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Influence of Life Skills Training on the Preparedness of Secondary Students Entering Post-Secondary Education and/or the Workforce

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Influence of Life Skills Training

on the Preparedness of Secondary Students Entering

Post-Secondary Education and/or the Workforce

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SIGNATURE PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On April 26, 1983, the Reagan administration released “A Nation at Risk”, which found public education was at poor academic performance at nearly every level and warned that the education system was "being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 1). The report set off a firestorm of school reform which has spanned decades and led to the “No Child Left Behind Act of 2002” (NCLB, 2002). This Bush administration law mandated improvement of students’ basic skills by increasing accountability standards and had schools facing tough sanctions for failing to do so (107th Congress, 2002).

Standardized testing used to measure school progress under NCLB had caused poorly performing districts to concentrate on teaching more mathematics and reading, while shortening time spent on or eliminating other important subjects like art, social studies, and science which helped teach valuable life skills to students. In narrowing the focus of what one teaches our young children are schools preparing them to meet the challenges of tomorrow’s society and demands of today’s ever evolving global workforce?

Many skills besides mathematics and reading are necessary for a student to be successful after completing high school. A well rounded education which engulfs a wide arrangement of subject matters including those which incorporate life skills learning are better suited at preparing graduating seniors at being more successful in both post-secondary education and/or in the workforce. The purpose of this study was to examine

the effects of teaching life skill learning objectives to graduating high school students and the effect on their success in entering post-secondary education or obtaining employment.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine the relationship of teaching life skills at the secondary school level toward the attitude of preparedness of graduating high school senior to enter the workforce and/or post-secondary education.

RESEARCH GOALS

This study examined how life skill training may influence the preparedness of graduating students entering post-secondary education and/or the workforce. The researcher focused on identifying and studying the relations between parent's and teacher's influence and how it shaped understanding of the need for life skills within the population. To guide this study the following goals were established:

1. Determine students' understanding and value of life skills as part of their educational growth.
2. Determine the influence parent's involvement contributes to student's development of life skills and preparedness of student to enter post-secondary education or the workforce.
3. Determine the influence teachers contribute to student's development of life skills and preparedness of students to enter post-secondary education or the workforce.
4. Determine the effect the parent/teacher/school relationship contributes to student's life skills development.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Twenty years ago, the United States was first in the world in post-secondary attainment for adults ages twenty-five to thirty-four; today our nation ranks 12th (NGA, 2009). The countries that have eclipsed the United States have done so by emphasizing student attainment of degrees from two-year colleges. While most American teenagers aspire to post-secondary education, only a quarter of them enter college ready to do the work (NGA, 2009). According to the 2005 National Education Summit on High Schools, nationally 30 percent of high school students fail to earn a diploma and many of those who do graduate and enroll in college or enter the workforce find they lack the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. The statistics show that of the incoming first year college freshman almost 30 percent are unable to achieve a high enough grade in the reading/writing and mathematics placement tests and are required to take remedial courses (Achieve Inc., 2004).

Another staggering fact is that of the 75 percent of high school graduates who enroll in two or four-year colleges, only about 35 percent complete a bachelor's degree. This low rate of post-secondary persistence and attainment may be attributed to the general lack of preparedness or readiness of high school graduates for post-secondary education (Martinez & Klopott, 2005).

The situation in the workplace shows little difference as the majority of employers say high school graduates lack basic skills and question whether a high school diploma means that a typical student has learned even the basics of grammar, spelling, writing, and mathematic skills needed to function on the job. It is estimated that employers pay nearly $40 million a year on reading, writing, and mathematics remedial training for their

employees (The American Diploma Project, 2004). This additional business expense may add to outsourcing as employers seek better qualified employees from other sectors of the world's workforce.

It is also recognized that employers no longer place primary importance on reading literacy and computational aptitude. In this modern global workplace, basic soft skills dominate workplace needs: interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge; skills and abilities such as ethics, personal organization, and work habits; time management; teamwork and interpersonal communication; anger management; reasoning and problem solving; and managing one's learning (McNamara, 2009). The compelling 1990, report "America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!" found more than 80 percent of employers were concerned about workers' soft skill deficiencies (National Center of Education and the Economy, 1990).

In the recent past many states had set forth legislative efforts to remedy the gap between high school educational exit requirements and post-secondary education entry requirements. Ohio, New York, Oregon, Arkansas, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Texas have planned or established core curriculum compulsory requirements for all students to address the educational gap in mathematics and language arts skills. Several of these states have also included required courses in social studies and economics to address life or soft skills education (Martinez & Klopott, 2005).

The American Diploma Project's (2007) report *Closing the Expectations Gap* indicated that 27 states reported they are committed to the process of aligning their high school standards to ensure graduates receive the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in college or in the workplace. Many educators understand that it is essential

for our nation's youths to receive the training and exposure to life skills at an early age to ensure they develop and hone these skills as they mature.

The skills gap between knowledge of, to the mastery of, higher order thinking skills may be what defines success and failure among 21st century workers. The best employers in the world will be searching for the most competent, most creative, and most innovative people on our planet to fill top dollar paying jobs. This job market will not just be limited to professionals and managers but will encompass the whole spectrum of the workforce. American graduates of both secondary and post-secondary education must be equipped with the proper skills, knowledge, and abilities to provide the workforce of the future to these global employers, or we will lose our competitive edge as well as millions of jobs to other nations' workforce (ASTD, 2006).

