

12-2018

# College & Career Exploration

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## Recommended Citation

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College & Career Exploration

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California State University Monterey Bay

December 5, 2018

Title: College & Career Exploration

#### Abstract

Taylor Farms Center for Learning was developed by the Future Citizens Foundation who is a California non-profit organization that provides programs throughout Monterey County. The rate of high school dropouts in Monterey County is extremely high. The purpose of the capstone project was to empower and promote youth to obtain a higher education and to simply allow youth to define success in their own terms. The empowerment process consisted of four educational workshops that focused in educating and informing youth of different postsecondary education and careers opportunities available. The results increased youth's knowledge and awareness about postsecondary education and career possibilities. Future recommendations to the agency will be to include guest speakers and field trips during the workshops to provide the youth with meaningful insight into different career and college experiences.

Keywords: *youth, college exploration, career exploration, postsecondary education, early intervention*

**Agency and Community Served**

Taylor Farms Center for Learning was developed by the Future Citizens Foundation who is a California non-profit organization that provides programs throughout Monterey County. The mission statement for the center is that it offers young people of the Monterey County opportunities for a better future (Future Citizens Foundation, 2016). The purpose of the Center for Learning is, “to be a place where students can further their education and grow into their potential, but it also aims to provide an environment for the local youth to feel safe and secure (Taylor Farms, 2018).” In addition, the Center for Learning keeps a high percentage of the cities vulnerable youth safe and provides supervised, healthy, activities to strengthen their resilience to the gang influence and violence (Future Citizens Foundation, 2016). The programs that the Center for Learning offers focus in enriching the lives of youth through STEAM, academia, and life exploration and preparation. In addition to these programs, the Center for Learning offers services such as tutoring, dual language academy, sat/act preparation, coding classes, website development, vocational exploration, college exploration and preparation, and mentoring support for youth.

The Center for Learning serves Monterey County youth. Currently, they serve 73% are of ages 6 – 13, 22% are of Ages 14 – 18, and 5% are ages 19 – 22. The youth enrolled in this center are all from diverse backgrounds for example, 91% are Hispanic or Latino, 6% are White, 2% Asian American, and 1% African American. Eighty-four-point eight percent of the students who attend the Center are eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch program and the partner school district’s data indicates 13.0 - 36.3% are Homeless. The center serves students with high needs such as low socio-economic. Low socio-economic status in children has been shown to be related to poor cognitive development, language, memory, socioemotional processing, and poor

income and health in adulthood. Therefore, the Center strives to offer programs and services that will enrich a student's life.

### **Problem, issue or need**

The rate of high school dropouts in Monterey County is high. According to Bonneau (2015), a dropout is defined as, "any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another elementary or secondary school." In Monterey County, high school dropout rates are 6.8 while at the state level, it is 6.3%. According to the Monterey County Office of Education(MCOE), over the past 3 years, the dropout rate for all students in Monterey County has decreased by 2.8% points (2016).

According to the National Dropout Prevention Center (2018), "dropping out of school persists as a problem that interferes with educational system efficiency and the most straightforward and satisfying route to individual educational goals for young people."

There are many factors that cause a student to drop out of school for example, financial concerns, academic challenge, gang involvement, and even family support. In a study performed by Doll, Eslami, & Walters (2013) the major reasons why student decide to drop out where getting married, not liking school, wanting to go to work, not doing well in studies, and financial difficulties at school. Youth who are struggling academically do not have a good support system and as a result, youth turn to their friends instead of their family for support and protection. When youth turn to their friends for support, often times, peer pressure leads them to commit unlawful acts.

