

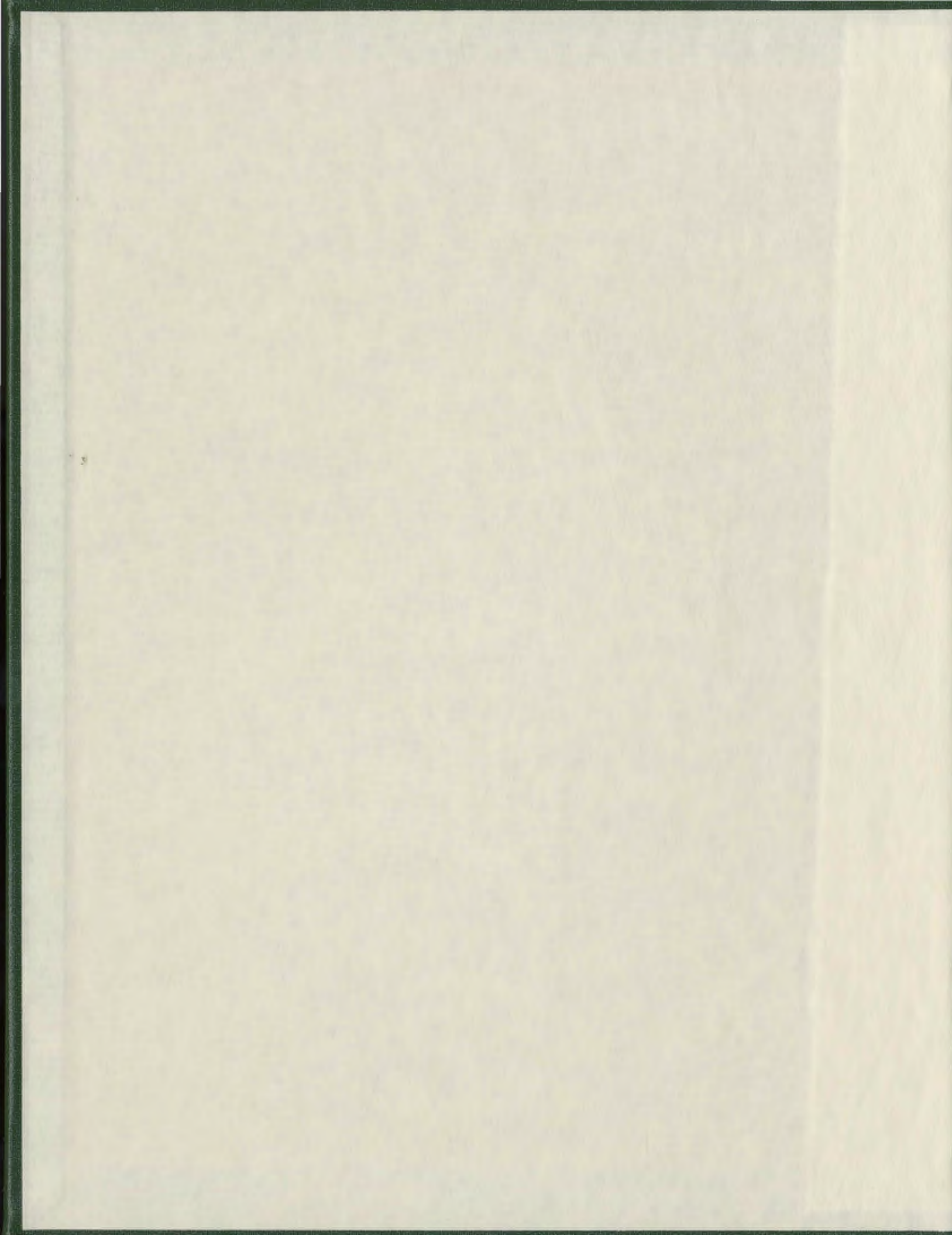
A CAREER EXPLORATION PROGRAM FOR
JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS WITH
LEARNING DISABILITIES

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**A CAREER EXPLORATION PROGRAM FOR
JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

by

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**A project report submitted to the
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Abstract

Career development has increasingly received attention in the literature and the education sphere. Career development planning for learning disabled students, however, has been largely overlooked. Learning disabled individuals need to develop a greater understanding, acceptance and knowledge of themselves in order to facilitate their own career development. Career exploration should begin early and continue as a life-long process. This project attempts to address the topic of career development for learning disabled students. The paper has been organized in the following manner: the purpose, rationale, background, definition of key terms, and a description of the project have been outlined in Chapter One. Pertinent literature has been reviewed in Chapter Two. The career development modules have been outlined and described in Chapter Three. These modules include: orientation, self-awareness, looking at your disability, career awareness, researching careers, and making decisions. Each module has specific goals and activities aimed at facilitating self knowledge and knowledge about the world of work. The overall objective of this project was to highlight the importance of career development planning for learning disabled students in junior high school. A sample curriculum has been presented to facilitate the flexible delivery of career development planning for this target group. The programming may be delivered in

a group or classroom format. It can be infused into the existing curriculum over a period of six to ten weeks, one to two hours per day, or over a semester twice a week. The program emphasizes strengths and de-emphasizes weaknesses as part of a collaborative approach involving students, parents, school, and community. With appropriate supports and accommodations, learning disabled students can experience success in all aspects of their lives.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to the memory of my mother, Ann Power, who placed great value on education and hard work.

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Chapter One-Introduction

Purpose

Career development is an essential component for all individuals, especially those with learning disabilities. This project has three main objectives: (a) to promote self-awareness of one's learning disability at the junior high level, (b) to delineate strategies and techniques in career awareness and career exploration for learning disabled junior high students, and (c) to outline and describe a program for students with learning disabilities that will facilitate their knowledge of career choices and the decision-making process. This project was aimed at the junior high school student, specifically, learning disabled grade seven students.

Rationale

To ensure a smooth transition from school life to work life, career counselling is critical for the learning disabled. It is evident from the literature that there is a dearth of curricula to help meet the academic needs of learning disabled youth. Few students, however, are receiving the career development education required to initiate and maintain successful adult employment. Nearly 50% of learning disabled students do not complete high school and drop out of school by the age of sixteen (Farley and

Johnson, 1999). These individuals obtain little or no employment, have low income, and suffer social isolation.

Many learning disabled graduates lack a career plan and are faced with numerous employment barriers. Barriers include: low self-esteem, a sense of learned helplessness, specific cognitive deficiencies and poor social skills (Gerber and Reiff, 1994). These barriers may interfere with and place limitations on the learning of many life skills. Learning disabled students generally display certain characteristics including: shortened-attention span, motor problems, problem-solving and decision-making difficulties, impulsivity and hyperactivity (Gillet, 1990). In order for learning disabled students to experience career success, several factors may be taken into account. These include: the severity of the learning disability, family support, socio-economic status, completion of high school, quality of educational services at the elementary and secondary levels, and the quality of post-secondary training (Gerber and Reiff, 1994).

Career counselling for learning disabled students should prepare them for work. Career development can begin as early as pre-school and continue through elementary, junior and senior high school. Effective career counselling recognizes strengths and equips individuals with self-empowerment and self-advocacy (Westling and Fox, 2000). Individuals with disabilities need to

feel that they are part of the career process. They should be exposed to work experience and employment opportunities. Successful career exploration emphasizes self-awareness, decision-making, and confidence-building.

This project provided an opportunity to examine the career exploration process for persons with learning disabilities. Career exploration for the learning disabled is a complex process. Beliefs, learning experiences, and different environments influence career exploration. Many learning disabled people experience fewer successful role models, a restricted job market and discriminatory attitudes. The more involved that the learning disabled person is in the process, the more likely they will overcome these barriers. Persons with learning disabilities must be encouraged to self-advocate and to develop independent decision-making skills. Persons with learning disabilities must become knowledgeable about the world of work.

This program has been specifically designed for junior high school students to assist them in the career exploration process. Many learning disabled students lack a career plan and need counselling and support to make post-secondary decisions. This program provided both the facilitator and the students with practical activities. This career exploration program was based on the premise that individuals with learning disabilities have the

same goals, wants and aspirations as all other persons in society. They all want to work, marry, and raise a family. The difference is that learning disabled persons have specific needs that must be addressed when developing a career plan. The learning disabled individuals must be reassured that with appropriate supports they can be successful.

Background

The career planning process is a challenge for individuals with learning disabilities, especially as they get older. Persons without a career plan "will often float", and experience difficulty in various areas of their lives.

Career exploration is not merely browsing through pamphlets and listening to guest speakers. It is a process involving several steps including: self-awareness, examination of the disabilities, career awareness, and career decision-making. Career exploration is not a process that begins in senior high school, but must begin at the pre-school level. Individuals with learning disabilities have strengths and, to be successful, they must turn their strengths into an action plan. This career exploration program utilized a practical, interactive approach, providing students an opportunity to participate in a group and to seek individualized assistance, if necessary.

Project Description

The project provided an opportunity to examine the career exploration process for persons with learning disabilities. Specifically, the project entailed the development and description of a career exploration program for junior high school students with learning disabilities. This program was designed to be delivered by a facilitator in a group or classroom format. It can be infused into the classroom curriculum over a period of six to ten weeks, one to two hours per day, or over a semester twice a week. Following is a description of the six modules:

1. Module 1-Adapting Activities to Learning Needs: Activities in this module included an accommodations checklist that may be used to meet the needs of learning disabled individuals.
2. Module 2-Orientation: Activities in this module included warm-up and "ice-breaking" exercises. The purpose of these activities was to facilitate the introductory process and to build trust in a non-threatening environment.
3. Module 3-Self-Awareness: Activities within this module focused on: strengths, skills, abilities, personality, and achievements. The general purpose was to facilitate building individual strengths.

4. Module 4-Looking At Your Disability: Activities

within this module addressed disabilities per se, and the accommodations and adaptations necessary for career success.

5. Module 5-Career Awareness: Activities within this module

explored specific occupations and occupational clusters as per the individuals' interests, aptitudes, and career goals.

