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AUTHOR Batsche, Catherine; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A statewide survey was conducted to determine the availability of a career development course at the high school level in Illinois. The participants in the study were the directors of vocational education in the 597 high school districts that submitted Local Plans for Vocational Education to the Illinois State Board of Education in FY 1984. They received a questionnaire at an annual meeting, and 80 percent returned them. The study found that career development courses are not available to students in the majority of districts in Illinois, even though most districts reported that the course would be helpful to students. The major barrier to the development of the course is the limited amount of time available in a student's schedule. Several alternatives could be explored to ensure that students are systematically exposed to career development activities: (1) the course could be required in the freshman or sophomore year, even if the school day had to be lengthened or study halls eliminated; (2) the content of the career development course could be infused into various required subject areas--an option favored by many career educators; or (3) a teacher advisement system could be adopted, involving the training of teachers to conduct a systematic series of activities during a daily advisement period. Survey respondents also expressed a need for inservice training for persons teaching career development and for a set of curriculum guidelines and related materials. The study recommended that districts should investigate the alternatives and move forward on career development activities for their high school students. (KC)

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A Study of the Status of Career Development Courses
in High Schools in Illinois

The Individualized Career Plan (ICP) is a written document that summarizes an individual's emerging career goals and the career development activities that will facilitate attainment of these goals. The ICP is based on a process that relates a student's formal learning experiences to career goals. It is a tool for students and staff to use to coordinate the school experience with career development. The ICP includes the following information: a statement of career goals, career assessment information, suggested course sequences leading to the goal(s), and suggested extracurricular activities related to career development.

From 1981 to 1983, the ICP process was field tested at 15 high schools in Illinois. The results of the field test indicated that the ICP process increased the student's awareness of the importance of career planning as part of their educational program. Eighty-five percent of the students at the field test sites developed a personalized plan that related educational and career choices to their own interests, abilities, and aptitudes. As a result of the field test activities, 100% of the participants agreed that local schools should assist students in the development of short and long-range plans to correlate education, training, and employment. The participants recommended that the ICP process should be continued and expanded to other schools in Illinois.

The ICP process was subsequently expanded through the efforts of the Career Guidance Centers sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education, Department of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education. In 1984, a statewide survey was conducted to determine the status of career development activities in Illinois. Specifically, the survey sought information concerning the availability of a career development course at the high school level. It was hypothesized that the ICP process would be facilitated by the availability of such a course and that the ICP could serve as a coordinating vehicle for students who registered for the course. The purpose of this report is to summarize the results of the statewide survey on the status of career development courses at high schools in Illinois.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The participants in this study were the Directors of Vocational Education in the 597 high school districts that submitted Local Plans for Vocational Education to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) in FY 84. Each director was asked to serve as a participant or to designate an individual from the school district to respond to the survey. The surveys were distributed to participants during the annual subregional meeting of vocational directors during the Fall, 1984.

Procedure

A survey was developed and reviewed by a panel of consultants from the Illinois State Board of Education, local guidance counselors, and project staff. The survey indicated that ISBE wanted to determine the availability of a course related to career development. It was explained that, although the title of the course might vary, the content of the course would emphasize the affective areas of employability: self-awareness, decision-making, attitude, development, career exploration, and career planning.

The survey was divided into two sections. Section One contained questions to be answered by those participants who offered a course in career development at their high school. The survey included questions to determine if the respondent felt the course was an important part of the student's curriculum, if the course was elective or required, the level at which students typically enrolled, the amount of credit given for the class, the length of the class, and the curriculum used for the class. Section Two of the survey was answered by those participants who did not offer a course in career development at the high school. The questions in this section were designed to determine if the respondent felt such a course would be helpful to students, the respondent's interest in developing a career development course, the obstacles that might be encountered in offering a course, and the incentives and assistance that would be needed from ISBE to initiate the course.