In Monterey County, there has been a lot of youth violence and crimes committed. Gang involvement contributes to the high dropout rates in Monterey County because being involved in a gang includes committing crimes and violence. In 2015, Salinas had the highest number of gun

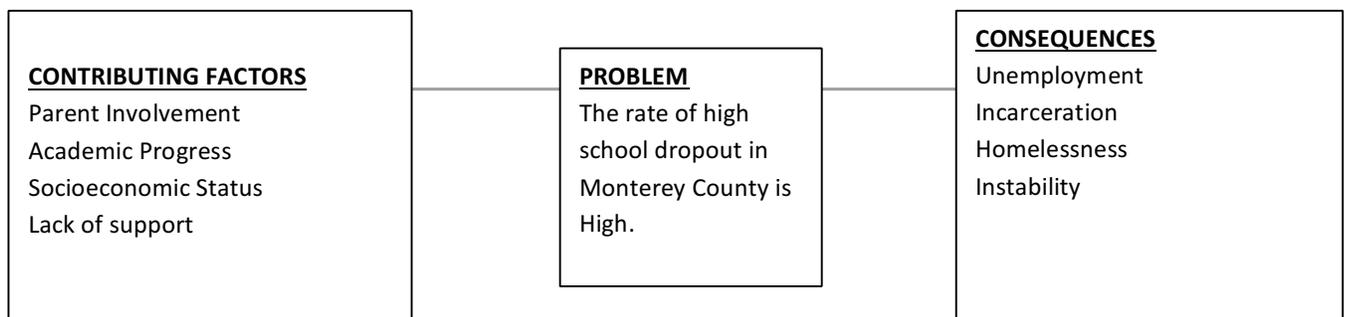
homicides in history: 103 shooting victims, 31 of whom were killed, and almost half of whom were 24 years old or younger (Magdaleno, 2016). Many of these youths are growing up in a community where the only way to gain respect is by being involved in a gang. Being involved in a gang, distracts them from school and their academic performance which negatively affects them. Therefore, they do not finish high school because they think school is not important and difficult.

Averagely, Monterey County's individuals live below the poverty level. Financial concerns are a major factor that contribute to the high student dropout rate. According to the United States Census Bureau(2016), Monterey County's poverty rate is 16.1%, greater than the overall rate for the state which is 15.8%. There are 82,000 people employed in agriculture production, which represents 18.4% of all Monterey County jobs (Martin, P., Hooker, M., Aktar, M., & Stockton, M, 2016). Majority of the people who work in Agriculture are Hispanic. Working in agriculture, involves working long hours sometimes even more than 12 which means they get home tired from work and have little to no time to have a conversation with their children. Financial concerns leads to losing interest in their academics, and therefore, their academic standing starts decreasing. Many of the youth are left unattended after school and feel the need to help out their parents financially. Youth often see their parents struggling and living in poverty, many youth decide to drop out of school to help their parents financially.

The consequences of dropping out of high school have long term effects. Dropping out of high school can lead to unemployment, incarceration, homelessness and instability. When a student does not obtain a high school diploma, finding a job is difficult and the jobs they can obtain are often paid at a minimum wage. When a person is struggling to find a job, they often end up unemployed for a long period of time. Most jobs that pay well require a high school

diploma at least. Besides incarceration, another consequences of dropping out of high school is unemployment.

Dropouts are exposed to many of the same socioeconomic forces that are often gateways to crime (Bonneau, 2013). Homelessness correlates with unemployment and instability because when a person because financially unstable, they become homeless as they do not have money to pay rent. Although not receiving a high school diploma, it does not mean an individual will become incarcerated, it all depends on an individual's environment and life choices. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2018), "If the nation made a comparable investment in schools as it does in jails and prisons, the return would be decreased levels of criminal activity and incarceration as well as significant and life-changing impacts for individuals and the nation as a whole." This statement is very true and could be a great strategy to increase high school graduation rates. If schools invested more in school activities and programs, the youth would have extracurricular activities to join and programs such as tutoring programs, mentoring support, and counseling to feel encouraged and motivated to graduate from high school.



### **Capstone Project Description and Justification**

Title: College and Career Exploration

The Center for Learning provides programs throughout Monterey County to break down barriers, enabling children to experience success and supports them in planning a productive future. Therefore, the empowerment process consisted of 4 educational workshops that focused

in educating and informing youth of different postsecondary education and careers. The goal of this project was to promote youth to obtain a higher ed education and to simply to allow them to define success in their own terms. This project provided participants with information needed to be college and career ready. For example, participants learned about the steps needed to apply to college, the different post-secondary education available to them, the requirements needed to obtain the career of their choice, and the process of creating short and long term goals.