6. Module 6-Researching Careers and Making Decisions:

Activities within this module facilitated access to information and options for career decision making.

This program was designed to assist learning disabled junior high school students to develop a greater understanding, acceptance, and knowledge of themselves, and facilitate their career development. The program enabled persons with learning disabilities to view career exploration as a continuous, life-long process. The goals of this program have been stated as follows:

1. To enable group members to participate in a self-exploration process.
2. To develop opportunities to explore knowledge of their skills, interests, values, and personality styles.
3. To recognize barriers to employment and outline ways of overcoming these barriers.

4. To explore occupational options.
5. To access and assess accurate and appropriate information on occupations.
6. To become more aware of the decision-making model, its importance, and its application.
7. To ascertain what accommodations are needed in order for a learning disabled student to be successful in the job search.

Definition of Key Terms

When designing a career exploration program for junior high students with learning disabilities, it is essential to understand key concepts and underlying principles. Herr and Cramer (1996) defines these key terms as follows:

Job:

Job refers to a group of similar paid positions requiring some similar attributes in a single organization.

Occupation:

Occupation refers to a group of similar jobs found in different industries or organizations.

Career:

A career is a course of events that constitutes a life; the sequence of occupations and other life roles that combine to

express one's commitment to work in his or her total pattern of self development.

Learning Disability:

A learning disability is basically a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia (Department of Education, 1999).

Summary

Educators must promote career exploration as an important component of the development of individuals with learning disabilities. The process of career exploration for learning disabled students must start early and must incorporate individualized needs. Counsellors and teachers must be cognizant that learning disabled individuals have specific deficits and characteristics that may hinder the career exploration process. It is essential that learning disabled individuals gain self-knowledge and learn how they can relate to the world of work. They must be given opportunities to explore strengths and to de-emphasize weaknesses. With greater understanding and acceptance of self, they

will be better equipped to make career decisions. This program has attempted to address the needs of persons with learning disabilities in the field of career exploration. The next chapter includes a review of relevant literature.

Chapter Two-Review of the Literature

An effective and successful career exploration program must be based on current research. A description of the background information for the career exploration program has been outlined in this chapter. The chapter is divided into two major sections: a summary of selected theories of career development and career exploration for adolescents with learning disabilities.

Selected Theories of Career Development

The evolution of career education can be traced to the emergence of career development theories. Enright, Conyers, and Szymanski (1996) have identified two models of career development for individuals with learning disabilities mirroring theories for non-disabled individuals. These were job-specific matching approaches and developmental approaches (Morningstar, 1997).

Trait-Factor Approaches

John Holland provided a basis for formulating ways to look at learning disabled individuals in a non-stereotypical manner (Cummings & Maddux, 1985). Holland's theory assumed that career choices are an extension of an individual's personality. People project their view of themselves and the world of work into occupational titles. Holland stated that there are six personal orientations to the world and six matching work environments. These personality types included: realistic, investigative, artistic,

social, enterprising, and conventional. An individual's personality type is determined by an assessment of occupational interests using the Self-Directed Search. After interests are assessed, a three letter occupational code is obtained. The three letters represent that individual's personal orientation based on Holland's six categories of personality and work environment. Individuals in occupational environments suited to their personality types are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Harrington, 1982).

Holland emphasized self-responsibility and self-direction. He provided a structural model that matches individuals and their personalities with jobs. People grow up to resemble one type or another due to influences from parents, school, and the community. Thus, individuals learn to translate personal characteristics, interests, and abilities into occupational titles. This approach has been the most common when working with students with learning disabilities. It has helped students to identify capabilities, interests, and needs and matches these with characteristics of the job site. By matching individual types with work environments, the end result will be greater occupational satisfaction.

Super's Developmental Self-Concept Theory

Donald Super's developmental self-concept theory is one of the most widely known. He proposed the existence of five major career

life stages: (a) growth, (b) exploration, (c) establishment, (d) maintenance, and (e) decline. Each stage is composed of several sub-stages and each stage is associated with several developmental tasks. Super believed that each of us has a unique set of personality characteristics that qualifies us for a number of occupations. Super believed that there are many occupations for everyone. The traits that make up a person's personality and that qualify them for jobs develop as a result of progression through the five stages. These stages are influenced by friends, school, parents, and socio-economic status (Levinson, 1998).

Super believed that the early years are a time of growth. People develop interests, skills, values, and attitudes about work. Approximately at the age of fourteen or fifteen, most adolescents begin the transition into the exploration stage of career development. They become more serious about potential occupational options. They may explore options of interest to them. They begin to formulate and identify self-concept. Thus, career and the various activities are specifically chosen in which individuals can fully implement their self-concepts (Rojewski, 1996).

In order for individuals with learning disabilities to make informed decisions, they must have opportunities to learn about themselves and the world of work. The major objectives throughout the school years should be improving self-awareness, occupational

awareness, and decision-making abilities. Super indicated that career awareness and exploration begin early in life and continues into adulthood.

Roe's Approach

This approach is based on the premise that individuals select jobs to satisfy personal needs. This theory states that there is a relationship between early experiences, attitudes, interests, and the career choice of an individual. Roe believed that personality differences reflect early individual experiences with parents and this has an impact upon a person's career choice. Thus, children from homes with accepting attitudes will choose an occupation that involves contact with people. Children from homes that were neglected or avoided will choose occupations that are scientific and technical (Goldberg, 1992).

Another component of Roe's theory is that the genetic predisposition combined with an individual's childhood experiences determines a need satisfaction. Thus, an individual's need is relevant to a person's career choice. A combination of needs and interpersonal orientation can determine a person's career choice. Roe has organized the world of work into eight groups and six levels. Early experiences can influence the type of career activity while genetic factors such as intelligence combined with socio-economic background influence the occupational level the individual

achieves. Childhood experiences combined with a child's aptitude should predict the career path an individual will pursue (Brolin, 1982).

A Learning Theory of Career Development

According to the learning theory, individuals are active and intelligent problem-solvers that interact with their environment to pursue their own purposes and needs (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999). Various factors such as genetic endowments, environmental conditions, planned and unplanned events, learning experiences, and their consequences interact to produce a particular career path for each individual. Skills, interests, beliefs, and values are all subject to change as the result of learning experiences.

Planned Happenstance Theory

John Krumboltz has described happenstance theory and has emphasized that humans are born with different characteristics and they grow up in an environment where unpredictable events occur. Individuals are provided with opportunities for learning of both a positive and a negative nature. Planned happenstance theory focused on career counselling as an avenue of creating and transforming unplanned events into opportunities for learning. The goal of planned intervention is to assist clients to generate, recognize, and incorporate chance events into their career development.

Clients must plan to generate and be receptive to chance opportunities. This theory includes two components: exploration generates chance opportunities for increasing quality of life, and skills enable people to seize opportunities. Planned happenstance theory proposed that career counsellors can assist clients to develop five skills to recognize, create and use chance as career opportunities. These five skills are: (a) curiosity, (b) persistence, (c) flexibility, (d) optimism, and (e) risk-taking (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999).

Decision Theory

Decisions are not based in isolation but are interactions between individuals and their environment. There are four elements of this decision-making theory (Herr & Cramer, 1996). These are: (a) the set of objectives that the decision-maker seeks to achieve, (b) the set of choices or alternate courses of action among which the decision-maker must choose, (c) a set of possible outcomes associated with each choice, and (d) the ways each outcome might be assessed. The steps in the decision-making process may include defining the problem, generating alternatives, gathering information, processing information, making plans and selecting goals, and implementing and evaluating plans. Basically, every individual has several alternatives to choose from resulting in the occurrence of different events. Thus, there is a correlation

between the decision-making process and the process of career exploration.

Ecological Theory

John Bronfenbrenner described human development as occurring in an ecological environment made up of a number of contexts (Young, 1983). The first is the microsystem that addresses the immediate settings around the developing person. The mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more of the major microsystems such as the interrelation between the school and the workplace. The exosystem consists of specific social structures such as school policies and parents' social network that encompasses the immediate settings of the developing person. Finally, macrosystem factors include the influence of cultural values and interests. These systems are seen as contexts in which individual career development takes place. Variables at each level influence and in turn are influenced by the adolescent career development. Thus, the career counsellor needs to focus on developmental transitions and can assist in transitions among family, peer groups, and workplace (Young, 1983).

Bronfenbrenner presented the notion of multiperson systems of interaction and the developmental effects of the interrelations between these settings, both direct and indirect. Events and

activities at the level of the macrosystem influence the nature of the personal interrelation at the microsystem level (Sontag, 1996).

Career exploration for adolescents with learning disabilities

Many learning disabled adolescents struggle in the preparation for and the completion of the transition from high school to post-secondary education or work (Aune & Kroeger, 1997). Based on a national sample of 8,000 students, only 27% of learning disabled adolescents are enrolled in post-secondary education, compared with 68% of the general population (Fabian, Lent, & Willis, 1998). Many experience problems with delayed career development and lower academic performance contributing to lower post-secondary enrollment. Learning disabled people have problems with career choice. Limited career development during adolescence contributes to higher rates of unemployment and underemployment (Rojewski, 1999).

Many learning disabled individuals face several major concerns. Individuals with learning disabilities often have problems with low academic performance, poor organizational skills, test anxiety, perceptual problems and limited attention span. Many experience greater difficulty assessing personal strengths and weaknesses and selecting appropriate career goals. This can lead to students dropping out of school. Individuals with learning

disabilities must receive educational support. This may include tutoring, note taking, and training in effective compensatory learning strategies (Rojewski, 1996).

The second area of concern for individuals with learning disabilities is related to social and personal needs. Many experience poor self-esteem and low self-concept caused by repeated failure, limited social skill development and reduced success in living independently. Many adolescents who are learning disabled experience difficulty in career decision-making. Many of these individuals are uncertain as to the nature of their disability. Programs must provide structure and support to students as they develop their career goals. Rojewski (1992) suggested that both individual and group counselling are required to assist in personal and social adjustment.

