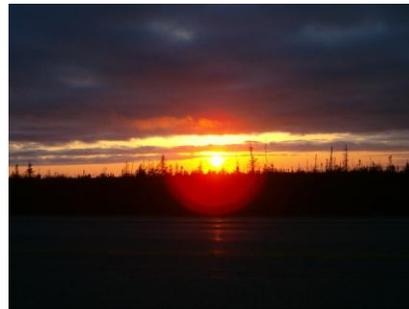


# Career Choices and Perceptions of the Skilled Trades

Grades 7 & 8,  
District 4, Spring 2004

- \* Strategic Social Plan/Rural Secretariat, Cormack-Grenfell Region
- \* Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association



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# Career Choices and Perceptions of the Skilled Trades Grades 7 & 8, District 4

## **Overview**

The surveys which are discussed in this report were conducted as a part of an initiative undertaken by the Cormack-Grenfell Strategic Social Plan/ Rural Secretariat in cooperation with the Newfoundland and Labrador chapter of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association. The two organizations were both interested in the perceptions of young people regarding possible career options, especially in the Skilled Trades. For the Strategic Social Plan/ Rural Secretariat, this fits with their larger interest in economic and social planning, skills development, and the perceptions of youth. For the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association, the project related to their concern over the looming gap in the Skilled Trades, whereby there will not be enough recruits to fill the positions needed in these trades. Part of the reason for this gap was considered to be the negative perceptions of youth regarding the Skilled Trades – perceptions which were not based on the reality of these occupations.

The two organizations designed an initiative to focus on grade seven and eight students in what was then School District 4 (southwestern Newfoundland). The plan was to prepare a set of activities which would illustrate the types of skills used in a number of the Skilled Trades. This “activities fair” (as it is referred to in this report) then travelled to the schools in the district, and all of the grades seven and eight students were able to participate. It was agreed that some method of evaluation was appropriate, and the idea of a set of surveys was developed.

The goal of these surveys was twofold: (i) to acquire baseline information on the views of grades 7 and 8 students regarding their career choices (especially the characteristics of their “ideal” job) and their perceptions of the skilled trades; and (ii) to evaluate the potential efficacy of the skilled trades activities fair, in terms of changing perceptions.

In order to achieve these goals, three surveys were prepared. The first survey (called the Pilot test hereafter) was constructed, based on consultations within the SSP-CME committee on the skilled trades. The survey was a “first-try,” designed to check the level of the language in the survey and the usefulness of the information. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix A. The survey was administered, in February 2004, to the grades 7 and 8 students in two schools in what was then District 3:

- St. James School, Lark Harbour

- Cow Head School Complex, Cow Head
- A total of 69 students completed this survey.

As a result of the feedback from the Pilot survey, we then designed the second version of the survey (called the Pre-test survey hereafter). This questionnaire gathered information on students regarding their expectations about staying in Newfoundland to work, whether they would continue with education after high school, who or what influenced their career and education decisions, the characteristics of employment that were considered to be important, and their perceptions of the skilled trades. A copy of this survey is included as Appendix B. This survey was administered, in April 2004, to all grade 7 and 8 students in eight schools within what was then District 4:

- Grandy's River, Burnt Islands
- LeGallais Memorial, Isle aux Morts
- Belanger Memorial, Upper Ferry
- Cape Elementary, Cape St. George
- St. Thomas Aquinas, Port au Port East
- St. Michael's, Stephenville Crossing
- Our Lady of Mercy, St. Georges
- E.A. Butler, McKays

In total, 307 students answered this survey.

The third survey (referred to here as the Post-test survey) repeated some of the questions of the pre-test survey (especially the ones regarding job characteristics and perceptions of the skilled trades). The survey also included a section on the students' evaluations of their experience of the skilled trades activities fair. A copy of this survey is included as Appendix C. The post-test survey was administered approximately 6 weeks after the skilled trades activities fair had been presented. The survey was completed by students at seven of the eight schools previously used for the pre-test (St. Michael's was not able to participate). A total of 193 students answered the post-test survey.

### **Results of the Pilot Survey**

The purposes of this survey were, in large measure, to evaluate the research instrument itself. But the findings can also be useful, to the schools themselves, and to us as a baseline measure of student perceptions in two rural schools of District 3. (The skilled trades activities fair did not go to schools in District 3, so there was not a chance for a post-test survey there.)

Many of the findings in the Pilot survey were similar as those in the Pre-test. However, there were some interesting points which emerged from the Pilot survey, which were not seen in the other surveys. For example, one question asked “Do you **want** to stay in Newfoundland to work?” In response, 16.4% said “yes,” 35.8% said “no,” and 47.8% were not sure. In response to: “Do you **expect** to be able to stay in Newfoundland to work?” about the same percentage were not sure (46.4%). However, 30.4% answered “yes” and 23.2% said “no.” Thus, there were a number of students who did not want to stay in the province to work, but who expected they would be able to stay. This is somewhat contrary to the perception that youth would stay in the province if there is work for them here. Indeed, the key to stemming youth provincial outmigration might not relate only to economic opportunities, but to cultural and personal expectations as well. This finding was not seen in the pre-test survey, however.

## **Results of the Pre-test Survey**

As mentioned above, a total of 307 students completed the Pre-test survey. The surveys were administered by an outside researcher (all but one school was done by Ivan Emke), within their classes during a specified class time. Below are some of the initial results of the survey.