Throughout the 4 workshops, youth created their own personalized scrapbook that showcased their college choice, career choice, and short and long term goals.

The term success is defined differently by every person but by allowing youth to explore different career and college opportunities, they were able to identify their own career and college choice to prevent any future dropouts. The project was developed due to the current issue that is being addressed at the Center for Learning. The issues being addressed at the Center is education and violence. This educational workshop not only benefited the agency, but also the community as it can increase future high school graduation rates, college enrollment, and employment status. According to Glessner, Rockinson-Szapkiw, and Lopez “colleges and universities can develop programs and interventions that communicate the value of a college education, provide a model of the possibility for all citizens to enter higher education, remove perception barriers based on race and gender, and discuss skills and knowledge needed to be college and career ready (2017).” The Center for Learning did not work directly from a college or university, however, it did have a facilitator who emphasizes the values, skills, and knowledge required to go to college or even to obtain a job.

College and career readiness can start as early as a student’s elementary school years. For this reason, the population this project served was from grades early as 4th to 12th grade. Youth

in grades 5th to 12th rely heavily in support and guidance as they are going through many changes. Radcliffe and Boss (2013) advise that, “while students are in middle school we recommend pre-service teachers coach them in creating three digital stories that may help them become college-ready.” Middle school students and any other student tend to be the most vulnerable and often seek guidance from others, so what better way than to motivate them to succeed in their education by allowing them to become college and career ready at an early age.

Being aware of the different requirements needed to enter a colleges, universities, or their dream career, is essential in order to be prepared. Students can become college-ready and develop a college-going culture by, “(1) understand the nature of college, (2) recognize that a college education may be important to his or her future success, (3) gain positive perceptions and aspirations about college, (4) prepare academically for college admission, and (5) set short- and long-term goals that support becoming college-ready (Radcliffe & Boss, 2013).” Throughout the 4 workshops, students will be completing activities in order to increase their knowledge so they can be prepared and informed of the requirements needed to obtain their ideal job or get into a university. Youth benefited from the support, mentoring, and guidance offered through the four educational workshops.

Scrapbooking is a form of displaying important personal memories through images, quotes, embellishments, letters, and more. The benefits of scrapbooking is that it is a therapeutic tool, personal project, and a book of memories. As Kohut (2011) describes, a scrapbook can help “in a time of insecurity and uncertainty. Keeping a scrapbook or journal can help an individual feel protected.” In addition, a scrapbook, “is now an established group identity that many people use to maintain a sense of community and to share their creations and ideas (Kohut, 2011).” Instead of educating youth through power point slides and having them write notes, Participants

will have an engaging experience by performing activities and creating a scrapbook that displays success in their own terms. Scrapbooks are not only fun but educational as they serve a purpose which is to motivate and reflect in the future upon one's own accomplishments.

The Center for Learning is a relatively new agency; they do not have any other projects that relate to the use of scrapbooking or college and career preparedness. Although the Center for Learning offers a program that focuses in life exploration and preparation that explores vocations, college strategies, and career preparation they have not implemented any programs. The most important tasks that were needed to implement this project were developing goals & outcomes, developing pre & post surveys, and creating a flyer to get students to participate.

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline
Identity Need for Project	Knowledge/Generating Ideas	January 2018
Draft Proposal	Receive Feedback	March, 2018
Research	Knowledge/ Generating Ideas	April, 2018
Develop Program Goals & Outcomes	Outcomes to Measure Program	May, 2018
Funding for Scrapbooks	Project Resources	August, 2018
Develop Pre & Post Surveys	Outcomes	August, 2018
Post & Hand Out Flyer	Recruitment tools	September, 2018
Lesson Plans	Project Materials	September, 2018
Create PowerPoint Slides	Lesson Plan	September/ October, 2018
Workshops	Project Implementation	October, 2018

The only unexpected circumstances that became present was that the workshops were postponed a week late because there was other events happening in the Center. An obstacle at first was getting the participants to attend the workshops, but by the of flyers, participants decided to attend the workshops as it was brought to their attention. In addition, a staff member from the first tee posted flyers around the center and online to get more participants to join.

