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Career Guidance at Central Coast High School

Max Termotto

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

Career Guidance at CCHS

Introduction

There is a lack of information for continuation high school students about financially and socially viable career paths that require no college education. On average, when continuation high school students do not receive this career oriented education, they are more likely to have lower rates of attendance, graduation and academic performance (*Career Guidance and Counseling Programs*, 2014)). Scholarly research proves the following assertion: “CTE (career and technical education) does have the potential to reduce the odds of dropout and increase the odds of high school completion (Wonacott, 2002). The benefits that high school graduates have over high school dropouts are numerous and long lasting, and ultimately will permeate into many areas of an individual’s life and wellbeing, financial or otherwise.

When provided the opportunity to explore careers that do not require a college education, the students will be receiving the guidance and direction necessary to ensure both a continued success in academics and ultimately an easier time forging their own career paths and finding their own place in society. To address this need , a two- day lesson was created to inform Central Coast High School students in Seaside, California as to the array of career path options that await them after high school. Nearly 50% of students at CCHS are immigrant students who are just beginning to learn English as a second language (CCD Public school data 2019-2020, 2020-2021 school years). This institution serves a diverse population and community, and functions also as a pillar of justice and equality within the community by providing programs for disadvantaged, disabled and delinquent youth.

Needs Statement

When continuation high school students are unable to receive education about the range of viable career paths after high school that do not require college education, they often struggle to find their own niche in society, socially and financially. Numerous scientific studies conducted at an international level have revealed that an “increased number of students involved in CTE (or vocational education)” has a positive correlation with “increased high school graduation rates” (Bishop & Mane, 2004). CTE provides a platform to begin planning their futures with, career oriented education also strongly incentivizes young adults to successfully complete their high school diploma, who may not have done so otherwise. More often than not, young adults are unaware of the plethora of career opportunities that exist in a large variety of fields that do not require more than a high school diploma. More so than ever, it is imperative that these students receive the guidance necessary to navigate in the real world after high school, so that they may lead fulfilling lives and become functioning and valuable members of society. This need is only compounded by the unique set of circumstances and challenges that many continuation students face on a daily basis. More often than not, the immigrant students are already working jobs to help support their families; and due to the numerous challenges many immigrants face, receiving a degree from an accredited four year program may not be a viable option. While some Continuation High schools do implement career oriented programs and job placement services (sometimes in tandem with local community colleges), this standard is not ubiquitous throughout the continuation school systems in California. Therefore, I created a three-day lesson on career pathways for students at Central Coast High School in Seaside, California.

The California Department of Education describes continuation high school programs as alternative high school diploma programs for students who are sixteen years of age or older and who have not graduated from high school and are at risk of not graduating (cde.ca.gov). In reality there are a number of additional reasons for students to enter a continuation program. The most common qualifying factors for students at a continuation program are as follows: working part or full time outside of school, being behind in school credits, special family needs and circumstances, or a history of delinquent behavior (e.g. expulsion from prior high school). Every school and program serves a different community, and in Seaside, California, a large majority of students at Central Coast high school are not categorized as being English Proficient (Enrollment Information. – Parents – Monterey Peninsula Unified School District. (n.d.).

There are a wide array of factors that may contribute to an adolescents placement in a Continuation Education program. As is recognized by the state of California, the most common of these are the following: being “behind in high school credits,” being “employed or fulfilling family obligations”(<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/ce/cefcontinuationed.asp>). The latter factors are especially relevant at Central Coast High School in Seaside, CA, due to the large population of immigrants, who face many cultural and social challenges of integration into a new society and emigration from their former home countries. More often than not, high school students from immigrant families are already working part or full time to help support their families. Many of these students also face linguistic challenges as they transition to learning in a foreign language, a well studied process that is known to pose extra challenges for young learners. The process of education that many immigrants face in the US has long been a contentious subject, spanning the centuries of immigration to the US by millions of people, hailing from various ethnic, social and or racial backgrounds. These challenges include the following: interrupted schooling, language

and cultural barriers, minority religious beliefs, levels of native education, socioeconomic resources, and the host country's level of acceptance or rejection of the immigrants (Benavides et al., 2012).