- the average age of the respondents was 12.9 years
- the sample was almost evenly split between grade 7 and 8
- 45.6 % were female, 54.1% were male
- 92.8 % expected to graduate from high school (the rest were not sure)
- Just under a third (30.2%) reported that they were “A” students, 43.1% claimed to be “B” students and 22.7% felt they were “C” students; only 4.1% reported having an average grade below “C”
- 24.1% wanted to stay in NL after graduation, 37.8% did not want to stay and the highest percentage, 38.1%, were not sure
- 22.3% expected to be able to stay in NL, 35.4% did not expect to be able to stay and 42.3% were not sure
- Fully 83.6% expect to continue some form of education after high school, with 58.4% citing University, 28% expecting to attend College, and 13.6% planning to attend other post-secondary institutions
- Only 10% chose that type of post-secondary education because it was close to home; most (49.8%) chose that type because they need it for their career, and another 40.2% chose it out of interest
- When asked whether they were willing to borrow money to continue their education, 36.3% were not sure and 13.3% said “no;” however, just over a half (50.4%) were willing to borrow

- In terms of help with their decision about **post-secondary education**, 65.8% said that parents were the most important influence. This was followed by “nobody” (they made the decision themselves) at 15.6%, friends at 5.4%, others at 4.3%, teachers at 3.9%, siblings at 2.3%, guidance counsellor at 1.2%, and media at less than 1%
- Fully 60.1% said that they had already decided on a career (even though they were only in grades 7 and 8). In fact, grade 7 students were more likely than grade 8 students to report they had decided on a career (although the relationship was not statistically significant). Gender and age were not related to this factor either. Even though the current career choice of the students may be likely to change, it indicates that students are thinking seriously about the idea of a career, at least.
- When asked about the **most important** influence in **choosing a career**, almost half (49.7%) reported that they had made the decision themselves. Other influences included parents (29.5%), friends (7.3%), other (6.2%), siblings (3.6%), media (2.1%), guidance counsellor (1%) and teachers (.5%). These findings are somewhat consistent with other studies which have shown a significantly reduced influence of teachers and guidance counsellors in career decisions. There are a variety of reasons put forward for this, including the changed role of guidance counsellors within the provincial school system, which cannot be addressed in this report. However, the findings should not be taken as a negative comment on the work of teachers and guidance counsellors.
- As evidenced by some of the above results, parents were a far more important influence in terms of educational choices, than they are in terms of career choices (65% versus 29%). The two decisions are related at some level, but the respondents were more likely to report deciding on their own about a career, even if they recognized the important influence of parents in terms of post-secondary education.

By looking at the relationships among the different variables, we are able to gain more insight into the ways in which students construct their own views and perceptions of the world. By analyzing the pre-test results using correlational and cross-tabulation tests, we are able to see which variables relate to other variables. Below is a listing of a number of the relationships. These are all statistically significant, at the  $p > .05$  level:

- Those with a higher average grade are more likely to expect to graduate, to anticipate going on to post-secondary education, and are more likely to choose university rather than other options. In

terms of job qualities, they are less likely to want to work outdoors. They are also more likely to make career decisions by themselves, rather than citing parents or siblings as the most important influences.

- Those students who want to remain in Newfoundland are more likely to choose community college than university as their post-secondary option. They are also more likely to value working with their hands in a job, working outdoors, and having a job in a rural area (which was a very strong correlation).
- Those who expect to be able to stay in Newfoundland are more likely to be willing to borrow money for their post-secondary education. However, they are also more likely to perceive the skilled trades as being low-paying jobs.
- Students who wish to continue their education are also more likely to have certain qualities that they are looking for in a job. They seek more independence, desire a job with some variety and one that they are proud of having.
- Respondents who reported that working in an office was important to them were also more likely to state that being a boss was important, as well as having a high-status job.
- Those who wanted a job where they worked with their hands also wanted to work with lots of technology, work outdoors, be their own boss, plan their own work day, and have a job in a rural area. There were a number of statistically significant links among these items. This certainly appears to be a useful combination of job qualities for the skilled trades to use as promotion. The combination of hands-on technology use as well as job autonomy is correlated, and may appeal to a specific demographic of the student audience.
- Students who wanted some independence in their job also wanted one with variety, with high status and one that they were proud to have. This group were more likely to have made a career decision already, and were more likely to perceive the skilled trades as being mostly for men.
- Students who preferred a job in a rural area were also more likely to think that jobs in the skilled trades did not require special training. This may represent a barrier to entry into the trades for these students, who may not be willing to invest the time into education but may expect employment in the trades.
- Those who did not think that the skilled trades paid well also thought that they were dirty, low status, boring, just for men, did not require training, and that people in the skilled trades could not “make it” in university. There were a set of linkages among these items – boring, hard work, dirty work, jobs just for men, work that does not require training. This represents a “hard to reach”

demographic for the skilled trades. Indeed, it may be of little use to appeal to those with such a cluster of negative perceptions of the skilled trades.

## **The post-test survey**

The major purposes of this survey were to measure the possible effects of the skilled trades activities fair, and to offer an evaluation of the experience of the fair. When looking at the effects of the fair on attitudes, one must realize that there are many components which influence attitudes and perceptions, only one of which was the activities fair. For example, the timing of the survey may be a factor. Some might have argued for an immediate post-test measurement. However, that might result in a “recency” effect, and there would not be the same confidence that any findings would relate to long-term changes.