RESULTS

An 80.3% return rate was obtained. A total of 479 surveys were returned from the 597 surveys distributed. The number of surveys returned from each of the six ISBE vocational regions follows: Region 1 (80); Region 2 (94); Region 3 (81); Region 4 (89); Region 5 (46); and Region 6 (89). A detailed analysis of the results, by region, is included in Table One.

Course Available

A course in career development was taught in 167 (34.9%) of the districts responding. One hundred and twenty-seven of the respondents (78.8%) felt the course was important to students in developing individual career plans, exploring careers, and assessing aptitudes. With one exception, the remaining 34 respondents indicated that the course was "somewhat important" (20.5%). One individual reported that the course was not important in helping students with career planning.

The career development course was a required course in 91 (57.5%) of the districts. The course was typically taken during the freshman (37.8%) or sophomore (30.1%) year. Students received credit for the course in 80% of the districts. The amount of credit received included 1/2 credit (61.2%), 1 credit (21.4%), and 1/4 credit (17.5%). The length of the class was reported to be nine weeks (34.6%) or one semester (43.6%). A small number of districts (20.5%) offered a full year course.

An established curriculum was reported in 88.1% of the courses. Thirty-one different materials were used as part of the

curriculum. The materials reported by more than one respondent included: The World of Work (McKnight); Entering the World of Work (McKnight); A.E.L. Decision Making Program (McKnight); Guidance Information System; Occupational Outlook Handbook Quarterly; and Succeeding In The World of Work (McKnight). Other materials listed included the ACT Career Planning System, Career World (monthly periodical), Occupational Biographies Series, American Consumer, The Career Planning Workshop, C.A.R.E. Kit, and the S.R.A. Career Materials.

The type of certification required for teaching the career development course varied considerably. In 49 of the surveys, the respondents indicated that any high school certification was satisfactory. Forty schools required certification of guidance counselors. Seven schools required the course to be taught by vocational educators.

Course Not Available

A course in career development was not available in 312 districts (65.1%). However, the importance of the course was rated high by 76.5% of those respondents who did not offer the course. The majority (61.9%) of the respondents were interested in developing a course in career development in their agency. The largest obstacle to overcome in adding a career development course was reported to be "finding time in the student's schedules." Lack of finances was also considered to be a major barrier. Four services were identified that would be helpful if provided by ISBE: guidelines for teacher qualifications, inservice for staff, curriculum guidelines and funding to support the course.

DISCUSSION

Career development courses are not available to students in the majority of districts in Illinois even though most districts reported that the course would be helpful to students. The major barrier to the development of the course is the limited amount of time available in a student's schedule. The scheduling problem is compounded by the fact that the freshman or sophomore year is the logical time for the student to enroll in a course on career planning. However, these two years are frequently filled with required courses and little room is left for elective coursework. In some schools, scheduling concerns may have multiplied following the implementation of recent legislation governing the requirements for graduation.

Given the high level of importance placed on career planning by the respondents in this survey, there are several alternatives that could be explored to ensure students are systematically exposed to career development activities. First, school districts could require the course be taken by all freshman/sophomore students. This option will have several limitations in some districts. As reported in this study, the student schedule simply may not allow for another course. However, some districts are examining the structure of their high school schedule to determine if it is feasible to reduce the number/length of study halls and homeroom periods. Some districts are even considering lengthening the school day. An alternative to requiring a career development course is to offer it as an elective. However, this option will

not have the desired results of providing all students with career related activities.

A second alternative is to infuse the content of the career development course into various required subject areas. The majority of the respondents indicated that career information is already being infused into the curriculum through courses such as English, social studies, science, health, speech, and consumer education. This approach is the one favored by many career educators. If this option is used, the district must implement monitoring methods to ensure adequate emphasis is given to career development activities. It will also be necessary to develop a system to ensure students are exposed to appropriate activities in an orderly, sequential manner. Ongoing teacher inservice will be essential in order to effectively implement the infusion process. The ICP could be used as a coordinating vehicle in this situation. Students could record relevant activities on their ICP. The ICP could be reviewed periodically to determine gaps in the career development process and to identify suitable activities in various classes.