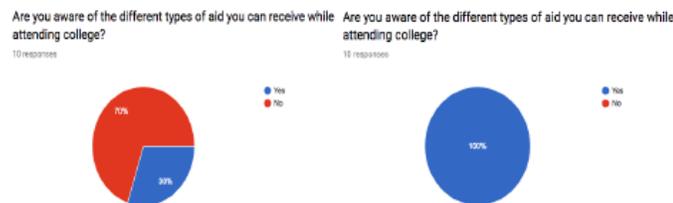
### **Project Results**

The expected outcome of this project was to deliver educational workshops that increased youths' knowledge and awareness about postsecondary education and career opportunities. The

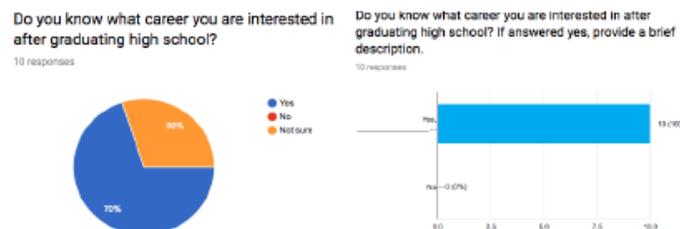
outcome measure that was utilized to assess the projects progress toward achieving the identified outcome was by assessing participants knowledge gained. This was done by comparing the pre-and post-surveys as they included questions regarding the workshops content. The method that was used to gather evidence in order to measure the outcome was pre-and post-surveys and attendance sheets. The results were analyzed by the intern and the mentor.

The project achieved its expected outcome. As a result of this project, those who participated in the workshops increased their knowledge and awareness about postsecondary education and careers. The sign in sheets varied each day however, there was 10 youth who consecutively attended all four workshops. Results from the pre survey, to the left, and post survey, to the right, are as follows :

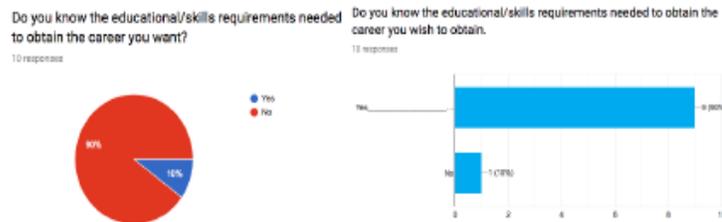
**Figure 1:** Different Types of Aid One Can Receive While Attending College



**Figure 2:** Career Interested in After Graduating School



**Figure 3:** Educational/ Skills Requirements Needed to Obtain Chosen Career



**Figure 4:** Steps in Order to Apply to College



Figure 1 shows that before the workshops, 70% of the participants were not aware of the different types of financial aid students can receive while attending college. However after fourth workshops, 100% of the participants responded that they are aware of the different types of financial aid available. Many students are unaware of the different career paths they can choose. Figure 2 demonstrates how only 70% of the participants knew exactly what career they were interested in after graduating high school before attending the workshops, but after the fourth workshop, 100% of the participants had increased their career awareness and were able to choose at least 1 career they were highly interested in. Based on Figure 3, 100% of the participants were able to identify the skills and requirements needed to obtain their ideal career. Overall, this project allowed participants to increase their college and career awareness and as Figure 4 shows, by the end of the workshops, 100% of the participants were able to identify the steps needed to apply to college. The participants are now college and career ready.

The success of this project was due to the information presented on power point slides and the activities that were incorporated throughout each workshop. The information presented in the power point slides contributed to the outcome because for each workshop, there was a 20 minutes presentation through power point slides that focused on specific topics. For example, the students learned very detailed information about college, universities, technical schools, careers, short and long term goal setting. After the power point presentation, followed a 20 minute interactive activity similar to the topic presented during that workshop. For the third workshop, the topic was careers so the activity that followed after the presentation was for the participants to choose a career they were interested in and research the requirements, salary, and job outlook. During each workshop, the last 20 minutes where used to allow participants to decorate and work on their scrapbook. The scrapbook showcased their chosen college/ university, career choice, short and long term goals. In addition, some of the comments received from the participants in the post survey was that they enjoyed the interactive activities and scrapbooking activity as it allowed them to be creative.