The third area of concern is that of vocational placement. Individuals with learning disabilities do not attain levels of independence or employment comparable to those of non-disabled individuals. Many individuals with learning disabilities encounter difficulties in obtaining and maintaining employment. Assistance is needed to help students learn how to get a job and what types of jobs are available. Emphasis must be placed on career assessment and job exploration.

Adolescents with learning disabilities tend to be less mature in their attitudes toward work (Clark & Kolstoe, 1995). As a result, many adolescents with learning disabilities display career exploration and career choice patterns that are different from non-disabled adolescents. Adolescents with learning disabilities in grades eight and ten were less likely to aspire to high prestige occupations and were more likely to be indecisive about their future occupational alternatives than non-disabled peers (Rojewski, 1999). Many are faced with systemic and structural barriers, discrimination and lowered social attitudes and expectations.

Due to the concerns faced by learning disabled adolescents, it is essential that career exploration focus on a number of areas. The first is the issue of metacognitive techniques. Individuals must be taught these techniques enabling them to reflect on what they have learned. This will allow them to develop strategies that de-emphasize deficits and build on strengths. Techniques such as inference modeling and questioning assist learning disabled adolescents to view themselves in relation to career planning may be used (Trenholm, 1994).

Career exploration for learning disabled individuals must also focus on social and problem-solving skills. Learning disabled adolescents must be provided with opportunities to develop problem solving, reasoning, and thinking skills. There must be targeted

strategies designed to enhance advanced thinking in adolescents with learning disabilities. Direct instruction is required. Direct instruction can provide academic problem-solving skills, strategies, and practice in social skills (Rojewski, Schell, Reybold, & Evanciew, 1995). Individuals need avenues and opportunities to practice these skills until they feel confident that the skill is mastered (Trenholm, 1994).

Career exploration must also emphasize supervised work experience with learning disabled adolescents. This combines classroom instruction with work experience and on-the-job training. Many learning disabled individuals are reluctant to undertake new experiences and feel a sense of failure before they begin. Co-operative education programs can address a number of goals. These include: developing social and career maturity, increasing academic achievement, providing positive work environments and enhancing cognitive development. Career exploration can provide positive work experience and for the transfer of learning from one environment to the next (Trenholm, 1994).

The successful learning disabled individual has learned to capitalize on his/her strengths by setting realistic goals. This can be achieved by emphasizing instructional career counselling using cognitive approaches (Hutchinson, 1995a). Many learning disabled adolescents face deficits and many have difficulty

acquiring knowledge with unstructured approaches. They are unaware of why they are experiencing difficulties and do not develop the strategies to meet the demanding workforce later in life. Individuals must learn to focus on strengths and de-emphasize weaknesses.

The cognitive approach in career counselling provides individuals with learning disabilities clear explanations of what is expected. Individuals are provided with opportunities to practice with their peers in small groups. They gain greater understanding of new material and are able to transfer new learning to their own personal situations. By arriving at a new understanding, career awareness is enhanced. Hutchinson (1995b) demonstrated that cognitive instruction with low achieving students has increased test scores. She noted that these strategies narrowed the gap between the low achieving student and the average student in completing job application forms.

Nancy Hutchinson and John Freeman have conducted extensive career exploration research for individuals with learning disabilities. They have devised a program called "Pathways", specifically for the learning disabled population. This program addresses five related areas: (a) awareness of self and occupations, (b) employment writing, (c) interviewing skills, (d) problem solving skills, and (e) anger management. Each activity

consists of three phases. In the first phase, the facilitator models a particular strategy by thinking aloud. In the second phase, the individual takes part in guided practice, while receiving feedback. Finally, in the third phase, students carry out independent practice until they master a task. This program has been successful in increasing both self-awareness and career awareness of learning disabled people. Individuals are able to generalize and apply their knowledge by setting goals, using task specific strategies, prompting, modelling, and receiving feedback. Pathways enables the learning disabled individual to role play a variety of situations and to build confidence when particular tasks are mastered. Thus, career counselling for persons with learning disabilities has taken on a new dimension (Hutchinson, 1995a).

A shift in focus has occurred in the career exploration field during the past number of years. What was once an emphasis on assisting individuals to obtain a job changed to a more developmental approach. Humes and Holenshell (1985) advocated that career exploration for persons with learning disabilities be infused into the curriculum with an emphasis on the importance of stage development. Individuals with learning disabilities will progress through the career exploration stage depending upon societal conditions, personal attitudes, skills and levels of career maturity (Rojewski, 1996).

Brolin and Elliott (1984) have also emphasized stage development in the career exploration process for persons with learning disabilities. It is a viable instructional strategy focusing on four stages. The first stage, beginning at the elementary level, is career awareness. This is a stage of learning and personal growth. Students begin to visualize and understand peoples' roles in the occupational world. Initial perceptions of the world of work begin with career awareness. Students should be encouraged to act out their perceptions of self in occupational and social roles. A work personality begins to take root during this stage. The second stage, beginning at the junior high level, is career exploration. Individuals begin to examine their abilities, self-images and realities of adult roles. Care should be given to encourage the development of self-confidence. To facilitate healthy exploration, abilities and assets should be highlighted and emphasized. This stage is very important because strengths and needs may have to be identified and the learning disabled student may require an Individualized Educational Plan. This plan assists in the programming needs of an individual and must include a transitional component at both the intermediate and secondary levels. The third stage, beginning at the senior high level, is career preparation. Time should be given to future roles including family, community, and personal-social responsibilities. The last

stage, occurring at the post-secondary level, is career placement/continuing education. Learning does not end at graduation. Individuals must be engaged in lifelong learning. The key to post-secondary intervention for individuals with learning disabilities is the linkage to community services. This can allow for a smoother transition from school to work life (Krumboltz & Worthington, 1999).

Trenholm (1994) has also placed a focus on the workplace and the community in career exploration for individuals with learning disabilities. He has advocated for a longitudinal approach in which individualized programs are linked to developmental stages. This, in turn, should be integrated with educational institutions, the workplace and the community. Thus, there is a shift in learning from a public and post-secondary focus to a broad life-long approach. In order to meet the needs of learning disabled individuals, educational programs must be flexible.

Reekie (1993) viewed personal flexibility essential to career exploration for persons with learning disabilities. We are living in a technological society demanding a highly skilled workforce. Many jobs have been changed while others have been eliminated. Thus, there is a move to a more holistic approach focusing on flexibility. Humes and Holenshell (1985) advocated that career exploration is the link between a smoother transition to

post-secondary education for the learning disabled individual. Education programs must be developmental and career exploration must be integrated into all levels of the curriculum. At the elementary level career exploration should emphasize exploration of personal perceptions in various work roles. This can be achieved through fantasy and self-awareness exercises. Hands-on activities should include field trips and work experiences fostering the acquisition of new skills. The school at all levels should address interests, attitudes and values. Career exploration provides a link between the family and the community and can ease the transition to post-secondary education.

Brolin and Gysbers (1989) have called for a shift from a secondary curriculum to a more functional approach. The Life-Centered Career Education Curriculum has been adopted in most schools in the United States of America. It focuses on 22 major competencies and this further sub-divides into 97 sub-competencies that relate to one or more of four important career roles that constitute a total worker. It is designed to facilitate the student's individual growth and development for all the major roles. It is a kindergarten through grade twelve approach built on the four stages of career awareness, exploration, preparation and assimilation. It requires a partnership between educators, family

and community agencies. This program has proven to enhance the career exploration process of persons with learning disabilities.

In order for programming to be effective with learning disabled individuals, an emphasis must be placed on internalizing strengths and identifying appropriate goals and needs. An environment must be created in which the client can see the connection between effort and success. Career counselling can assist learning disabled students in personal growth and the realization of one's potential. It is important to keep in mind that for teenagers, adolescence is a difficult time and it is further complicated by the presence of the learning disability. Consideration must be given to these concerns in order to prepare individuals with learning disabilities for a change in life roles. Individuals must be given the opportunity to examine the future environment and to make predictions for the future. Career counselling can assist the learning disabled individual to clarify goals and barriers, and to focus on independence and self-determination. Counsellors must find ways of assisting students in matching strengths and needs with career goals. Persons with learning disabilities seem to learn best through experiences that can enable them to become self-advocates and to ask for accommodation (Hutchinson and Taves, 1993).

Career counselling with learning disabled individuals

must place a greater emphasis on self-awareness. Individuals must be able to explore interests, values, aptitudes, and skills. They require techniques for clarifying, problem solving, and decision-making. Due to the lack of social skills, lack of motivation and the unique modes of learning, many of these techniques may have to be modified and adapted in the career exploration process. The goal of career counselling is independent management of career issues (Reekie, 1993). Morningstar (1997) commented on the critical issues in career exploration for persons with learning disabilities and generated five recommendations: (a) consider the developmental nature of career preparation across the life span, (b) provide opportunities for students with learning disabilities to develop the skills necessary for career maturity, (c) provide meaningful work experiences, (d) encourage the participation of families in career exploration, and (e) encourage student interest in career exploration. A partnership must be formed between the education system, the parents, and the workplace for the learning disabled client to experience success and to prepare them to cope in the world of work. Parents, especially, can have a dramatic influence on the career development of their children. They can enhance self-esteem, self-competence, and reinforce values (Young, 1994).

Career exploration for persons with learning disabilities is a process involving factors beyond the disabilities. Many of the factors include family, culture, education, socio-economic status, and job satisfaction (Enright, Conyers, & Szymanski, 1996). Many have limited decision-making ability and lack the experience in making decisions. Many individuals with learning disabilities have different needs and may lack a sense of self-worth. At times, they are unable to advocate for themselves and relate their positive attributes to career choices. Many have a slower rate of career maturity and set unrealistic career goals. Many individuals with learning disabilities have serious career related concerns partially due to negative past experiences (Ryan & Harvey, 1999). When engaging in career exploration it is important to take into account childhood experiences along with the individual's perception of the disability.

