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Long-range Planning motivates students & personalizes Instruction

BY REBECCA M. DEDMOND

Many high school students, whether at risk or college-bound, face the same challenge: maintaining the personal drive to stay academically focused and disciplined through the tribulations and pressures of the teenage years and early 20s. When young people are confronted with any of the myriad problems (academic, financial, personal) they are likely to meet on the path to adulthood, giving up or back-scaling their goals is extremely tempting. How can educators help ignite drive and enthusiasm in *all* students? How can a busy classroom teacher hope to “connect” with students and understand their unique motivators when asked to take on an advisory role? One proven strategy that speaks to both questions is to facilitate the development of a comprehensive 10-year career and education plan. This

sure-fire approach gets students to value education and make the most of their time in school while providing educators with insights into what sparks each student’s interest.

The Process of Long-range Planning

Increased student motivation begins when students can articulate *why* completing postsecondary education or training is necessary for entry into a productive and self-sufficient adulthood. Students who are actively engaged in creating 10-year plans in a course dedicated to this process—and in updating their plans with teachers or advisers throughout high school and college—develop an intrinsic understanding of the payoffs for exerting the educational effort necessary and, just as important, the lifelong consequences of not getting a good education. The biggest payoff for students is the planning process

itself. Once young people can visualize and then create the detailed roadmap of their plan, confidence builds and fear of an unknown future lessens.

When teachers and advisers guide students through a planning process built on personal contemplation and the thoughtful deliberation of cherished dreams and goals, students are less likely to give up their plans when roadblocks present themselves. This recommendation is in contrast to the four-year high school graduation plans popular today. A plan limited to high school completion does not provide the motivational ingredient required to make the necessary shift in attitudes, particularly for high-risk students. When graduation from high school is seen as an end rather than a means, students who question the value of education will see no reason to apply themselves to their studies, much less pursue postsecondary

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educational options. To have the impact necessary, young people need to envision and then plan for a career beyond school.

“A planning strategy, such as the 10-year plan recommended by the Freshman Transition Initiative, can link middle school, high school, college and career,” says Victoria Bortolussi, former Moorpark College dean. “This is an essential component whereby we shift our focus to student learning and success rather than to completing courses and grade levels within institutions.”

Linking Coursework to Standards

The guide for the 10-year plan is the Course Standards for Freshman Transition Classes (for a copy visit www.freshmantransition.org). Courses that follow these standards tie academic rigor to reality, highlighting life beyond the classroom and making it easier for students to understand how to match academic and educational effort to lifestyle expectations. This personalized, real-world approach to learning makes a difference when it comes to student motivation and performance. Just ask Deb Crapes, a career specialist at Havermale High School, an alternative school in Spokane, Washington.

“In my 15 years of experience working with disadvantaged youth, many of whom are first generation high school graduates,” Crapes says, “I cannot stress

enough the importance of early career planning and exploration. When we can show students the correlation between school and the world of work, it can be the motivation they need to dream and then reach their career aspirations.”

Eighth-grade students at Havermale research career options through their life skills classes and participate in activities to explore a variety of career interest areas. Throughout high school they continue to investigate and update their online portfolios and plans.

“These opportunities help students start earlier learning to plan for college, create strong applications, and prepare for testing,” Crapes says. “Students are assisted to make career goals that are realistic with their strengths and abilities.”

Crapes notes an increase in the number of students opting for dual enrollment and meaningful and relevant learning opportunities as a result of this planning process. This is a natural outcome for schools like Havermale that intentionally provide formalized opportunities for students to revisit and revise their plans throughout high school. For dropout prevention purposes (not only high school but also dual enrollment programs and, eventually, college), the timing for the development of the 10-year plan is important. Written at the beginning of students’ high school tenure, in either the eighth or ninth grade, this vision of a

productive future provides the roadmap for keeping students on course as they tackle the higher order skills demanded of citizens of the 21st century. Schools across the country are implementing Freshman Transition courses that culminate in a 10-year plan. In Jacksonville, Florida’s, Duval County School District, more than 11,000 freshman students develop 10-year plans in the district’s required year-long “Keystone” course.

“Every ninth-grade student takes our Keystone course,” says Beverly Strickland, director of high school programs for Duval County Public Schools. “We believe whether you are a potential dropout or a potential star, you need assistance in determining details about your future and an understanding that there is a place for you in the future where you can be successful.”

