

A Comprehensive Paradigm for the Provision of Career Development Services to a K-12 School Population Including Those With Special Needs

Perry S. Bickel

An Article Published in

TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus

Volume 3, Issue 2, November 2006

A Comprehensive Paradigm for the Provision of Career Development Services to a K-12 School Population Including Those With Special Needs

Perry S. Bickel

Abstract

A comprehensive paradigm for the provision of career development services to a K-12 school population including those with special needs is presented in an easily understood format. This service delivery "tool" is intended to help teachers and administrators both acknowledge the career development services that they are currently providing and concretely identify and strengthen areas of need. It is valuable for what it shows in addition to what it does not show, "gaps in services." The focus is on demonstrating accountability and relevancy of services which are viewed as being inseparable concepts. This constitutes a change in focus from educating for education's sake to educating for employment/career preparation. An expanded version of the typical career development format is utilized that is in turn cross referenced with different service delivery options in line with differentiated instruction methodology. A provision for ongoing student involvement in progress monitoring is included to empower and teach students to advocate for themselves.

Keywords

career, development, differentiated, progress, monitoring

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Bickel, P.S. (2006). A comprehensive paradigm for the provision of career development services to a K-12 school population including those with special needs. *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*, 3(2) Article 2. Retrieved [date] from <http://escholarship.bc.edu/education/tecplus/vol3/iss2/art2>

Introduction: The Importance of Accountability

We live in a rapidly changing world in which increasing international competition and off-shoring have raised some concerns about our ability to remain competitive (Friedman, 2005). As a result, accountability has become a major issue that forcefully confronts practitioners in a broad range of institutions. Demands for measurably effective performance are keenly felt within the educational community, entrusted with the responsibility of helping to prepare America's youth to meet the challenges of globalization. The Bush Administration's No Child Left Behind Act is a high-profile example of the view that increased emphasis on accountability is essential to individual and national survival and success (Tompkins, 2003).

Concern for international competitiveness and the need for educational accountability are made emphatically evident by the recent acknowledgement that fully "30% of America's high school students will leave without graduating" (Thornburgh, 2005, p.32). This has prompted some observers to characterize the U.S. as the "dropout nation." One important reason for this is that "Many dropouts never see the connection between school and later life" (Thornburgh, 2005, p.40).

This concern is echoed by members of the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability. Their position is compelling: "Youth who do not understand the relevancy to the 'real world' of what is being taught in their classes are likely to become poor performers or drop-outs" (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, 2006, p.1).

It is in this context that the concepts of *accountability* and *relevancy* are linked together. Schools that do not focus on helping

students to see the relevancy of education will often fail to motivate them to be successful. Student needs will not be met, and school performance on conventional accountability measures will be diminished. These adverse outcomes, however, can be countered by preparatory experiences such as career assessments, opportunity awareness, and development of work readiness skills. Adoption of these measures would constitute a change in focus "from always educating for education's sake to educating for employment/careers" (Schoket, 2000, p.1).

Youth with disabilities in particular are too often exposed to low expectations and lack of opportunities that interfere with their ability to learn and motivation to want to learn (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Many leave school without having had opportunities to learn about different careers or to build the strong academic skills and workplace competencies needed to succeed in many careers (National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, 2006).

These current concerns regarding accountability and relevancy are similar to those I faced several years ago when I became the vocational coordinator at a school serving a large special needs population. The major question at that time was, *are we effectively serving the career development needs of our varied, dynamic, and in many cases quite needy population?* Those students ranged from five to twenty-one years of age and in ability levels from superior intelligence to mentally deficient designations. Disability categories included: PDD (Pervasive Developmental Delay)/Autism, Severe Emotional Disorders, Brain Damaged, and Learning Disabilities.

Origins of the Paradigm: Accountability & Relevancy

After extensive trial and error experiences over a period of years, a paradigm evolved that provided a visual display of the major components of our program including the following:

1. The types of career development services that were already being provided,
2. The services being provided for each age range: elementary, middle and secondary school students,
3. The varied service modalities that were being utilized at various times by different people to deliver these services including: computer based, paper & pencil based, hands-on based experiences, curriculum based, reference materials based, guidance counseling activities based and progress monitoring based.