Aune and Kroeger (1997) stated that to enhance the career exploration needs of individuals with learning disabilities, it is essential to address the issues in the external environment. They elaborated on a study in which career programming was established to assist with the career exploration of persons with learning disabilities. Data were collected and key career issues were identified. The main areas of concern for students were knowledge,

services, circumstances and attitudes. Students indicated a need for more job seeking skills information to make rational career choices. Students involved in this study indicated that factors such as stress, health-related problems and financial problems had an effect upon their career decision-making process. Individuals in this study had to consider the disability and its interaction with the external environment. Many did not realize the implications until the career exploration process began. Hutchings and Horvath (1998) have emphasized that when applying any theory not only should the abilities, limitations and history be considered, but the individual's environment must be taken into account. Students who are learning disabled must be treated as individuals, and career counselling may assist them to understand themselves and how they interact with their environment. An emphasis must be placed on creating a barrier-free environment.

Hutchings and Horvath (1998) examined career exploration needs of college students with learning disabilities. They examined seventy-five undergraduate students in terms of career exploration, career choice, describing one's disability, self-advocacy and transition planning. Many of the college students surveyed were unaware of the impact that the disability would have on career exploration. Many were not provided with job shadowing opportunities and relevant career information. Twenty-eight of

those surveyed were unable to identify the skills needed for their career interest, and were unable to recognize potential barriers to employment.

Career exploration for learning disabled college students should focus on increasing independence and self-advocacy. Students should understand their disabilities and be given the opportunity to explore career options. A greater emphasis at the high school level for career planning must occur. Curnow (1989) called for a long-term perspective for career exploration between the client and the counsellor. The focus for career counselling should be the client's needs, abilities, interests and preference for a work environment. Many adults with learning disabilities have limited early experiences, difficulty in decision-making, poor self-concept and the inability to incorporate the disability into the identity. All of these issues have influenced their career exploration. These individuals must be provided with positive opportunities to develop realistic goals. Students must begin to weigh the extent and limits of their abilities and what effect this will have on choosing a particular career field. Individuals with learning disabilities need to be educated about the realities of the job search so that they can become empowered to deal effectively with a variety of situations.

Summary

Individuals with learning disabilities face numerous challenges in the career development process. Many are faced with academic, social and career concerns. Many continue to deal with deficits relating to their particular disability along with a lack of career maturity. A new approach must be taken for individuals with learning disabilities to have success in the workplace.

Career education must be developmental in nature and career programming must be infused into the curriculum at all grade levels. Individuals must be prepared for change in life roles and opportunities must be provided for successful change to occur. Individuals must be provided with opportunities to clarify goals, problem-solve, and make important decisions. Individuals with learning disabilities must emphasize their positive strengths and de-emphasize weaknesses. Learning disabled individuals must be provided with opportunities in our society to grow and to become independent persons. A collaborative approach must be taken between individuals, parents, school and the community to make the transition to post-secondary easier. With appropriate supports and accommodations, learning disabled individuals can experience success in all aspects of their lives.

This project attempts to offer a program that will enhance the career exploration of individuals with learning disabilities. It

focuses on recognizing strengths and examining disability in terms of accommodations required for the workplace. Individuals are provided with opportunities to investigate, explore, problem-solve and make decisions. This program is intended to be enjoyable and interactive with the hope that as individuals learn about themselves and the world of work, career decision-making can be made easier. The program has been outlined in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three-Career Exploration Activities

Introduction

The curriculum consisting of career exploration activities has been outlined in this chapter. These activities have been organized under the following headings: (a) adapting activities to learning needs, (b) orientation, (c) self-awareness, (d) looking at your disability, (e) career awareness, and (f) researching careers and making decisions.

The curriculum has been designed for a flexible delivery format. The facilitator may infuse these activities into existing curriculum over an extended or truncated period. These activities comprise the remainder of the chapter.

Module 1-Adapting Activities to Learning Needs

All individuals are unique with a wide range of learning needs. Meeting the needs of each individual is a challenge. Facilitators must be aware of the various learning styles, instructional strategies, and accommodations required to support student learning. Each student with a learning disability may progress at individual rates, and the supports and services may vary. There are numerous interventions and accommodations that can be made to enhance the success of children with learning disabilities. The following is an example of an accommodations

checklist designed to meet the needs of a learning disabled individual:

- **Post daily schedules**
- **Use advance organizers**
- **Shorten directions**
- **Repeat directions**
- **Use computer assisted instruction**
- **Use visual aids**
- **Adjust amount of copying**
- **Allow student to tape-record class lectures**
- **Provide student with a copy of notes**
- **Provide extra assignment time**
- **Provide a student buddy for reading**
- **Provide NCR paper for note-taking**
- **Use audio-visual aids**
- **Use checklists and cueing devices**
- **Allow use of calculators**
- **Allow use of word processor/spell checker**
- **Break materials into smaller task units**
- **Use graph paper for writing**
- **Provide special lighting**
- **Provide colour overlays**

- Allow the use of a scribe
- Read questions orally

Further information on accommodations can be found in the Department of Education, Teaching Students With Learning Disabilities. (1999)

Module 2-Orientation

Activity #1

Title. Name Tag.

Objective. This activity is designed to help participants learn more about one another in a group.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Students will discover the complex and varied interests about group members.

Materials. Paper and Pens.

Process. Tell group members to write the following information on their paper:

1. In the center, write your first name.
2. In the top left-hand corner, write your favorite TV show.
3. In the top right-hand corner, write your favorite food.
4. In the bottom left-hand corner, write the name of a person you admire.
5. In the bottom right-hand corner, write the name of your favorite sport.

Participants are asked to share their responses with the group.

Trainer's notes. Warm-up activities have a way of helping the facilitator to become aware of the group's level of readiness. They are designed to help build a positive group atmosphere, warming group participants up to the experience (Barksdale, 1989).

Activity #2

Title. Once Upon A Time.

Objective. This activity is designed to help participants recognize their creative abilities.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To recognize the individual abilities of group members.

Materials. Five different objects e.g. comic book, clock, string, ball, plastic bag.

Process. The group is divided into sub-groups of three or four. The facilitator will distribute five different objects to each group. They must role-play using the five objects

Trainer's notes. All individuals are creative in their own unique way. It is essential that the facilitator encourage positive qualities and de-emphasize weaknesses.

Activity #3

Title. I've Always Wanted To Be...

Objective. This activity is designed to assist group members to know each other a little better.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Participants will be able to identify with the dreams of others.

Materials. None.

Process. Each member of the group takes a turn telling something that he/she always wanted to be or do in his/her life. Provide group members time to discuss reasons for their choice.

Trainer's notes. Group members will express their ideas in an open, non-threatening environment. Provide for ample time for participants to express feelings and emotions.

Standard. This module will be evaluated using the Autographs worksheet (Appendix A-1). Students are invited to mingle in the group and to obtain autographs for each statement.

Module 3-Self-Awareness

Activity #1

Title. "What Is Self-Esteem?"

Objective. This activity is designed to enable participants to become aware of their own self-esteem.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Participants will discover the meaning of "self-esteem".

Materials. The worksheet titled "What Is Self-Esteem?" (Appendix A-2) and a flipchart.

Process. Distribute the "What Is Self-Esteem?" worksheet (Appendix A-2). Participants will brainstorm on the definition of "self-esteem" and will list the five aspects of self. These include emotional, intellectual, physical, spiritual, and sexual. Participants are invited to share their ideas with the larger group. All ideas are placed on the flipchart.

Trainer's notes. Stress the definition of self-esteem and its importance. This is a process of knowing about yourself. Individuals need to self-reflect and explore. All aspects of self must be identified in order to meet one's individual needs.

Activity #2

Title. "Building Self-Esteem".

Objective. To outline ways of increasing our self-esteem.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Participants will identify and practice ways of increasing one's self-esteem.

Materials. A flipchart, markers, paper, and pencils.

Process. Participants are asked to complete on paper the statement "I am. . ." with descriptive statements. Then, answer the following questions:

1. How do I feel about myself?

2. Do I like myself? In what ways?
3. What characteristic would I change to increase my self-esteem?

Participants are asked to reflect on their answers. Have students brainstorm ideas on self-esteem. Ideas are recorded on a flipchart.

Trainer's notes. An awareness of oneself, one's interests, values, and abilities is important in career decision-making. Self-esteem may be enhanced through positive feedback from oneself and others.

Activity #3

Title. Feeling Good About Myself.

Objective. To provide students with an opportunity to ascertain positive attributes about self and to reflect these feelings.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Students will identify the positive qualities about themselves.

Materials. The worksheet titled "Feeling Good About Myself" (Appendix A-3).

Process. Distribute a copy of the "Feeling Good About Myself" worksheet (Appendix A-3). Review this exercise with the participants and provide an example of a completed sentence. Form

groups of two or three and have students to share their responses. Invite students to share what they have learned from each other.

Trainer's notes. Oftentimes, people find it easier to list their negative attributes, but find it difficult to see their positive points. The sharing of positive thoughts and feelings is intended to further promote feelings of self-worth. Promote a caring, non-threatening environment for individuals to express their feelings.

Activity #4

Title. Interests.

Objective. To closely examine interests and hobbies.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Participants will identify their interests and the things they enjoy doing.

Materials. Paper, pencils, and the worksheet titled "Check Out Your Interests" (Appendix A-4).

Process. Have participants complete the worksheet titled "Check Out Your Interests" (Appendix A-4). Invite students to share their responses with a partner.

Trainer's notes. It is important to keep in mind that people have many different interests. These interests influence the choices that one makes. Each person has developed personal

preferences for certain activities and these preferences influence one's career choices.

Activity #5

Title. Values.

Objective. To closely examine values and to delineate important values in one's life.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Participants will identify the values that are important to them.

Materials. Paper, pens, flipchart, the worksheet titled "Values Mirror" (Appendix A-5), and the worksheet titled "Getting in Touch With Your Values" (Appendix A-6).