Having the testing later avoided these effects, but made it possible that other events had occurred which also changed perceptions. For example, maybe there was some explicit discussion of careers in school curriculum, or some relevant activities in a student’s personal life. We hypothesized, though, that the pre-test survey and the participation in the activities fair may have initiated both some individual thinking on career choices, as well as classroom discussion on career choices and the specific area of the skilled trades. An ethnographic approach, which included interviews with students and teachers, would be required to confirm the extent to which the skilled trades activities fair and the surveys acted as a catalyst to further discussion.

The demographics of the post-test survey were similar to that of the pre-test (this was expected as it was, in general, the same population being re-surveyed – although some students had missed filling out the pre-test survey, due to absences, and a few students who filled out the post-test had not been present at the activities fair – we took the latter group out of the analysis):

- 47.7% were female, and 52.3% were male
- Just over half (50.5%) were not sure if they planned to stay in Newfoundland to work. Almost a third (32.3%) said “no” and only 17.2% gave an affirmative response.
- Over three-quarters (77.2%) planned to continue with their education after high school; 16.6% were not sure and only 6.2% said “no.”
- Almost two-thirds (62%) would choose university, 22.7% preferred community college and 15.3% cited some other post-secondary school.

- Students were asked about their career plans. Just over half (51.3%) had not yet decided on a career. For those who had decided, the breakdown was as follows: Professional (34% of those who had decided), skilled trades (27.7%), cultural sector (16%), services sector (9.6%), military (7.4%), and resource sector (5.3%).
- Those students who were planning to enter the skilled trades were also more likely to want to work with their hands (and less likely to want to have a job where they have to work with people). The opposite was true of students who wanted to work in either the professional area or the cultural sector.

In the post-test survey, 24 students reported not having had the chance to attend the skilled trades activities fair. We looked at whether there were significant differences in the post-test survey between those who attended the activities fair and those who did not attend, in terms of their evaluations of the skilled trades. There were two areas where the differences were statistically significant (although we should be cautioned that the survey numbers are relatively small at this point). The two were as follows:

<i>Percent who strongly agree or agree with the statements(taking out those who were not sure or who did not answer):</i>	Attended the activities fair	Did not attend the activities fair
People go into the skilled trades only if they are not smart enough to make it through University	18.3	47.4
Jobs in the skilled trades are boring	15	33.3

Thus, based on these two items, those in the post-test who attended the activities fair were more likely to have a positive perception of the skilled trades.

### **Comparisons of pre-test and post-test survey results**

One of the important sources of data in these surveys is in the comparison of the pre-test and post-test surveys. We were looking here for significant differences, which might indicate changes in attitudes and perceptions that might have occurred as a result of the activities fair.

In terms of making a decision **on a career**, 60.1% of the pre-test group had decided, and 54% of the post-test group had decided. (Surprisingly, fully 82% of the pilot test respondents had decided on a career.) The most important influences cited by the students were as follows (we have included the findings from the Pilot test here as well):

	Pilot test	Pre-test	Post-test
Nobody (self)	36.4%	49.7	47.7
Parents	36.4	29.5	30.5
Friends	13.6	7.3	6.6
Other	6.8	6.2	6.6
Siblings	--	3.6	2
Media	4.5	2.1	4
Guidance counsellor	--	1	--
Teachers	2.3	.5	2.6

The surveys asked a number of questions about ideal working conditions. The question was worded as follows: “Please use the table below to tell us about what would be important to you in your **ideal** job. For each working condition, check off whether it is very important, somewhat important, you are not sure, a little bit important, or not at all important.”

	<b>Pre-test</b>		<b>Post-test</b>	
	Very or somewhat important	A little bit or not at all important	Very or somewhat important	A little bit or not at all important
a) To work with people	85.7	8.6	81.6	11.8
b) To work in an office	35	42.6	35	43.5
c) To work with my hands, building things	39.8	33.9	40.6	37.7
d) To be a boss	39.4	36.1	46.1	30.9
e) To have some independence in my job	83.9	7.4	81	5.6
f) To do a wide variety of things in my job	73.9	10.9	72.6	11.7
g) To have a job that is secure (I won't have to worry about losing it)	90	3.7	92.2	2.8
h) To have a job that pays well	95.3	2.3	89.9	5.6
i) To have a job with high status (like being a doctor)	62	19.6	58.1	24.5
j) To work with lots of technology	48.3	35.1	46.6	27
K) To work outdoors	41.2	36.9	48.6	31.6
l) To be my own boss	43.6	29.2	48.9	25.6
m) To be able to plan my	56.4	25.4	59.7	21

own work day				
n) To have a job that I am proud of	97.3	.6	90	3.9
o) To have a full-time job	89.2	3.7	76.3	10.2
p) To have a job in a rural area (rather than in a city)	37.2	32.6	38.4	29.9

Another way to measure any changes in the students' views of their ideal job would be to compare the means for the answers to the above statements. A subject who answered "very important" would be coded as a "1," a "somewhat important" was a "2," and so on. Thus, if we take out the "not sure" answers, thus considering only those with an opinion, and then compare those in the pre-test and the post-test who participated in both surveys and in the activities fair, we end up with a single number which indicates the level of importance of each statement, for each survey. The findings from this analysis are in the table below.

Remember that a **lower** score means that the statement is **more important**.