In these challenging times one must still ask the question: "Does earning a diploma guarantee that a high school graduate is ready for work and college?" It should, for very practical reasons, as entrance requirements for colleges have increased as has tuition. The investment made in post-secondary education must be a wise one, with little room to throw good money away relearning old skills. Employers also expect more and students must be able to communicate effectively, think critically, analyze and interpret data, and evaluate a variety of materials. Sixty-seven percent of new jobs in the market today require some post-secondary education (Achieve Inc., 2006). It is time to give children all the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to be successful once they graduate from the secondary educational system.

Many schools across the nation have recently been teaching life skills to their pupils as a serious educational need, just as teaching reading/writing and mathematics.

This study sets out to determine effects of teaching life skills to graduating high school students on their preparedness for post-secondary education and/or employment. It evaluated graduating seniors from West Sound Technical Center (WST) in Bremerton, WA. WST is the premier provider of vocational skills training in the West Sound area dedicated to giving young adults relevant job skills in the work place. WST has provided entry-level skills training to thousands of students from the West Puget Sound region's eight school districts. The vision of those districts was to create a school, in partnership with business, to prepare students for higher education and the workforce by offering students the opportunity to be trained in technical career areas too expensive for a single district to fund (WST, 2009). Each of 16 career and technical programs has incorporated teaching life skills as part of their main curriculum.

In our changing world more employers are seeking stronger soft skills when evaluating a potential new employee. Freshmen entering college find they lack the social coping skills needed to stay in school and finish their degree. Recent studies have indicated that the teaching of life skills can make the difference in the post high school success of these students. This survey set out to determine if the teaching of life skills as part of a structured curriculum of secondary educational program influences the preparedness of graduating seniors to enter post-secondary education and/or employment.

LIMITATIONS

This study was conducted with, and cognizant of, the following limitations:

1. The population of this study was senior students at the West Sound Vocational Trades Center (WST) attending the Public Safety/Emergency Services, Engineering and Design Technology, Academy of Finance, and Hospitality

Services programs and graduating seniors from the South Kitsap School District (SKSD).

2. The study was limited to graduating seniors from similar socio-economic groups.

ASSUMPTIONS

The research was designed to determine the relationship between students' learning life skills as part of a secondary school system curriculum and its positive effect on their post-secondary education achievement and/or employment obtainment. The following assumptions were made:

1. The group of students at the WST provided a reasonable sampling of a student population in general.
2. The group of participating graduates from SKHS and WST provided a reasonable sampling of the general graduate population.
3. Survey participants have a basic understanding of the meaning of "life skill", "soft skills", and "employability skills" and understand those concept.

PROCEDURES

The study compared the attitude, confidence, and feeling among the 2010 graduating seniors from SKSD, and those attending WST toward their attitude of being prepared to enter post-secondary education and/or the workforce. The two groups will be compared to determine if there is a significant difference in the preparedness between graduating seniors attending WST and SKHS in the Class of 2010 based on their life skill training. Data from each group will be compared to determine if there is a correlation between learning life skills and attitude of their preparedness to enter either post-

secondary education or the workforce within each of the populations. Surveys were developed and administered to both participating groups. The collected data were analyzed to determine the effect curriculum that teaches life skills had on graduating senior preparedness for post-secondary education or entering into the workforce in comparison to those who did not receive similar life skills education.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The following terms are defined to assist the reader:

EI: Emotional Intelligence

EQ: Emotional Intelligence Quotient is a measure of one's emotional intelligence which is defined as the ability to use both emotional and cognitive thought.

Employability Skills: Skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions.

Life Skills: are a set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily human life.

SEL: The Social and Emotional Learning process from which people learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors. Such skills are a critical component to the success of all schools.

Soft Skills: is a sociological term relating to a person's "EQ" (Emotional Intelligence Quotient); the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people.

WST: West Sound Technical Skills Center

SKSD: South Kitsap School District

NCLB: No Child Left Behind

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

In light of the NCLB Act, which has brought about standardized testing used to measure student learning and gauge school progress of teaching as well as reducing the scope of what one teaches our children; it must be questioned as to whether or not schools are preparing students to meet the challenges of tomorrow's society and demands of today's ever evolving global workforce. A well rounded education engulfs a wide arrangement of subject matters including those which incorporate the life skills learning part of preparing graduating seniors to be more successful in both post-secondary education and/or in the workforce. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of teaching life skills learning objectives to graduating high school students and the effect it has on their success in entering post-secondary education or obtaining employment. Ground work is set for this study by identifying the research goals, limitations, assumptions, target subjects, and providing the procedures to gather the data and methods of analysis and determining the findings. It is hoped that the study will show the significance of teaching life skills as part of the high school core curriculum to better prepare graduating seniors for the perils they will face in post-secondary education or in the workforce.

Chapter II will provide background and review of available literature on variable aspects of teaching life skills; the need of students to learning life skills; employment trends and employer's expectations; and making connections with known and accepted

methods of teaching and learning. Chapter III will discuss the types of methods and procedures used by the researcher to gather and analyze the data and instruments employed. Chapter IV will present the findings of the study and how it was interpreted. Chapter V presents the researcher's conclusions based on the findings of this study and shows how the research material did or did not support the teaching of life skills at the secondary school level. It will also include recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In life, each individual requires all types of skills to become a fully functional member of modern society able to contribute to its growth and to be able to provide for their own well being and that of their family unit. These skills or competencies are learned through a variety of methods of education and training. Individuals learn in their parent's home, with peers, in primary and secondary school classrooms, on college campuses, and in the workplaces. The skills which one learns assists them throughout life and in every aspect of living. Our skills can define who we are as a person, professional, and parent. The academic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic are fundamentally important for all individuals to master and contribute greatly to one's success in the world. Still there are other skills, those life skills which were traditionally taught by parents and extended family when it was the village that raised a child. The subject of this study is to investigate the effects of teaching life skills in the preparation of students for post-secondary education and/or employment. Many factors play a role in understanding the importance of these skills.