Process. Have students discuss the term "values". Place all responses on a flipchart. Discuss topics such as "What shapes our values?" and the factors that influence our values. These questions guide the group discussion. Distribute a copy of the worksheet titled "Values Mirror" (Appendix A-5). Ask students to write a word or phrase on the mirror corresponding to their feeling about each of these statements:

1. A person who has influenced you.
2. Something that symbolizes a value your family lives by.
3. The one thing that makes life worthwhile.
4. What would you do anything to get?

5. Something that makes you happy.

6. Your greatest achievement.

Students are invited to share their responses with the larger group. Distribute a copy of the worksheet titled "Getting in Touch With Your Values" (Appendix A-6) and ask students to complete the sheet individually.

Trainer's notes. In order for a career plan to be successful, values must be identified. Stress the relevance between pursuing work consistent with values that can result in career satisfaction.

Activity #6

Title. Skills and Achievements.

Objective. To recognize that each individual has specific skills and achievements that can assist them in the career planning process.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Participants will identify their individual skills and achievements.

Materials. Paper, pencils, and the worksheet titled "Skills and Achievement" (Appendix A-7).

Process. Skills will be organized into three groups:
(a) specialized skills, (b) communication/interpersonal skills, and
(c) general skills. Elaborate on each skill so participants are clear on the difference between them. Students are invited to list

the skills for the three groups and to list a circumstance when they have used each skill. Students must keep in mind past experiences and positive accomplishments. Students are invited to share their responses with the larger group.

Trainer's notes. It is important to keep in mind that a skill is defined as the ability to do something well, especially as a result of experience. Employers are interested in knowing what skills an individual possesses.

Activity #7

Title. Personality.

Objective. To assist students in evaluating who they are now, and to identify personality traits that apply to them.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Participants will identify personality traits and its influence in career development.

Materials. Paper, pencils, and flipchart.

Process. Elaborate on the Holland Theory and the six different personality types: (a) realistic, (b) investigative, (c) artistic, (d) social, (e) enterprising, and (f) conventional. Each personality type fits into a particular work environment.

As a group brainstorm a list of personality traits. These traits can be outlined on flipchart. Individually have students

list five personality traits and relate these traits to the following questions:

1. In what ways do I interact with the world?
2. How do I take in information?
3. How do I make decisions?
4. What is my preferred environment?

Trainer's notes. Your personality is the "you that you show to others". Personality traits can indicate the suitable work environment for an individual.

Standard. This module will be evaluated by having each student create a collage. This collage should illustrate personal characteristics, interests, values, skills, and achievements.

Module 4-Looking At Your Disability

Activity #1

Title. What is a Learning Disability?

Objective. To enable individuals to learn more about their disabilities and their particular learning style.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Students will learn more about themselves in terms of their learning disability and will learn to advocate for themselves.

Materials. Flipchart, paper, and pencils.

Process. Review the term "learning disability" with the group. Elaborate on the different learning styles:

1. Visual - learns best by seeing.
2. Auditory - learns best by listening.
3. Kinesthetic - Learns best by doing.

Stress the idea that students do have a preference for a particular learning style. Ask students to complete the following questions:

1. What type of learning style do you most prefer?
2. What activities do you find yourself limited to?
3. What kinds of accommodations do you need to find success?

Trainer's notes. Most students at the junior high level have undergone psycho-educational testing to have been diagnosed as learning disabled. Most students are quite verbal in discussing what they can or can not do.

Activity #2

Title. What Are the Various Types of Strategies?

Objective. To enable learning disabled students to recognize and implement the particular strategies addressing their deficits.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Allow students to recognize their deficits and put the appropriate supports in place to be successful.

Materials. Flipchart, a copy of the book titled "Teaching Students With Learning Disabilities" Programming for Individual Needs, Department of Education, and the worksheet titled "My School Days" (Appendix A-8).

Process. Present the group with the various types of strategies. These include: (a) metacognition, (b) information processing, (c) communication, (d) academics, and (e) social/adaptive.

Present the group with strategies for written expression (academics). These strategies include: (a) pre-writing, (b) planning, (c) composing, (d) editing, and (e) revising. Students are given the topic, "My School Days" (Appendix A-8), and are asked to write a short story. The strategy called the brainstorm sheet is used. Each student is given a copy of a sheet and completes the information. Students are to provide information about the topic and give supporting details. This strategy helps students organize their thoughts before completing a final draft.

Trainer's notes. Specific problem areas must be identified and intervention strategies presented to the learner. It is essential the facilitator models strategies. Not all learning disabled students have written output problems, however, this lesson was just one example. All strategies for the various deficits must be

presented and modelled with the class. Time has to be allocated for individual assistance.

Activity #3

Title. Discussion on Learning Disabled.

Objective. To provide individuals with an opportunity to discuss openly how they feel about their learning disability and to assess their attitudes and beliefs about barriers.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Individual will discuss their learning disability in an open, non-threatening environment.

Materials. Flipchart and pens.

Process. Have students do a cartoon sketch of a life experience relating to their learning disability. Some may discuss their feelings about the learning disability and the impact it has had on their lives. Flipchart some of the stereotypical attitudes that exist about learning disabilities.

Trainer's notes. Many learning disabled individuals have experienced negative situations and may feel there is no hope of success. Individuals must be provided with positive experiences so the sense of learned helplessness can be eliminated.

Activity #4

Title. Identifying Barriers.

Objective. To define barriers and to review some of the barriers that learning disabled persons face every day.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To recognize the barriers and their influence on the learning disabled person.

Materials. Flipchart, paper, and pens.

Process. Brainstorm the definition of the term "barriers". Place all ideas on the flipchart. Have students list the various types of barriers: (a) environmental, (b) social, (c) systemic, and (d) personal. Have students work in pairs to brainstorm ideas under each barrier. The facilitator can web the ideas on the flipchart.

Have students discuss the following questions:

1. What kinds of barriers do persons with learning disabilities put up?
2. In what ways are the capabilities of learning disabled persons different than others?
3. Name some successful individuals who are learning disabled.

The facilitator encourages the students to examine their belief system to determine if their actions and attitudes indicate personal barriers.

Trainer's notes. It is important to keep in mind that learning disabled persons have lower labour force participation rates than

individuals without learning disabilities. Also, an examination of employer attitudes in the workplace may need to be reviewed.

Activity #5

Title. Overcoming Barriers.

Objective. To determine ways in which barriers can be overcome in the lives of learning disabled individuals.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To discuss ways of eliminating barriers while building a positive self-image.

Materials. Flipchart, paper, and the worksheet titled "Overcoming Barriers in the Workplace" (Appendix A-9).

Process. Have students work in pairs to brainstorm ways in which barriers can be removed in our personal lives and the workplace. These ideas are then placed on the flipchart for the entire group to examine. In pairs, have students complete the worksheet titled "Overcoming Barriers in the Workplace" (Appendix A-9). This activity provides real-life situations for persons with learning disabilities. Solutions can be formulated for each situation.

Trainer's notes. The following points need to be emphasized during this lesson:

1. Each individual has abilities, and it is important to keep a positive frame of mind.
2. Individuals must learn to become independent and become self-advocates for change.
3. Individuals with learning disabilities have legal rights in our society and must not be discriminated against due to the disability.
4. It is important to acquire personal and professional skills and to be open to new ideas.

Standard. This module is evaluated through the worksheet titled "Self-Assessment" (Appendix A-10). This worksheet provides an opportunity to self-reflect and to focus on themselves in relation to the world of work. The purpose is to identify some fears addressed in the remaining modules.

Module 5-Career Awareness

Activity #1

Title. Job-Occupation-Career.

Objective. To enable persons with learning disabilities to review the concepts of job, occupation, and career, and to examine the factors influencing career decisions.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To recognize key terms and factors in the career developmental process.

Materials. Paper, flipchart, markers, the worksheet titled "Career Definitions" (Appendix A-11), and the worksheet titled "Factors That Can Affect Our Career Decisions" (Appendix A-12).

Process. Divide the class into pairs and distribute the worksheet titled "Career Definitions" (Appendix A-11). Have students define the concepts of job, occupation, and career. Emphasize that a career encompasses a life story and includes a number of experiences and roles. Later, display terms on a flipchart.

Distribute the worksheet titled "Factors That Can Affect Our Career Decisions" (Appendix A-12). Elaborate on each factor in detail, and invite students to comment on how these factors could influence their choices.

Trainer's notes. Oftentimes, the terms "job", "occupation", and "career" are used interchangeably, but in reality they are quite different. It is important to know the differences and to closely look at the factors that affect our career decision-making.

Activity #2

Title. Career Planning.

Objective. To provide individuals with an opportunity to understand that career planning is essential and beneficial.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To realize the value of career planning.

Materials. Flipchart, pens, and paper.

Process. In a large group, define the term "career plan" and list the steps and benefits of career planning. A career plan should take several factors into account. These include:

- (a) education and training, (b) career research, (c) money,
- (d) personal duties, and (e) jobs leading to your career goal.

Have students brainstorm in the larger group and outline ideas on flipchart. Discuss the importance of persons with learning disabilities having an individualized career plan.

Later, have students individually outline their career paths. Keep in mind that the term career comprises all sorts of activities.

Trainer's notes. Stress the importance that a career plan can help save time, money, and effort. It can also help in other ways and is essential in the career exploration process. Individuals with learning disabilities must realize the benefits of career planning and must have a plan of action put in place.

Activity #3

Title. Career Anchors.

Objective. To have individuals understand the term "career anchors", and to identify some of the career anchors in their lives.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To allow individuals to explore the various career anchors.

Materials. Flipchart, paper, and pens.

Process. In the larger group, brainstorm the definition of "career anchor". These are the qualities found in life that a person can not give up when changing any aspect of life without significantly reducing overall satisfaction and well being. Write the definition on a flipchart and outline the most common sources of career anchors. These are interests, status, environment, achievements, wealth, family, security, risk-taking, and independence. Have students outline their own career anchors.