	Pre-test	Post-test
a) To work with people **	1.58	1.80
b) To work in an office **	2.83	2.57
c) To work with my hands, building things	2.48	2.44
d) To be a boss	2.49	2.37
e) To have some independence in my job	1.57	1.68
f) To do a wide variety of things in my job **	1.69	1.94
g) To have a job that is secure (I won't have to worry about losing it)	1.27	1.29
h) To have a job that pays well **	1.29	1.51
i) To have a job with high status (like being a doctor)	2.08	2.02
j) To work with lots of technology	2.42	2.43
K) To work outdoors	2.50	2.34
l) To be my own boss	2.33	2.31
m) To be able to plan my own work day	2.20	2.02
n) To have a job that I am proud of **	1.17	1.32
o) To have a full-time job **	1.39	1.71
p) To have a job in a rural area (rather than in a city)	2.54	2.46

\*\* For these items, the difference between the pre-test and the post-test was statistically significant at  $p > .05$ .

It is interesting to note that almost all of the significant changes regarding one's ideal job involved a decline in the importance of the characteristic. Again, this could relate to other factors influencing the

students, but the finding is a consistent one. For example, in the post-test, students argued that the following job characteristics were less important: to work with people, to do a wide variety of things, to have a job that pays well, to have a job they are proud of and to have a full-time job. The only significant change in the other direction was that respondents to the post-test rated working in an office as being more important than respondents to the pre-test.

The surveys also inquired about students' perceptions of the skilled trades. The question was worded as follows: **“Your thoughts about the skilled trades.** Remember, the skilled trades are jobs like plumbing, welding, forestry, manufacturing or carpentry. They take some training after high school, but don't require university. This table has some statements about the skilled trades. Please note whether you strongly agree, agree, are not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements. Remember, we are interested in **your opinions.**”

Here are the results for those items where the difference between the pre-test and the post-test was statistically significant at  $p > .05$ . The percentages use only those who expressed an opinion – “not sure” was not counted as a response in the analysis.

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Agree or strongly agree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Agree or strongly agree	Disagree or strongly disagree
Jobs in the skilled trades do not pay very well	39.2	60.9	22.8	77.2
Jobs in the skilled trades usually involve work that is dirty	80.1	19.9	62.4	36.6
Jobs in the skilled trades are usually very hard work, physically	88.4	11.6	77.3	22.8
Jobs in the skilled trades are seen by others as being “low class”	38.8	61.2	31.4	67.7
Jobs in the skilled trades are boring	16.7	83.3	15.9	84.1

For all of these items, we see movement from the pre-test to the post-test. In all cases, the movement is in the same direction as well, signifying a more positive evaluation of the skilled trades. Closer analysis of the figures shows that the movement tended to be from a view of “agree” to “strongly agree,” or “not sure” to “agree” or “strongly disagree” to “disagree.”

## Evaluations of the Skilled Trades Activities Fair, from the Post-test

A part of the post-test survey asked students about their opinions regarding the skilled trades activities fair. The question was worded: **“Your thoughts about the activities fair.** We are interested in whether you liked the activities fair and whether you found it useful. This table has several statements about the activities fair. Please note whether you strongly agree, agree, are not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements.”

The results were as follows, for those in the post-test who attended the activities fair:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) I enjoyed the activities fair	35.3	54.2	4.6	2.6	3.3
b) I learned something about skilled trades (like plumbing and electrician) at the activities fair	37.6	44.6	12.1	3.2	2.5
c) The instructions for the activities were easy to understand	34.8	50	11.4	2.5	1.3
d) The activities fair made me think about what kind of a job I want to have	22.8	23.4	25.3	16.5	12
e) Since going to the activities fair, I now have a more positive opinion of the skilled trades	26.8	30.6	29.3	7	6.4
f) The activities fair helped to answer some of my questions about the skilled trades	28.5	41.1	17.7	7	5.7
g) The activities fair had a good mix of activities	35	49.7	8.9	3.8	2.5
h) I read the materials that I got at the activities fair	31	34.8	15.8	8.9	9.5

As the data shows, the activities fair was very highly valued by the respondents of the survey. They were especially positive regarding their overall enjoyment of the fair, the feeling that they’d learned something, the clarity of instructions and the mix of activities.

Those who had already decided on a career were more likely to have highly positive evaluations of the activities fair. It could be that such students were already predisposed to considering career information, and their interest in this area was further enhanced by the activities. The statistically significant relationships were found with the following items:

<i>Percent who strongly agree or agree with the statements(taking out those who were not sure or who did not answer):</i>	Decided on a career	Have not decided on a career
The activities fair made me think about what kind of a job I want to have	40.2	34.5
Since going to the activities fair, I now have a more positive opinion of the skilled trades	51.9	41.3
The activities fair helped to answer some of my questions about the skilled trades	61.8	50.5
I read the materials that I got at the activities fair	65.7	41.3

There was no relationship between grade level and their evaluation of the activities fair.

There was a statistically significant relationship between gender and two evaluations of the activities fair. Women were more likely to have higher positive evaluations of the following:

<i>Percent who strongly agree or agree with the statements(taking out those who were not sure or who did not answer):</i>	Female	Male
I enjoyed the activities fair	75	67.3
The instructions for the activities were easy to understand	72.8	66.4

## **Gender Differences**

One of the questions which arose during our planning procedures was related to the interaction of gender with other factors. It has been observed that, in the past, many of the skilled trades were associated largely with men. In addition, there may be social and cultural barriers to young women in making the choice to enter the skilled trades, despite the positive effects of educational and governmental initiatives on women in the trades. Thus, we were especially interested in what our surveys showed regarding gender and perceptions.

