachers' engagement towards goals and purpose (Orr et al., 2002) to implement my initiative. Early intervention in the lives of middle school students is an investment in human capital (Currie, 2008). My team believed that exposing students to college and career awareness could enhance cultural and social capital by connecting career goals to education.

In Cycle I, I administered the Career Interest Inventory (CII). The inventory served as a personal survey for each student to identify academic likes and dislikes, career and hobby interests, as well as their strengths and personal values. In Cycle II, the team met to develop a thematic plan in absence of a curriculum designed to encourage middle school students to think about their careers. The intent for the plan was to include both careers that required college preparation and those that do not. The thematic plan was developed to be utilized in any content area, and was based on the data collected and analyzed during Cycle II. The purpose for Cycle III was to set in motion a thematic unit that was consistent with the suggestions by Print and Coleman (2003). They identify specific criteria for interventions. They list academic discourse, group processes, and cooperative learning experience to develop students in their learning. These techniques not only build trust and cooperation, they create an environment that promotes the development of social capital (Brown et al., 2005).

I began with the expectation to observe three of the five teachers twice per week as they implemented the curriculum between September 23, 2009 and February, 2010. I also planned to meet with participants once each week for feedback. I quickly realized the responsibility of my teaching schedule hampered this frequency. The goal quickly became prioritizing observations based on our workloads and recognizing that the follow up discussions could be both formal and informal. I conducted 22, 30-35 minute observations over a 13 week period.

The qualitative data were summarized into themes. Although the implementation of the curriculum began with extraordinary excitement, I perceived this undertaking as an era of testing. I was willing to embrace the challenge and make any provisions deemed necessary. To capture the richness of the team's devotion to the curriculum implementation, I summarized the feedback into four themes. The themes were: students gain new respect for education, connecting to higher education, building self-esteem through personal interest, and the impact of career day.

Students Gain New Respect for Education

September 23, 2009 was the first day of observing the implementation of our career curriculum modifications. It began with extraordinary excitement. Ms. Canon was able to expand the students' schema by providing her personal journey of becoming a teacher. As she spoke about her desire to attend college, but having no idea how to begin the process, the students' faces were hanging on to every word with suspense. One student asked, "If you liked computers, why didn't you just work for a computer company like HP (Hewlett Packard)?" Ms. Canon responded, "That's a good question." She added, "The only problem was that I needed a degree or certification to work at HP."

This exchange emerged as academic discourse. This is one of the valuable techniques that encourage the development of student networks and social capital (Print & Coleman, 2003).

Also identified during this session was a list of colleges generated through the verbal interaction between student and teacher. Then, the students researched teacher training requirements at those colleges. They estimated the amount of time needed to complete the course work. After viewing a few of the prerequisites to be a teacher, it seemed as if the students discovered a new respect for their teacher. This was evident by the questions asked during the lesson. One student asked, "Ms. Canon, you took all these classes?" "Wow, that's a lot of classes."

Ms. Canon elaborated on how her interest in computers led her to the teaching field. "When you attend college right after high school you have the time to study and focus on graduating with a bachelor's degree then apply for a teaching job." Ms. Canon emphasized her career path to bestow upon the students the findings of Fry (2002), which reports the timing of Hispanic youth entry into post secondary education is significant to degree completion and immediate entry into college may have a positive impact on college completion. Observing the discourse between student-student and student-teacher as the activity unfolded seemed to have the potential to encourage the development of student networks (Brown et al., 2005; Print & Coleman, 2003). Enthusiastic about the interaction, I wrote in my journal:

> I was pleased to see Ms. Canon recognized how the students seemed overwhelmed about the pursuit to obtaining a teaching certificate, and began to show the students the number of classes needed to become a teacher can be achieved over time. I was also extremely grateful for the availability of technology and hoping the students understood how the use of computers can be a tool for searching higher education possibilities. (Leadership Journal October 1, 2009)

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The next observation took me to Mr. Smit's classroom. The students demonstrated being engaged by raising their hands and asking relevant questions. They asked questions such as, "What does it mean to be qualified to teach?" or "Why do you have to take a test?" To make the objective (how to become a teacher) more meaningful, Mr. Smit displayed a photocopy of his teaching certificate and explained the meaning of being licensed. The students were astounded at what they were observing and examined the wording of the certificate. The student paid close attention to the date. He reminded the students how things had changed and continued to change. Several students raised their hands to say, "So after I go to college, I still have to take a test?" One student bravely commented, "That's crazy." Reba said, "I still want to be a teacher, but I hope they change some of those requirements. They're scary." Mr. Smit did a fine job explaining the route from a bachelor's degree from an accredited college to taking and passing a Praxis test. He provided an excellent definition to explain the meaning of accredited and historical/background information pertaining to testing for certification. The academic discourse between Mr. Smit and his students went into further depth than Ms. Canon. Rita asked, "What if you don't pass the test?" Mr. Smith realistically explained, "If you don't pass, you will not be able to apply for a teaching job. You will have to take the test again." His comments seemed to leave an indelible mark on the students' faces.

To diminish the possibility of discouraging the students who were interested in entering the teaching field, Mr. Smith told the class that teaching is a lot of work, but the greatest pay off is working with future college students like them. He asked if anyone felt

different about putting in time and maybe money to make their dreams come true. The

students circled around Mr. Smith as if they were a football team ready to put forward

their best efforts. I surprisingly heard the students say, "Oh Mr. Smit, we're allowed to go

to the library and continue searching for information about teaching; can you come?" It

was at this time that I learned students were on their own, extending the lessons (potential

sustainability) coming to their teachers' classroom at 3:00 to following up on various

information reviewed during the college and career lessons. Mr. Smit made the point

stating, "If you would like to revisit the information about teaching requirements on the

computer, I will make every effort to stop in the library to coach your research. How does

that sound?" The students were visibly excited about the gesture and exclaimed, "Thank

you." To observe the students so easily engaged in the lesson and willing to revisit the

lesson convinced me of their new respect for their teacher and the progression towards

developing skills that may help to encourage their pursuit of post secondary education.

The closing activity also was a display of academic discourse suggested by Print and

Coleman (2003).

During the implementation process, I began to encounter a struggle to maintain a

consistent schedule of observations. The participants recognized my limitations. They

were flexible. If I was running late, they attempted to wait before beginning a lesson. In

some instances I simply had to observe a lesson already in progress.

To complete my first set of observations, I paid a visit to Ms. Val's class. She

opened her lesson with a discussion of the traditional route to obtaining a teaching

degree. However, Ms. Val prearranged for a representative from Future Teacher of

America (FTA) to visit the classroom. Woodbine school welcomed individuals from the

program. The FTA is especially interested in enrolling students of diverse ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic background, especially males who are underrepresented in the field of education. The teacher visiting the students on this particular day was Mr. Hemsun. He seemed excited about being invited to speak to our youth and said, "I hope my being here will make an impact." During the presentation, Mr. Hemsun shared with the students how he became a college student. He shared his humbled beginnings in North Philadelphia and how his parents were "training" him to become another one of the neighborhood's barbers.

The questions and comments that transpired during Mr. Mr. Hemsun's visit: Jenny Lee said, "North Philly," "Isn't that like a sort of bad neighborhood?" Mr. Hemsun, "Yes, it can be. That's why I was determined to follow my dream of becoming a teacher." Student: "Oh, that's cool." During Mr. Hemsun's interaction with the students, he described how he was made aware of the availability of financial aid and other resources from talking to his teachers. I was pleased to see Ms. Val take the curriculum a step further for her students by bringing in outside resources.

The discussions that followed Mr. Hemsun's presentation led me to ascertain that the students were readily able to identify the attainability of higher education. To encourage students to ask questions, Mr. Hemsun had them place their desks in a circle and invited the students to join in the dialogue. The students grasped the opportunity and surprisingly proceeded to verify what they had learned and been exposed to thus far. Ms. Val and I looked at each other in utter amazement. "Why do want to become a teacher?" asked Jose. "Do you have to take a test before you become a teacher and do you think

that's fair?" asked Terrell. Mr. Hemsum eagerly answered each question and confirmed information such as the work involved to become a teacher or to get a bachelor's degree.

Ms. Val and I felt the students may gain in-depth appreciation of the requirements to become a teacher, and perhaps turn information into knowledge (Fullan, 2001), going beyond traditional didactic lecturing (Brown et al., 2005). It was hopeful that students viewed Mr. Hemsun's college experience as a foundation for accepting it as an attainable goal for themselves. Now that the teachers have shared their personal experiences, they become that resource for networking that Print and Coleman (2003) reference as useful interventions to be included when designing curriculum.

Connecting to Higher Education

The original curriculum plan called for students to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between a rural and urban college campus, a 2-year and 4-year college, and a large college versus a small college. A visit to a rural campus such as Rutgers Camden campus was suggested. Unfortunately, on November 12, I had to inform the team of the principal's decision disallowing the students' attendance to college campuses. Administration's premise was that programs such as CHAMP/GEAR-UP were expected to provide this opportunity. The team was presented with the daunting news and appeared upset and frustrated and required a few minutes to regroup. As they began to brainstorm for alternatives, Mr. Allen reminded them with this statement, "Hey, you forgot what we had put in place as an alternative just in case something like this would happen." Ms. Val said, "You're right, we said we would use the virtual tour as an option." Ms. Suder prompted the team to have a determined attitude by stating, "Since when have we allowed anything to stop us from being instrumental in allowing our sixth

graders from experiencing that campus life." The team's response was consistent with Stowell and Mead (2007) who state, "Solid team processes offer big payoffs when a team is facing critical obstacles or serious setbacks" (p. 137).

Ms. Canon, the technology teacher, reminded the team of how the use of technology will play a pivotal role in this situation. Ms. Val chimed in by saying, "What we planned was to have the students' experience the rural campus via a "virtual tour" if the actual visit to the urban campus was postponed or not approved." Mr. Allen stated, "That's correct." The team was able to reclaim their confidence and enthusiasm and quickly accessed the computers for a sample preview of the tour. Once the team experienced the option in real time, we decided to look into this further and meet again on November 19th.

When we met on November 19th, we began sharing the students' encounters with the college application process. Teachers shared students' strengths and weaknesses. Several members made comments such as, "I can only hope the students will capture what it's like to no longer walk the halls of schools with only people they know, and I think the virtual tour will ignite the desire to pursue that different environment." The comments were encouraging and the team initiative seemed to look and feel less like research and more like curriculum development. We ended with Mr. Smit saying, "It's worth a try and don't forget, it's all about strategy."

Despite the setback, each participant was able to move forward by implementing a virtual tour of Millersville University. It is a beautiful rural college located outside of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I toured the campus with Ms. Suder's, Mr. Allen's, and Ms. Canon's classes. In all classes, the students were surprised to hear the school was once

called a "Normal School" and had been established as a teachers' college. Students asked about choosing classes and majors. They also asked what would happen if they changed their mind before finishing. Realizing the dilemma, Robert announced, "But that is going to make you start over and lose time from finishing." Another student mentioned, "But I don't want to be spending time studying something I don't like." This conversation led to explaining to students that their interests should influence what they choose as a career and as a major. Then Ms. Val explained that it is best to choose a college that may best serve their needs. John recalled from a previous lesson that he would prefer a small, rural campus and stated, "If I change my mind, I can go to an office on campus and talk to someone before changing anything." The teachers were glad to see the student recalling that information. The statement drew the attention of his peers. "I think I want to go to a rural college like Millersville," said John. "I just want to move away from this neighborhood and then come back and make it better." Although a few other students snickered at John's comment to get away; they soon paused appearing to share the same thought.

As the virtual tour progressed, it explained how a student is responsible for setting up his own schedule and leaving the dorm in time to arrive at class promptly. Jose commented, "So what if I don't go to class?" Rita answered, "Then you will just fail and eventually get kicked out." "Oh, I can't wait to get to college. That's going to be live (a slang term meaning awesome)," exclaimed Jose.

The tour kept the interest of the students for the entire period. The virtual tour of the campus permitted the objective to be met via technology, and the students did not seem to mind that we had to go without touching a foot on the well-groomed grass. It did

not seem to take away from their experience or a piece of the dream that could change their lives.