Trainer's notes. Career anchors are the building blocks for career decisions (Cahill, 1994). It is important to keep these sources in mind when making career decisions.

Activity #4

Title. The World of Work.

Objective. To have students explore the world of work and to discover some job interests.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To build on your job interests and discover new things about yourself.

Materials. Flipchart and paper. Suggested career assessment instruments include "Choices", "Career Options Checklist", and "Career Decision-Making Systems Revised".

Process. In the larger group, brainstorm the definition of the term "work". Discuss in detail how work has changed over time and identify the different kinds of work. Jot all ideas down on flipchart. Individually have students participate in programs such as "Choices" or the "Career Decision-Making Systems Revised" or the "Career Options Checklist". Have individuals investigate and match with suitable occupations. Ask questions based on subjects, abilities, values, and interests and how they relate to the findings within career clusters.

Trainer's notes. All group members have examined their interests, skills, values, etc. It is important to investigate the world of work and how their qualities can relate to their career choices. Students may require individual assistance with the career assessments.

Activity #5

Title. Exploring a Career Interest.

Objective. To have students explore job interests and to identify possible career options.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To investigate and discuss possible career options.

Materials. Flipchart, paper, the worksheet titled "Occupational Dreams" (Appendix A-13), and the worksheet titled "Occupational Selections" (Appendix A-14).

Process. Individuals are asked to write on a piece of paper the response to the following statement "I've always wanted to be..." They may wish to share their responses with the entire group. Individuals are asked to complete the "Occupational Dreams" (Appendix A-13) worksheet. They are to list the more frequent occupations they have considered. On a flipchart, outline the career interest areas and occupational clusters for each individual.

After completing a number of assessment instruments in the previous lesson, individuals are asked to complete the "Occupational Selections" (Appendix A-14) worksheet. An opportunity is provided for them to list possible occupational choices. Later in the next module, individuals can gain access to information on their choices

Trainer's notes. Students need to explore occupations prior to making career selections. In narrowing down occupational options, students will need to ponder many questions. Students may require individual help and extra time spent on occupational clusters.

Standard. This module can be evaluated by having students devise a career portfolio. This can assist in self-discovery and self-evaluation.

Module 6-Researching Occupations and Making Decisions

Activity #1

Title. Asking the Important Questions.

Objective. To examine various questions that learning disabled persons must consider when doing a career research.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To become more knowledgeable about the career research process.

Materials. Flipchart, paper, pens, and the worksheet titled "What Do I Want To Know?" (Appendix A-15).

Process. In the larger group, brainstorm some steps involved in researching an occupation. Place ideas on a flipchart.

Divide the group into pairs and distribute the "What Do I Want To Know?" worksheet (Appendix A-15). Invite students to elaborate on each item on the worksheet and to focus on specific questions.

Trainer's notes. Career research takes a lot of time and effort. It is important to ask questions, and to find out the necessary information because your decision can play a major role in your life. Students may have other questions that are significant to them. Allocate ample time to answer all concerns.

Activity #2

Title. Information Search.

Objective. To have students identify sources of career information.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Students will discover new ways of locating career information.

Materials. Flipchart, pens, and the worksheet titled "Where Do I Find The Information About a Career?" (Appendix A-16).

Process. Have students brainstorm and list possible areas where information can be found about careers. Place all ideas on the flipchart. Distribute a copy of the "Where Do I Find The Information About a Career?" worksheet (Appendix A-16) and discuss each category in detail.

Trainer's notes. Searching for information can be a time consuming task. Many individuals are unaware of how many different information resources are available. These resources provide current, detailed information for individuals with learning disabilities. It is important to examine some of the resources in the immediate environment and community. These may include job shadowing and hands-on experience.

Activity #3

Title. Occupational Research.

Objective. To provide individuals with learning disabilities the knowledge of what they have learned about research methods and implementation.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. To investigate different avenues for research.

Materials. Tape recorder and notebook.

Process. Students are asked to review the occupation/careers that appeal to them. Investigate the services in the community and research the occupations as per professional and print/electronic resources.

Later, provide feedback to the group on the information you found. Were the research techniques helpful and beneficial?

Conduct an interview with a person who is working in an occupational area that interests you. Ask a variety of questions such as:

1. What do you like most about your job?
2. What do you like least about your job?
3. What are the training requirements?
4. What is your work schedule?
5. What accommodations are needed for individuals with learning disabilities to be successful in this particular field?

After the interview, answer the following questions:

1. What did you learn about your selected occupations?
2. Why is it important to research an occupation before making a decision?

Trainer's notes. From the previous modules, individuals with learning disabilities have identified occupations of interest. It is important to research the various occupations and to gather information on the decision-making process.

Activity #4

Title. The Decision-Making Model.

Objective. To define the term "decision" and to understand the decision-making model.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Students will become aware of the decision-making process.

Materials. Flipchart, pens, the worksheet titled "Decision-Making Model" (Appendix A-17), and the worksheet titled "Decision-Making Exercise" (Appendix A-18).

Process. On a flipchart, define the term "decision". These are situations requiring choices. Present the decision-making model and explain each step in detail. Provide examples for each step.

Students are to use the "Decision-Making Exercise" worksheet (Appendix A-18) and practice using the steps in a personal situation that they are presently faced with.

Trainer's notes. Learning disabled individuals have had little experience making decisions. Oftentimes, decisions are made quickly without much reflection. Individuals with learning disabilities must be aware of the steps involved in the decision-making process, and have opportunities to engage in the practice of decisions.

Activity #5

Title. What Influences Our Decisions?

Objective. To become aware of influences on occupational decisions, and of how to enable individuals to make better decisions.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Students will investigate the influences on decisions that are present in their lives.

Materials. Flipchart and pens.

Process. Brainstorm the factors that influence our decisions such as family, friends, goals, health, skills, etc. Place these ideas on a flipchart and discuss the influence of these factors. Do these factors have a positive or negative influence on our career decisions?

It is important to keep in mind that not all decisions are made accurately. Individuals need to explore strategies for making better decisions. Chart these ideas. Possible examples are:

1. Practice the decision-making steps.
2. Recognize obstacles that get in your way.
3. Research information.
4. Ask for help.

Trainer's notes. Daily decisions are not made in isolation, but are influenced by a variety of factors. Many of these factors are important, and an awareness of these is critical to the decision-making process.

Activity #6

Title. Career Paths.

Objective. To provide an opportunity for students with learning disabilities to plot their own career paths.

Grade level. Junior High.

Competency. Individuals will learn more about the career planning process and begin to outline their career plan.

Materials. Flipchart and pens.

Process. In the large group, elaborate on the term "career path". Discuss the many points plotted along the way. Each point has different requirements utilizing certain information and

actions. When a path is completed, a final decision is required. Discuss with the group the steps in the process.

Have students outline their own career path and consider the following questions:

1. Why is career exploration important?
2. How has your career exploration experience influenced your career choice?
3. What have you learned about your disability and how does it relate to the world of work?
4. Why do you think it is important to follow a career decision-making path?
5. Why is it important to ask questions while on a career path?

Trainer's notes. A career path allows individuals to have some control over what happens in their lives. It is important to reflect and practice making career decisions. All information must be evaluated in order for goals to be reached.

Standard. This module can be evaluated by having students list the possible ways of researching careers and by outlining their career path in detail.

Summary

Career development in the 21st century will center around change, globalization, technological advances, and a rapidly

changing environment. Career exploration has never before been as crucial, especially for the learning disabled population. Many of these individuals face a reality of little employment and social isolation. Many drop out of school and have little skill development to obtain work. Career development must begin early for learning disabled students and must provide a transition from school life to work life.

The area of career development for learning disabled students has been of particular interest to the writer of this paper. Very little programming for learning disabled students has been designed, even though the need exists in our school system today. This program was intended to enable the learning disabled junior high school student to work through a process. Along the way, the individual will discover new things about themselves and explore their dreams about the future. The learning disabled individual will explore and find new meaning to the term "career" and discover that they have a bright future in the work force. They will gain knowledge of where to find relevant information and practice making real life decisions.

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Appendices
Sample Work Sheets

Appendix A-1: Autographs

Individuals are asked to interview other members to find persons that best fit and agree with the statements below.

Born in the month of July _____

Enjoys playing hockey _____

Likes to eat Jigs Dinner _____

Was born outside Canada _____

Has a dog _____

Is an only child _____

Can play the piano _____

Likes Brittany Spears _____

Enjoys reading _____

Has their driver's license _____

Has a part-time job _____

Enjoys working with computers _____

Likes to make things out of wood _____

Likes to fish _____

Likes to play board games _____

Likes the colour blue _____

Watches the TV show "Dawson's Creek" _____

Watches TSN - Sports _____

Enjoys cleaning the house _____

Has worked in the summertime _____

Appendix A-2: What Is Self-Esteem?