Reaping the Rewards

The biggest payoff for educators striving to personalize their instruction is a formalized plan that provides glimpses of who their students are, and, more importantly, who they want to become. Educators who can help young people create a vision of a productive adulthood that matches their lifestyle expectations and the plan to accomplish their goals will

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successfully motivate students to step outside their academic comfort zone, apply themselves to their studies, and acquire the education necessary to realize their career and life aspirations. As the country seeks to curb an alarming high school and college dropout problem, career and technology educators are in a unique position to assume a leadership role in this effort. Their experience and sensibilities make them ideal candidates to deliver the courses that culminate with the development of quantitative and meaningful 10-year plans and to participate in the review and updating of student plans throughout their course of study. By advocating for the implementation of a 10-year plan for all students, educators can alter their

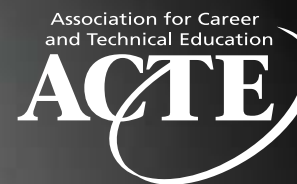
students' relationship with education, which in turn will impact their schools' dropout rates. The result: Students who can internalize the connection between school and work, thereby preparing them for a lifetime of productive employment and continual learning. **T**

Rebecca M. Dedmond

is the director of the Freshman Transition Initiative at The George Washington University (www.freshmantransition.org) and the director of the Master of Arts graduate program of the school counseling program at the Alexandria Center. She can be contacted at rdedmond@gwu.edu.

ACTE Interested in exploring this topic further? Discuss it with your colleagues on the ACTE forums at www.acteonline.org/forum.aspx.

Spotlight on Washington



With the current economic climate and the change in leadership in Washington, now is a critical time to be part of ACTE's national movement, Spotlight on Washington, to increase awareness of the importance of career and technical education (CTE) and the decisive role CTE plays in the nation's economic recovery. It is crucial to the success of CTE that everyone understands the importance of working with new and veteran policymakers in Washington to ensure that CTE programs receive the attention and resources that they need.

The CTE community has benefited from extraordinary breakthroughs in how to integrate CTE classes with a regular curriculum and the real world, yet our system of education has not adapted fully to these changes and is not fully aware of the importance of CTE. We urgently need to create schools for the 21st century and those schools can't be formed without CTE classes! It is imperative that policymakers see the connection between CTE and economic recovery. CTE is the vehicle to help

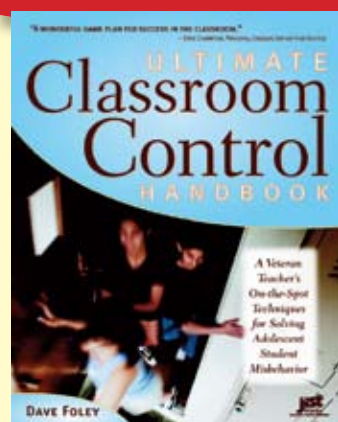
ensure that our students are well prepared for a high skill, high demand workplace, and therefore are able to compete in an evolving global economy.

ACTE can demonstrate the success of CTE by providing data, facts and additional information, but we have to rely on our members to provide the personalization of CTE programs that really hits home with Members of Congress—especially this year with so many new legislators and a brand new Administration. ACTE will rely on its members to provide that link between the program and the person. Your success stories demonstrate firsthand how crucial CTE is to your community. ACTE's community is nearly 29,000 voices strong. Can you imagine the impact on Capitol Hill if all 29,000 members marched to the Capitol in support of CTE? Can you imagine if 35,000, 40,000 or even 100,000 people all walked together with one voice? It would be impossible to ignore.

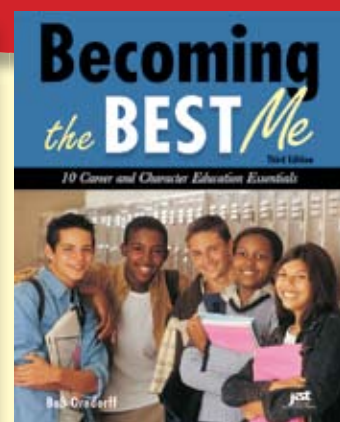
This year is the first step on the future path of CTE. It's time to stand up as a CTE supporter who pushes for change, inspires innovation, and believes that our children deserve creative approaches that will prepare them for a successful future. It's in your hands to make a difference for CTE, for your school programs, but most importantly—for your students.

We encourage **YOU**, CTE's biggest supporter, to lift your voice for your school, your community and your students by sharing your ACTE experience with colleagues and by inviting them to add their voices to the national movement, Spotlight on Washington, for a brighter future for CTE. Refer your colleagues to www.acteonline/join.aspx to learn more about ACTE and ACTE's membership benefits. Together we can build a stronger and brighter future for our children.

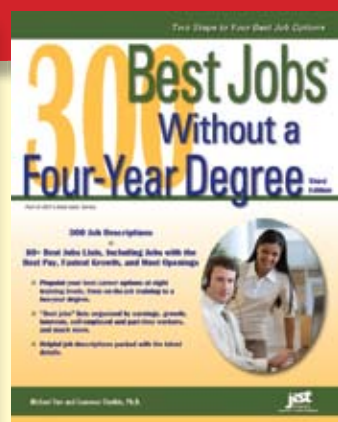
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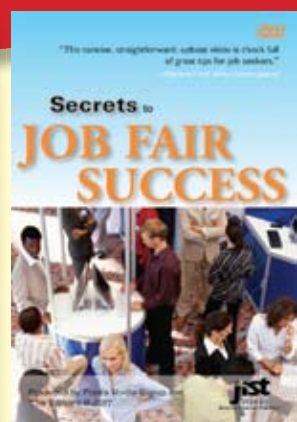
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