Still wheeling from the excitement of exposing the students to institutions that might carry out their aspirations, I visited Ms. Val's class next on November 23, 2009; the curriculum objective to compare the rural campus of Millersville University to the urban Rutgers University campus was played out. I observed the student discourse about this experience. "MU was much bigger and the greenery was awesome," said Eric. "We can play football in the middle of that campus," said John. "Well, on an urban campus I can catch a bus, go down town or home in a hot minute and look for part-time work. They might hire me if I'm a college student," Dene stated. "It looks expensive to live on campus," said Jose. Ms. Val led the students in their discussion of the advantages of attending an urban campus. Access to law firms, doctors' offices, hospitals, and veterinarian hospitals provide places to work. She also mentioned the advantages of attending a rural college. Ms. Val explained that could mean less crime and a quieter setting. However, she stated "A student may have less opportunity to secure an internship." The students seem to be engaged in deeper thought. "My cousin goes to Slippery Rock University. I'm going to ask him if that's why he chose that college." This student to student interaction enhances student learning (Print & Colman, 2003). Tina mentioned, "That's like Rutgers. You are on a campus, but all around you are stores and other business." Santos continued, "Like Cooper hospital." "Oh, I hope I can go to a college with a lot of trees and grassy hills," said Jenny. Ms. Val assured them there are always advantages and disadvantages in most college and career choices. She also stated, "The most important factor to remember is, get in the game and don't give up."

Building Self-esteem through Personal Interest

Research shows students' academic and career aspirations significantly contribute to their educational and occupational achievement and academic self-concept (Majoribanks, 2002). With that being said, I would be remiss to not mention Mr. Allen's efforts to include the components of self-esteem in his lesson. Mr. Allen's class is the group that was less receptive to the curriculum during the first phase of implementation.

Mr. Allen began the lesson by encouraging the students to discuss their hobbies, talents, and interests after defining each concept. During the discourse he reminded the students their interest is what makes them unique and the more they explore, it will help to build their self-esteem and career aspirations. When asked for a few volunteers to provide an example of a hobby, talent, or interest, the students stated, "I like to collect hot wheels and I want to go to school to learn how to design cars." "I want to be an artist, and I like to draw; so I think that's my talent." "I like to play basketball, but I want to be a lawyer." Mr. Allen replied to each comment, explaining the connection and commending each of them for attempting to make the connection without assistance. He interestingly spoke to the student who identified basketball as a hobby. Mr. Allen cleverly asked, "So Franco, do you see a connection between your basketball playing and wanting to be a lawyer?" "I challenge myself to do more than I thought I could on the basketball court," said Franco. Mr. Allen as well as myself was impressed with Franco's ability to make that connection. It seems the overall lesson was beneficial to the students. Mr. Allen allowed the students to continue connecting their talents, hobbies, and interests. Once the connections were established, the notion that although each of these attributes can be different, they are unique to each of them. To bring that message closer to the students'

understanding, Mr. Allen chose to slightly alter the instructional activity. He asked the

students to dip their index finger in red, water paint, located on their desk. The students

were then asked to press their finger on a sheet of white paper. Mr. Allen explained to the

students at this point that each of their prints is unlike their peers or anyone else on the

planet. He went further to ask for a volunteer to tell him what their talents, hobbies, and

interests have to do with the finger printing. One of the students offered this opinion, "I

think Mr. Allen is trying to say we are all different like our interests, hobbies and

talents." Mr. Allen asked everyone to give Sarah a hand for thinking on the right track.

He then asked, "Who can tell me who does those hobbies, and talents, and interests

belong to?" One student raised her hand and yelled, "To me." Mr. Allen replied, "Yes,

and your prints are whose?" "Mine." "Yes, you're right again!" He then asked, "So if

your unique prints are yours and your hobbies, talents, and interests are yours, then that

makes you what?" One of the students announced, "Oh I get it, that makes us unique!"

Mr. Allen jumped in the air with excitement and replied, "Yes, hobbies, talents and

interests are yours, and your prints are 'U-that means you are unique." Mr. Allen allowed

the students to converse with each other. The students asked to come to Mr. Allen's class

at the end of the day. Mr. Allen extended his commitment by stating:

> I'm sure I will be in a meeting or working on lesson plans, so what I will do is try
> to meet you guys in the library. I heard some of you have been using the
> computers in the library with the librarian's permission.

The students replied, "Yes, Mr. Kone allows us to talk quietly about what we have

learned in your class and use the computers to look up information about scholarships for

college." Mr. Allen further added, "And maybe we can finish talking about how unique

you guys are." Mr. Allen, evidently not only smitten with wanting to see his students

benefit from the curriculum, but from extending the lessons, stated to the students, "You guys are going to make it, keep up the good work." The enthusiasm from the students and Mr. Allen were uplifting and he also seemed to be enlightened by the authentic feedback from the students as well. Mr. Allen further clarified to me once the students departed the room:

> I'm glad you're here in real time to give me the opportunity to explain how I managed to implement this lesson. A few days ago, I was bringing the lesson about financial aid to a close, when the students and I ventured into a conversation about talents versus hobbies. I promised them that I would follow up on that conversation with a lesson. I'm glad we decided to place that lesson in the curriculum. I hope they were able to gain a better understanding of a hobby, talent, and interest each play a role in their uniqueness.

I quickly responded, "That's what distinguishes them from others, and the way things seem to be progressing with you, including the other teachers and the students, I would wager to say, they just may be distinguishable college students." According to Henze, Walker, Norte, Sather, and Walker (2002), this is evidence of a shared sense of purpose among team members. Mr. Allen replied, "That's my hope too." I then expressed how I confidently observed the delivery of that lesson, students' responses and engagement; although I believed a follow up would be beneficial. Therefore I made it a point to inform Mr. Allen of my hearing of his decision to meet the students in the library. I then concluded with Mr. Allen, "I was ecstatic to have had the opportunity to observe the lesson that the team confidently added to the curriculum as optional due to the time factor." I also noted in my journal:

> Mr. Allen's decision to implement this lesson was twofold. For starters, it was Mr. Allen's group that was resistant to the curriculum during the first phase of the implementation process. He sought to deliver the self-esteem lesson to make good on a promise to the students about clarifying talents versus hobbies and the connection to their interest. I perceived the lesson as a means to assist the students

in viewing themselves as potential college students. (Leadership Journal, November 1, 2009)

In continuation of the optional self-esteem lesson, I was gratefully surprised by the observation with Ms. Canon. The lesson objective remained as planned, however the pre-class and the instructional activity were appropriately altered. She opened the lesson with the statement, "To get the most out of life means getting to know who 'You' are." Ms. Canon tied the message in with corporate marketing. She turned on her computer, which projected onto a screen a few products and asked the students if they recognized some of them. Ms. Canon explained the relationship between the product for sale and its logo and/or words that accompanied the product.

Ms. Canon then explained how they too are a brand, but in this case the brand is "You." The exercise seemed to excite the students as they participated in role playing how their character and self-esteem are directly connected to the "You" brand. As part of the experience, the students were asked a few fun questions such as, are colleges looking for a brand they can depend on, count on, or is durable? Ms. Canon discussed each product and gave an example of its intended and unique purpose. The students were placed in small groups and encouraged to place their name next to the product on a graphic organizer. The students' comments during the small group exercise were as such, "I know which product I'm going to choose, we did this in our language arts class," said Tiffany. Ms. Canon asked, "Tiffany can you tell the class what is different this time." "We didn't know it had anything to do with our character or self-esteem." Ms. Canon replied, "And that's what we are trying to demonstrate here. You are pretending to be that product and if you want that college or other educational institutional to consider accepting you, you want your character and self-esteem to shine." Ms. Canon said she

thought it would be a good idea to reinforce the concept of products and consumers after having to teach the lesson in language arts.

Several of the students said they have a better understanding of what colleges and companies are looking for and never thought about themselves as a brand. I could not have planned a better ending to my curriculum and modification observations. The students did not want to see the lesson come to an end. Ms. Canon continued to work with the students until they seemed comfortable and confident in the delivery of the lesson. The students exited the class stating, "I can't wait to tell my friends and family about what we did." She continued to work with the students and offered the option for the students to return at the end of the day if they chose to do so. Ms Canon's lesson not only kept the information in context with self-esteem, but also seemed to encourage group processes and cooperative learning (Print & Coleman, 2003).

The Impact of Career Day

On December 3, 2009, the team found time to meet. The focus of the meeting was to confirm the plan to have particular guest speakers for Career Day. The team members verified the potential guest speakers with each other and reviewed their credentials. Mr. Gray was the current school nurse and was looking forward to the event. The next speaker discussed was an alumnus, Ms. Neah; she was also excited about meeting and speaking at her alma mater. Mr. Ford, who works in law enforcement and was the friend of one of the team members, had confirmed his visit as well.

The guest speakers were scheduled to present on December 17, 2009,between 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Mr. Allen volunteered to host the event. He introduced our first presenter, who was Mr. Gray, Woodbine Middle School's male nurse. He began by

providing a brief biography of himself. Mr. Gray included how his interest in the

medical field led him on the path of becoming a school nurse. A brave male student

raised his hand to ask, "Did your friends tease you about becoming a nurse?" Mr. Gray

explained how he was not accustomed to seeing male nurses during his middle and high

school years, and that yes, his friends discouraged him. Mr. Gray briefly presented

statistics stating 6-7% percent of the nurses are males, but added that he hoped some of

our students would consider increasing that statistic. Another student asked, "Can you

still work in a hospital if you are a school nurse?" The speaker was impressed by the

students' questions and genuine interest. He named local schools offering required

courses of study.

I found the students' concern to be aligned with Schwartz's (2009) research that

references the false information and beliefs, specifically, stereotyped views of

occupations possessed by male adolescent reaching middle school. "Machismo" is a very

real expectation that the males live by in the urban community. The earlier an

intervention is initiated the better. Schwartz (2009) further offers the limited view of

career aspirations these adolescents hold along with the false information. These views

tend to occur for girls, however at a slightly older age.

Ms. Neah, alumni student, was scheduled to present next. She opened her

dialogue by explaining how taking advantage of school trips to places like the state house

in Trenton New Jersey and the capital in Washington D. C. inspired her to become a

lawyer. I was particularly enthused with Ms. Neah's statement, reason being, several of

our middle school students fail to realize the significance of attending school trips. A

student raised her hand to ask, "Did you think you was going to be a lawyer when you

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were in middle school?" Ms. Neah stated, "I always wanted to be a lawyer, but I didn't know I had to go to a law school." Ms. Neah brought the thematic plan to life for the students by showing photos of herself as an 11-year-old, sitting in the same seats as they were sitting at Woodbine Middle School. The students perused the photos of Ms. Neah, as she had been as a Woodbine Middle schooler. Ms. Neah stated to the students:

> I looked as if I was in a daze in some of those pictures, but I and my teacher Ms. Kirkland, can assure you, I was thinking about going to law school. In fact, Ms. Kirkland would advise me to talk to different people and she would always talk to my mother about my potential during report card visits and even when she would see my mom at the mall.

I believe the dialogue that transpired during Ms. Neah's visit may have helped students understand how a middle school student can have aspirations and holding on to those dreams can become a reality by remaining focused on the goal. The continued interaction with Ms. Neah provided the opportunity for more academic discourse with additional teachers and adults (Print & Coleman, 2003). Ms. Neah ended her discussion by telling the students, "I sat here just like you all are sitting now. If I can do it, you can do it!" Ms. Neah went further to state, "If possible, I would like to stay a little longer, so I can visit some of your classrooms to see some of the work you all have done around college/career exploration."Another student raised her hand and stated, "My name is Rita, and I would like to invite you to our classroom."The host of the Career Day, Mr. Allen, announced prior to introducing the next presenter, Mr. Ford, that Ms. Neah as well as the other speakers were welcome to visit the classrooms, to review the individual portfolios that provide an overview of students' explored career interests, hobbies, and role models.

The final speaker for our Career Day was Mr. Ford, a private investigator. Mr. Ford encouraged the students to be proud of themselves and look forward to

completing applications that ask for their educational background. He explained how he always wanted to work outside and help others, but was not able to connect his desires to law enforcement until he began to answer questions on applications, exploring careers in his community, and talking to educators.