Adolescents are infamous for being “excessive risk takers,” being “overly self-focused, and highly susceptible to social pressure” ((ET The Development of Self and Identity in Adolescence...)). Scholarly research also reveals this period of development during adolescence and young adulthood “is crucial for many aspects of developing self and identity, including commitments, personal goals, motivations, and psychosocial well-being.” Once more, research also reveals that these young adults “seek autonomy, particularly from parents, along with increased commitments to social aspects of identity and greater needs for connection with peers” (ET The Development of Self and Identity in Adolescence). Considering these critical aspects of this period of development, it becomes evident that young adults hold the most malleable perception of both themselves and their environments and as such are most susceptible to change (be it positive or negative). **It is in** this context that career related education programs and interventions have the most profound and positive impact. In tandem with these findings, further research surrounding CTE (Career and Technical Education, i.e. vocational education) has also yielded the following results: “CTE does have the potential to reduce the odds of dropout and increase the odds of high school completion” (Wonacott, 2002). Additional research also suggests that CTE engages “students more thoroughly in school and create a more tangible connection between schoolwork and postsecondary experiences, be that in college or career (Stone & Alfeld, 2004). In essence, career oriented programs are proven to have positive impacts on the development of identity in adolescents and young adults.

There exists substantial research and scientific literature on the developmental outcomes of young adults who successfully complete high school and young adults who do not. Primarily, high school graduates have the following impact on society: “Individual academic and employment gains from high school completion successfully contribute to the welfare of a community through lower unemployment, increased payment of taxes, and reduced reliance on social programs that are associated with education” (Plank, DeLuca, & Estacion, 2008; Schargel & Smink, 2001). More over, “those who complete high school tend to have stronger health and lower mortality rates as well as a lower likelihood of committing crimes” (Rumberger, 2010). Considering these numerous benefits that will contribute to a life of health, wellbeing and longevity, it becomes clear that young adults are better off developmentally as high school graduates than as high school dropouts.

While the majority of contemporary institutions are in favor of a linear path that takes young adults through high school and an accredited four year university, in reality there are an abundance of career opportunities in a variety of fields that provide social and financial security, as well as a purpose driven career. Whether it be in fields like healthcare, transportation, hospitality, human services, small business, first response, technology, agriculture, or the array of paths available through trades (e.g. plumbing, electrician, masonry, etc.), there is no shortage of need for competent young men and women to fill these roles. **When** done properly, many of these careers or small businesses in addition to providing skilled labor and needed services, have the potential to be highly profitable. Indeed, it is the case that so many “high school graduates have been so effectively encouraged to get a bachelor's that high-paid jobs requiring shorter and less expensive training are going unfilled...[this] affects those students and also poses a real threat to the economy” (Gross & Marcus, 2018).

To greater understand the need for career oriented programs at CCHS, it is critical to juxtapose the institution with comparable and contemporary institutions in the state of California. CCHS has a graduation rate of 70% which is put into perspective when considering the state average of 85%. In addition to this discrepancy, CCHS falls 50% below the state average when it comes to students meeting UC and CSU admission requirements. Upon further juxtaposition of CCHS and the State of California, it is revealed that ACT, SAT and AP Course participation rates are significantly lower at CCHS than the average school in California

(<https://www.greatschools.org/california/seaside/3263-Central-Coast-High-School/>). The state of California does acknowledge the need of these institutions to also serve the following purpose: “the program emphasizes an occupational or career orientation or a work–study schedule... supplemental programs may include independent study, regional occupational programs, career counseling, and job placement and apprenticeships”

(<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/ce/cefcontinuationed.asp>). While this consideration is made explicit on the California Department of Education’s website, you will be hard pressed to find a comparable program at Central Coast High School. In Lieu of the recent global pandemic the staff at Central Coast High School has been unable to allocate resources to these types of programs and have had to stick to a standard curriculum of general education and credit recovery.