It is also important to note that the activities fair itself was set up and operated by a team which included two women and one man, and sometimes three women and one man. We wondered if this gender composition of the team itself would have had some positive effect on the views of the young women (especially) at the activities fair.

In the pre-test, gender was correlated with three of the perceptions of the skilled trades. In the Pilot study, gender was related to two items, and in the Post-test survey, it was related to only one item. In some cases, the differences were not large, but they were still statistically significant (at  $p > .05$ ). The relationships are noted on the table below:

<i>Percent who strongly agree or agree with the statements (taking out those who were not sure or who did not answer):</i>	Female	Male
<b>Pre-test study</b>		
Jobs in the skilled trades do not pay very well	46.9	31.3
Jobs in the skilled trades usually involve work that is dirty	77.7	74.6
Jobs in the skilled trades are just for men	10	14.2
<b>Pilot study</b>		
People go into the skilled trades only if they are not smart enough to make it through University	14.8	47.6
Jobs in the skilled trades are boring	15.3	39.1
<b>Post-test study</b>		
Jobs in the skilled trades do not pay very well	25.5	24.6

Summarizing this table, females were more likely to think that the skilled trades did not pay very well and that the work was dirty. However, they were less likely to think that the skilled trades were just for men, that they were for people who couldn't make it through University and that they were boring.

We were especially interested in the responses to the statement: "Jobs in the skilled trades are just for men." Even in the post-test, after the experience of the activities fair, 10.5% of females and 11.5% of males agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. About another 15% of both males and females were not sure. This means that about 10% of the sample were "hard to reach" or "hard to convince" regarding the gendered nature of the skilled trades, and about 25% in total require some education on the matter (as they are either unsure or they have stereotypical views). Of course, a respondent might agree with the statement, but not in a normative sense (they may not think that this is the way things should be, but that this is simply the way things are at

the moment). If the statement were stronger, such as “Jobs in the skilled trades should just be for men,” then the results would be clearer.

However, in the pre-test (using only those subjects who then did the post-test), 11% of females and 12.3% of males agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Another 4.6% of females and 15.6% of males were unsure. Thus, there was a slight change, in a positive direction, for both women and men (although the change was slight). (One curious fact was that the percentage of females who were unsure was higher for the post-test than for the pre-test).

To explore this relationship further, we looked at whether there was a differential effect of the skilled trades activities fair on views of gender and the skilled trades. Specifically, we hypothesized that, for women, attendance at the activities fair would be related to views of whether the skilled trades were only for men. In other words, those females who attended the activities would be more likely to reject the idea that skilled trades jobs were just for men than those females who did not attend. Based on some initial findings, we hypothesized that there would not be the same effect for males (attendance at the fair would not influence their perceptions on this matter). Indeed, 85.5% of the females who attended the fair disagreed or strongly disagreed with “Jobs in the skilled trades are just for men,” whereas only 50% of the women in the post-test situation who had not attended the fair disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, the figures for males in the same categories were more closely related: 65.3% of those who attended disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to 68.4% of those who did not attend. Nevertheless, this relationship was not found to be statistically significant at the .05 level, although it was approaching significance ( $p=.07$ ).

One further finding related to the grade level of the participants. We found that the students in grade 8 were more likely to perceive the skilled trades as being for both women and men. This relationship was statistically significant. For example, 17.7% of grade 7 females in the pre-test agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “Jobs in the skilled trades are just for men,” whereas only 6.5% of grade 8 females held this position. For males, 19.5% of those in grade 7 agreed or strongly agreed, but only 5.1% of those in grade 8 had the same sentiment. It is heartening that the extra year of education seems to indicate a more open attitude regarding gender roles in skilled trades.

It should be noted that there was no explicit input regarding gender and the skilled trades during the activities fair, so any effects would be a product of the experience and the people involved in the presentation. Without such direct content, we could not expect to have dramatic

results, but we are moderately pleased with the indications in the data thus far.

Finally, there were a number of items where males and females differed. The results from the pre-test showed the following statistically significant differences in the sample:

- Females had higher grades than males
- Females were more likely to report that they will continue with education after secondary school
- Females were more likely to choose university than community college or another post-secondary institution
- Females were more likely to want to work in an office
- Males were more likely to want to work with their hands
- Females were more likely to want some independence in their job
- Females were more likely to want to have a high-status job
- Males were more likely to want to work in a job with lots of technology
- Males were more likely to want to work outside
- Males were more likely to want to be their own boss
- Females were more likely to think that skilled trades did not pay well
- Males were more likely to think that those in the skilled trades were there because they could not “make it” in university

## **Conclusions**

It is hoped that the above discussion provided a substantive glimpse into the findings from the surveys. Readers are welcome to make enquiries regarding the data, including requests for specific tests.

Given the large number of findings, it is dangerous to summarize them, for fear of leaving something out. However, the surveys do provide some indication of what students are looking for in a job, even at this early age. Indeed, many have already made a career decision, so they are thinking about their future. For some students, there is an expectation of outmigration. Their views of skilled trades were not entirely stereotypical, and some of the perceptions are positive. However, of those going on to post-secondary education, the majority are anticipating university, which will not lead them directly into the skilled trades.

The activities fair clearly had high evaluations. There was some evidence that perceptions had changed in between the pre-test and the post-test. This was not a dramatic change, and it was not always statistically significant, but it was always in a positive direction (meaning that there was more understanding of the skilled trades after the activities fair).