Mr. Ford then provided a few experiences as a law enforcer, which sparked several questions from students such as, "Do you work undercover?" and "Do you have to carry a gun?" Mr. Ford revealed how he is often required to work undercover and there are times he may be assigned to a case that last for several months, and during that time frame, he is not allowed to discuss any of the details with his friends or family. As the issue of carrying a weapon was discussed, Mr. Ford emphasized to the students the safety measures of handling a firearm and drawing out a weapon on an individual, as a last resort. He also extended his condolences to students who have lost family members due to gun violence. One of the students asked, "Do you think guns will ever be taken away from the bad guys and only used by police officers?" Mr. Ford offered his opinion and encouraged the students to explore positive options such as martial arts, as a means to learn how to protect themselves and use their bodies as a weapon of defense as opposed to using guns.

To further address the inquisitive and enthused students, Mr. Ford recommended to the students, the opportunity to join the Police Athletic Club (PAC) to gain valuable information about law enforcement. Mr. Ford offered to further discuss the PAC program and answer any additional questions, when he visited the classrooms, after the workshop. Mr. Ford closed out his presentation by thanking the students and the teachers of Woodbine Middle School for having him and reiterated to students that this is a growing

field, and added, "Use your teachers as resources to more information and continue to explore the field via Internet to remain current."

Each of the speakers was informative and seemed to deliver an abundance of inspiration to the students. It was inspiring to see students writing notes for themselves and asking their teachers to meet with Mr. Ford, Ms. Neah, and Mr. Gray after the workshop. As the students, teachers, and presenters filed to the various classrooms, I was showered with the sounds of excitement blaring from the students as they escorted the various speakers to their classrooms. Mr. Ford was heard saying,

> It was great to sense the students' interest and excitement in what I particularly do for a living. I believe having this venue is a great opportunity for the students, and I would invite more of my colleagues to participate in the future.

I was grateful for the extended invitation of his colleagues and compliment, and personally thanked Mr. Ford for his advanced commitment.

Ms. Neah was the first to arrive to Mr. Allen's room. The students anxiously retrieved their career/college portfolios preserved on their flash drives. While Ms.Neah was waiting for the students' portfolios to upload on the computers, she mentioned to Mr. Allen how she thought storing students' career/college exploration on the flash drives was a great way to show the students how technology can play a major role in their future.

One of the student's portfolios shown to Ms. Neah opened with captivating graphics. Ms. Neah commented, "From the looks of it, it seems you like math and science." The student replied, as the colorful numerals rotated around a state of the art microscope, "Yes, I like science and math, and I want to be a veterinarian." The student added, "In my search, I found out that my career interest in caring for animals is called

veterinarian medicine, and I have to attend college and take classes in biology, physical sciences, and math." Ms. Neah was impressed with the way in which the student was able to communicate the results of his exploration, while presenting the technical portfolio, and stated, "I can see you all are on the path of going to college, and wish you the best. And if you have any questions, I will leave my contact number." The students and participants thanked Ms. Neah for her support and encouraging words as she prepared to leave Woodbine Middle School's Career Day. As each of us said our goodbyes, I could not help wondering how we could expand upon Career Day, making it an annual school wide effort. The next time, perhaps we could invite more professionals and include college recruiters.

The Career Day event proved to contribute to an improved level of cultural capital and was a catalyst to enhancing social capital. The students displayed an attitude of gratitude towards guest speakers such as Woodbine Middle School, Nurse Gray, Officer Ford, and Alumnus Neah, as they passionately spoke with the students, about the hard work, and dedication that lead them to professional careers. The guests did not disappoint the team and seemed to up hold our expectations, and most importantly, delivered a wealth of inspiration to the students. From the looks of the students' faces and the effort put into their questioning and comments, they seemed to enjoy the interaction and exited the conference room, chatting about the knowledge and career fields they were provided. With very little effort and without realizing it, the students had begun building a network of resources to enhance their social capital while also building on their cultural capital as supported by Brown et al. (2005) and Bourdieu (1990).

The teachers' efforts are consistent with what Walpole and McDonough (2005) contend; although cultural capital is knowledge, habitus can be considered as a tool kit of strategies and act as a web of perceptions regarding the possible and appropriate action to take in a certain setting in order to achieve a particular goal. It was clear from observing and listening to the teachers that they felt the Career Day was a unique experience for them as well as the students, and that their efforts seemed to have more of a purposeful direction.

The students that were included in this curriculum appeared to be impacted as evidenced by their engaging questions and eagerness to participate in the instruction. Additionally, they seem to have gained a greater respect for their teachers as previously identified by their discourse. The research states a lack of knowledge or cultural capital, as it relates to college admission processes, places urban African American and Latino high school students at a disadvantage in the college choice process in relation to their peers (Walpole & McDonough, 2005). The Woodbine students may have just been given the opportunity to defy these odds.

Cycle IV Summary

The implementation of the curriculum forged dialogue between the teachers and the students about colleges and the courses required (for example) to become a teacher. Most of the students were receptive to the various presentations and attentively engaged in the planned college and career exploration. They worked diligently through the Print and Coleman (2003) recommended curriculum design of academic discourse, group processes, and cooperative learning activities.

The teachers took ownership of the curriculum by incorporating additional resources such as a speaker from Future Teachers of America. The teachers were flexible and accommodated my schedule. During a weekly team meeting, several of the teachers expressed the need for additional time to complete all aspects of the curriculum. The need for additional time was also a factor for the students. This was also identified in the surveys. One of the teachers found that his students were not as receptive to the curriculum initially as those in the classes of his colleagues. Perhaps the observed responses provided from the students spoke to the research (Akos et al., 2007), which indicates how students may perceive one job or career path to be more accessible than another. Akos et al. (2007) further contend, based on factual information they have gathered, however, the values and beliefs of others such as peers, parents, or teachers can shape students' occupational aspirations over time.

The Career Day was deemed successful and found to be perhaps more beneficial if it included additional professionals and college recruiters. It may also be valuable to have individuals representing various careers cycling through the classrooms more often to reinforce the connection between education and career aspirations. According to Holly (1987), the lack of agreement on a definition as well as determining whether self-esteem either causes the result observed or whether it contributes to other variables that result in particular behaviors or problems, continues to prevent the validation of self-esteem. Despite this discrepancy, it seems the Career Day was a motivating factor and a social influence in their predisposition stage of the Hossler and Gallagher model of college choice (Gafford Muhammad & Banks-Rogers, 2008).

Chapter VIII

Cycle V – Impact of Curriculum

Introduction

The implementation of the curriculum began on September 21, 2009. During this time frame, classroom observations were conducted as well as student interviews, using Appendix F. In addition to observations and interviews, student and teacher surveys were circulated to assess the impact of the curriculum intervention and modification for college career aspirations. The surveys (Appendix F & G) were distributed to 90 students and the five teacher participants at three different times through the course of the research. The first survey (see Table 7), which was given October 13, 2009, recorded 86% of the students found minimal benefit of the curriculum. Also during that first phase, 100% of the teachers disagreed to strongly disagree that the students were able to complete a college application (see Table 8). The students disagreed that the curriculum had assisted them in identifying their career choice. Eighty one percent disagreed the exploration helped them to determine the educational requirements of their interest. Equally when asked about whether the curriculum prepared them for identifying or assessing training, 81% disagreed that it had any benefit. Most telling was a 100% response disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that they could identify a college or trade school that fit their needs at this early stage of the curriculum. It is reasonable to assume that the rationale for this lack of agreement is primarily due to the timing of curriculum implementation.

At the onset of the curriculum implementation, the students and teachers had just begun to scratch the surface of the content. Although the first phase was at the beginning

of October, it was nevertheless most gratifying to learn that 100% agreed or strongly agreed that a higher education would give them a better chance to do well in life.

The belief in its benefits began to show as the students and teachers became more involved in the curriculum. By the second distribution of the survey on December 19, 2009, 80% of the students felt that the curriculum assisted them in identifying their career and its educational requirements. Another 80% indicating they knew how to begin the exploration for their career interest. Also during this second phase, 60% of the teachers either agreed or strongly agreed the curriculum influenced students to aspire toward higher learning. During the last survey, in February, 80% of the teachers strongly agreed that the curriculum positively influenced the perception of their students compared to the first survey in October, when 80% disagreed with that question (see Table 9).

Interestingly, by December 2009, 80% of the teachers felt that the students knew what the educational requirements were for their career interest and how to explore them. By February 2010, after the students were exposed to the full curriculum of explorations, college tours, guest speakers, and a wealth of discussions, the attitude surveys seem to shed a more positive light on the curriculum.

In December, 2009, the last survey demonstrated 89% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum assisted them in identifying their career choice. Ninety percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed the career exploration helped them to identify the educational training for their career interest. Also in December, 80% of the teachers agreed the curriculum assisted the students in identifying what kind of educational training is required for their career.

Teachers' responses to the survey seem to parallel their prior belief that they could make a positive difference in the lives of their students, which aligns with the research that refers to teacher efficacy as their belief in having the ability to have a positive effect on students' learning (Protheroe, 2008). By February 21, 2010, 100% of the teacher participants agreed that the career exploration curriculum should be implemented by the 6th grade level and by all content area teachers. In doing so, the teachers felt they would be holistically meeting the needs of the students. The fact that the teachers' perspective of the students had been influenced from October, the first survey, to February 2010 pleased me the most. In support of this statement, the student interviews showed that their overall view of themselves seemed to reflect that they had begun to make a connection between their career interest and educational goals.

Table 7

Results from Student Survey

	Phase 1 Oct/09	Phase 2 Dec/09	Phase 3 Feb/10
1. Because of the career exploration curriculum, I believe a higher education will give a better chance to do well in life.	A/SA= 100% 90	A/SA= 100% 90	A/SA= 100% 90
2. Has the career exploration curriculum assisted you in identifying your career choice?	SD/D= 78% 36/35	A/SA= 87% 34/40	A/SA= 90% 51/30
3. Has the curriculum about career exploration helped you to determine the educational requirements of your interest?	SD/D= 81% 38/35	A/SA= 80% 41/37	A/SA= 87% 34/45
4. Based on the curriculum about career exploration, I know where to begin to explore my career interest.	SD/D= 85% 40/37	A/SA= 80% 33/39	A/SA= 89% 48/33
5. Has the career exploration curriculum assisted you in finding what kind of educational training is required for your career?	SD/D= 81% 54/19	A/SA= 75% 33/35	A/SA= 95% 48/38
6. Because of the career exploration curriculum, I know how to access/get the training for my career	SD/D= 94% 36/49	A/SA= 64% 23/35	A/SA= 78% 40/31
7. Based on the career exploration curriculum, I can identify a college or trade school that best fits my needs	SD/D= 100% 90	A/SA= 85% 42/35	A/SA= 87% 40/39
8. Based on the career exploration curriculum, I am more confident in completing a college application	SD/D= 100% 90	A/SA= 84% 40/36	A/SA= 86% 35/43
9. Based on the career exploration curriculum, I am aware of different ways to pay for higher education.	SD/D= 89% 38/41	A/SA= 81% 35/38	A/SA= 92% 43/40
10. Because of the college exploration, I plan to attend an institution of higher education	SD/D= 52% 23/24	A/SA= 80% 34/38	A/SA= 93% 40/44

Table 8

Results from Teacher Survey

	Phase 1 Oct/09	Phase 2 Dec /09	Phase 3 Feb/10
1. Because of the career exploration curriculum, students can associate a higher income to higher education.	SD/D 100% 3/2	A/SA= 100% 2/3	A/SA= 100% 1/4
2. Has the career exploration curriculum influenced your perception of students?	SD/D= 100% 4/1	A/SA= 80% 1/3	A/SA= 80% 3/1
3. Because of the curriculum about career exploration students can determine their educational requirements for their interest.	SD/D= 100% 3/2	A/SA= 80% 3/1	A/SA= 80% 3/1
4. Based on the curriculum about career exploration, the students know where to begin to explore their career interest.	SD/D= 100% 2/3	A/SA= 80% 3/1	A/SA= 80% 3/1
5. Has the career exploration curriculum assisted the students in identifying what kind of educational training is required for their career?	SD/D= 40% 2	A/SA= 60% 2/1	A/SA= 80% 3/1
6. Because of the career exploration curriculum, I believe the interventions should begin at the sixth grade.	SD/D= 40% 2	A/SA= 80% 1/3	A/SA= 100% 1/4
7. Based on the career exploration curriculum, I believe the interventions should be implemented by all content area teachers.	SD/D= 60% 1/2	A/SA= 80% 1/3	A/SA= 100% 4/1
8. Based on the career exploration curriculum, the students can complete a college application.	SD/D= 100% 3/2	A/SA= 60% 2/1	A/SA= 80% 3/1
9. Based on the career exploration curriculum, students are aware of ways to pay for higher education.	SD/D= 60% 1/2	A/SA= 100% 2/3	A/SA= 100% 2/3
10. Do you feel the college exploration curriculum influenced students to aspire toward higher learning?	SD/D= 80% 1/3	A/SA= 60% 1/2	A/SA= 80% 2/2