The challenges this project faced was keeping the participants interested to continue to attend the workshops. However, in order for a student to attend the workshop, a signup form was created so participants and their parents were informed of the 2 week commitment they were making to attend all 4 workshops. The sign up form was specific about the dates and times the participants needed to attend. Incentives were used in this project in order to motivate the students to keep attending the workshops. Some of the incentives used were snacks and zollar dollars which is money to buy items from the Center.

### **Recommendations for the Agency Based on Results**

Based on the results, further recommendations for the agency is to implement the workshops as a part of their program. This college and career exploration workshop will further enhance the Center's mission statement by preparing the students to become active members of society. In addition, the workshops focuses in life exploration and preparation as it allows participants to explore different vocations, colleges, and preparation. As mentioned, the Center for Learning has not implemented any programs about life exploration and career preparation. Therefore, the workshops can prepare students to be college and career ready at an early age. It will also increase the rates of high school graduation rates amongst the Monterey County as they will have learned the importance of education.

If continued, one thing that should be done differently during these workshops is to incorporate field trips and guest speakers. These field trips would include visiting local universities, community colleges, and trade programs. By incorporating field trips as part of the workshops, participants will feel inspired and motivated as they will be able to envision a life after high school. According to Eastern Promise (n.d), "this experience they may begin comparing the similarities and differences between community colleges, trade programs and 4-year universities." Participants can then make a decision and envision a clear picture based on their choice. Guest speakers during a workshop allow participants to hear personal experiences that they might relate with and feel empowered. Providing students with the support and guidance needed is essential as it can prevent any future dropouts.

### **Personal Reflection**

Throughout this project, I have learned that youth in Monterey County are scared for their future. I also learned that youth are not aware of the requirements needed to apply to college or to obtain a job because it is not a topic that is not spoken at home or school. Especially

for those participants who are in elementary and middle school, college has not been introduced to them. During one of my workshops, I had an activity that asked participants why they were undecided about their college preference. One of the participants answered, “I am scared of making the wrong choice and to disappoint my parents.” When I seen this response, I was very surprised and astonished to know someone so little can be scared to make the wrong choice. This response shows that youth need a lot of support and guidance throughout their educational experience.

Facilitating a workshop is a great skill I have developed because of this project. Planning for this workshop was stressful but definitely worth it. When I first started planning for this workshop I did not take in consideration all the effort, time, and money a workshop can take. However, once I prepared my lesson plans, the journey was a lot easier as I was a lot more organized and knew exactly what my power point slides needed.

This project effectively contributed to the agency as it addressed the importance of education. This project informed participants of the steps to apply to college, the different financial aid available to them, and the requirements needed to obtain their ideal career. It enabled participants to become active members of society. It also introduced them to topics related to college and careers in which they were not previously familiar with.

### **Broader Social Significance**

The broader social problem this project related to is unemployment. Dropping out of high school affects a person’s future by limiting their employment options. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), “the overall unemployment rate for 16- to 24-year-olds was 19 percent, it was 30 percent for those without a high school diploma and 7 percent for those with a bachelor’s or higher degree.” As discussed, those who do not obtain a high school degree are more likely to be unemployed and the jobs they obtain are not paid very well. Having a high

school degree, open the doors to many opportunities and increases the likelihood of obtaining a good paying job.

In order to address the broader social issue of unemployment, further investigate needs to be done in unemployment causes and effects. Unemployment should be another workshop that can be added to this project so instead of having four workshops, it would be five. This fifth workshop can educate participants about the effects of unemployment and additionally, prepare them with the skills needed to become employed. The activities that can be implemented for this workshop in order to be effective and to prevent any future unemployment are creating a resume and interviewing role plays. An advice that's beneficial for future capstone students working on these types of project is to prepare in advance and to create interactive activities for each workshop. Workshops take a lot of preparation but the results and feedback you get from your participants, make the effort and sacrifices worth it all.