This third issue in particular provided the major incentive to create this paradigm. Different professional people, academic teachers, a computer teacher, a librarian, vocational teachers, and guidance counselors, were providing different career development services by different means. It was consequently difficult for an administrator to track the services that were being provided to our students without the aid of such a paradigm. The paradigm became the “big picture,” and was a systematic means of determining which services were being provided, to what age group, by whom, and by what means they were being provided. It consequently became the only means of answering the original question, *are we effectively serving the career development needs of our student population?*

Special Note: The relevancy of Career Development for schools has recently assumed even greater importance owing to the current Federal initiative requiring that the

concept of accountability within the special education realm extend beyond the point when each student leaves school. This has necessitated the creation of a post-school survey process for “leavers,” graduates, drop-outs, and age-outs. Scheduled to begin in 2007, the survey will focus on assessing the success of leavers, one year after departing school, in terms of either being successfully employed or enrolled in some form of post-secondary education/training program (Pennsylvania Training & Technical Assistance Network, 2006). This new reporting requirement, along with the potential implications in terms of accountability for schools, represents a forceful illustration of the importance of having a long-term focus regarding educational accountability.

Visual Nature of the Paradigm

In line with the old adage, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” the paradigm was created in a graphic format to pictorially display its various elements and their relationship to one another in what was considered to be the easiest understood way possible. Stated simply, the paradigm presents 1) an expanded version of a typical career development format, 2) cross references that format to different service delivery options in line with differentiated instruction methodology, and 3) provides numerous specific examples of their application.

It is especially important that different and multiple mediums are available to deliver services to such a broadly based special needs school population. This is in part due to the need to keep the students motivated, while minimizing the opportunity for boredom, and also in reference to the need to address the different preferential modalities by which different students can optimally learn. Much has

been written today about the need to utilize “*differentiated instruction*” to adapt the content, process, and product of lessons in accordance with each student’s readiness, learning style, and interests. Sands and Barker (2004) note that while this teaching concept is not really new, the term “differentiated instruction” has only been in use for approximately a decade. The reader is referred to the following sources for further information on this topic:

www.enhancelearning.ca,

www.ascd.org

(click on “education topics”), and

www.education-world.com/a_curr/strategy/strategy042.shtml.

The actual paradigm is presented on the following pages.

Elementary School Students

| Service Modality | Self – Knowledge | Formal Assessment | Occupational Exploration | Decision Making | Career Planning | Job Readiness Skills | Job Search | Work Experience | Program Planning |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|---|-------------------|------------------------|--|
| Computer Based | “Paws In Job Land” | “Paws In Job Land” (Interests Only) | “Paws In Job Land” & “Challenge for Your Future” | “Career Voyages” U.S. Dept. of Labor | “Career Voyages” U.S. Dept. of Labor | Expose students to the web site for the local One Stop Job Ctr. | | | Monitor the availability of new and appropriate computer software. |
| Curriculum Based | Social Skills Training – Importance of cooperation. | Life skills: Reading & Math – assessments. | Explore careers in the library, ex. Biographies. | Understanding How to Make Decisions. Pros & Cons. | Do a class report on a specific occupation. | Practice organizing class like a work setting. | | | Update curriculum as needed due to student changes and needs. |
| Paper/Pencil Tests & Inventories Based | “Careers for Me II” & “Careers for Me Junior” | “Careers for Me II” & “Careers for Me Junior” | “Career Challenge Game” | “Career Challenge Game” | “Career Challenge Game” | Life skills math test & life skills reading test | | | Use only tests that are appropriate for your student population. |
| Group Guidance Activities Based | Video recording of mock job interviews. | Prepare a speech to describe your strengths. | Career speakers & field trips to businesses. | Career speakers & field trips to businesses. | Career speakers & field trips to businesses. | Have students operate a classroom store. | | | Include parents in trips and ask for their input & feedback. |
| Reference Materials Based | Simple budget: What would you do with \$100 and why? | Practice math & reading tests (basic workplace competency) | Books by Richard Scarry (for young children) | Writing samples: What do you like and why? | Have career biographies available. How others planned? | Have sample portfolios available. What does one look like? | | | Have a classroom Career Corner. Students can earn extra points for what they do. |
| Hands On Experiences Based | Try making something with your hands. Do you like doing it? | Life skills assessment: Have a student prepare a food or make a bed. | Have students plant some seeds or take apart & put together a flashlight. | Perform a work task & list what you liked & what you did not like about it. | Find out what it takes to become a plumber or computer programmer. | Assign responsibility for chores & group activities. | | | Rotate students in class jobs and plan new activities to avoid student boredom. |
| Progress Monitoring Based | <u>Empower:</u> Include students in their own progress monitoring. | <u>Empower:</u> Each student should know his/her need for accommodations & Assistive Technology. | <u>Empower:</u> Students must demonstrate where to go to get occupational information. | <u>Empower:</u> Pick a favorite career and name five things they like and don’t like about it. | <u>Empower:</u> Students must demonstrate that they know how to use all available sources of career info. | <u>Empower:</u> Students must know the skills needed to become job ready. | | | Student/parent participation in planning & Community partnerships with local businesses. |