Discussion

Based on the results of the surveys given to students and teacher participants, it is reasonable to determine the curriculum was a success. This was evidenced by the positive change in students' responses on surveys from October 2009 to February 2010. Students went from 86% feeling minimal benefits in identifying their career choice to 90% in February, agreeing or strongly agreeing that the curriculum indeed benefited them in identifying their career choice (see Table 7). The results of the survey speak to the necessity of such a curriculum. It aligns with the research of Walpole and McDonough (2005), which maintains the lack of knowledge or cultural capital, as it relates to college admission processes, places urban African American and Latino high school students at a disadvantage in the college choice process, in relation to their peers. In that same light, 81% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the curriculum helped them to determine the education requirements of their interest. By the February survey, an unyielding 92% agreed or strongly agreed the career exploration curriculum provided them with an increase in awareness to pay for higher education. I believe this is a critical time in a middle school student's educational path, as research identifies this as the predisposition stage. The stage involves the development of occupational and educational aspirations coupled with the emergence of intentions to continue their education beyond the secondary level (Stage & Hossler, 1989). Further, while Stage and Hossler state the predisposition stage may begin as early as the seventh grade, the concern is with low SES students whose lack of social and cultural capital decreases, and dramatically differs in the range of choices available to them as potential college students (Duncan, 1994).

Based on the results of the surveys given to teacher participants, by February,

80% of the teachers felt the students knew what was required for entry into their specific Careers (see Table 8). Also in February, 80% of the teachers agreed the curriculum assisted the students in identifying what kind of training, if any, was required for students' career choice. Given the above information, I concur with Chen (2009), who contends the involvement of participating teachers can influence the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to assist students in preparing for post secondary transition.

The research states this stage involves the development of occupational and educational aspirations along with the emergence of intentions to continue education beyond the secondary level (Stage & Hossler, 1989). As pointed out by Schwartz (2009), middle school students arrive with limited career aspirations. Coupled with the lack of cultural and social capital, the team was committed to making a difference as early as the 6th grade. The curriculum consisted of lessons that were based around the predisposition stage depicted by Stage and Hossler (1989). The outcomes of the lessons solidified the need for a curriculum and access to various sources of information as described by Tierney and Auerbach (2005). Research urges early intervention to affect long-term, systematic change in the culture and climate of schools for positive outcomes (Somer et al., 1999).

Research supports a notable trend of teachers who are rethinking every part of their jobs, meaning their relationship with students, colleagues, their responsibilities, and the form and content of curriculum (Lanier, 2011). Most telling is that the teachers' perspective of the students had been influenced from the first survey, in October 2009 (see Table 8). I believe implementing the curriculum with teachers played a vital role, given the reality that schools today are predominantly replacing the role of the parent;

especially in the low-income communities. Moreover, parents of low SES students have the propensity to be unable or unknowledgeable of the college process (Tierney et al., 2005). Additionally, parents of low-socioeconomic status (SES) tend to be less involved in their children's education than higher SES parents, as measured by traditional forms of involvement such as classroom volunteerism and working with children at home (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004).

Qualitative Data

The students also seemed to develop a sense of ownership of their education, by showing a newfound respect for their teachers. As evidenced when listening to students' dialogue, Luis stated, "Carlos you have too many blanks on this application, Ms. Canon is not going to appreciate that." Carlos replied, "I know…, I'm going to look back at the sample on my flash drive before I turn it in." Luis stated, "You know what Ms. Canon always told us about having your resources ready." It appeared that the more time students and/or teachers were exposed to the curriculum, the more benefits there were.

Qualitative Results on Student Interviews

The once 6th grade Woodbine Middle School students were interviewed in September 2010. The purpose was to qualitatively analyze if the projected objectives were met. Specifically, what impact, if any, was made upon the students after the curriculum modifications and interventions were implemented by the five Woodbine teacher participants? The curriculum was implemented with the then 6th grade students starting in September of 2009, and ending in March 2010. The overarching objective of the curriculum (Appendix E) was to increase their view of themselves as a college student and develop career aspirations. Sixteen students took part of the interview. Two

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themes were extracted from the interviews: maturity and understanding and learning and exploring interests. The following paragraphs provide excerpts from the interview that support each of the themes that were extracted.

Research argues that a balanced middle school program is one that has a curriculum in which all areas are taught to reveal opportunities that will assist students to develop and appraise their own interest and talents (Wiles & Bondi, 1998).There is evidence of the benefit to reinstating the Career Interest Inventory in the students' response during the interviews.

Maturity and understanding. The students indicated that the curriculum helped develop maturity and understanding of what goes into planning one's future and career. When asked about sharing his interest in entrepreneurship, Russel reported a mature response regarding understanding and respect, "Yes, because now when I talked to my classmates, they understand how serious I am about what I want to become, and I will respect what they want to become." Ortez offered support for this theme by stating, "I wanted to be a professional skateboarder, and now I know I can do that and still get a business degree from college. There I can learn how to run my own business and be my own boss." When asked about preparation to a higher education, Josh replied, "I found out that it's not all about passing tests. Even if I have good test scores, I have to send all my information on time, to the college, or I won't be able to go." Further on, Josh indicated how he was going to follow the example of his teacher when he becomes "qualified in math or science to teach in a school" and "Teach kids how to look on the computer about what they want to be." After discussing her career interest, Paula, who is involved in the Champ/Gear Up program indicated that, "Ms. India from the Champ

program wants me to talk to the new sixth graders coming into the program because she said I was on the right track." Erica stated support for this theme by the following:

> I know it's not just a dream to be a lawyer, and I know I have to keep my grades up so when I send my college application in, I'm going to be ready. What if you don't hear from the once college you applied to? I'm going to send applications to more than one college. If you had the opportunity to apply for scholarships to help pay for law school, would you take the time to apply? Oh yes, most definitely. I know I have to write an essay telling why I think I deserve the scholarship.

One student stated:

> I want to be a professional skateboarder. Before the classes with Ms. Val, I thought I had to choose either skateboarding or work at some meaningless job for [the] rest of my life. Now I know I can pursue professional skateboarding and still go to college to be a Math teacher.

Nedia reported that she sees herself going to college to be a pediatrician based on her experience, "Yes, my uncle lives with us and he has to take medication two times a day and I give them to him." Nathaniel indicated how he would raise money for college, "I plan to save my money from fixing computers for people and build my own computer." Desere simply stated, "Oh I'm going to college, and I know it's going be hard." Chauncy indicated that her father's wish to have done something different than stocking shelves at night helped her come to the following conclusion, "I think it means I have a chance to go further in my schooling; I want [to] take advantage of everything." When asked if she thought her father would have earned better pay if he continued his education, she added, "Yes, it hurts to see him work so hard and not earn the money he deserves."

Research states early intervention programs play a pivotal role in the lives of minority youth. These initiatives can also decrease the gaps between the participation of

whites and minorities and address the lack of representation of minorities in certain

career fields, including mathematics and science (Martin 1999).

Learning and exploring interests. Students indicated learning the process of

entering into and exploring their career interests. Russell offered support for this theme

by stating, "Yes, I was excited about looking up entrepreneur and finding out [that] to

have a business I need to go to business school and get a degree in business, before

jumping out there without my certifications." Jerry commented on the exploration of the

interests of others when asked what portion of the curriculum was most helpful,

"Watching those clips about how kids my age get to try out their dreams with adults who

give them a chance to experience what they are interested in; like flying planes." Anna

indicated how her teacher helped teach her about different schools of interest given

Anna's desired field of study, "I want to be a veterinarian, and while I was in Ms. Val's

class, she showed us how to go on the computer and explore the different veterinarian

schools that I can attend." Later, Anna added, "I found out [that] because more people

own animals, they need more veterinarians. And they teach you how to do surgery like a

doctor, work in the lab, and in the office." Enrique indicated learning about applying for

tuition on the computer, "I found out looking up on the computer how I can apply for

grants and scholarships to help me with paying for tuition." Similarly, Rita indicated how

she told her grandmother about applying for tuition, "I told her I know how to fill out the

application and my teachers will help too if we need extra help." Andrew simply offered

support for this theme by indicating what he can apply from a college education, "I

learned in Ms. Suder's class about becoming a nurse practitioner. Then I found out I will

go to college, and earn a master's degree. After that I can work with people of all ages

and physicians."Jeremy also indicated learning about tuition based on the career exploration curriculum, "I learned how to apply for different scholarships and grants and never stop checking the computer for new ones."

Terenzini et al. (2001) contend a clear understanding of how Americans of underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds develop aspirations to attend college ready themselves for college work, choose among institutions, and enroll and persist to graduation has eluded researchers and policy makers alike. While reflecting on the students' responses, the significance of becoming aware of their interest and exploration emerged as a key theme. This theme may play a role in demystifying what has eluded researchers, and identify possible factors influencing higher education persistence.

Several students were given the opportunity to collaborate with students who were freshmen in college via Distance Learning. The venue is an Internet connective means for students to keep in touch with teachers, and provide access to communication between students. The technology is often used on college campuses to provide global access to students.

A few of the students weighed in as a result of the process. Monte stated:

At first I was scared to ask questions, but when Mr. Smit informed the teacher on the internet (Distance Learning) that we're just beginning to learn about our career interest, and finding out how we may need to fill out applications for college, I felt more comfortable to ask questions. That was cool, I learned you have to pick a major when you go to college; I can't wait to go.

Student Tina added, "That distance learning was awesome! I asked that girl was college classes hard; she said if you don't study, that makes it hard. But she also told me like Mr. Allen said, I can do it!"

Shawn made an observation that seemed to leave an impression: "Did you see the sweat shirts they were wearing? All of them were sporting the college name." Shawn then added, "I'm going wear my Florida sweat shirt too, you watch!"

The positive outcome of the students collaborating via distance learning lead the teachers at Woodbine Middle to keep in touch with the students attending the college. The efforts between teachers seemed to align with the research that argues low socioeconomic status (SES) students accumulate different capitals while in college and display a different habitus, both in college and afterwards than their high SES peers (Bourdieu, 1990). Further, while college students from high SES backgrounds are converting the capital accumulated in college into graduate school attendance, and most prestigious degrees at higher rates, the low SES students are converting their capital into membership in the workforce at higher rates, but securing lower paying positions than their high SES peers.

Johnson (2000) interviewed sixth and ninth graders as part of a study in Student Awareness, and found that most of the students had only a shallow understanding of how school relates to work. Additionally, the students showed limited awareness of the knowledge and skills needed for work and minimal cognizance of how to develop them. Most significantly, the participants had little or no awareness of the type of work involved in their career aspirations. The aforementioned research has shown the urgency of school-work needing to be career specific to be relevant.

Qualitative Results on Classroom Observations

First phase. As I entered the classrooms, I would intently listen to students' dialogue. Mr. Allen's class was the most challenging to observe. His students seemed to

resist the plan in the beginning and were not shy in making their opinions known. One

student went on to say the first week, "Why do you want us to stay in school? I can't

continue to stay in school, it's too many years." Karal chimed in stating, "And besides,

it's too long of a day, we should get dismissed early every day." Mr. Allen seemed to be

the perfect teacher for this group of students. Others began to chime in, "School is not fun

and I don't know anyone who went to school and is now rich!" Mr. Allen took a risk and

shared his story: "Look," he said whispering. And they all seemed to settle down and

began to focus on what Mr. Allen had to say:

> I was a kid who was placed in special education classes because I was determined
> to talk about how I was going to be somebody. I told those administrators,
> teachers, and everyone who tried to tell me otherwise… that I'm going to make it
> out of this school and go on to college.

The students seem to be in awe! Their facial expressions seemed to say, "Tell me more."

Mr. Allen had sparked those students' interest and was at a perfect place to begin telling

the students what was planned.