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional Intelligence (EI) roots can be traced back to Payne (1985), a graduate student at an alternative liberal arts college in the USA. He wrote his dissertation which included the term "emotional intelligence" in the title. This seems to be the first academic use of the term (Hein, 2005). Salovey and Mayer (1990) published their influential article "Emotional Intelligence," where they defined EI as, "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and

emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 5).

EI can be traced back to Thorndike (1937) who wrote about "Social Intelligence" and Wechsler (1940) who stated that non-cognitive aspects of intelligence were important for adaptation (Cherniss, 2000). Maslow (1950) described how people can build emotional strength taken from his concept of a hierarchy of needs paper, "*A Theory of Human Motivation"*. Gardner (1983) used the term "multiple intelligence" and highlighted the importance of "intrapersonal" and "interpersonal" intelligences. But it was Goleman (1995), who popularized this term, *Emotional Intelligence* when he stated, "When it comes to the question of whether a person will become a star performer, IQ may be a less powerful predictor than EI" (Fragouli & Fragouli, 2007, p. 64). Since its conception there has been a considerable body of research suggesting that a person's ability to identify, understand, use, and manage emotion provides the basis for the kinds of social and emotional competencies that are important for success in almost any job. It is said that the more complex the job, the more EI matters (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004).

The scientific evidence found in different studies has given us a view of the importance of EI. Salovey and Mayer (1990) initiated a research program intended to develop valid measures of emotional intelligence and explore its significance. In one such study, individuals who scored higher in the ability to perceive accurately, understand, and appraise others emotions were better able to respond flexibly to changes in their social environments and build supportive social networks (Salovey, Bedell, Detweiler, &

Mayer, 1999). This spurred others to search for more answers to the affect of EI on individuals' performance and success in life.

Some research questions if IQ by itself was a good predictor of job performance. The Sommerville Study tackled this exact question. A 40-year longitudinal investigation was performed of 450 boys who grew up in Sommerville, Massachusetts, where two-thirds of the boys were from welfare families and one-third had IQ's below 90. The results showed that IQ had little relation to how well they did at work or in the rest of their lives. What was discovered that made the biggest difference was their childhood abilities such as being able to handle frustration, control emotions, and get along with other people (Snarey & Vaillant, 1985).

It should also be kept in mind that cognitive and non-cognitive abilities are very much related, as research suggests that emotional and social skills actually help improve cognitive functioning. An example of this can be found in the famous marshmallow studies at Stanford University. In this study four year olds were asked to stay in a room alone with a marshmallow and wait for a researcher to return. The toddlers were told that if they could wait until the researcher came back before eating the marshmallow, they would be reward by having two. Ten years later the researchers tracked down the kids who participated in the study. They found that the kids who were able to resist temptation had a total SAT score that was 210 points higher than those kids who were unable to wait (Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990).

With all possibilities considered many researchers have argued that by itself emotional intelligence probably is not a strong predictor of job performance, but it does provide the bedrock for competencies that are. The distinction between emotional

intelligence and emotional competence refers to the personal and social skills that lead to superior performance in the world of work. The considerable body of research makes a convincing argument that a person's ability to perceive, identify, and manage emotions provides the basis for the kinds of social and emotional competencies that are important for success in almost any job (Cherniss, 2000). The need to understand EI and to develop ways to teach these emotional competencies in both our secondary and post-secondary education is a vital necessity for the United States to remain competitive in a changing global market.

A CHANGING GLOBAL EXPECTATION

The technology industry is one of the fastest growing economies in the world as just the computer system design and related services in the United States alone has increased employment by 616,000 from 1994 to 2004. It is estimated to continue climbing another 453,000 to a staggering 1.6 million jobs by the year 2014. The catalyst for this industry is the persistent evolution of technology and the constant effort of businesses to integrate these new resources to enhance their productivity and expand their market opportunities (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).

This increase in job markets is spreading across the globe, as more countries, through their own development of technological products or by benefitting from the outsourcing of companies based in countries as the United States is increasing their job markets within the technology industries. Countries such as China and India are making great strides at gaining major footholds in the high-technology marketplace, while they are still far behind the U.S., their potential growth is great. It is estimated that China

could be the second largest economy by 2016 and surpass the United States by 2046 (Wadhwa, Gereffi, Rissing, & Ong, 2007).

In a study conducted by McKinsey Global Institute, a sampling of young professionals (university graduates with seven years experience) in twenty-eight low wage countries, it was discovered that there were about 33 million young professionals, of which only between 2.8 to 3.9 million had the skills needed to work for multinational corporations (Wadhwa et al., 2007). Table 1 shows the number of young professionals in emerging markets (low wage counties) in dark color as compared to developed economies (higher-wage countries). In the column of engineers, it can clearly be seen the rising number of engineers in China, India, and Russia compared to the United States, United Kingdom, and Japan (Wadhwa et al., 2007).

The demand for young professionals in these fields will only increase over time, not only due to the creation of new technology, but also as a result of the exiting of a larger older workforce (baby boomers) reaching retirement age within a relatively short time frame. Those world societies which do not prepare for the decrease in qualified workers and the increase of demand for their talents will suffer greatly in their competitiveness in the global market.