| Middle School Students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|------------|-----------------|---|
| Service Modality | Self – Knowledge | Formal Assessment | Occupational Exploration | Decision Making | Career Planning | Job Readiness Skills | Job Search | Work Experience | Program Planning |
| Computer Based | “Choices Explorer” | “Choices Explorer” (Interests Only) | “Choices Explorer” | “Learning for Life” – “Life Choices CD ROM Game” | Explore the Federal Government “O Net” system. | “Win Way Resume Deluxe Writer” | | | Monitor the availability of new & appropriate computer software. |
| Curriculum Based | Class discussion of the concept: Who are you? Where are you going...? | Life skills <u>task analysis</u> : filling out a job application form. | Developing a real life budget. Good paying jobs. | Developing a real life budget. You need money. | Class discussion of the child labor laws. | <u>Job Smart Video Series</u> “How to Stay Unemployed” | | | Update curriculum as necessary due to student changes and needs. |
| Paper/Pencil Tests & Inventories Based | Knowing your academic & behavioral strengths & needs. | “Reading Free Vocational Interest Inventory 2” | “Job-O, 2000+” (Grades 7 & up) “Job-O Elementary” (Grades 4-6) | “Brigance Life Skills Inventory” | “Job-O 2000+” (Grades 7 & up) | “Brigance Employability Skills Inventory” | | | Use only tests that are appropriate for the characteristics of your student population. |
| Group Guidance Activities Based | Practice doing mock job interviews with a camera. | Have students build a project that requires math, reading, & writing. | Career speakers & field trips to businesses. | Career speakers & field trips to businesses. | Career speakers & field trips to businesses. | Explore community partnerships with local businesses. | | | Explore new activities to avoid student boredom. |
| Reference Materials Based | “Looking at Myself II” (Grades 7-12) | Sample PSAT & ASVAB examinations. | “Enhanced Occupational Outlook Handbook” | “Career Delivery Units” # 10 Decision Making | “Career Delivery Units” # 13 Career Planning | Sample job application forms & practice resume forms. | | | Order updated materials as they become available. |
| Hands On Experiences Based | Plant a bed of flowers and describe how it made you feel. | Build a project of your choice. Describe how you could have done it better. | Job shadowing program | Job shadowing program | Spend a day at a tech. school visiting different shop areas. | “Brigance Employability Skills Inventory.” | | | Rotate students in class jobs and plan new activities to avoid student boredom. |
| Progress Monitoring Based | <u>Empower</u> : Include students in monitoring their own progress. | <u>Empower</u> : Each student must know his/her needed accommodations & assistive technology. | Students must demonstrate where to get projected job information for different career areas. | <u>Empower</u> : Students should be able to describe both their strengths & needs. | Have each student show his/her career portfolio. | Students must demonstrate ability to fill out a job application form & write a resume. | | | <u>Student/parent</u> participation in planning. <u>Community</u> participation in planning. In-service training for staff. |