In terms of recommendations, the surveys support the claim that the activities fair project was a useful one. With appropriate financial support, the activities centres could be retrofitted and tried in another area. Certainly there would be student (and teacher) support for that initiative. If a study was part of that project, it could use a post-test closer to the time of the activities fair, to see what short-term differences might show up. A debriefing/focus group session with a couple of classes would be useful, to see if the whole process of survey/fair/survey prompted them to think more about their future, or whether it had changed their expectations about their career.

Career choices represent a complex set of decisions, based on knowledge, advice, experience, hunches, luck and research. We can only hope that, for the students in these surveys, this project was indeed one of the significant contributing voices in helping them to think about their own careers.

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## Appendix A: The Pilot Survey

### Survey on the Skilled Trades, February 2004

Hello. This survey is related to a project of the Strategic Social Plan (a provincial government organization) and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association (an organization of businesses and manufacturing employers). We are interested in what young people, such as yourself, think about certain types of jobs. We refer to these jobs as the "skilled trades." These are things like auto mechanics, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, people who work in manufacturing (for example, in factories), or people who work in industries like drilling for oil and gas. We'd like to know what you think about these jobs, and whether you'd be interested in working in the skilled trades.

Do not put your name on this survey anywhere. It is to be totally anonymous. If there are questions you do not want to answer, that is fine. Just leave them blank. If you are not sure what something means, put up your hand and we'll come around and try to give you an answer.

When you are answering the questions, be sure to follow the arrows.

Most of all, **thanks** for filling out this survey. Your ideas are important to us.

---

#### About you and your family

- 1) What is your age: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Are you: Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What community do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What is your mother's job: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What is your father's job: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What is your average grade in school: A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D\_\_\_ E\_\_\_

#### About your future

- 7) Do you expect to graduate from High School? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_
- 8) Do you **want** to stay in Newfoundland to work? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_

9) Do you **expect** to be able to stay in Newfoundland to work?

Yes

No

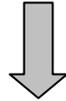
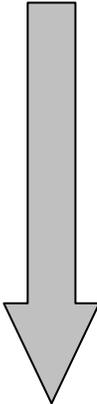
Not sure

10) Do you plan to continue with your education after High School (e.g., attend college or University)?

Yes

No

Not sure

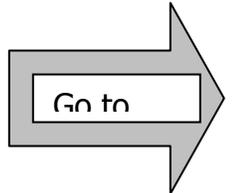


11) If no, why not? I'm not interested

It is too expensive

I don't want to borrow money

I'm not sure what to take

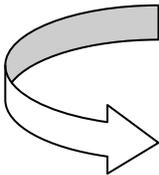
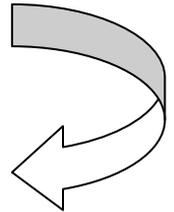


12) If yes, what type of training do you expect to do?

A trade/technical diploma (e.g., College of the North Atlantic)

A University degree (e.g., Memorial University)

A private college certificate (e.g., Academy Canada)



13) Why would you choose that particular type of training?

I am interested in it

It is close to home

14) Are you willing to borrow money to continue your education?

Yes

No

Not sure

15) Are you willing to spend several years in more education (after High School) before getting a job?

Yes

No

Not sure

## About working conditions you would like in your job

16) Please use the table below to answer the questions about which skills or working conditions would be important to you in your "ideal" job:

	Very important	Somewhat important	A little bit important	Not at all important	Not sure
a) To work with people					
b) To work in an office					
c) To work with my hands, building things					
d) To supervise people					
e) To have some independence in my job					
f) To do a wide variety of things in my job					
g) To have a job that is secure (I won't have to worry about losing it)					
h) To have a job that pays well					
i) To have a job with a lot of distinction or status					
j) To work with technology					
k) To work outdoors					
l) To be my own boss					
m) To be able to plan my own work day					
n) To have a job that I am proud of					
o) To have a full-time job					
p) To have a job in a rural area					

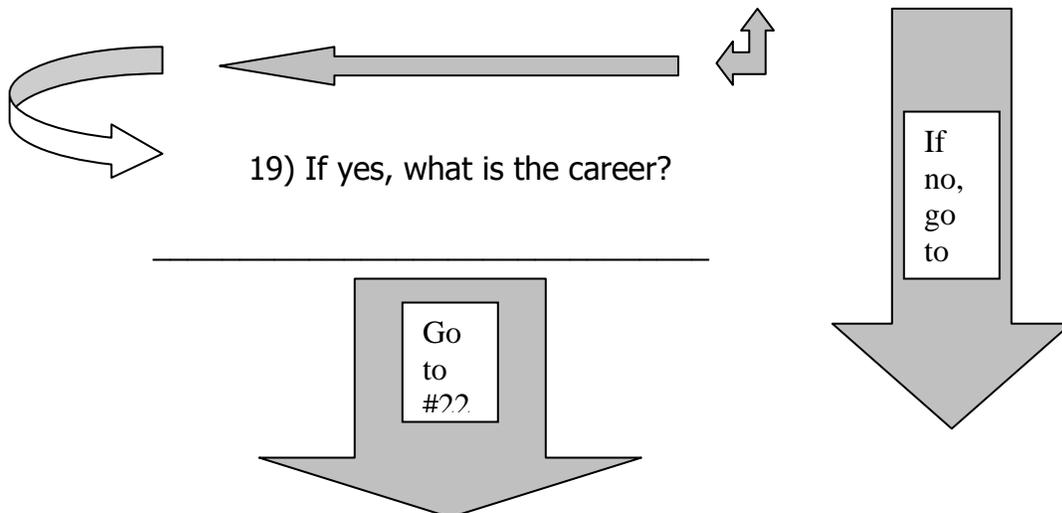
## Your thoughts about the skilled trades