A third alternative is to adopt a teacher advisement system similar to the program developed by the Ferguson, Missouri school system. Their Teacher Advisement Program involves training teachers to conduct a systematic series of activities during a daily advisement period. Career planning activities are part of the activities included in a six year calendar that begins in junior high and proceeds through senior high. Teachers are trained monthly by guidance counselors to conduct the activities

scheduled on the calendar. This method ensures students are exposed to essential activities at some point in their junior/senior high school experience. Once again, the ICP could be used as the coordinating and communicating vehicle for the advisement activities.

In addition to the student schedule, there are other barriers to be overcome prior to widespread availability of a career development course. Respondents indicated concern over the qualifications and certification that should be required for the teacher of the course. Although counselors appear to be a logical candidate for course development and implementation, this role will be a major change for many counselors. It is not known how counselors will perceive this role change, nor is it certain that it is desirable. However, given the background of the guidance counselor and the needs of the student, the match seems appropriate. The role and function of the guidance counselor will need to be evaluated in each district to determine the level of involvement by the counselor. In some districts, the counselor may serve as the actual teacher of the course. In other districts, it may be more appropriate to utilize the counselor as a consultant to those who teach the course or who integrate the course into the curriculum.

Two other needs emerged from this study. The need for staff inservice in the area of career development was considered essential. The respondents also expressed the need for a set of curriculum guidelines and list of related materials. Both of these activities should be addressed on a statewide level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Local school districts should investigate alternatives to overcome the barriers to offering a career development course including: revised scheduling practices; reorganization of advisement periods, homeroom periods, and study halls; teacher advisement programs; and systematic, accountable, infusion programs. The State Board of Education should develop incentives to assist school districts accomplish this goal.
2. Local school districts should review the role and function of the guidance counselor and determine methods to increase the involvement of the counselor in career planning.
3. A state curriculum guide for a career development course should be developed and disseminated by the Illinois State Board of Education. The guide should include recommendations for teacher qualifications, course content and sequence, and resource materials.
4. The ICP should be used by local schools to coordinate the career development activities of a student and to communicate relevant information to the student's teachers throughout the four year high school experience.
5. Inservice activities related to career development should be increased at the local level. Inservice is particularly necessary in those schools that rely on the infusion process of career education.

REFERENCES

Hawkins, M.L. (1981). Discussions and things to do: An advisor's calendar and an advisement activity book. Ferguson Reorganized School District, Teacher Center, Ferguson, Missouri.

Career Course Survey Response By Region

QUESTION	REGION						COMPOSITE	PERCENT	
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
Career Course Is Taught	Yes	30	30	20	30	24	33	167	34.9
	No	50	64	61	59	22	56	312	65.1
Career Information Infused	Yes	35	34	22	27	12	20	150	78.9
	No	9	4	8	5	1	13	40	21.1
<u>If Agency Has No Course:</u>									
Would It Be Helpful	Yes	38	50	34	44	17	48	231	76.5
	No	14	11	9	15	5	7	61	23.5
Would You Offer	Yes	23	37	24	31	16	40	171	61.9
	No	23	18	27	19	6	12	105	38.1
What Obstacles Exist:	Finances	27	39	39	44	20	42	207	--
	Time	34	44	44	47	16	37	222	--
	Teacher	11	5	30	21	13	18	98	--
	Other	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	RANK
What Incentives Needed:	Materials	2.25	2.18	2.48	2.48	2.00	2.57	2.37	3
	Guidelines	3.28	3.20	3.07	2.45	3.27	3.05	2.97	1
	Inservice	3.13	2.68	2.50	2.74	3.30	2.75	2.74	2
	Funding	2.29	1.76	1.79	1.37	1.36	1.69	1.66	4
	Other	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<u>If Agency Has A Course:</u>									
Is Course Important	Yes	26	22	13	20	21	25	127	78.8
	Somewhat	7	5	6	6	3	6	33	20.5
	No	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	--
What Level Taken	Fresh.	15	13	8	10	10	13	78	37.8
	Soph.	20	9	5	7	6	13	62	30.1
	Junior.	5	8	7	6	2	4	32	15.5
	Senior	6	6	5	4	6	7	34	16.5
Course Required/Elective	All Req.	14	17	11	17	14	18	91	57.5
	Some Req.	3	0	7	2	3	2	17	10.8
	Elective	15	10	2	11	11	1	50	31.6
Students Receive Credit	Yes	26	20	14	21	17	26	124	80.0
	No	7	8	4	5	2	5	31	20.0
How Much Credit	½	18	8	5	12	9	11	63	61.2
	1	3	8	2	2	4	3	22	21.4
	Other (½)	2	4	--	1	4	7	18	17.5
Length of Class	Nine Wks.	6	15	5	8	7	13	54	34.6
	Semester	18	6	7	14	11	12	68	43.6
	Year	6	7	5	3	7	4	32	20.5
	Other	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	--
Established Curriculum	Yes	28	21	16	22	21	26	134	88.1
	No	1	7	1	5	1	3	18	11.9