| High School Students | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| Service Modality | Self – Knowledge | Formal Assessment | Occupational Exploration | Decision Making | Career Planning | Job Readiness Skills | Job Search | Work Experience | Program Planning |
| Computer Based | “Aviator 3” “Career Scope” “SAGE” “Choices Planner” | “Aviator 3” “Career Scope” “SAGE” | “Aviator 3” “Career Scope” “SAGE” “Choices Planner” “O* Net” | “Choices Planner” “O*Net” | “Choices Planner” “O*Net” | “Win Way Resume Deluxe Writer” | “Career Builder” & “Monster.” | Students need to demonstrate basic computer & keyboard skills for work success. | Monitor the availability of new & appropriate computer software. |
| Curriculum Based | Video tape mock job interviews & play them back for the class. | <u>Task analysis</u> : check writing skills & balancing a budget. | Developing a real life budget. | Developing a real life budget. | Lesson on helping students to clarify their work values. | Cooperative work curriculum for student workers. | How to use the Classified Ads. | Cooperative work curriculum. Compliments work experience. | Update curriculum as necessary due to student needs. |
| Paper/Pencil Tests & Inventories Based | “Reading Free Vocational Interest Inventory 2” | “Reading Free...” (Interests Only) | Test students ability to interpret the Occupational Outlook Handbook. | “PSAT Examination.” | Develop a career portfolio. | Develop a career portfolio. | Test involving the use of the classified section of the newspaper. | Employer & student rate his/her work behavior & then compare and contrast. | Use only tests that are appropriate for characteristics of your student population. |
| Group Guidance Activities Based | Have students interview one another & then introduce the other person. | Have students do practice job interviews with one another. | Have students interview different people in a specific job & then compare. | College & tech. school visitations. | College & tech. school visitations. | Have students volunteer as a group at Habitat for Humanity. | Take a group of students to a local “one-stop” job office. | Have a group of students volunteer to clean up a park. | School counselors should work with teachers. |
| Reference Materials Based | “What Color is Your Parachute?” | Practice test manuals: “ASVAB”, “PSAT”, “SAT”. | “Enhanced Occupational Outlook Handbook” | “What color is Your Parachute?” | “Peterson’s College Guide for Students With Learning Disabilities” | “Choosing A Job: A First Step to Success” O.V.R. pub. | Classified sections of local newspapers. | Sample resumes that can be followed. | Keep up to date materials available at all times. |
| Hands On Experiences Based | Self-discovery through your first actual part-time job. | Life skills inventory such as the “Brigance.” | Job shadowing program | Active participant in the I.E.P. process. | Student gets a part-time job. How much planning does it take? | Situational Assessment. Pre-vocational training. | Internships & paid employment. | Internships & paid employment. | Vary the types of hands on experiences and clearly document progress. |
| Progress Monitoring Based | Student Transition Planning. Student’s awareness of his/her strengths & needs. | Do the special needs students / parents value & understand the test results ? Need for accommodations & assistive technology. | Have students maintain their own career portfolios and decide what goes in it. | Special needs students should participate in their own IEP meetings and share in decision- making. | Presentation: 1. Pick a job. 2. Prepare a budget based on income. 3. Present to class. | Have students rate their own progress: 1. social skills 2. motivation 3. productivity 4. quality 5. safety | Have student describe 5 different ways of finding a job. | Students should be able to obtain a part time job and maintain employment for at least 90 days. | Expose the school staff to on-going in-service training on career ed. including transition planning. |

Paradigm comments

All items framed with quotation marks are retail products. Conversely those items not framed in quotes are teacher made/developed items. Many of the commercial products are also available in Spanish language versions.

The Job Search and Work Experience columns are not utilized with elementary and middle school students due to the prevailing child labor laws (in this case, Pennsylvania)

1. www.bridges.com
2. www.valparint.com/
3. www.bls.gov/home.htm
4. www.curriculumassociates.com
5. www.careercc.com/links/
6. www.pesco.org/home.html
7. www.learningforlife.org

A Word About Student Expectations and Time Frames

The fact that this paradigm is longitudinal in nature and *repeats the same career development themes* (limited only by child labor laws) through the elementary school, middle school, and secondary school years, makes it very compatible with a heterogeneous school population. Each special education student can progress at his/her own pace as dictated by each student's I.E.P. (Individualized Education Program). There is ample opportunity for "over-learning," practicing a skill in a variety of situations before moving to another topic, a common special education strategy (Crealock & Kronick, 1993). Further, due to the ultimate focus on self-advocacy, the more advanced student is not held back; he/she can progress with minimal guidance at his/her own pace increasing proficiency in each skill area.

forbidding employment in most instances until a child is at least 14 years of age.