17) In this table, there are a set of statements about the skilled trades. Please note whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree strongly disagree with the statements, or whether you are not sure about the statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
a) Jobs in the skilled trades do not pay very well					
b) Jobs in the skilled trades usually involve work that is dirty					
c) Jobs in the skilled trades are usually very hard work, physically					
d) Jobs in the skilled trades are seen by others as being "low class"					
e) People get jobs in the skilled trades only if they are not smart enough to make it through University					
f) Jobs in the skilled trades are boring					
g) Jobs in the skilled trades require special training					
h) Jobs in the skilled trades are just for men					

## Your career plans

18) Have you decided what career you want to have? Yes  No



20) If you have **not** decided on a career, who will help you to make your decision?

- |                                   |                          |                         |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Nobody, I'll do it myself         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Parents                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friends                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Teachers                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School guidance counsellor        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Brothers and/or sisters | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Media (e.g., TV, radio, internet) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (_____)           | <input type="checkbox"/> |

21) Which **one** of these influences will be the **most** important? \_\_\_\_\_

22) If you have **already** decided on a career, who helped you decide?

- |                                   |                          |                         |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Nobody, I did it myself           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Parents                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friends                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Teachers                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School guidance counsellor        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Brothers and/or sisters | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Media (e.g., TV, radio, internet) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (_____)           | <input type="checkbox"/> |

23) Which **one** of these influences was the **most** important? \_\_\_\_\_

24) What kind of information would help you to make a decision about your career?

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25) Are there courses which you'd like to take in High School which would help you in making a career decision?

---

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THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR HELP!



## Appendix B: The Pre-test Survey

# Survey on the Skilled Trades, April 2004

## Grades 7 and 8, School District 4, Newfoundland

*Do not put your name on this survey. Thanks..*

Hi. First of all, thanks for agreeing to do this survey. We are trying to find out what young people think about jobs in the "skilled trades." These are jobs like auto mechanics, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, people who work in manufacturing (for example, in factories), or people who work in industries like drilling for oil and gas, or forestry. We'd like to know what you think about these jobs, and whether you'd be interested in working in the skilled trades.

If there are questions on this survey that you do not want to answer, that is fine. Just leave them blank. If you are not sure what something means, put up your hand and we'll come around and try to give you an answer.

Most of all, **thanks** for filling out this survey. Your ideas are important to us.

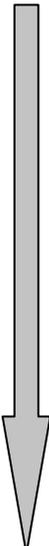
### About you and your family

- 1) What is your age: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Are you: Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What community do you live in? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What is your mother's job: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What is your father's job: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What is your average grade in school: A \_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_

### About your future

- 7) Do you expect to **graduate** from High School? Yes  No  Not sure
- 8) Do you **want** to stay in Newfoundland to work? Yes  No  Not sure
- 9) Do you **expect** to be able to stay in Newfoundland to work?  
Yes  No  Not sure

10) Do you plan to continue with your education after High School (e.g., attend college or University)?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	I'm not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>(a)</b> What type of school will you go to?</p> <p>University (e.g., Grenfell) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Technical College (e.g. College of the North Atlantic) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other (e.g. Academy Canada) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>(b)</b> Why choose that type of school?</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">I need it for my career <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">I am interested in it <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">It is close to home <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>(c)</b> Are you willing to borrow money to continue your education?</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Not sure <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><b>(a)</b> Why not? (<i>check the most important one</i>)</p> <p>I am not interested <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>It is too expensive <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I don't want to borrow money <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I'm not sure what to take <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I want to get a job and make money as soon as I can <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I'm afraid that I would fail out <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>(Go to # 11)</i></p>	<p><i>(go to #11)</i></p> 
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Go to #</div> 		

11) Which of the following is important in helping you make a decision about whether to go to college or university? (*Check all that apply*)

- |                                   |                          |                         |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Nobody, I'll decide myself        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Parents                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friends                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Teachers                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School guidance counsellor        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Brothers and/or sisters | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Media (e.g., TV, radio, internet) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (_____)           | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12) Which of these is the **most important** influence? \_\_\_\_\_

**13) About working conditions you would like in your job.** Please use the table below to tell us about what would be important to you in your **ideal** job. For each working condition, check off whether it is very important, somewhat important, you are not sure, a little bit important, or not at all important.

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not sure	A little bit important	Not at all important
a) To work with people					
b) To work in an office					
c) To work with my hands, building things					
d) To be a boss					
e) To have some independence in my job					
f) To do a wide variety of things in my job					
g) To have a job that is secure (I won't have to worry about losing it)					
h) To have a job that pays well					
i) To have a job with high status (like being a doctor)					
j) To work with lots of technology					
k) To work outdoors					
l) To be my own boss					
m) To be able to plan my own work day					
n) To have a job that I am proud of					
o) To have a full-time job					
p) To have a job in a rural area (rather than in a city)					

**14) Your thoughts about the skilled trades.** Remember, the skilled trades are jobs like plumbing, welding, forestry, manufacturing or carpentry. They take some training after high school, but don't require university. This table has some statements about the skilled trades. Please note whether you strongly agree, agree, are not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements. Remember, we are interested in **your opinions**.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) Jobs in the skilled trades do not pay very well					
b) Jobs in the skilled trades usually involve work that is dirty					
c) Jobs in the skilled trades are usually very hard work, physically					
d) Jobs in the skilled trades are seen by others as being "low class"					
e) People go into the skilled trades only if they are not smart enough to make it through University					
f) Jobs in the skilled trades are boring					
g) Jobs in the skilled trades do not require special training					
h) Jobs in the skilled trades are just for men					

**Your career plans**

15) Have you decided what career you want to have?

