

Running head: PURPOSE

Career Exploration Unit: Statement of Purpose

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Statement of Purpose

The Education Problem: Contextual Learning with Career Exploration

In an increasingly global community, the United States education system must continually evaluate our educational practices. According to research, about half of the students who enter college do not earn a four-year college degree within five years (Rosenbaum, 2003). In addition, a significant number of college students take remedial courses in college because they do not have the necessary academic foundations. It is clear that something needs to be changed in order to ensure that college-bound students are prepared for the academic and social challenges of college. It is also clear that this change needs to happen in order for young adults to graduate with lifelong learning skills that allow them to compete in the global environment.

Research demonstrates that student success may be enhanced when students are given the resources and opportunities to explore career development in high school (Lappan, Bradley, & Kosciulek, 2003). School counselors advocate for comprehensive school counseling programs that support students' academic, career, personal, and social development. In this unique role, school counselors use preventative, data-driven practices to provide services that advance the achievement of all students. School counselors collaborate with students and other school stakeholders on an individual, group, class, and school-wide level to effectively promote comprehensive developmental guidance curriculum, address students' immediate needs, and encourage students to achieve their potential.

Needs of Today's Learners

In our digitally rich society, school counselors must also continually work to engage and advocate for students using digital tools. This is particularly true when it comes to the ever changing world of career development. For example, as a school counselor in a small, rural

Pettisville High School, I currently teach an eighth grade career class. All of the eighth graders are in the career class for a nine-week period. Throughout the course, the students use a number of online career resources and online learning opportunities to enhance contextual student learning and provide up-to-date career exploration.

In addition to incorporating technology into the learning environment, the career exploration course is also necessary because it provides students with the opportunity to gain interest and excitement in their future. The course encourages students to examine their own interests, strengths, and context. It provides a pathway for students to develop an academic and career plan. The career exploration also helps students understand why education is a foundational step for their future.

Needs of Society

To remain globally competitive, the education system must look for effective instructional practices that promote twenty-first century skills, intellectual development, critical-thinking skills, and the ability to problem-solve. In addition, school systems are now held accountable to state standards and must implement data-driven practices to document effective instruction. It is clear that the strength of our country is connected to the strength of our education system; the students of today will be society's future leaders. It is imperative that educators engage in strategies to reach students, connect learning to students' existing experiences, and encourage high academic standards. Providing students with a course that allows them to not only dream about their future careers, but helps them create an academic plan to build a strong foundation for their future helps produce productive, independent citizens that can make a positive difference in the world.

Value of Career Exploration

Understanding how careers relate to specific subject matters and education in general helps students understand the value of learning. Integrating career education into the academic curriculum supports contextually, purposeful learning and student success. Career exploration helps equip students with the tools to be productive contributors to society with the ability to successfully compete in the global market. Research has shown that students are more invested in their learning if they can apply it to their own context and interests. With contextual learning in mind, the career exploration course is specifically designed to help students understand the connection between their current education and their success in the future.

Educational Goals in Career Exploration

The educational objectives of the introductory career exploration course are primarily to help students gain knowledge about career possibilities and plan the steps necessary to successfully achieve career goals. The Ohio School Counselor Association (OSCA) provides comprehensive school counseling guidelines for school counselors to model as we advocate for all students. Within the eighth grade career course, some of the specific goals are to have students identify their skills and interests and gain knowledge about various career options and requirements. Most importantly, the goal of the career exploration course is to support students as they build a strong educational foundation in order to become productive, independent citizens who contribute to society.

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