Additionally, it is not the intent of this writer or his school to endorse a particular retail product or products that may be indicated on this grid; nor is this list of retail products intended to be exhaustive or complete. Those wishing to find out more about the listed retail products are, however, directed to the following Internet sites:

"Choices" products.
"Aviator 3" & "SIGI"
Occupational Outlook
Handbook
Brigance Products
Multiple products
SAGE
Life Choices CD Game

While this paradigm is not meant to be a substitute for a particular child's I.E.P., it is viewed as being compatible with and complimentary to the I.E.P. process. The paradigm's focus is on providing career development information via a variety of mediums to help meet individual student learning styles. It is, however, acknowledged that some special education students, particularly the more needy ones, will require more finely tuned strategies to *further differentiate* instruction for their particular needs. Also, in some cases these students may require various kinds of assistive technology and/or transition planning supports, such as job coaches, which are concepts that must be legally addressed via the I.E.P. process.

Definition of Terms

The working definitions for the headings listed at the top of each column are as fol-

lows: the term “*Self Knowledge*” is used in reference to knowing your likes, dislikes, and aptitudes as they would relate to the world of work. “*Assessment*” applies to formal assessment tests and devices that also contribute to self-knowledge. “*Occupational Exploration*” refers to a systematic process designed to assist a person to learn about different jobs and to gradually identify things that are liked and disliked about each job. “*Job search*” is a very specific term reserved for the act of actually attempting to find employment. “*Decision Making*” applies to the ability to weigh the pros and cons of a possible choice or course of action and to make a decision that best fits your interests, aptitudes, and other personal priorities. “*Career Planning*” is a more general term that refers to the process of helping the individual develop and achieve meaningful adult roles as they relate to the world of work. “*Job Readiness Skills*” refers to more general work skills that are necessary to be successful in any job such as appropriate work-related social skills, productivity skills, safety habits, and concern for the quantity and quality of work produced. “*Work experience*” includes: situational assessment, on the job training, internships, competitive employment, and supported employment. “*Program Planning*” refers only to management techniques and performance monitoring methods for an entire program that yields data that indicates how well the program as a whole is achieving its goals. The term “*Career Development*” is more generic in nature and is utilized here to include the sum total of all of the above activities and terms and extends throughout each individual’s lifetime, from the elementary school years to the retirement years.

It is important to note that the column headings utilized in this visual format are an expansion of those terms typically included

within a developmental career education model: “self-knowledge,” “educational & occupational exploration,” and “career planning” (National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, 2003). Due to the unique and extensive needs of a broadly based school population including those with special needs, more headings were added for descriptive purposes to further differentiate the services for this type of population. “Job readiness skills,” for example, are a critical component for special needs students that might normally be taken for granted with a typical regular education population. Also, “self-knowledge” (focusing more on emotional issues), and assessment are differentiated here due to the greater range of emotional needs found with this type of population; it encourages a more detailed focus on this issue by breaking it down into two different but related sub-categories.

Benefits of Utilizing this Paradigm

The simplicity, organizational nature, and visual focus of this paradigm provide many benefits for an overworked educational staff:

- 1) It visually displays a broad range of career development services that could be provided to a heterogeneous, school-aged population.
- 2) The multiple methods utilized to present the material in line with differentiated instructional methodology increases the likelihood that at least some of the services will be found to be relevant to each student’s specific needs and learning style (Sands & Barker, 2004).
- 3) It clearly illustrates potential gaps in services that would significantly aid the school administrator in terms of

future program planning efforts. It is consequently as valuable for what it shows as for what it does not show.