**Yes**

**(a)** What is the career? \_\_\_\_\_

**(b)** Which of the following was the **most important** in helping you make this decision?

- Nobody, I did it myself
- Parents
- Friends
- Teachers
- Guidance counselor
- Brother/sister
- Media (e.g. TV, internet)
- Other \_\_\_\_

**No**

**(a)** Which of the following will be the **most important** in helping you make the decision?

- Me
- Parents
- Friends
- Teachers
- Guidance counselor
- Brother/sister
- Media (e.g. TV)
- Other \_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: The Post-test Survey

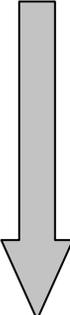
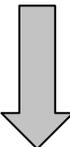
### Follow-up Survey on the Skilled Trades, Grades 7 and 8, School District 4, Newfoundland, June 2004

Hi. First of all, thanks for agreeing to do **another** survey for us! Just like in the first survey, we are trying to find out what young people think about jobs in the "skilled trades." But this time we are especially interested in whether going to the activities fair has helped you to think more about what kind of job you'd like to have; or whether the activities fair changed your ideas about the skilled trades.

Most of all, **thanks** for taking the time to fill out this survey.  
And have a good summer!!

#### About you and your future

- 1) What is your first name: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What are the last two numbers in your telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Are you: Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Do you plan to stay in Newfoundland to work?  
Yes  No  Not sure
- 5) Are you going to continue with your education after High School (e.g., attend college or University)?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	I'm not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>(a)</b> What type of school?	<i>(Go to # 6)</i>	
University (e.g., Grenfell) <input type="checkbox"/>		<i>(go to #6)</i>
Technical College (e.g. College of the North Atlantic) <input type="checkbox"/>		
Other (e.g. Academy Canada) <input type="checkbox"/>		

**6) About working conditions you would like in your job.** Please use the table below to tell us about what would be important to you in your **ideal** job. For each working condition, check off whether it is very important, somewhat important, you are not sure, a little bit important, or not at all important.

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not sure	A little bit important	Not at all important
a) To work with people					
b) To work in an office					
c) To work with my hands, building things					
d) To be a boss					
e) To have some independence in my job					
f) To do a wide variety of things in my job					
g) To have a job that is secure (I won't have to worry about losing it)					
h) To have a job that pays well					
i) To have a job with high status (like being a doctor)					
j) To work with lots of technology					
k) To work outdoors					
l) To be my own boss					
m) To be able to plan my own work day					
n) To have a job that I am proud of					
o) To have a full-time job					
p) To have a job in a rural area (rather than in a city)					

**7) Your thoughts about the skilled trades.** Remember, the skilled trades are jobs like plumbing, welding, forestry, manufacturing or carpentry. They take some training after high school, but don't require university. This table has some statements about the skilled trades. Please note whether you strongly agree, agree, are not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements. Remember, we are interested in **your opinions**.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) Jobs in the skilled trades do not pay very well					
b) Jobs in the skilled trades usually involve work that is dirty					
c) Jobs in the skilled trades are usually very hard work, physically					
d) Jobs in the skilled trades are seen by others as being "low class"					
e) People go into the skilled trades only if they are not smart enough to make it through University					
f) Jobs in the skilled trades are boring					
g) Jobs in the skilled trades do not require special training					
h) Jobs in the skilled trades are just for men					

**Your career plans**

8) Have you decided what career you want to have?

**Yes**

**(a)** What is the career? \_\_\_\_\_

**(b)** Which of the following was the **most important** in helping you make this decision (check only **one** please)?

- Nobody, I did it myself
- Parents
- Friends
- Teachers
- Guidance counselor
- Brother/sister
- Media (e.g. TV, internet)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**No**

**(a)** Which of the following will be the **most important** in helping you make the decision (check only **one** please)

- Me
- Parents
- Friends
- Teachers
- Guidance counselor
- Brother/sister
- Media (e.g. TV)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## The Skilled Trades Activities Fair

9) Did you attend the Skilled Trades Activities Fair (the event where people set up 10 different activities, like knot tying and electric circuits and an assembly line)?

Yes       No  *(If no, then do not answer question 10; thanks)*

**10) Your thoughts about the activities fair.** We are interested in whether you liked the activities fair and whether you found it useful. This table has several statements about the activities fair. Please note whether you strongly agree, agree, are not sure, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) I enjoyed the activities fair					
b) I learned something about skilled trades (like plumbing and electrician) at the activities fair					
c) The instructions for the activities were easy to understand					
d) The activities fair made me think about what kind of a job I want to have					
e) Since going to the activities fair, I now have a more positive opinion of the skilled trades					
f) The activities fair helped to answer some of my questions about the skilled trades					
g) The activities fair had a good mix of activities					
h) I read the materials that I got at the activities fair					

If you have any other comments about the skilled trades activities fair, or about this survey, feel free to put them here:

**Thanks for your help!**