The primary issue to overcome in bridging the gap between the industrial and societal demand for educated and highly skilled and qualified technological workers lay in the educational system of both the developed and emerging markets of the world. Only in ensuring that each country's higher education system is capable of providing quality education to its student population which will deliver the type of graduates with the skills and knowledge to meet the demands of a growing technology-driven world will

provide the economic stability and growth for it to capture its share of the global market (Wadhwa et al., 2007).

Table 1

Young Professional, 2003 (Thousands).

	Engineers	Finance/ Accounting	Life sciences researchers	Analysts	
China	1,589	945	543	202	
United States	667	1615	852	175	
India	528	2273	674	537	
Russia	486	1082	108	107	◀ Emerging markets
Japan	317	702	180	55	
Phillippines	290	423	14	16	
Brazil	158	355	75	16	
U.K.	150	165	100	27	◀ Developed economies
Germany	128	137	31	26	
Mexico	115	319	23	8	
Poland	82	231	25	22	
Canada	81	150	89	18	
Malaysia	49	83	19	11	
Hungary	27	59	2	1	
Ireland	22	32	4	3	
Czech Republic	15	33	2	5	

Source: McKinsey Global Institute, The Emerging Global Labor Market: Part IIÑ The Supply of Offshore Talent in Services (June 2005)

The United States has long been considered one of the forerunners of new educational methods and technology and the U.S. government ensures that every American child has access to a quality education with the latest technological advantages of almost any other educational system in modern society. Over 75% of high school students graduate high school on schedule and 75% of those graduates continue to college (Henry, 2002). Yet one of the biggest challenges facing the U.S. educational system is that the number of students that drop out of high school and college continues to rise. In 2007, the percentage of high school graduates fell to 70% and the 2000 U.S.

Census revealed that one in every three Americans dropped out of college (Martindale, 2010). In recent years new challenges have created a lack of confidence in the U.S. educational system and this has affected the standing of the U.S. in the global economy. In short, our population is becoming stagnated in the number of degree earning adults, as fewer and fewer young people are entering or progressing through post-secondary education (Reindl, 2007). If this trend of the U.S. educational system is not corrected and reversed, it will cause the country to be unable to have the skilled workforce required to maintain international economic competitiveness and ensure the continuation of the high quality of life enjoyed by most Americans today.

The call is for educational institutes to enroll more academically talented students into crucial fields of engineering, applied natural science, agricultural science, and similar technological disciplines (Eckel & King, 2006). This is the tip of the iceberg. The educational skills needed by graduating high school seniors goes beyond the basic needs of reading, writing, and arithmetic, as many graduates still find themselves ill-equipped to compete in the 21st-century economy as too many lack the right skills to help their employers grow and succeed (ASTD, 2006).

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW SKILLS

There is a wide gap between the skills that businesses value and the skills most graduates actually have when they enter the workforce. Public education is the bedrock from which our national and individual prosperity rises and clearly we must make dramatic changes in our educational process as currently many young Americans are struggling to thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy. Today's and tomorrow's workplace will continue to demand new and different competencies as no

one works alone. Instead individuals must have the skills to work with teams that are global and virtual in nature. They will need to master knowledge in a real-world environment by thinking critically, analyzing information, comprehending new ideas, communicating, collaborating in teams, and solving problems. All in the context of modern life, these are the competencies of twenty-first century skills (Schwarz & Kay, 2006).

It should not be understated that students' academic readiness remains a key factor in college retention. Students who are well prepared for college coursework are more likely to stay in school, yet academic help alone is not enough to keep many students in school. Students also need individual support to feel connected to the campus community so as not to feel isolated or feel as if they do not "fit in". It is important for colleges to offer programs and services that integrate first-year students into the social fabric of the college community, so that they feel a part of campus life from the very start of their college experience (Martindale, 2010). There is more to preparing students to enter into a college level program in technology or engineering than is covered by national standards. Students must also possess "life or soft skills" in order to be successful at the post-secondary level (Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007).

Life or soft skills have been defined as personal characteristics such as: work ethics, positive attitude, social grace, facility with language, friendliness, integrity, and the willingness to learn (Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007). Strong indications show that today's employers seek soft skills such as a positive work ethic, a willingness to learn, a positive attitude, language proficiency, flexibility, self-discipline, and teamwork as valuable assets in college graduates (Coll & Zegwaard, 2006).

Today's competitive global market and changing work environment demand that every worker from engineers to human resource workers possess "soft skills" in addition to technical skills to have the ability to accomplish their assignment with available resources. Currently, engineers learn leadership and management skills while working and "learning soft skills the hard way". In order to meet the demands of this changing world, engineering programs are challenged to come up with innovative ways to teach classes so that graduates are prepared to take on the challenges twenty-first century engineers face (Kumar & Hsiao, 2007).

All technical training programs need to have more soft skills training integrated directly into curriculum to ensure their graduates will be more successful in our increasingly demanding global economy. While many skeptics may consider soft skills the intangibles, these skills are quickly becoming a requirement that drives tangible and measurable increases in personal productivity and directly translates to sustainable competitive advantage. All graduating high school and college seniors entering the workforce need life or soft skills to cope with the demands of this global marketplace.

THE VALUE OF LIFE SKILLS

There are many different definitions of life skills used by educators and businesses around the world, but universally there is no accepted definition for the term, as different organizations attach different meanings to it. UNICEF defines life skills as "a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills" (2007, p. 2). Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well-being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life (UNODC, 2003), while "soft skills" can be best defined as a

sociological term relating to a person's Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ) or the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people (Nicolaides, 2002). These two terms have been used interchangeably in research studies, articles, and other publications. They relatively have the same meaning and refer to the same concept of EI.