Define Self-Esteem

List the five aspects of self

**Can you tell the reasons why each aspect must be satisfied
in order for an individual to be happy?**

Appendix A-3: Feeling Good About Myself

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

I am good at _____

I have achieved _____

The sport that I am best at is _____

I like myself because _____

I feel important when _____

I am happy when _____

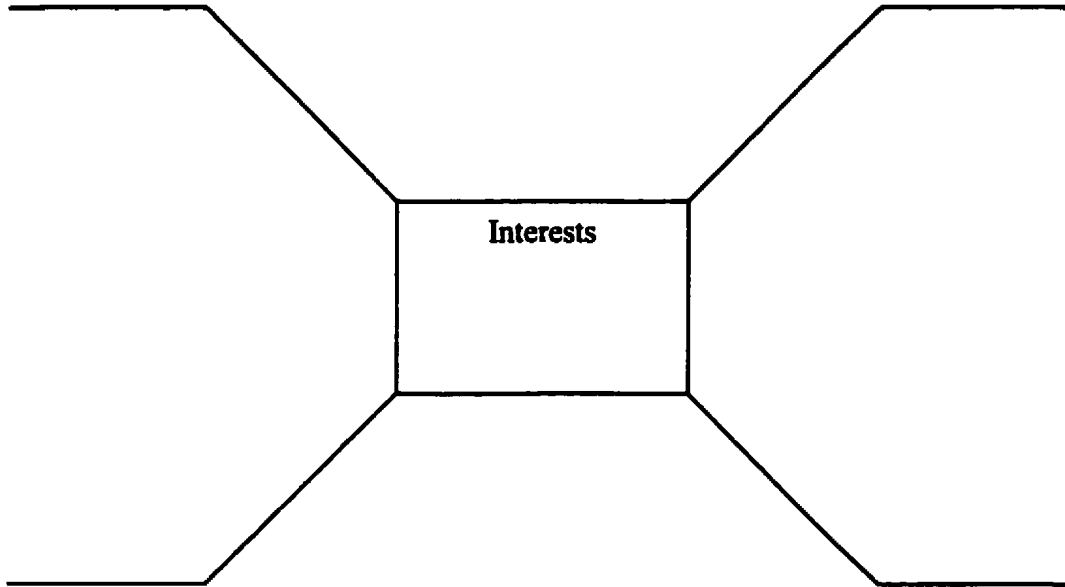
My strengths are _____

I am praised for _____

What people like about me _____

The most important thing in the world to me _____

Appendix A-4: Check Out Your Interests



What activities do you like doing the most?

What are your hobbies? What do you do in your spare time?

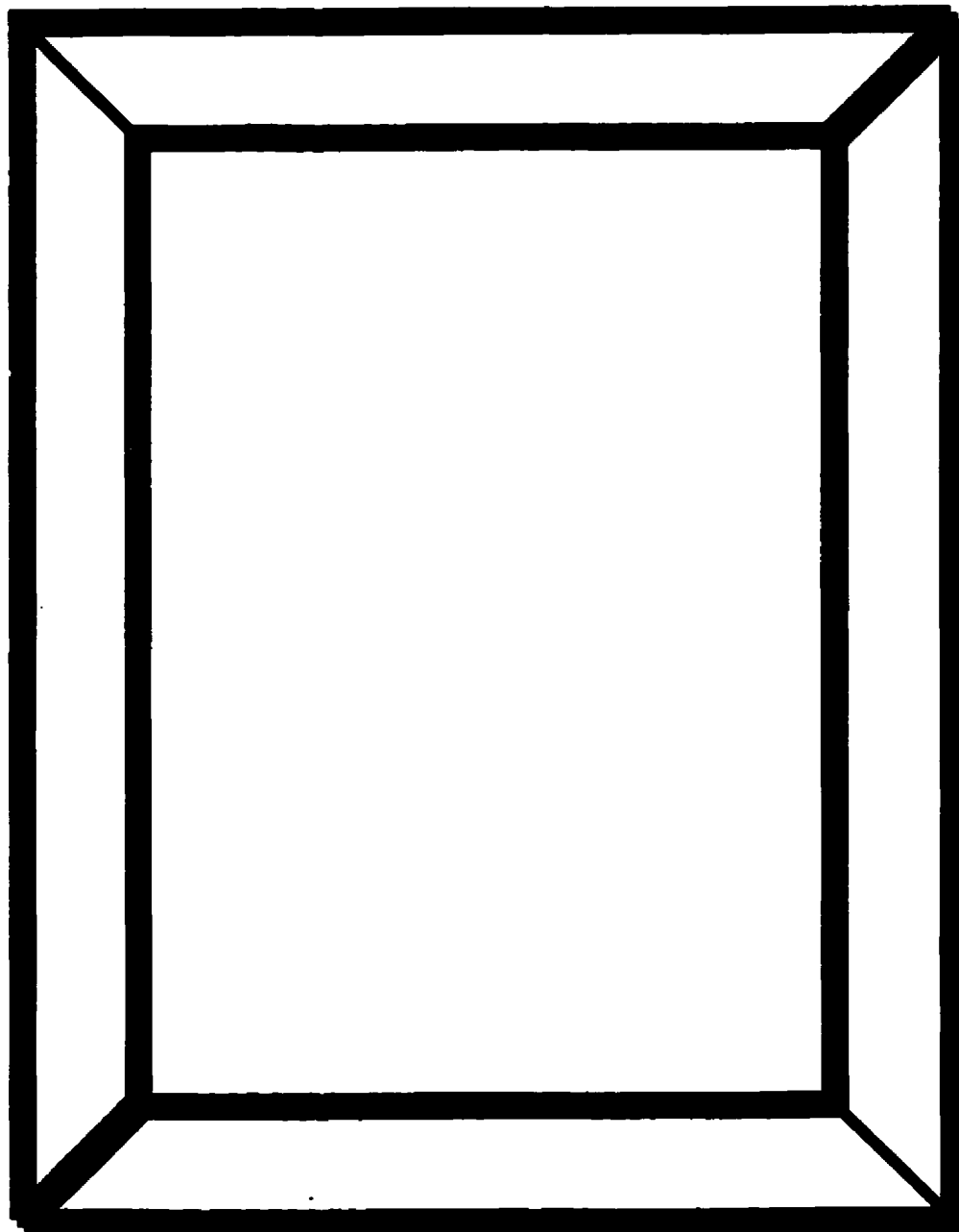
Which classes in school have been your favorites?

Would you enjoy working with data (facts, numbers, words, symbols)?

Would you enjoy working with people?

Would you enjoy working with things?

Appendix A-5: Values Mirror



Appendix A-6: Getting in Touch With Your Values

The following is a list of personal values that have been identified as being important in career planning. To begin exploring your personal work values, rate each value listed with the following scale:

Things I Value Very Much

Things I Value

Things I Do Not Value Very Much

Helps society	_____
Helps others	_____
Public contact	_____
Works with others	_____
Works alone	_____
Competition	_____
Makes decisions	_____
Works under pressure	_____
Influences people	_____
Knowledge	_____
Change and variety	_____
Security	_____
Fast pace	_____
Adventure	_____
Excitement	_____

Financial Gain _____

Independence _____

My Five Most Essential Values Are:

Appendix A-7: Skills And Achievements**Specialized Skills** _____

_____**Communication/ Interpersonal Skills** _____

_____**General Skills** _____

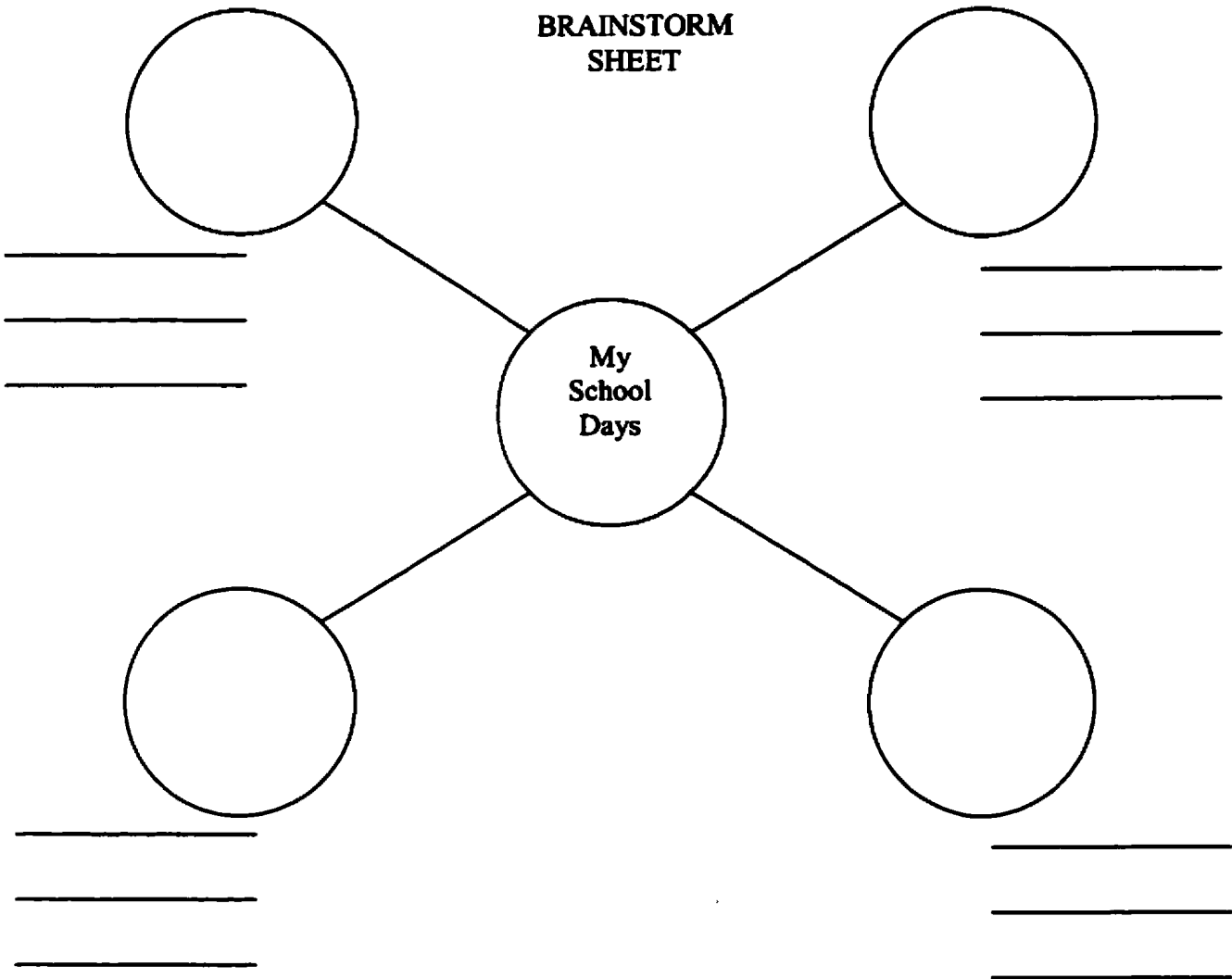
Previous Experience: **Include employment, volunteer, and academic experiences. Answer the following questions about each:**

1. What did I learn?
2. What did I like?
3. What did I dislike?
4. What did I accomplish?

Personal Achievements _____

Appendix A-8: My School Days

**BRAINSTORM
SHEET**



Appendix A-9: Overcoming Barriers in the Work Place

Read the following statements and find a solution to each barrier.