- 4) It enables educators to acknowledge the career development services that they are already providing but may not be labeled as such. In an encouraging way this can help to illustrate that the “glass is half full rather than being half empty.” An excellent case in point involves math and reading classes. Good math and reading skills are obviously important for success in adult life. They can be referred to as “basic workplace literacy skills” and included under the grid heading “Job Readiness Skills.”
- 5) By virtue of the visually based grid nature, it is *more easily explained to and understood* by the general population, which can be an important public relations aid.
- 6) It facilitates the adaptation of career development *services* when and if the parameters of the existing school population change. If, for example, there is an increase in the percentage of lower functioning readers in an 11th grade class, it would make it easier to target specific career development areas to determine the minimum reading level requirements to benefit from a particular device, test, etc. One would not, for example, want to encourage these students to take the PSAT examination as a means of facilitating “Decision Making.” It would be more appropriate to utilize a life skills task such as developing a real life budget.
- 7) It provides an excellent visual representation of the ongoing nature of career development services. This illustrates one of the major advantages of delivering career development services in a school environment. The length of time available to provide services to each student/client is much greater than would be found in, for example, a “one-stop” walk in career center for adults - years vs. hours (Brown, 1999). This opportunity for repeated exposure to these career development issues year after year increases the prospect that students will learn and retain the material.
- 8) In terms of *accountability*, it enables the school administrator to justify career development based expenses to, for example, school board members who may know little or nothing about the nature of career development services; they see the “gap.”
- 9) It clearly illustrates to school administrators that vocational assessment is not a simple process that can be accomplished at one point in time by buying a particular device or instrument in order to “be in compliance.”
- 10) In line with the concept of relevance, it helps to establish a clear link between the school-based learning and work-based learning. It does this in part by visually demonstrating how they are related. It will enable students to see how school is related to the world of work and consequently encourage rather than discourage those students who may not be on a traditional college bound academic track.
- 11) It can be *gradually infused into the general curriculum* with minimal disruption to the school program. A social studies class would easily, for example, provide a means by which to *learn about occupations* particularly in relation to the current Global Econ-

omy emphasis. Also, instead of consistently reading, for example, classic novels in English class, the teacher could change focus at times and help students learn how to read and understand a technical manual (focusing on underemphasized *technical reading skills*) such as would be found with a new electronic device. As yet another example, “workplace skills” are commonly taught in the classroom daily without being designated as such. Instead of disguising them as classroom procedures, rules, behaviors and the like, teachers could dress them up as workplace skills. Employee evaluations from local employers could be used or adapted, for example, focusing on workplace skills such as: attendance, punctuality, time management, quality of work, cooperation with peers, cooperation with supervisor, etc. One observer has proposed that this would be a “great addition to the ‘report card’ and for parent conferences” (Schoket, 2006).

- 12) As each teacher introduces new strategies in the classroom, the paradigm would enable them to keep track of the new services that he/she has introduced as a progress tracking mechanism.
- 13) It further acknowledges that it takes an educational team to effectively deliver a developmentally based career focused program. It is not the exclusive domain of any one professional person such as a guidance counselor, vocational teacher, or academic teacher. It is a process that follows each student through the grades, from class to class and school to school. In line with the concept of taking a “vil-

lage to raise a child,” it takes an “educational village” to prepare a truly effective career development program.

- 14) The costs of providing the services are usually relatively inexpensive. Many of the services can be “home-made” and, with the exception of the high technology computer-based systems, most of the retail products are relatively inexpensive. While retail versions are available, a relatively simple example of a free device available on the Internet is a parent/student “Transition Planning Survey” form. One of these can be found at: www.remc11.k12.mi.us/sped/transitio/n/docs/parentQ.pdf .
- 15) The paradigm includes a progress monitoring component that encourages student involvement as a means of promoting self-advocacy. Due to the extremely volatile world that we live in, the ultimate goal for all students must be to give them, within the extent of their own limitations, the skills necessary to serve their own needs in the adult world.
- 16) It may serve as a good starting point in terms of helping school staff become aware of career development issues facing special needs students and a special needs population. It has recently been noted, for example, that graduate students in counseling programs, with the exception of rehabilitation counselors, are not typically required to learn about people with disabilities (Smart & Smart, 2006; Wadsworth & Cocco, 2005).

The Career Portfolio; Tracking Individual Student Progress

Since this paradigm is longitudinal in nature, extending over time, and will by nature include information derived from different teachers, classes, and schools, a career development portfolio is viewed as being the most appropriate method of following overall student progress (Wonacott, 2001). At the elementary and middle school levels, the portfolio would be more generally focused and would include many samples of student work: job research summaries, career related book reports, job shadowing experience reports, reports of career related counseling sessions, interest inventories, and copies of various other self-exploration reports. When a student reaches the secondary, or high school level, it would become more student-directed and career/job focused in nature as greater emphasis is placed during these years on helping students become more responsible for their own lives, along with becoming better self-advocates for themselves. In this age bracket, the portfolio might include more information of relevance to a prospective employer or a prospective post-secondary training program or college such as a transcript, resume, or recent work sample. The importance of helping each student take responsibility for his/her own progress cannot be overstressed.