These skills were traditionally taught to children by their parents as the mother and father held their role in the family. Historically speaking, the head of household was male. Society has been socialized to expect men to be brave, industrious, and domineering. Women have been expected to be submissive, timid, and nurturing (Valletta, 1997). Typical male qualities were thought to be a better springboard for sound decision making and men became the power in the family. Yet the women were the homemakers and primary child care providers of the family unit. The child developed personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and learned how to form relationships with people through the skills they observed or were taught by their parents. It was a time of stay at home moms, and father's involvement in raising their young and families which remained together.

These days such traditional families especially in the United States are faded into memories only found in the Norman Rockwell paintings portraying those past days. Society is faced with an increasingly competitive economy that created an environment where parents are forced to spend longer hours at work and fewer hours with their children. Latch-key kids are responsible for their own safety, entertainment, and social development between the hours they are released from school until the first parent is

present at home. Single parent families and blended families are common in American society. One lives in an age where outside influences have greater access and influence over children than ever before. The internet and the media are bringing the outside world into our home and our children's peers, music, and movies excerpt more influences over them than their parents (Dunning, 2004).

Recent analyses concerning the status of American youth and families concluded that the United States is a nation at risk in regard to many social indicators (Nation et al., 2003). Today American schools are witnessing discernible levels of violence, bullying, dropout, and youth suicide. These negative behaviors have caused distress in student's emotional well-being and social adjustment, resulting in documented rising rates in childhood depression, emotion-related illnesses, and expression of fear and hopelessness (McCombs, 2004). Although rarely considered necessary components of education in the past, social and emotional skills may be critical for the basic knowledge inventory of all children (Greenberg, Kusche, & Riggs, 2004).

Emotional intelligence has been claimed to be directly predictive of student success as well as indirectly mediating success by protecting students from barriers to learning such as mental distress, substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and violence (Hawkins et al., 2004). In the past teaching of life skills was generally seen as the responsibility of the parent, but now this responsibility seems to have shifted largely to the school system. In building strong life skills parents and teachers can provide the valuable skills children need to cope in today's society (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009).

All families, regardless of income, education level, or cultural background, contribute to their children's success. When parents are involved and encourage learning with high expectations for the future, they are promoting attitudes that are keys to achievement. Students who feel that they have some control over their destiny, that they can earn an honorable place in society, that hard work will be recognized and rewarded, are students who do well in school. Although these attitudes are formed at home, they can be either strengthened or discouraged at school (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009).

School traditionally focused their energies and resources in promoting the development of student's cognitive skills and academic achievement. Schools generally do not systematically educate students in affective competencies, basic values, social skills, and moral reasoning across the school years. In not receiving this learning student are not given the crucial foundation and skills for becoming caring, empathic, responsible, and compassionate citizens in our modern society (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009).

Many educational institutes have recognized that social and emotional education is the "missing piece" in school life and should be included as part of the school's mission. The trend of bringing emotional literacy into schools makes emotions and social life themselves key topics for learning and discussion. Educators in favor of teaching "life skills" as part of school curriculum understand how it plays a critical role in improving children's academic motivation, learning, and achievement (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2009).

Several studies have been conducted on the influence of "life skills" on job performance, which is highlighted in Klaus's (2008) book, *The Hard Facts About Soft*

Skills - Workplace Lessons Smart People Wish They'd Learned Sooner. In it she illustrates the importance of these skills to today's worker. The finding of some of these studies included:

- A survey conducted by the Graduate Management Admission Council (2007) found that although MBA's were strong in analytical aptitude, quantitative expertise, and information-gathering ability, they were sorely lacking in other critical areas that employers find equally attractive: strategic thinking, written and oral communication, leadership, and adaptability.
- Indiana Business Research Center (IBRC) (2007) has found that while credentialing in the form of degrees and certificates is important, development of soft skills—skills that are more social than technical—will be a crucial part of fostering a dynamic workforce. Skills projected to be in the highest demand for all Indiana occupations through 2014 include active listening, critical thinking, speaking, active learning, writing, time management, and social perceptiveness.
- In America's Promise Alliance's *Every Child, Every Promise* (ECEP) (2006) report, economists Cunha and Nobel laureate Heckman say soft skills are just as essential to a young person's success as the more frequently cited academic indicators. Yet according to *Are They Ready to Work?* (2006), a report commissioned by leading organizations and associations representing the business sector, three-quarters of surveyed employers said that incoming high school graduates were deficient in soft skills. Additionally, 40% of employers said that the high school graduates they hire lack adequate soft skills competency for even entry-level job.

- The overwhelming majority (93%) of the HR managers surveyed said technical skills are easier to teach than soft skills. The most in demand soft skills cited by the managers are organizational skills (87%), verbal communication (81%), teamwork and collaboration (78%), problem solving (60%), tact and diplomacy (59%), business writing (48%), and analytical skills (45%) (IAAP, 2007). Also surveyed were International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) members, who were asked to report the soft skills areas in which they would like to improve. The areas they mentioned the most were analytical, verbal communication, negotiation, and problem-solving.

These studies show the need to add soft skills education to our secondary and post-secondary educational systems. It is a training need which must be addressed to ensure American students receive the skills they need to continue to be the best workers in the world.

The need to add "life or soft skills" to school curriculum is being addressed by many secondary school districts across the country in the form of teaching "employability skills". Employability skills are defined as "skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions" (ACCI, 2002, p. 3).