To have observed Mr. Allen's students migrate from their defeating statements in

the first few minutes of the lesson (first phase) to wanting to know more of his plan,

confirmed the urgent need for this population's experiences to be directed towards

college and career aspirations. Research shows low socioeconomic status (SES) students

are less likely to attend college, are more likely to attend less selective institutions when

they do enroll, and have unique college choice processes (Astin, 1993; Hossler, Schmit,

& Vesper, 1999; McDonough, 1997).

Before I could enter Ms. Val's class, I was positively prevented from crossing the

threshold due to students' dialoguing outside the door. She had adorned her door with

several names of colleges, universities, and other higher learning institutions. The

students made comments such as: "Oh look, that's my team, I'm going play for Michican." Another student stated, "You like Michigan? I'm going for this one: Temple!" The girls were slow to respond. Janis replied, "I don't know, I wish I could go…" Sarah sounded off, "Girl, if I could go to college, I would go to the best school in the country." Ms. Val came to the door with a gleaming smile stating, "If you like what's on the door then you would like what I have planned for you today." The students rushed inside to finish listening to what Ms. Val had to say," I would like to begin by saying, 'Yes you can go to those colleges and universities you see on my door and we're going to find out how to do just that!'" Ms. Val's exposure to the names of higher learning could be the first time most of her students talked about college and universities with an adult. Research supports such encouragement, indicating that the ways in which SES affects students' choices is mediated in part, by parents' knowledge of what it takes to prepare for higher education (McDonough, 1997) (Observational journal October, 2009).

Second phase. One particular student, Jerry, explained what portion of the curriculum was most helpful:"Watching those clips about how kids my age, get to try out their dreams with adults, who give them a chance to experience what they are interested in; like flying planes." For verification, I asked which clips. Jerry continued, "The ones called 'Young Icons.'" As I listened to the student's enthusiasm about the clips, I was moved to allow him to download a copy of the clip for him to access at his leisure and share with others students (Observational journal, December 18, 2009)

As time went on, I consistently noticed how students, after interacting with the curriculum with their peers, seemed to view themselves as college students. Research shows students interacting with others in groups influences their self-awareness

(Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005), and according to Reasoner (1992), curriculum modifications and interventions addressing college as a choice for low SES and minority middle school students influences the predisposition stage generally associated with high socioeconomic status and cultural capital.

A student by the name of Nathaniel was asked, "Do you see yourself as a college student." Nathaniel stated, "When I see myself as a college student, I see myself making a lot of loot (money) before and after I graduate and get my degree." Anxious to question Nathaniel how he had planned to make money before and after college, I asked, "How so Nathaniel?" "I like computers and I found out I can make money using the computer like that FaceBook guy." I replied, "You're referring to Mark Zuckerberg." Nathaniel commented, "Yes, he's a millionaire." I could clearly see Nathaniel was excited about his interest and determined to have money. I was not about to deter him one bit, but I wanted to make sure he was realistic in his plan by asking, "What are you doing now?" Nathaniel replied, "I can fix computers and my neighbors ask me to help them sometime. I get a couple of dollars and sometimes computer parts. I plan to save my money from fixing computers for people and build my own computer." I reminded Nathaniel to also save his money for computer training or college. The impact of classroom observations was captured in my journal: "I am more convinced of how vital it is for every student entering Woodbine Middle school should be given the Career Interest Inventory, and allowed to explore their career through all content area teachers"(Observational journal, December 15, 2009).

Third phase. Keeping with the thinking that our youth could be making a connection between their education and goals, I sought to ask Chauncy, "What advice

about college or his career information she would like to get from his family." Chauncy responded, "How to not go through what my father is going through." I then stated, "And may I ask, what could that be?" Chauncy continued, saying, "My dad said he wishes he learned in school what we're learning now, maybe he wouldn't be working in a grocery store stocking shelves at night right now." "Wow, Chauncy, what does that say to you?" "I think it means, I have a chance to go further in my schooling, I want take advantage of everything." I was compelled to then ask, "Do you think if your father would have continued his education he would have a better paying job?" Chauncy emphatically replied, "Yes, it hurts to see him work so hard and not earn the money he deserves." I agreed with Chauncy and saluted his interpretation for being on point. Listening to this particular student's response brought to mind the predisposition stage, which involves the development of occupational and educational aspirations, as well as the emergence of intentions to further education beyond high school (Stage & Hossler, 1989) (Observational journal, February 17, 2010).

Prior to observing Mr. Allen's class on this particular day, I was reminded of the circumstances surrounding the option of utilizing the technology (Distance Learning). Distance learning allows people to see the individual you are communicating with. During the team's planning stage, Mr. Allen suggested infusing distance learning into the classroom, to provide students with a live, interactive, forum. To my surprise as well as Mr. Allen, the session was prepared for his class and the students were deservingly excited about what was about to take place.

Upon arriving to the class, I heard students using terms such as tuition, campus, textbooks, and accepted. Students seemed to have arranged themselves directly in front of

the camera and ready to ask questions. The visiting college students opened the session

by greeting our students, and the students from Woodbine Middle returned the greeting.

Students began to ask questions similar to, "How long are your classes?" "Are your

classes difficult to pass?" to "How much does your school cost to attend?" The college

students responded favorably to the Woodbine students and were patient with each of

their questions (Observational journal, February 23, 2010).

Having the opportunity to observe Mr. Allen's students in this venue was

paramount to their educational path for several reasons. Research contends higher-

socioeconomic-status parents are more likely to talk to their children about college (Stage

& Hossler, 1998). Further, parents of higher SES are more knowledgeable about financial

aid programs (Stephenson & Eisele, 1982. Finally, higher socioeconomic status students

are more predisposed to make financial plans to pay for college (Flint, 1992).

Implications

In the past, Woodbine utilized the Career Interest Inventory (CII) (Appendix A)

and made use of the instrument until the 2005-2006 school terms. Previously the process

to employ the inventory involved 7th graders exclusively. The purpose of this practice

was to place students in the theme based Small Learning Community initiative for their

eighth grade year. To establish career and college awareness, the initiative was predicated

on the results of students' interest inventories and the premise of existing early

intervention programs and initiatives. The research clearly states the importance of

students having access to career/college education information earlier than ninth and

commonly eleventh grade (Perna & Swail, 2001). Early intervention initiatives are

designed to provide disadvantaged students with opportunity to develop the skills,

knowledge, confidence, aspirations, and overall preparedness for college early enough in their schooling so as to influence their ultimate educational attainment levels (Perna & Swail, 2001).

Interviews were also conducted among 16 students over a 1-week period of time. The students were asked a series of open-ended questions pertaining to the updated curriculum that was implemented by the five teachers. The responses provided by the students were assessed for commonalities, or themes. The themes that were extracted from the student interviews are presented in the following paragraphs.

Conclusion

The five practitioners are credited with recognizing the urgency to implement a curriculum that addresses the conceptual framework of the study, the predisposition stage that can begin as early as the seventh grade. As evidenced during the last phase in February, 2010, student surveys demonstrated 90% of them either agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum assisted them in identifying their career choice (see Table 7). Further, 87% of the students felt the curriculum assisted them in identifying the educational requirements for their career. As early as the second phase, 100% of the students strongly agreed that a higher education would give them a better chance to do well in life. By the second phase, 80% of the teachers felt that the students knew what the educational requirements were for their career interest and how to explore them. By the final phase in February, 2010, 100% of the teacher participants agreed that the career exploration curriculum should be implemented by the 6th grade level and by all content area teachers.

The 16students that were interviewed helped to provide a qualitative perspective of the impact of the curriculum through the theme of maturity, coherence making, and exploring interests. This was observed through the interview process as well as classroom observations. Students talked about doing what they liked to do, and connecting it with proper training. Additionally, students became cognizant of time management and meeting deadlines. Most telling was the young lady who spoke of how it hurts to see her father earn so little, but work so hard. These comments support what research states about the pivotal role played by early intervention programs in the lives of minority youth.

While exploring their interest, students indicated finding the computer a great resource. They were able to determine whether their career interests required college or a trade school, a degree or a license, or both. These outcomes immediately addressed what Johnson (2000) found after interviewing 6th and 9th graders. Here the work showed students had a limited awareness of the knowledge and skills needed for work. The college and career aspirations curriculum has proven to be relevant to the participating students.

Observing the classrooms of the five participating teachers through each of the three phases was also very informative. Students progressed from being resistant and disengaged to being participatory, while perceiving themselves as college students. Their interactions with one another and the relevant materials presented was consistent with the work of Print and Coleman (2003), which suggests this form of classroom interaction works towards building trust cooperation and acquiring networking skills, all of which are needed for future success.

Chapter IX

Leadership Reflection

Introduction

In this action research study, I sought to understand myself as a leader, specifically as a teacher leader, and to determine if or in what ways my leadership was challenged or changed as I engaged in the process of seeking ways to promote student career aspirations. The work done by Rumberger (2000), and the work by Orr et al. (2002), set the premise for my interest in the area of student career aspirations. While they cite school as a vital source of a child's educational path, Rumberger (2002) contends children disengage from school as early as first grade. Research shows, allowing students to explore their interest prior to the typical ninth grade, is considered early intervention (Perna & Swail, 2001) and recommended to effect long-term systematic change in the culture and climate of schools (Somer et al., 1999).

If we expect to compete globally as a society, why are we seemingly ignoring our future, or are we unaware of what it means to simply care? According to Watson (2006), to consciously care is to intentionally engage in an authentic transpersonal relationship to connect with and embrace the spirit or soul of another. This chapter focuses on my leadership reflection, which helped me to gain a new perspective, listen to what people care about most by recognizing their comments had history that deserved being explored.

Most telling, the journey through the study assisted me in validating that my leadership was instrumental in teachers viewing their efforts as a vital "change" initiative. As an overview of my leadership actions, I gained a sense of confidence in my ability to

promote an ethic of care. While functioning from the buy-in factor, and through daily reflection, it became evident that my leadership centered on moral purpose as well as an ethic of care. This chapter also includes my leadership platform, research questions answered, limitations, and recommendations.

Leadership Platform

My leadership platform incorporates aspects of servant leadership, and transpersonal caring, while being anchored in an ethic of care and a spiritual foundation as my code of ethics. Greenleaf's study (as cited in Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) was instrumental in aiding me to take ownership of servant leadership and adjusted my mindset by removing the apprehension of having to compromise my theory of transpersonal caring. He believed that effective leadership emerges from a desire to help others. "This perspective stands in sharp contrast to those theories (such as transactional leadership) that emphasize control or "overseeing" those within the organization" (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 17). Greenleaf embraces servant leadership as a unique perspective on the position of the leader within the organization. Instead of occupying a position at the top of a hierarchy, the servant leader is positioned at the center of the organization and the individuals within it, as opposed to interacting with a few high-level mangers who also occupy positions in the upper strata of the hierarchy.

Beck's (1994) view on caring is instrumental in causing my theory of transpersonal caring to swim closer to shore. It is through the examination of ethical caring that I have discovered a significant player in the arena of leadership. Beck covers conceptual information in direct line of caring by specifically establishing caring as important to the practitioner in order to address the issue of ethics. Beck (1994) brings

into focus the purpose of a caring ethic is to assist the administration to embrace the idea that each person deserves the opportunity to live and learn in a supportive, nurturing environment. They would, therefore, obtain methods to promote personal and community well-being by involving three tasks:

- Thoughtfully and reflectively cultivate a "driving vision [that would imbue] decisions and practices with meaning, placing powerful emphasis on why things are done as well as how" (Lipsitz, 1984, quoted in Sergiovanni, 1987, as cited in Beck, 1994, p. 41).

- Through dialogues with others, carefully and realistically assess the system in which they work, considering needs and abilities of various persons, the cultural and moral fabric of the organization, and political constraints and imperatives.

- Superimpose a vision of the ideal upon the real and seek organizational strategies for moving the latter toward the former (Beck, 1994, p. 79).