Cindy is very disorganized at work. She has difficulty finding memos and is always late for meetings.

Solution _____

Ted is asked to take the minutes of the meeting, but he finds it difficult to listen and take notes at the same time.

Solution _____

Susan is in charge of organizing field trips for the school's elementary students, however she has difficulty planning and organizing her thoughts.

Solution _____

Appendix A-10: Self-Assessment

Identify hopes and fears when you hear the term "career exploration".

Identify the positive beliefs and attitudes that can assist you in your career search.

Identify the negative beliefs and attitudes that can hinder you in your career search.

How can constructive change occur so the negative beliefs become positive?

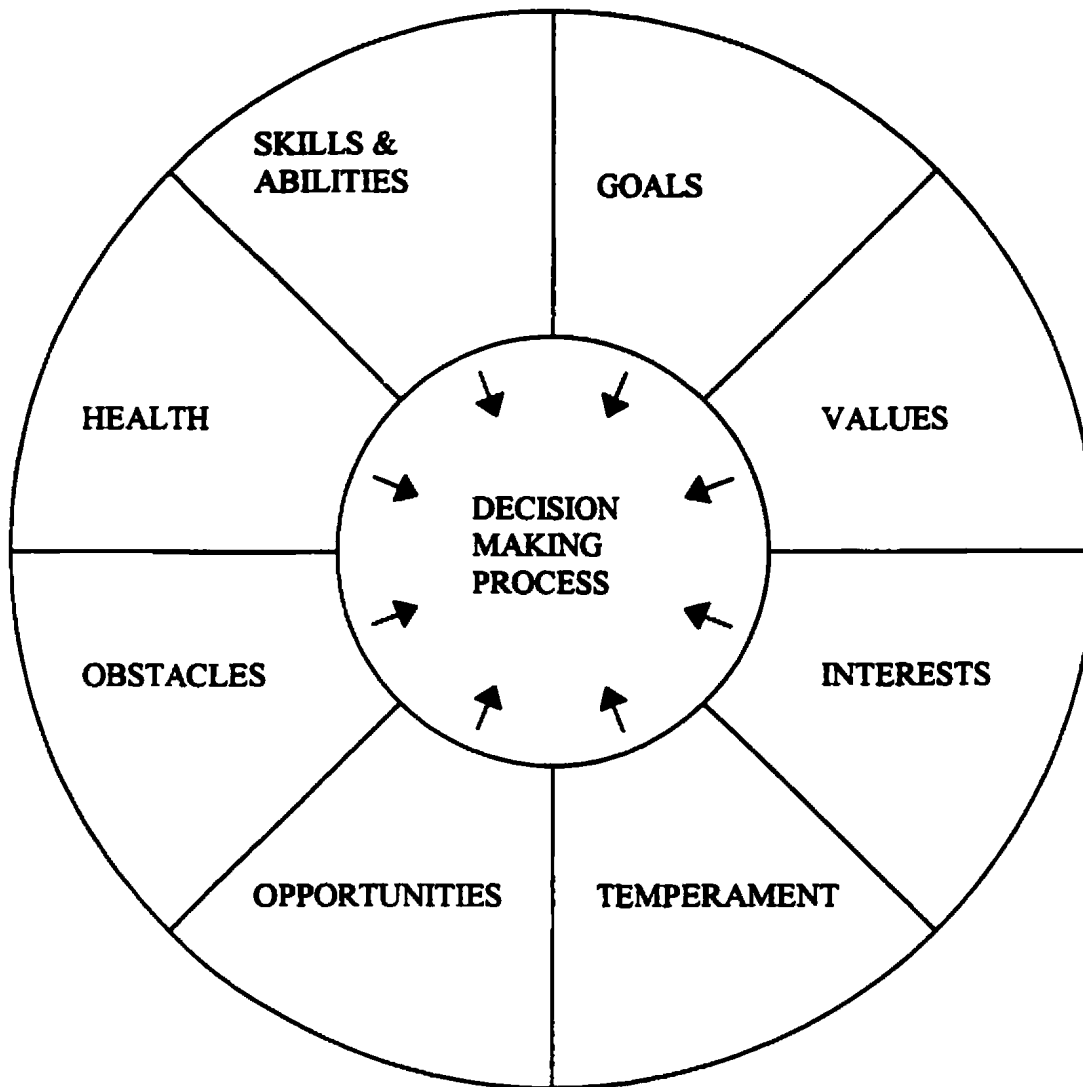
Appendix A-11: Career Definitions

Job: _____

Occupation: _____

Career: _____

Appendix A-12: Factors That Affect Our Career Decisions



Appendix A-13: Occupational Dreams

List below the occupations you have considered in thinking about your future. List the careers about which you have daydreamed as well as those you have discussed with others. Put your most recent "daydream" on Line 1 and work backwards to the earlier jobs you have considered.

OCCUPATION(S)

Appendix A-14: Occupational Selections**Identify five possible occupational choices**

Appendix A-15: What Do I Want To Know

Skills:

Education and Training:

Work Environment:

Hours:

Duties and Responsibilities:

Personality:

Location:

Advancement:

Job Outlook:

Pay:

Rewards:

What accommodations or supports are needed for individuals with learning disabilities to work at this particular career?

Appendix A-16: Where Do I Find Information About A Career?**Reading Materials****Job Futures****Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations****Public Library****Career Publications****Books and Magazines****Guidance Counsellour****Computerized Programs****People****Friends****Family****Workers****Employers****Own Experience****Co-operative Education Programs****Volunteer Experience****Part-time Jobs****Self-employment****Job Shadowing**

Appendix A-17: Decision-Making Model

Define the problem

List the options

Explore the alternatives

Choose and action plan

Follow through

Evaluate

Appendix A-18: Decision-Making Exercise

Problem

Define the problem

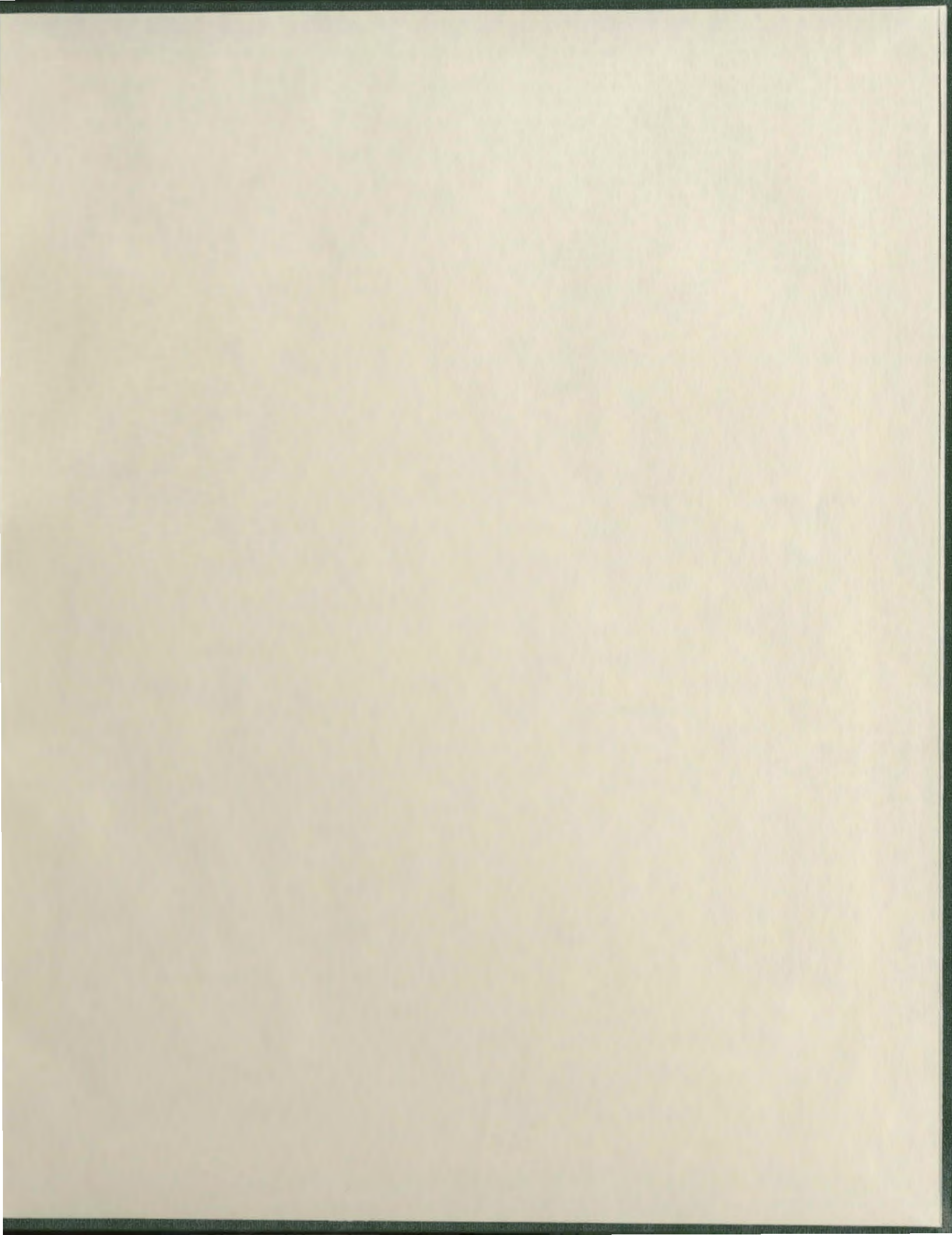
List the options

List the alternatives

Describe the action plan

How you will follow through

How you would evaluate the results



10000

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