Employability skills are general in nature and cover a whole range of job experiences. Students may find mastering employability skills to be a challenging and confronting process, requiring intensive teacher and school input and explicit teaching, role modeling, and task planning. It requires teachers to devote time, curriculum

resources, and effort toward teaching employability skills as an important part of their careers, work education, or life learning program (Vize, 2010).

Employers are seeking stronger soft skills when evaluating a potential new employee. These are skills that can easily be included in lessons at every grade level. Teachers feeling overwhelmed by generalized testing brought on by NCLB and the emphasis being placed on increasing student standardized test scores are brought to yet another difficult task. But this is a task which must be faced and solutions must be presented as our nation faces the difficult road ahead of us in our changing 21st century world.

Many life skills are considered essential in today's competitive world market; each profession has its opinion on the desirable skills for their members (IAAP, 2007; Klaus, 2008). The increasing pluralism of America and the emergence of a global economy make diversity a central facet of work life. Employers value diversity as it pervades relationships between employees, helps to shapes the work environment, and affects the way a company interacts with customers, partners, and investors (MSU, 2005).

Many employers believe that critical thinking is the most essential skill for making sense of the world. In critical thinking skills one has the ability to gather the pertinent data and identify the important elements, then sort the relevant information as to what matters the most for the task at hand. The individual can evaluate the information to detect trends or patterns and making sense of disparate or conflicting information while recognizing the assumptions inherent in the data and then plan a consequential course of action (MSU, 2005). Using effective communication to relate ones thoughts to others and the ability to work in a team environment are all key competencies of life

skills which must be mastered by today's workers. The importance of each life skill is essentially equal to the competencies learned in traditional academic education; each skill helps to improve the others.

SUMMARY

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is "the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Cherry, 2010, p. 1). The scientific evidence found in different studies has given a view of the importance of EI and suggests that emotional and social skills actually help improve cognitive functioning.

Society is facing a changing global economical market with new expectations. The current trend of global productivity and expanding foreign markets is of great concern due to its possible effects on US employment opportunities. The nation must find ways of tackling the primary issues in bridging the gap between the industrial and societal demands for educated and highly skilled and qualified technological workers. The fact is that the U.S. has a stagnating number of degree earning adults as less young people are entering or progressing through post-secondary education.

There is a gap between the skills that businesses value and the skills most graduates actually have when they enter the workforce. Tomorrow's workplace will continue to demand new and different competencies as our nation transcend into the twenty-first century. Employers seek soft skills such as a positive work ethic, a willingness to learn, a positive attitude, language proficiency, flexibility, self-discipline, and teamwork as valuable assets in college graduates.

These are valuable life skills which were traditionally taught to children by their parents. Yet today's changing social dynamics of the American family has had a shortfall of these skills being passed on to the new generation. Recent studies have been conducted to determine the value of teaching life skills and expressing the need for more educational programs to incorporate life skills training into their curriculum. These studies provide the groundwork for this research to see if teaching life skills does affect student's preparedness for post-secondary education and/or employment.

Chapter III will discuss the methods and procedures used in conducting this study. Along with the methods and procedures, an overview of the population and statistical analysis will be reviewed.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The problem of this study is to determine the effects of teaching life skills in the preparation of students for post-secondary education and/or employment. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods and procedures utilized in gathering data to determine if and how teaching life skills at the secondary school level has any influence on the preparedness of students for post-secondary education and/or entry into the workforce. It describes the population associated with the study, the instruments used to conduct the study, the methods used to gather data, and how the data were analyzed.

POPULATION

In order to gain students' perspective of the value of learning life skills and gain a better understanding of how leaning this skill set may or may not add to their preparedness for post-secondary education or to enter the workforce, it was necessary to concentrate primarily on graduating seniors in the local Kitsap County school districts. In order to obtain the widest range of perspectives from the largest group of people associated with learning and developing life skills at the secondary school level, the student bodies used were those that attended West Sound Technical Center and South Kitsap High School. The students attending WST gave a good representation of senior students enrolled in one of the 25 high schools (including alternative schools) in the eight school districts surrounding Kitsap County, which include Bainbridge Island, Bremerton, North Kitsap, Central Kitsap, South Kitsap, North Mason, Peninsula, and Quilcene school districts. SKHS gives a good representation of a typical Kitsap region high school.

The population consisted of males and females and was racially diverse with the predominant ethnic groups being Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic. The population's economic backgrounds were mainly considered middle class and students ranged in age from 18 to 19 years old.

The population consisted of 114 graduating senior, of which 52 students were attending the Public Safety and Emergency Services, Engineering and Design Technology, Academy of Finance, and Hospitality Services programs at WST and 62 graduated from the class of 2010 from South Kitsap School District (SKSD) randomly selected by teaching staff or student volunteers to participate in this study.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

A survey was designed to gather information that would help determine the attitude people have toward development, value, and use of life skills. The instrument used in this study was a survey that utilized a Likert-scale as response choices. The instrument was designed to determine:

- How participant's understood and valued life skills in their lives.
- How students felt life skills contributed to their preparedness for entering either post secondary-education or the workforce.
- How students viewed their parent's influence on learning life skills.
- How students viewed their teacher's influence on learning life skills.
- How they viewed a good parent-teacher-school relation in learning life skills.

The survey consisted of a cover page and comprehensive two-page questionnaire that was designed to gather the desired information from each participant in a short period of time. The survey consisted of a set of 28 forced-choice questions where the

participant was asked to select from four choices that were answered on a scale from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree. All of the statement items were written to support the research questions and were designed on a Likert-scale.