It is critical to recognize that students at CCHS have been deemed at risk of completing their High school education and receiving a diploma. This in and of itself warrants the implementation of a career oriented program or lesson, that not only helps young students think ahead, but also incentivizes students to see the value in receiving their high school diploma and completing their education. What there is not a need for in this community is the continued

negligence of our youth through a lack of guidance or education at programs like Central Coast High School, that exist all across the state. It is imperative that these adolescents and young adults receive at the least, the proper information, so that they can pursue success for themselves and their families, in whatever capacity that may manifest. At the least, students will come away from the program with an understanding of why it will be advantageous for them to acquire their high school diploma.

In order to address the lack of career oriented education and guidance at Central Coast High School, I have created a three day lesson that will inform students of post high school career paths only requiring a high school diploma. The lesson will be administered to students of a continuation high school in Seaside, CA known as Central Coast High School. While CCHS does well to help liberate underprivileged students through programs oriented around the English language, citizenship and voters rights, it is evident that many of these students would benefit highly from career path oriented programs as they eventually make their way into (for many of them a foreign) society.

THEORY

The theory responsible for this project's method of delivery is Jean Piaget's comprehensive theory of cognitive development. Although the emotional, intellectual, social and cognitive areas of human development are all present in considering the context of development occurring for students at Central Coast High School, the intellectual and cognitive areas were taken into special consideration when choosing the method of delivery and manner of instruction. At the crux of Piaget's theory of cognitive development is the notion that intelligence

not only changes as children grow and develop, but also holds implications about the acquisition of knowledge, and how this acquisition evolves as we develop. It is important to note that Piaget's theory is applicable ubiquitously across language and cultures, although the rates of development may vary from person to person (Huitt, W., & Hummel, J. (2003). Piaget's theory categorizes the stage of cognitive development that adolescents and young adults experience as the formative operational stage.

According to Piaget's cognitive theory regarding this stage of development, the ability to think abstractly and logically coincides with the age period of these adolescent students. This stage is referred to as the Formal Operational stage and takes place from the age of 12 and up. Piaget uses the following characteristics to categorize this stage of development: the ability to begin thinking abstractly, troubleshooting hypothetical problems, the use of deductive reasoning and logic, and the ability to think comprehensively about moral, philosophical, social and ethical principles. The hallmark of this stage of Piaget's developmental theory is the gained ability to think more abstractly and logically about the world and society, and in the process gain the ability to change their perception of it as they acquire new information.

It is in this stage of development, marked by the acquisition of new knowledge and a capacity to think more deeply of the world, that students at Central Coast High School will be exposed to a three day lesson plan revolving around career planning, consultation and education. As students are in the midst of Piaget's latter Formal Operational Stage, they are at a point in their lives and developmental trajectory where they can acquire new information, and use said information to form and develop new perspectives and understandings of the world around them, thinking abstractly of the future and career paths. Ultimately, according to Piaget's developmental theory of cognitive development, this population of students falls under the

optimal age group and period of development that will allow for a successful and meaningful participation in this workshop.

CONSIDERATION OF DIVERSITY

Central Coast High School (CCHS) serves a diverse community and student body. CCHS serves a student population that is over 78% Hispanic, 13% white, with the remaining percent being African American, Filipino, Asian, Pacific Islander and Native American.

To adequately serve the needs of its students, Central Coast high school specializes in ESL programs and over 22% of students just beginning to study the English language, just under 17% of students are RFEP (Reclassified Fluent English Proficient), and just under 50% of CCHS students are categorized as “FEP” (Fluent English Proficiency). The institution meets an increased demand of young English learners from a variety of backgrounds and certainly is helping them transition both academically and socially to a new culture and society. Through successfully completing ESL programs at CCHS, students have the opportunity to both learn a new language and arm themselves with a stronger capacity to navigate institutions within society.

Notably, of the grand total of 103 students enrolled, about 84 come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. A majority of these students are from families who have emigrated from their home countries and have to work to support their families (hence they are at a continuation school where there are fewer hours and where a student can earn their diploma while working part or even full time).

