

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of designing educational programs to meet the current and future needs of society is a daunting one; a challenge which the educational system is not well suited to meet by nature of its structure and its orientation toward academic achievement. When the quickly changing demands of the workplace are added to this design challenge the task becomes even more difficult. Nevertheless teachers and curriculum planners must address the changes in schools and changes in the workplace when designing programs if we are to have students graduate from our schools prepared for all aspects of their future and prepared for the challenges our world will offer.

The information in this project should serve as the basis for curriculum development for Cooperative Career Education programs which serve a wide variety of student occupational interests. Portions may be appropriate for adoption by other career programs which utilize the cooperative education method of instruction. In either case this is a framework only. Additional work is required in order to produce a curriculum guide capable of guiding instruction and assessment.

One goal of the project is to redefine the content and purpose of Cooperative Career Education programs. Past curriculum has focused on classroom instruction and on-the-job activities which had entry level employment as its main goal. Current research on employment skills plus the demands of the workplace and the goals of public education indicate that programs must now prepare students for learning over their life long careers, not only for their first job. This requires a curriculum which includes higher level academic and occupational skills which are transferable across jobs and occupational areas.

The project also has the goal of fostering a variety of instructional methods to support the achievement of these higher levels of learning. Most Cooperative Career Education programs rely on textbooks as at least a reference if not the primary source of curriculum and instructional methods. The inclusion of sample activities with each curriculum standard is an attempt to demonstrate how knowledge and skills can be mastered through a variety of instructional and assessment techniques based on real world activities. This type of instruction in the classroom makes the on-the-job experience even more relevant and beneficial.

A third goal of the project is to encourage teachers and curriculum planners to consider new and innovative program design structures. Programs which break through the constraints of time and tradition may well be precursors for renewing the role of career education programs in the secondary curriculum.

The extent to which this project meets its goals depends upon the vision, energy and commitment of teachers and program planners. The project will be a

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success if it helps Cooperative Career Programs fulfill its potential by preparing students for success in a rapidly changing world.