Questions 2, 6, 7, 22, 25, 26, and 27 were designed to determine students' understanding and value of life skills as part of their educational growth, use, and importance in their personal growth. Questions 11, 12, 16, and 18 were designed to determine the influence parent's involvement contributes to student's development of life skills and preparedness of students to enter postsecondary education or the workforce. Questions 8, 10, 17, 19, and 20 were designed to determine the influence teachers contribute to student's development of life skills and preparedness of students to enter post-secondary education or the workforce. Questions 1, 13, 14, and 15 were designed to determine the effect the parent/school relationship contributes to student's life skills development and Questions 3, 4, 5, 9, 21, 24, and 28 were designed to determine how prepared the participant felt he or she was in entering the workforce or post-secondary education as a result of their life skills training as it related to the research goals.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The intent of the study was to determine if a relationship existed between learning life skills in an academic institution and this effect on preparing graduating seniors for success in post-secondary education or in the workforce. This relationship became of interest to the researcher during observation of teaching techniques and classroom control observations at the West Sound Technical Center. At WST all students are given a list of employability skills for their specified trade and are instructed to develop and abide with

these skills. Consequently the researcher chose this population as the focal point for data collection.

On June 7, 2010, a letter of introduction and the survey were delivered to two SKHS graduating senior volunteers and to key WST teaching staff members to seek out volunteer participants at SKHS and WST. The Letter of Introduction is attached as Appendix A and survey is included as Appendix B. Specific instructions on how to fill out the survey were given within the content of the cover letter of the survey.

A receptacle for deposit of the surveys was provided to both the WST Staff and SKHS Volunteers. The WST Staff and SKHS student volunteer were instructed to inform the participants to return the surveys to the receptacle as instructed in the cover letter and to have the survey receptacles ready for pick up by June 18, 2010.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data collected from the surveys were analyzed for the purpose of evaluating the effects of teaching life skills on graduating seniors. The researcher used the means of the forced choice questions Likert-scale results to:

- Identify patterns and trends in the students view and attitude of their understanding and value of life skills.
- Review the number and frequency of response answers to questions to further clarify the student's view and feeling of their preparedness for life after high school to enter the workforce or post-secondary education.
- Review the number and frequency of response answers to questions to further clarify the participant's feelings toward parent's influence on their learning life skills.

- Review the number and frequency of response answers to questions to further clarify the participant's feelings toward teacher's influence on their learning life skills.
- Identify the relationship between participant's life skills and parent-teachers-school.
- Determine if a relationship exists between teacher or parent influence on learning life skills and the preparedness felt by participants to enter post-secondary education or the workforce.

The two population's Likert scale means of each individual statement was analyzed as it related to the research goals of each population using a t-test. The survey data were further grouped together in like questions designed to measure the same related research goal. Using the combined Likert-scale value of the two groups' accumulated response to each statement, a t-test was used to analyze the data to determine if a differences of the data between the two groups existed. In addition, the sample means of accumulated response from each grouped concerning parent's/teacher's influence and preparedness were analyzed using a Pearson r test to determine if a relationship (correlation) existed between two sets of each populations data.

SUMMARY

The methods used to gather data for the study were selected to obtain the most accurate data possible and determine the effectiveness of life skills training to prepare graduating seniors for post-secondary educational programs or entry into the workforce. Surveys with a force answer Likert score questions were chosen as the method of collecting the data because of the nature of the environment and the people who were to

be surveyed. The survey consisted of a set of 28 forced-choice questions where the participant was asked to select from four choices that were answered on a scale from 1-strongly disagree to 4-strongly agree.

A wide range of participants were selected from two distinct populations. One group from a Kitsap County high school with traditional educational curriculum, and the second population from a trade specific or occupational study alternative high school located in the Kitsap County area which employed the teaching of "Employability Skills or Life Skills" as part of their curriculum of study. These groups were the target audience to be surveyed in order to gain a broad perspective of individual's attitudes and values of life skills as they may relate to their preparedness to enter post-secondary education or the workforce within the average student population in the Kitsap area.

This chapter describes the target population of this study, the instrument design, and type of data collected, and how data was used. The next chapter will describe in detail how the data was analyzed, the results of analysis, and the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The findings of this research study will be reported in this chapter. The problem of this study was to determine the effects of teaching life skills in the preparation of participants for post-secondary education and/or entry into the workforce. This was accomplished through the use of a survey.

This survey consisted of twenty-eight questions which were designed to be related to the four research goals. The survey utilized a forced answer, four point Likert scale answer system ranging from 1 - strongly disagree to 4 - strongly agree.

The study was accomplished using graduating seniors attending South Kitsap High School located in Port Orchard, Washington, and graduating seniors from various high schools in the Kitsap County area attending West Sound Technical Skill Center located in Bremerton, Washington. The data were analyzed using a t-test and compared to determine the difference between the groups as related to the research data. The details of this study are explained in the following sections of this chapter.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The survey target population was graduating seniors 18 years old and older, attending South Kitsap High School and West Sound Technical Skill Center. A total of 150 surveys were submitted and divided into two separate groups with seventy-five surveys sent to graduating student volunteers at South Kitsap High School and seventy-five surveys delivered to volunteer staff members of the West Sound Technical Skill Center. A total of 114 surveys were returned for an overall return rate of 76%. Of these, 52 surveys were returned from WST and 62 surveys were returned from SKHS. The

respondents in this study were diverse and generally represented the population of the typical high school districts in the surrounding Kitsap area. See Table 2 for an illustration of this data.