Reflecting upon my spiritual background obtained through life experiences, spiritual mentor (Hilton, 1987) and church leadership (McLean, 1998), I have had the opportunity to be guided and grow under ethical standards. Fortunately, the standards were part of the system that never became an issue during my nurturing. I continue to view spirituality as a guiding force of my leadership in conjunction with transpersonal caring, as a top priority for the purpose of serving others and accountability. However, I am aware of the profound effects upon individuals who may experience spiritual leadership that is unethical, and there is an increased chance that those individuals who are affected, may have a difficult time recovering from the encounter. In a more similar

vein, I believe not all individuals have allowed a spiritual foundation to be laid upon their life. Having a spiritual foundation has greatly influenced my leadership platform. To espouse to be a servant, transpersonal caring leader, I believe has its origins in understanding the benefits of being unselfish as well as having a sense of the destruction that awaits for selfish acts, that tend to emerge when a person is unaware of who they are.

It is with respect for the free will of the human spirit, that I approach servant leadership with the assumption, that there may lie the possibility that not all people have in place a spiritual foundation, and if so, allow it to be cultivated. My belief of a spiritual foundation is a philosophy or religion. According to Webster (2006), philosophy is defined as theory or logical analysis of the principles underlying conduct, thought, knowledge, and the nature of the universe. Additionally, religion is any specific system of belief, worship, etc., often involving a code of ethics. With that being said, interacting with the possibility of a person(s) operating without a philosophical or religious foundation, trials and tribulations may become a norm within an organization, creating an atmosphere of constant chaos. Therefore as a servant, transpersonal leader, when faced with a situation, my spiritual foundation is put to the test, and it is up to me to perceive the circumstance as a test and assess my behavior in terms of what I may have learned from the encounter. Lastly, it is of utmost importance for me to be in a constant mind set of creating an atmosphere of mutual respect to circumvent a potential chaotic atmosphere. Wheatley (2006) further adds, chaos is the principle of reflective human action and when one is in acceptance of chaos they are acknowledging the messiness of life.

While operating from the change framework of Fullan (2001), I functioned from

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my espoused leadership platform of an ethic of care. An ethic of care is when each person deserves the opportunity to live and learn in a supportive and nurturing environment (Beck, 1994). It was during phase one of the implementation cycle (IV) that Mr. Allen's students were slow to come aboard and he was quickly slipping back into the frustration that brought us to the initiative. In support of him and the students, I used the side-by-side method of teaching alongside him for the purpose of absorbing some of the flack the students presented. I encouraged Mr. Allen to make use of his path to higher education by sharing his story in efforts to help him reconnect to his students. After a few more visits to Mr. Allen's class, he was connecting to his students through their career interest and future aspirations. This removed the pressure off of him to react and provided the students a fresh response to their needs. It took a few encounters like this to convince the students that their interests were actually driving this project.

Transpersonal care refers to transmitting concern for the inner core of an individual in hopes of transitioning one from their ego itself (Watson, 2006). Actively listening to the teachers communicate their frustrations about student engagement and rising behaviors during the professional development (PD) in Cycle I, I found the transpersonal caring leader hearing more than the words alone projected. Listening to the biography of the words, perceiving where they were born seemed to provide me with the appropriate responses at key points in the discussion that helped move the faculty into a more productive position so as to begin planning. Asking if any of the teachers had experienced a teachable moment, which according to Cain et al., (2008), is not a time one can plan for, and may require a brief digression from the original lesson plan. The staff seemed to find value in inquiring about their moments, for they were able to share how

their teachable moments with their students allowed them the opportunity to explain a concept that inadvertently seized the students' interest. The staff wanted to experience more of these moments, and in my conveying a concern for that same desire, showed them that I wanted that experience for them as well. I also felt their disappointment, when one of the counselors expressed how the students were not taking advantage of the CHAMP/GEAR UP program. In acknowledgment of their need to move beyond their emotional state, I offered anyone who would like to further extend the dialogue, and perhaps explore other options for our students' career aspirations, to feel free to contact me via district e-mail.

Servant leadership, according to Greenleaf (1977), is understanding the needs of those within the organization and in doing so, developing the skills of those within the organization, which is one of what Greenleaf postulates as a central dynamic of servant leadership. The way in which this dynamic manifested itself during the initiative was that of providing continued support during the implementation phase of the initiative. I realized I needed to do more than simply talk to the teachers or be a sounding board for their frustrations. I needed to empower them to be the change in their own feelings of frustration, in light of the recent negative behaviors demonstrated by the students. I walked into the classroom and observed Enrique telling his classmate Jimmy, how to further explore their interest. I brought Mr. Allen over to the area where the students were, and encouraged him to listen to his students. Enrique stated to his peer, "Since you want to be a pilot, type in pilot and see what information comes up." He went further to say, "The best part is they will usually have a link on their website that directs you to schools that you can apply to for classes." Mr. Allen was proud of his students and stated,

"These two guys were my main behavior issues in the class." I informed Mr. Allen, "You have just witnessed making a difference in the lives of those students, and be sure to note, how Enrique recommended to his classmate Jimmy, extending his education beyond the high school level." Bringing to Mr. Allen's attention how his students have begun to flourish as a result of the initiative seemed to facilitate the development of his leadership skills and my servant leadership to have its place in time.

Another example of servant leadership took place in the teacher's lounge of Woodbine Middle. I observed two of the participants, Ms. Val and Mr. Smit, empathizing with a co-worker who was expressing their dissatisfaction with a few students, and how they are disrupting the entire class. Mr. Smit and Ms. Val kindly stated, "If you could find out what those students interest are…" and then Ms. Val interjected saying, "And then teach to their interest, you will see a turnaround in those students and in your class, won't she Mr. Smit? Tell her!" Mr. Smit sarcastically responded, "I was, but you took the words from my mouth." Nonetheless, Mr. Smit went on to add, "This way you can reconnect to your students." I could have taken this occurrence as a "I told you so moment," however, the servant leader in me retreated, allowing the teacher participants to meet the needs of their colleague by giving sound advice, that they believed was authentic, valuable, and an extension of their confidence in their ability to promote students' learning, which is identified as teacher efficacy (Hoy, 2000).

The most profound occasion during the project occurred while I was attempting to enter one of the classrooms for an observation. The principal, Ms. West, approached me with a classroom coverage slip while stating, "I need you to do something more important." I immediately viewed her actions as intentions to impede the initiative, and

therefore, the servant leader in me maintained the atmosphere of mutual respect, refusing to respond with any negative remarks. I interpreted this particular incident as the principal perceiving the initiative as a change, that threatened her competence and confidence to lead, and most significant, had the potential to redefine her proficiency (Evans, 1996).

Despite the principal's intentions, my leadership role continued to be in the capacity of a servant leader, where I saw a need in others and felt compelled to address it. Most importantly, I believe without my spiritual foundation, it would have been impossible for me to lead others during this initiative. Because of my strong belief that we serve a higher being, my overreaching goal was to always improve the quality of education for the students, which at times may also mean serving the needs of teachers as well. This built moral purpose and satisfaction in knowing that I had the capabilities to lead others and they had the confidence in allowing me to lead them. My leadership platform incorporated aspects of transpersonal caring, servant, and altruistic leadership, rooted in the ethic of care. Beck (1994) advocates caring as an important facet to the practitioner in order to address the issue of ethics. The research further states the purpose of a caring ethic is to assist the administration to embrace the idea that each person deserves the opportunity to live and learn in a supportive, nurturing environment.

Through this study I was able to substantiate that my leadership facilitated the teacher participants to view their efforts as a "change initiative" and to consider the impact the college and career planning could have on student lives. In addition, each cycle presented an array of findings that are similar to what the methods of all teaching should be, which is to have the support to draw on many different disciplines for any

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given lesson. If the right to an education is a fundamental human right, then exposing a

child to his interest may provide the opportunity for him to develop into a well-rounded

human being. As an advocate for low SES students as well as their teachers, in addition

to the key findings from the preceding chapters, I have attempted to answer the research

questions in the next section.

Research Questions Answered

How did a middle school curriculum focus on college and career exploration to

impact the predisposition stage of low SES students?

According to Schwartz (2009), the greatest predictor of success in college is early

intervention of academic preparation. It is evident from the data collected the connections

and correlations reaffirmed the need for early intervention to influence our students'

predisposition stage, which involves the development of occupational and educational

aspirations along with the emergence of intentions to continue education beyond the

secondary level as postulated by Stage and Hossler (1989). To establish career and

college awareness, the initiative was predicated on the results of students' interest

inventories and the premise of existing early intervention programs and initiatives.

The initiative to promote college and career aspirations for low SES students

parallels the work of Perna and Swail (2001), that spoke about early intervention

initiatives being designed to provide disadvantaged students with opportunity to develop

the skills, knowledge, confidence, aspirations, and overall preparedness for college early

enough in their schooling, so as to influence their vital educational attainment levels. It is

hoped that this initiative, like that of Martin's (1999), can decrease the gap between the

participation of whites and minorities, and address the lack of representation of minorities

in career fields including mathematics and science. In correlation to Martin (1999), the baseline data in the study showed when students were asked to name their most and least favorite subject in school, out of 90 students, 74 responded. Of the nine subjects selected, students choose math/science as their favorite subject. Mathematics was named 53 times and science was named 45 times for a total of 98 or 34%.

The predisposition stage developed by Don Hossler and Karen Gallagher (1987) is a three-phase college choice model, which divides the process into the stages of predisposition, search, and choice. Their model has been a prominent focus for other scholarly works, unfortunately, has concentrated primarily on the stages after predisposition: search and choice. Further, of all three phases in the Hossler and Gallagher model (1987), predisposition continues to be the focus of the least amount of research and is often considered a black box of psychological and sociological functions (Mau , 1995). Leading with the understanding that this particular stage (predisposition) has received the least amount of research, I chose to make an attempt to impact that predisposition stage through the middle school curriculum.

Most curriculums implemented in the school arena are predicated on some form of standardized testing for the purpose of assessing academic achievement, although these test continue to generate gender and race gaps in achievement despite decades of national concern. I strongly believe it would be beneficial to place equal importance to implementing a career interest inventory upon entry of middle school as a means of meeting students earlier in the pipeline. Prior to developing the curriculum for the study, the results of students' career interest were shared with the teacher participants. Of the five, sixth grade classes, it was estimated, more than half of the low SES students could

benefit from early curriculum interventions that aimed to prepare them for their career interest.

To continuously test students to assess for academic purposes and not access their career interest may contribute to the research that contends many studies take for granted the ways that traditional understandings of student characteristics account for student predisposition to participating in postsecondary education (Mau, 1995). Reluctance to expose students to their career interest as early as the 6th grade, I believe, is contributing to that psychological and sociological black box postulated by research, and in preventing moral purpose to manifest. Additionally, a curriculum designed to engage minority and low SES students in strategies and interventions that are specifically geared toward increasing the students' view of themselves as a college student, may also shed light on the *black box*, theorized by Fry (2003) and meet our students holistically.

What were the most effective curriculum intervention strategies that promoted college and career aspirations among low SES students?

The curriculum was adapted to the recommendations suggested by Print and Coleman (2003). The teacher participants played a pivotal role in the delivery of the curriculum, which entailed engaging students in the college application process, and visitation to urban and rural campuses via Internet access. Teachers shared their college path experiences and exposed students to professionals in various career fields by way of a Career Day. The curriculum (thematic plan) and strategies recommended by Print and Coleman (2003) allowed for student to student and student to teacher interactions in the classroom (academic discourse); group processes, which facilitated communication utilizing visual diagrams; and cooperative learning that works towards building trust,

cooperation, and acquiring networking skills. The purpose of the components of Print and Coleman's (2003) work lies in enhancing social capital. Of equal importance are the teachers implementing the curriculum, which gave rise to teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy according to Hoy (2000) is teachers' confidence in their ability to promote students' learning. Although teachers at Woodbine Middle have constant student to teacher interaction, it may not necessarily be positive in nature. Therefore, the teachers and the students misplace valuable time and place the student in danger of disengaging from the existing curriculum that is more than likely designed to adhere to standards that are not conducive to promoting college and career aspirations. I believe, as a result, the teacher who is expected to be as effective and efficient runs the risk of losing confidence in his personal teaching ability.

The curriculum also called for teachers to incorporate the building of students' self-esteem in order to address the need for students to view themselves as college students. In doing so, the research team incorporated Reasoner (1992), which suggested one on one interaction, positive praise, referring to students as their career interest or the higher education institution they aspire to attend. The research contends these actions will show students that their teachers care and in turn will build students' self-concept/self-esteem.

How did a middle school curriculum focus on career aspirations help to enhance social capital of its low SES students?