CAREER DEVELOPMENT COURSE

S U R V E Y

The Illinois State Board of Education, Department of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education, would like to determine which local education agencies teach a course related to CAREER DEVELOPMENT. The title of the course may have different names such as Orientation of Careers, Career Advisement, Career Planning, or Career Exploration. However, the content of the course would emphasize the affective areas of employability: self-awareness, decision-making, attitudes, career exploration, and career planning. Please complete this survey and return it to your Regional Vocational Agency. Thank you for your help!

Name: _____ Local Education Agency: _____
 Position: _____ AVTE Region: _____

- 1A. Is there a course taught in your local education agency that emphasizes the career development process?

YES _____ NO _____

If your answer is NO, please respond to questions 2 through 5 only.

If your answer is YES, please respond to questions 6 through 16 only.

- 1B. Is career development information being infused in the curriculum and/or in designated class periods such as home room/advisement?

YES _____ NO _____

If yes, please indicate which classes: _____

Please answer questions 2 through 5 if your local education agency does not have a career development course.

2. Do you feel such a course would be helpful to students in developing individual career plans, exploring careers, and assessing aptitudes?

YES _____ NO _____

3. Would you be interested in developing a career development course to offer in your agency?

YES _____ NO _____

4. What obstacles might interfere with the development of a career development course in your agency?

_____ Finances _____ Finding a qualified teacher

_____ Finding time in the student's schedules _____ Other: _____

5. What incentives and assistance from the Department of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education would help you in developing a career development course for your agency? (Rank 1 through 5 with 1 being the most important)

_____ Curriculum and materials _____ Staff inservice

_____ Guidelines for teacher qualifications _____ Course funding
 _____ Other: _____

Please answer questions 6 through 16 if your local education agency does have a career development course.

6. Do you feel the career development course is an important part of the student's curriculum?

YES _____ SOMEWHAT _____ NO _____

7. At what level do students typically enroll in the course?

High School:

_____ Freshman Year _____ Junior Year

_____ Sophomore Year _____ Senior Year

Community College:

_____ Freshman Year _____ Sophomore Year _____ Other

8. Is the course required or is it an elective?

_____ Required of all students _____ Elective

_____ Required of some students (please specify) _____

9. What type of teaching certificate do you require of the person(s) teaching the class?

10. Do students receive credit for the class?

YES _____ NO _____

If YES, how much?

_____ 1 credit
 _____ ½ credit
 _____ Other: _____

11. What is the length of the class?

_____ Nine weeks or less
 _____ One semester
 _____ One year
 _____ Other: _____

12. Is there an established curriculum for the class?

YES _____ NO _____

13. If you are aware of the course materials/texts used to teach the class, please list them below:

14. May we contact the teacher/counselor in your agency if we need more information? If yes, please indicate name, address, and phone number of the person:

_____ Name
 _____ School
 _____ Address
 _____ City _____ State _____ Zip
 _____ (Area Code) _____ Phone Number

THANKS!!!