“Given the reality that there will be numerous changes in each individual’s career plan over the years, it is almost as though that plan is a living, growing entity. Individuals will often have to make decisions or choices. Because these decisions can have a dramatic impact on their lives, it is important that they be informed decisions. It is

important to have knowledge of the economy, labor market trends, changes in occupations, and the availability of the constantly changing education/training resources. This knowledge must be updated whenever a career decision is needed throughout the life of the individual, often without the help of a counselor. Equipping our students/clients with the knowledge and skills to acquire and reacquire this knowledge and use it to make good decisions will have a major impact on their happiness, productivity, and general success in life” (Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, 2004, p.1).

Summary

A comprehensive paradigm has been presented that helps to monitor and facilitate the provision of career development services to a K-12 school population including students with special needs. The focus is on demonstrating *accountability* and *relevancy* of services, which are viewed as being inseparable concepts. This further constitutes a change in focus from educating for education’s sake to educating for employment/career preparation. An expanded version of the typical career development format is utilized that is in turn cross-referenced with different service delivery options in line with differentiated instruction methodology.

This paradigm is unique in that it assists in identifying areas of both program strength and program needs; it is thus valuable for what it *shows* in addition to what it does *not show*, “gaps” in services. Also, it provides this information in a visual format that is easy to explain and understand with minimal inter-

pretation to the general public. It can be utilized in a variety of ways: as a planning tool, a program diagnostic tool, a public relations aid, and as a motivational aid to convey the relevancy of program services to students. It can further be expanded or minimized as needed to meet the unique parameters, service needs, and learning styles of each school population. It further demonstrates visually that career development is an ongoing process that extends through all of the grades, from the elementary school years through high school (and beyond).

A provision for ongoing student involvement in progress monitoring is included in the paradigm to empower and teach students to advocate for themselves. The concept of a career development portfolio is presented as being a complimentary device for collecting: writing samples, work samples, student progress reports, and tracking student progress over time. The portfolio concept also compliments the notion of encouraging student self-advocacy by permitting each student to assume greater responsibility for its content as he/she nears the secondary academic phase of education.

References

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2006). *Differentiated instruction resources*. Retrieved April 10, 2006, from www.ascd.org

Brown, Bettina L. (1999). *School-to-work and elementary education*. ERIC Practice Application Brief.

Crealock, C., & Kronick, D. (1993). *Children and young people with specific learning disabilities*. Paris, France: UNESCO.

Friedman, T. (2005). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (2006). *Navigating the road to work*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (2003). *National career development guidelines by area and level*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (2006). Training program on the special education post school survey. King of Prussia, Pennsylvania: Author.

Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (2004). Does your career path look like a pretzel? Rhode Island's Career Resource Network News Corner. Spring, 13(1): 1

Sands, D., & Barker, H. (2004). Organized chaos: Modeling differentiated instruction for pre-service teachers. *Teaching & Learning*, 19(1), 26-49.

Schoket, S. (2000). Career development for all students. Retrieved May 10, 2005. www.teachnet.com/lesson/real/career4all/index.html

- Smart, J., & Smart, D. (2006). Models of disability: Implications for the counseling profession. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 84(1), 29 - 40.
- Starr, Linda. (2004). Differentiated instruction. Retrieved May 10, 2006, from www.education-world.com/a_curr/strategy/strategy042.shtml
- Theroux, P. (2006). *Learning with technology*. Retrieved April 10, 2006, from www.enhancelearning.ca
- Thornburgh, N. (2005, April 17). Dropout nation. *Time*, 30-40.
- Tompkins, R. (2003). Leaving rural children behind. *Education Week on the Web*. Retrieved May 8, 2006, from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm>
- U.S. Department of Education (2003). Comments by Secretary Paige to the Commonwealth Club of California. Retrieved May 12, 2006., from <http://www.ed.gov/02-2003/03122003a.html>
- Wadsworth, J., & Cocco, K. (2005). A look at career development for persons with mental retardation. *Career Convergence Web Magazine*. Retrieved April 10, 2006, from www.careerconvergence.com
- Wonacott, M. (2001). Career portfolios. ERIC Practice Application Brief.

About the author:

Perry Bickel is a certified school counselor and a certified rehabilitation counselor and is the Vocational Administrator for Wordsworth Academy in Pennsylvania.