The reality of funding the cost of public education has always been a debatable topic and continues to loom over our public school systems. Research shows low SES students are connected in low-income schools (Haskins et al., 2009), meaning lack of

resources in the school and income of the surrounding area. Although Woodbine Middle

would become a recipient of a grant or donation from time to time, the disparities seem to

persist. This perplexing dilemma seem to lend itself to the Economic Mobility Project

(2009) perspective of social capital, as the non-financial resources available to

individuals through their relationships to people or institutions that shape the capabilities

of an individual to take advantage or not take advantage of the opportunities that are

connected to mobility. It was revealed during the professional development session

(Cycle II), that despite encouragement from the counselors to the students to complete

applications for college provided by government programs such as CHAMP/GEAR UP,

the students, of all grade levels, were not retrieving the applications, and when and if they

obtained them, they were not being returned.

While some students of Woodbine Middle take advantage of outings and

programs offered as free or at a low cost, there still exist a number of students who are

reluctant to take advantage of these opportunities. It is not unusual to encounter students

stating: "I don't want to go on that trip," and "I've been there already." Once more, if

students were exposed early to a college/career readiness curriculum, perhaps they would

better understand the significance of, for example, trips that visit a college campus or

programs that reveal higher education opportunities.

The dream of a college education for some students is actualized through parental

aspirations and expectations, but for others, that dream is actualized through school

personnel such as counselors, teachers, and administrators. Unfortunately, in many urban

schools in which students of low socioeconomic status are in need of this service, the

ratio of student to counselor is 457:1 as identified by the College Board Advocacy and

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Policy Center (2011). Additionally, research (Hanson, 2011) continues to stress how, although it is not readily discussed, one of the teacher's primary jobs is to be an advocate for the children in her classroom and school. Further, that teachers may have to go beyond providing merely an education, meaning actively working to protect students' welfare, involving parents in school activities, and promoting and raising awareness of educational programs. The providing of early curriculum interventions that foster college exploration and teacher to student dialogue about their aspirations and avocation for accessing opportunity, may play a prominent role in their social and cultural capital.

How did my leadership theory promote the development and implementation of a career and college exploration curriculum?

My involvement in this initiative guided me through a plan that appeared to require managing, but in reality, called for careful observation and listening. Argyris (2000) categorizes my experience as "non-actionable advice" which gave birth to a new perspective for me. Change cannot be managed, perhaps led, but it cannot be controlled (Argyris, 2000). I saw this unfold while taking in the insights from counselor interviews and teachers during the professional development. Counselors, despite their laissez-faire attitude towards how our low SES students were experiencing their college/career aspirations, were receptive to the fact that more needed to be done. Some of the teachers, fortunately, had teachable moments with their students which fostered college/career aspirations, however, were short lived due to the absence of a curriculum which allowed for such good intentions. Through the skill of listening, I was able to interpret the feedback from the teachers and counselors as intentions for effective change that voiced:

"We are packed and ready to go, we just need a vehicle to get there." I soon realized that vehicle was me, leading individual intentions to a place of change.

In many ways the process was similar to past experiences involving walks of faith, which is "no stranger" to my life patterns. What was different and most uplifting is the fact that, in the journey this time, "I didn't go at it alone." Stepping up, and having the confidence in myself on a mission is one thing, but asking co-workers to step up and take ownership for why they think our students are struggling, became a matter of what I came to know as Buy-In (Mihalic, 2002).

I would like to add, each of the participants was aware of my previous accomplishments as being honored as Teacher of the Year in 1998, and again in 2001. They had demonstrated their confidence in me as a teacher with their votes, and this may have contributed to their willingness to *buy-in* to my intentions. Mihalic (2002) maintains that to accomplish buy-in, suggestions and questioning must be taken to heart. In my experience throughout the initiative, suggestions were generated from the professional development, focus group, feedback from classroom observations, teacher and student surveys, and informal conversations with teachers. The total sum of each sector provided valuable insight throughout the development and implementation of the curriculum. Moreover, I would argue to accomplish *buy-in* is to listen to what people care about most in the situation at hand, which according to Kegan and Lahey (2001) will identify and align to what they are committed. Comments from two of the participants during informal conversations were as follows: "I love my job, but I don't think I'm getting through to these kids, and Administration will make assumptions about your teaching abilities based on a student's behavior."

As a teacher-leader listening to my colleagues I heard genuine concerns, recognizing their words had history that warranted being explored (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). In order to address their concerns, the research suggests reflecting on the biography of these concerns by asking: (a) When was it born? (b) How long have you lived with this concern? and (c) Where did do you think it got its start? (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). As a researcher and caring, servant leader, I by no means take these questions lightly, and in short, have utilized similar inquiries as a means of reflective practice since I entered the teaching field in 1982.

Most of the conversations that stemmed from these questions were informally addressed prior to the participants buying into the research project, and continued throughout the process. The dialogue served as a basis for our relationship, set the foundation for trust. Additionally, I utilized my accomplishment as Teacher of the Year as a venue to express to the participants that experiencing a breakthrough with our underrepresented students will show you, what you do, matters. And I believe, providing the opportunity for those to learn of their career interest and potential, validates their worth, and in turn will do the same for the teaching profession.

It would not be unlikely that one would view this leadership through a social justice platform when taking into account that social justice is based on human rights and equality (Wikipedia, 2012c). However, a great degree of the concept pertains to economic egalitarianism, which described by Novak (2000), has intellectual difficulties, and therefore can become a term of art whose operational meaning is, "We need a law against that" (p. 1). He further contends social justice can become an instrument of ideological intimidation, for the purpose of gaining the power of legal coercion. With that

being the circumstance surrounding social justice, I recognize the need to level the playing field, not from the matter of a legal stance, but more from one of morality and care.

Throughout the study, I was able to substantiate that my leadership facilitated the teacher participants to view their efforts as a "change" initiative, and soon discovered I was drawing energy from two teachers' remarks: "I no longer view these kids as unaware of what education is all about," and "I think my kids can now believe what I say, after seeing for themselves, what possibilities lie ahead for them." Considering the teachers' interpretations seemed to point to the notion that they had begun to take the focus of their frustrations from the forefront and were now refocusing on the students. In a broader sense, the teachers were rediscovering their sense of worth out of the success of the students and allowing me to lead them down the moral path.

As I turned a reflective eye on the comments, and the overall feedback from the study, I realized I was gaining confidence in my ability to promote an ethic of care, while operating from the buy-in factor, which served as the bridge to collectively extend care to the students through the members. The teachers were gaining confidence in their ability to promote students' learning, which is identified as teacher efficacy according to Hoy (2000). While standing on the buy-in, the caring aspect, and now the efficacy platform, I noticed teachers were functioning from their own moral purpose. They seemed to be getting a fresh look at what was once an uphill battle. Evidence of teacher efficacy continued to flourish as evidenced in two of their responses: "I'm less critical of my students," and "I no longer feel like I'm caught between the demands of administration and students, I have strategies, interventions." The teachers reconnecting with their

students through their career interest and future aspirations, inspired me to embrace teacher leadership, and perceived the actions of the teachers as an internal commitment.

Fullan (2001) speaks of internal commitment as essential to the framework of leadership. Similar to the challenge of eliciting care individually, then as a collective endeavor, collective action by itself can be short lived if it is not based on, or does not lead to, a deep sense of internal purpose between the members (Fullan, 2001). Fullan contends the litmus test of all leadership is whether it mobilizes people's commitment, resulting in putting their energy into actions designed to improve things. The teachers collectively, during the development of the curriculum (Cycle III), put in place interventions that would enhance students' social capital, engaging them in dialogue (academic discourse) that would envelope their career aspirations and understanding the likeliness of the student to have these conversations in the home or surrounding community would be less than favorable. Additionally, the teachers adopted techniques that encouraged cooperative learning among the students and to develop networking skills, which have shown to be vital when building social capital. I contend the teachers' display of commitment may also lend itself to teacher-effectiveness. Although teacher-effectiveness is currently found to be debated by researchers due to its wide range of association with multiple variables, such as achievement to the climate of the classroom, Kemp and Hall (1992) associate effective teachers with classrooms in which engaged learning occurs, therefore higher levels of student cooperation, student success, and task involvement prevails. I strongly believe the curriculum modifications and intervention initiative assisted the teachers to be more effective in the classroom and provided a nurturing and caring environment for their students. This ethic of care (Beck, 1994)

seems to have paved the way for internal commitment and set the course for moral purpose.

The task of developing a curriculum (Cycle III) was a welcomed undertaking and empowering opportunity to make a difference. As a continuum of commitment, which I was grateful to be a part of, I had to reflect upon my component in this process. Engaging my servant way of thinking allowed me to be confident in who I am as a spiritual being. Further, to trust in the inner workings of self, and as a servant leader, to listen and develop the skills of those within the initiative. The teachers planned the lessons as if their own children were going to be the recipients of the initiative. They planned to share with the students their path to higher education, and more specifically, their path to teaching, which provided them the opportunity to extend their skills, while exposing the students to information to build their cultural capital.

Throughout the initiative it became clear that my leadership centered on moral purpose and the ethic of care. Ridley (1996) states, "Leaders in all organizations, whether they know it or not, contribute for better or worse to moral purpose in their own organizations and in society as a whole" (p. 15). It is my belief that those around you also deserve to experience that sense of moral purpose in order to experience effective leadership. My commitment to this belief stems from wanting to meet the needs of the whole person, conveying a concern for the individual through his inner core, in hopes of transitioning beyond the ego itself (Watson, 2006).

Allowing change to be guided by moral purpose is perhaps transitioning beyond the status quo. In these complex times, the propensity to resist morality is often common place; leaders must be guided by moral purpose. We have learned how complexity keeps

people on the edge of chaos and research (Wheatley, 2006) defines it as order without predictability. Fullan (2001) agreeably contends how that edge is important, because that is where creativity resides. Fortunately, at Woodbine Middle School, there is a fair amount of chaos to go around. Feedback from the student surveys was instrumental in providing access to the edge, and helped the teacher participants gain the confidence in maintaining coherence. The teacher participants were consistently positive about the curriculum and the way in which the students were responding (Cycle IV). They remained united, implementing the plan with the understanding that the students were not in possession of cultural knowledge skills and abilities often inherited by certain groups in society, in particular those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1990).

I felt the teacher participants' coherence was instrumental in allowing me to continue to lead them in the path of moral purpose. Moral purpose is critical to the long-term success of all organizations (Fullan 2001). More importantly, it is essential for leaders to understand the change process. Fullan contends moral purpose without an understanding of change will result in moral martyrdom. Additionally, leaders who combine a commitment to a moral purpose coupled with a healthy respect for the complexities of the change process, not only will be more successful, but also will unleash deeper moral purpose (Fullan, 2001). Further, Fullan states:

> You don't have to be Mother Theresa to have moral purpose. Some people are deeply passionate about improving life (sometimes to a fault, if they lack one or more of the other four components of leadership: understanding of the change process, strong relationships, knowledge building, and coherence making among multiple priorities). Others have more cognitive approach, displaying less emotion but still being intensely committed to betterment. (Fullan, 2001, p. 13)

Moreover, Fullan (2001) contends whatever your style, every leader, to be effective, strongly recommend working on improving his moral purpose. Additionally, moral

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purpose is regarding both ends and means, and in education, a significant end is to make a difference in the lives of students. Fullan (2001) goes further to state, however, the means of arriving to that end is also critical, especially if you do not treat others for example, teachers, properly and fairly, he warns, you will be a leader without followers.

Limitations

The present study has a few limitations that may prevent the generalizability of the results. This study consisted of five sixth grade classrooms equivalent to 90 students out of the entire student body of 420 students. This is an approximate of the school student population. A larger sample size of student participants may have provided the opportunity to conduct a comparison study of the predisposition influences, understanding the values and beliefs of their peers, the involvement of parents, and how teachers can shape students' occupational aspirations overtime.

My teaching responsibilities some days outweighed my leadership abilities. Like any teacher, there were times when I was asked to cover other classes on my preparation period, when the study required me to observe one of my participating classes during the same day and time. It is very probable that I may have missed important data that would have either complemented or contradicted the current data. Parental expectations and support can play a crucial role in the college aspirations of low socioeconomic status students. Therefore, having parental involvement as part of the study could have perhaps, further enhanced the findings. As I reflect back, I feel that these are limitations of the research that have impacted the study.