Despite being grossly underfunded, Central Coast High School is doing its best to serve students in their community who are disadvantaged. A 20% increase in size of student body population since 2019 evidences a growing need for this institution within the community of Seaside, CA (*Explore Central Coast High in Seaside, CA*).

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The creation of a lesson plan educating students at CCHS aimed towards both the benefits of obtaining a high school diploma and providing insight into careers and career planning stratagem that do not require a four year degree from a university, has certainly been influenced by the characteristics of diversity at CCHS. Moreover, the characteristics of life as a first generation immigrant and non English speaker pose many challenges for young learners. Coupled with socioeconomic disadvantages and the challenges of having to work through high school to help support their families, young students have plenty of bonafide reasons for not continuing their education past high school or for receiving their high school diploma. Ultimately this lesson has been designed with these challenges in mind and will strive to meet students where they are in their own lives and span of development, placing an emphasis on the array of benefits and positive value(e.g. socially and financially) that accompany completing high school and receiving a diploma. Simultaneously, the lesson plan will also educate students as to the array of positions and careers throughout society that do not require higher education and are capable of providing stability, longevity, success and happiness in life for themselves and their families.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, the students at Central Coast High School will be able to:

1. Identify two financial benefits and advantages that high school graduates have over high school dropouts.
2. Identify at least two career paths that do not require a college degree.
3. Indicate at least one desired career path and two post-high school steps to make progress toward the career path.

METHOD SECTION

Participants

The three days of lessons will take place at Central Coast High School, a continuation school in Seaside, California. The expected number of participants will be twenty 11th and 12th graders currently enrolled at the school. The age range of participating students will be from 16-18 years of age. Notably, CCHS does have a substantially larger male population, with about

28% of students being female. Accordingly, we do expect to have a significantly larger population of males than females at the lesson due to the population of the participants.

Procedures and Materials

The first lesson will revolve around the importance of successfully completing a high school education and receiving a diploma. Participating students will gain an understanding of the benefits and advantages that accompany a high school diploma (e.g. higher incomes, greater marketability, etc.). The lesson will begin with student introductions, followed by the breaking out of students into four groups of five. While with their groups students will work together to come up with benefits and advantages that high school graduates have over high school dropouts. After group work is completed the class will come together to discuss results and ideas, and will create a master list illustrating these comparisons. Students results will be corroborated with scientific and scholarly research. Students will be required to identify at least two of these advantages, financial or otherwise, upon conclusion of the lesson.

Lesson 2 will begin with a group discussion as an entire class. Students will be asked to identify career paths in society that do not require a college degree. A master list will be created on the board. As necessary, results from the discussion will be categorized into appropriate fields (e.g. healthcare, trades, transportation, service, business etc.). Following the discussion students will engage in a collaborative quiz/game known as kahoot. An appropriate kahoot lesson will be

constructed for the students to complete in groups, as a class contest. The kahoot lesson will revolve around career paths and career fields that don't require higher education. Students will then view an informational powerpoint detailing post high school career paths that only require a high school diploma. Following the kahoot lesson, students will be broken up into groups of two to discuss and come up with potential career paths that they find interesting to themselves. Upon completion of Lesson 2 students will submit a list of at least two potential career paths that do not require a college degree. Career paths must be chosen by students based on the criteria of interest levels and viability (i.e. students must be interested in pursuing the career, for the intent and purposes of the lesson the career cannot require the completion of a four year bachelor's degree OR two year associate's degree).

Lesson three will primarily consist of the class watching the following ted talk:

https://www.ted.com/talks/mike_rowe_learning_from_dirty_jobs?language=en#t-1216259.

After reflecting on the ted talk, students will break up into groups of four to discuss their own career paths from Lesson two and will narrow down their choice to one career path. Ultimately, upon conclusion of the third lesson students will be required to submit one potential career path that they may be interested in pursuing after graduating high school. Additionally, students must provide two steps that they must take in order to qualify as candidates for their chosen position or vocation (e.g. certification, credentials, volunteer work, etc.).

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