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## Appendices

### Pre Survey Capstone Project

This survey will remain confidential you do not have to write your name. This is not a test there are no right or wrong answers simply just your own opinions. Please fill it in as honestly as you can.

1. What grade level are you currently in?

Mark only one oval.

- 4th-6th Grade  
 7th-8th Grade  
 9th-12th Grade

2. What are your plans after high school?

Mark only one oval.

- I plan to work  
 Attend a 4 year University  
 Attend community college  
 Attend technical/ vocational school  
 Enter military  
 Not Sure

3. Do you know the basic steps to apply to college?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes  
 No

4. Are you aware of the different types of aid you can receive while attending college?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes  
 No

5. How likely are you to attend college after you graduate from high school?

Mark only one oval.

- |                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                                       |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1              | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                                       |
| Definitely Not | <input type="radio"/> Definitely Will |

10/20/2018

Pre Survey Capstone Project

6. Do you know what career you are interested in after graduating high school?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes  
 No  
 Not sure

7. Do you know the educational/skills requirements needed to obtain the career you want?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes  
 No

## Post Survey

This survey will remain confidential you do not have to write your name. This is not a test there are no right or wrong answers simply just your own opinions. Please fill it in as honestly as you can.

### 1. What grade level are you currently in?

Mark only one oval.

- 4th-6th Grade  
 7th-8th Grade  
 9th-12th Grade

### 2. What are your plans after high school?

Mark only one oval.

- I plan to work  
 Attend a 4 year university  
 Attend Community College  
 Attend Vocational/technical School  
 Enter Military  
 Not sure

### 3. Do you know the basic steps to apply to college?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes  
 No

### 4. Are you aware of the different types of aid you can receive while attending college?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes  
 No

### 5. How likely are you to attend college after you graduate from high school?

Mark only one oval.

- 1    2    3    4    5
- Definitely Not                  Definitely Will

## Post Survey

### 6. Do you know what career you are interested in after graduating high school? If answered yes, provide a brief description.

Check all that apply:

- Yes, \_\_\_\_\_  
 No

### 7. Do you know the educational/skills requirements needed to obtain the career you wish to obtain. If answered yes, provide a brief description

Check all that apply:

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
 No

### 8. What is the difference between a short and long term goal? Provide an example for each

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 9. I really liked the use of scrapbooks as an educational purposes.

Mark only one oval.

- 1    2    3    4    5
- Strongly Agree                  Strongly Disagree

### 10. Rate your overall experience in learning about different Colleges and Careers during this workshop.

Mark only one oval.

- 1    2    3    4    5
- Very Dissatisfied                  Very Satisfied

### 11. What did you like the most about the workshop?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

# College & Career Exploration



4 Workshops - October 22, 24, 30, 31 - 4:00 - 5:00 PM

## Purpose

The primary purpose of these workshops is to inform and educate youth about different college and career opportunities. Participants will learn about the steps required to apply to college, the types of financial aid available and the educational requirements needed to obtain their desired career. In addition, participants will also be learning about short and long term goals. Participants will create their own personalized scrapbook showcasing their educational, career, short and long term goals.

## Goal

1. To empower and promote youth to obtain a higher ed education
2. To allow participants to define success in their own terms.

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing this form you give permission for your child to take the class and to have posted or published his/her photo as part of a capstone project.

# COLLEGE & CAREER EXPLORATION WORKSHOPS

**Want to explore different college & career opportunities? Then join us, to create your own personalized scrapbook!**

Future Citizens Foundation



## WHEN

October 22  
October 24  
October 30  
October 31

4:00 - 5:00 PM

## WHERE

Taylor Farms Center for Learning  
1551 Beacon Hill Dr.  
Salinas, Ca 93905

Limited to 20 Participants

+Sign up at the CFL or  
Print out form online  
using code below\*