Recommendations

Most importantly, rising college enrollment has not translated into substantial increases in the share of African and Latino students who earn four-year degrees (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). Considering the aforementioned research, to best serve our students, we as educators must intervene early, with a curriculum aimed at college and career readiness. Earlier career curriculum interventions may prepare and foster in students the meaning of college success, and contribute to their lack of birth advantages including social capital as well as cultural capital (Fashola & Slavin, 1997).

Although the student to counselors' ratio has improved from 740:1 as identified by Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis (CHEPA, 2003) to 457:1 as identified by College Board Advocacy and Policy Center (2011), our low SES students cannot risk waiting to be informed about higher education by counselors. The study shows college and career curriculum can be implemented by any content area teacher, and the counselors could benefit from the collective support. Specifically designed interventions aimed at allowing students to acknowledge and explore their career interest early may provide a means to meeting students holistically. Moreover, a college and career centered curriculum may assist students in broadening their aspirations beyond the stereotypes of gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. As schools become inundated with students performing proficiently and above on standardized test, a prominent area of competency correlates to self-knowledge (Akos et al., 2007) and I would arguably include essential conditions to foster self-esteem. I believe self-esteem exercises help students to acquire an accurate estimate of their interests, abilities, and talents combined with a vision of

their future with accompanying aspirations that will enable them to realize their full potential as productive citizens in a global economy.

Equally important is the cost of tuition that has the propensity to discourage minority and low-income students from ever considering college. Students should be provided with the plethora of financial options to dispel dissuasion. To equalize the playing field, sources of information about college should be posted in the school for all students, and access to knowledge and activities provided that facilitate college access early. Career day events should be an ongoing activity to increase social mobility, and perhaps develop occupational and educational aspirations, inclusive of the emergence of intentions to further education beyond high school. Moreover, allow teachers, counselors, and administration to experience the effects of exposing first generation students to their career aspirations in hopes of perceiving students as college material.

Conclusion

As early as 1762 it was believed that learning was most successful when education began with the student's interest (Rousseau, 1762, as cited in Wiles & Bondi 1998). Career education for middle school was then staunchly argued against by researchers Finch and Mooney in 1997, until the studies were overwhelmingly accepted, which then justified the inclusion of career education. I embarked upon this action research project understanding the urgency to revive the concept of career and college education for our adolescents who arrive with limited career aspirations by the time they reach middle school (Schwartz, 2009).

This project was born out of the need to college or career ready our middle school age students and reinstate the once utilized Career Interest Inventory questionnaire

designed by the Psychological Corporation (1990). After consulting with other educators from the focus group, it then evolved to the development of a curriculum by the research participants. The curriculum was designed to holistically accommodate the students by creating modifications and interventions tailored to reach them earlier in the educational pipeline, thereby increasing the number of low income and/or minority students prepared to navigate the college and career path process. Historically, such exploratory curriculums have been highly recommended, it is at that point when researchers found middle school having need of common elements such as attention to personal development, values, group process skills, and career education (Wiles & Bondi, 1998). In an effort to adhere to the common elements for this study, the research participants sought to include in the curriculum suggestions from Print and Coleman (2003) that consisted of academic discourse, group processes, and cooperative learning. To incorporate a component for the purpose of building our low SES self-esteem, Reasoner's (1992) recommendations were included.

The study provides further evidence that curriculum modifications and interventions addressing college as a choice for low SES and minority middle school students influences the predisposition stage generally associated with high socioeconomic status and cultural capital. The sixth graders in the study were guided by teacher participants, who engaged students in the exploration of their career interest and the college preparation process. The teachers sharing their experiences during their path to the teaching field, and student to student interaction, provided the venue for students to view themselves as college students and make a personal connection to their education. The experiences of the students in this study suggest that sixth grade students may benefit

from exploring their career interest upon entry into their middle school, guided by a curriculum that can be implemented by any content area teacher.

Examining the current practices of Woodbine Middle School regarding the program CHAMP/GEAR UP, whose aim is to provide their adolescent learners the opportunity to prepare for college, it was estimated that approximately one fourth of the students were actually being served, despite the program's financial incentives. While the mere act of parental encouragement may serve as a powerful intervention that may have more impact on student aspirations than immutable factors of family SES or ability (Tierney et al., 2005) parents are often unknowledgeable of the college navigation process. Therefore, if school personnel such as counselors, teachers, and administration realize we as educators cannot leave the urgency to prepare our low SES students for the path to college to a program that serves a few, or to unknowledgeable parents, perhaps more students will have the opportunity to realize their dreams. The necessity to infuse a college and career curriculum has currently reached the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). As of 2012, the department has created a College and Career Readiness Task Force, which consists of a group of K-12 and higher education practitioners and business community representatives. One of their main responsibilities is to clearly establish the knowledge and skills that students should master to be "college and career ready."

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Appendix A

Career Interest Inventory

Now that I know something about the *Career Interest Inventory*, how do I prepare for taking it?

In order to prepare for the *Career Interest Inventory*, you need to be thinking about some of your interests, values, future plans, and abilities. The following questions will help you do that. Answer each on carefully.

1. What are some of you most favorite school subjects?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What are some of your *least* favorite school subjects?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. What are some of your hobbies?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. What kind of further schooling or training are you planning?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. What do you feel are your strongest abilities? Are you artistic, mechanical, musical, mathematical, scientific, or athletic? Do you write well, speak well, or have the ability to teach others? Are you a good leader or a good actor? These are examples of abilities.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. What kinds of work would you like to do?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. If you have had any jobs, what types of jobs were they?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

8. Among the people you know, whose job or career would you most like to have and why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9. The following is a list of work values. Place check marks by the ones that are *most* important to you.

Having time to relax
Working as a member of a team
Solving problems

Being happy with what I do
Having the ability to change people's lives
Not being bored
Making a lot of money
Having daily contact with the public
Helping people get well
Spending time by myself
Being able to see the results of what I do
Traveling to other places
Having the time to do the things I enjoy most
Having opportunities for adventure and excitement
Working with people or animals
Working with machines or tools
Helping to make the world a better place
Finding a job easily
Receiving rewards
Being successful
Having a secure job
Being able to be creative or inventive
Being respected by others
Being my own boss
Being able to use physical strength while I work
Working outdoors
Managing and making decisions for other people
Doing work that is no complicated
Being able to use my mental abilities
Working under the direction of others
Having opportunities to learn new things
Performing a variety of work activities

10. Of the values you checked, which ones are the *most* important you? List then in the space below.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. Which of the values are the _least_ important to you? List them in the space below.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

12. Do you know of any jobs or careers that might involve the work values, you feel are _most_ import to you? What are these jobs or careers?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Now that you have explored a few of your interests, hobbies, goals, and work-related values, you are ready to take the _Career Interest Inventory_. Remember, however, that the results of you _Career Interest Inventory_ can only tell you how things look at the present time. Your interests, goals, and educational plans may change as you learn and do more things.

Appendix B

Interview Questions for High School Counselor

1. What current transition interventions take place between middle school and high school counselors that could aide in students connecting to college preparation /career development?

2. If no transitions currently exist, what would you like to see occur between middle school and high school counselors for students to benefit from increased awareness of college access and career development?

3. What more do you feel the middle school can do to prepare students for higher education/ career advancement?

4. What tools do you believe or suggest teachers utilize to better prepare our middle school students for the higher education/ career development path?

5. How do you suggest the middle school pave the path to higher education to more closely align with the shrinking number of careers?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Middle School Counselors

1. What curriculum (specifically by counselors) is being implemented to improve the path to higher education for middle school students?

2. How well do you think you're doing with the current curriculum?

3. What could we as middle school teachers do to introduce middle school students to careers that require higher education or career development?

4. In what ways could you impress upon the middle school student the importance of pursuing higher education?

5. How useful do you think a "pre-college" or "higher education interest groups" could be at the middle school? college/career exploration club

6. What classes do you think should be offered in the middle school to prepare students for higher education?

7. Why do you feel students who come from low socioeconomic status should be a prime focus?

8. What type of school activities could you sponsor that would introduce students to post secondary education?

9. What type initiatives would you create to introduce parents/guardians to the in depth focus of the college path?

10. How do you suggest the middle school bring an awareness of post secondary education to the forefront?

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

1. How has your role impacted the students perception of themselves as college students? (provide examples)

2. What do you think research says about the low SES students and college aspirations?

3. How would you describe success for our students as a whole in the future? (sample response such as: self-sufficient contributing citizens).

4. Who do you view in the school system as responsible for advising and encouraging students to pursue higher education?

5. How do you feel a middle school curriculum could impact the student's perception of themselves as career/college students?

Appendix E

Sample Lesson

Strategies to Promote College Readiness and Career Aspirations for Low Socioeconomic Students

Lesson 1- Curriculum sample

Objective(s):

SWBA to identify the requirements to become a teacher

Materials:
Computers, White board, Markers

Pre class:
Teacher asks students what they think they know about becoming a teacher…
Teacher allows students to share out of their knowledge, being cognizant to highlight those points that are in correlation to the profession. Ex. Its educational requirements, its options (programs), possible cost, time frame. Review vocabulary: college, university, certification, courses, and required

Instructional Activity:

Teacher asks, "How did some of you obtain the knowledge you believe?" Then state, "Let's summarize the similarities in each of your responses." Students respond. When feasible, refer to students according to their interest to help build students self-esteem.

Teacher review common course work required to become a teacher. Example: 125 credits (approx. 41 classes), Certification (Four year college)

Teacher records on large paper students source of knowledge and or have a student record list on computer. Also, ask if any students are interested in entering the teaching profession and add names to a section of list.
Activity

Teacher directs students to New Jersey, teacher certification website to identify requirements or for example Bloomberg College website: http://campus.bloomfield.edu/education/program.asp offers a state approved Teacher Education Program.

Teacher ask," Are there any one in this class that is on the list thinking of changing their mind and if so Why?" Allow students to discourse about the topic, observing the student-student and student-teacher interaction.

Teacher record responses on list and or on computer

<u>In closing</u>: Encourage students to journal their experience to track aspiration changes

Appendix F

College/Career Exploration Curriculum Student Survey

Thank you for participating in the college/career exploration classes. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. This is an anonymous survey; do not put your name anywhere on the survey. Answer each question by placing a circle around your response. When you are finish, fold paper and return to facilitating teacher.

1. Because of the career exploration curriculum, I believe a higher education will give a better chance to do well in life.

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

2. Has the career exploration curriculum assisted you in identifying your career choice?

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

3. Has the curriculum about career exploration helped you to determine the educational requirements of your interest?

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

4. Based on the curriculum about career exploration, I know where to begin to explore my career interest.

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

5. Has the career exploration curriculum assisted you in finding what kind of educational training is required for your career?

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

6. Because of the career exploration curriculum, I know how to access/get the training for my career.

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

7. Based on the career exploration curriculum, I can identify a college or trade school that best fits my needs.

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

8. Based on the career exploration curriculum, I am more confident in completing a college application.

        Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

9. Based on the career exploration curriculum, I am aware of different ways to pay for higher education.

        Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

10. Because of the college exploration, I plan to attend an institution of higher education.

        Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

Appendix G

College/Career Exploration Curriculum Teacher Survey

Thank you for participating in the implementation of the college/career exploration project. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. This is an Anonymous survey; do not put your name anywhere on the survey. Answer each question by placing a circle around your response. When you are finish, fold paper and return to facilitating teacher.

1. Because of the career exploration curriculum, students can associate a higher income to a higher education?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

2. Has the career exploration curriculum influenced your perception of your students?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

3. Because of the curriculum about career exploration students can determine their educational requirements for their interest?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

4. Based on the curriculum about career exploration, the students know where to begin to explore their career interest?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

5. Has the career exploration curriculum assisted the students in identifying what kind of educational training is required for their career?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

6. Because of the career exploration curriculum, I believe the interventions should begin at the sixth grade?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

7. Based on the career exploration curriculum, I believe the interventions should be implemented by all content area teachers?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

8. Based on the career exploration curriculum, the students can complete a college application?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

9. Based on the career exploration curriculum, students are aware of ways to pay for higher education?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

10. Do you feel the college exploration curriculum influenced students to aspire toward higher learning?

    Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   SDisagree

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.