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents

Race, Gender and Age	White	African American	Other	Males	Females	18 yrs	19 yrs	>19 yrs
WST	36	5	11	39	13	40	8	4
SKHS	40	5	17	24	38	56	2	4
Total	76	10	28	63	51	96	10	8

The participating population was comprised of 55% males and 45% females. The age range of the participants was primarily 18 year of age, making up 84% of the target population, with the remaining 16% of the population being 19 years and older. The racial makeup of the population consisted of 67% white, 8% identified as African American, and 25% of the population represented other ethnic groups such as, Asian, Hispanic, and others ethic groups.

INDIVIDUAL QUESTION BREAKDOWN

The means for the study questions were determined utilizing a four-point Likert-scale of total responses given for each questions by the two separate groups. A value of 1 was applied to “Strongly Disagree, a value of 2 to “Disagree”, a value of 3 to “Agree” and a value of 4 to “Strongly Agree”. The total of each survey Likert-scale value was analyzed for the group’s means of each question and is presented in the following paragraphs.

Question 1 was designed to determine if the participants felt that their high school taught life skills as part of its normal curriculum. The means for this question were SKHS 2.5 and WST 3.31, which indicates that 83% of the students attending WST felt

that life skills were part of the school daily curriculum while 63% of those that attended SKHS felt that their high school had incorporated life skills as part of their daily school curriculum.

Question 2 was designed to determine level of understanding and value the participants place on using life skills to perform more effectively at work, school, and daily life. The means for this question were SKHS 3.16 and WST 3.35, indicating that a slightly larger majority of 84% of the WST population felt that life skills provided them with the ability to perform better at work, school, and in daily life. A good number of the population (79%) attending SKHS shared this same feelings.

Question 3 was designed to determine how the educational programs at their respective schools had prepared them to enter the workforce or post-secondary education. The means for this question were SKHS 2.58 and WST 3.42, which indicated that 21% more students attending WST (86%) felt better prepared to enter either the workforce or post-secondary education compared to 65% of population attending SKHS.

Question 4 was designed to determine how the participants felt about having the skills to cope with entering the workforce or post-secondary education. The means for this question were SKHS 2.87 and WST 3.10, which indicated that 6% more students attending WST felt better equipped to cope with life in the workforce or post-secondary education compared to 72% of the SKHS population.

Question 5 was designed to determine how confident the participants felt about having the ability to be a valuable contributing factor to an organization because of their education at their respective high schools. The means for this question were SKHS 2.71 and WST 3.13, which indicated that 10% more of the population attending WST (78%),

felt they possessed confidence in their abilities to be a valuable contributing member of an organization compared to 68% of the SKHS population.

Question 6 was designed to determine the value participants placed on life skills in preparing them to enter the workforce or post-secondary education. The means for this question were SKHS 2.85 and WST 2.87, which indicated that both groups felt equally the same on the value of life skills in their after high school preparedness.

Question 7 was designed to determine the participants' understanding of the value of life skills in preparing them to enter the workforce or post-secondary education. The means for this question were SKHS 2.87 and WST 3.08, which indicated that both groups equally understood the value of life skills in their after high school preparedness.

Question 8 was designed to determine how the participants felt their teacher at either SKHS or WST contributed to their development of life skills. The means for this question were SKHS 2.63 and WST 3.33. The means of this question indicated that 17% more of the WST (83%) population gave credit to their teachers at WST in contributing to their life skills development compared to 66% of the SKHS group.

Question 9 was designed to determine how the educational programs at their respective schools had prepared them to enter the workforce. The means for this question were SKHS 2.56 and WST 3.04, which indicated that 12% more students at WST had a greater favorable outlook toward the education program at their respective school, than the populations at SKHS (64%).

Question 10 was designed to determine how the participants felt about their high school's (SKHS or WST student's parent high school) contribution to their development of life skills. The means for this question were SKHS 2.63 and WST 2.79, which

indicated that both groups shared a similar view (WST 70% to SKHS 66%) on their parent high school contribution to their life skills development.

Question 11 was designed to determine how the participants felt about their parent's contribution to their development of life skills. The means for this question were SKHS 2.98 and WST 3.1. The means to this question indicated that both populations held similar beliefs that their parent's had considerable contributions to their life skills development.

Question 12 was designed to determine the participants' view on if their parent's involvement in their high school education had a positive contribution to their development of life skills. The means for this question were SKHS 2.84 and WST 3.21, which indicated that the 80% of the WST population felt their parents involvement contributed to their life skills development while a smaller majority 71% of the SKHS population shared a similar view.

Question 13 was designed to determine how the participants felt about the importance of a good parent-teacher-school relationship and its contribution to their development of life skills. The means for this question were SKHS 2.74 and WST 2.94, which indicated that both populations felt closely similar in the importance of a good parent-teacher-school relation in the development of their life skills.

Question 14 was designed to determine how the participants felt about the importance of a good parent-teacher-school relationship and its contribution to their overall academic development. The means for this question were SKHS 2.69 and WST 2.98. The means to this question indicated that there existed a slight difference in how

the two populations felt about the importance of a good parent-teacher-school relation in their overall academic development.

Question 15 was designed to determine how participant's views on how well their high school had contributed to their life skills development. The means for this question were SKHS 2.69 and WST 3.12. The means to this question indicated that 78% of the WST population felt that WST had contributed more significantly to their life skills development compared to 67% of those attending SKHS.

Question 16 was designed to determine if participants felt their parents and upbringing had been the main contributor to their life skills development. The means for this question were SKHS 3.13 and WST 3.15. The means to this question indicated that both populations equally felt that parents had been the main contributor to their development of life skills.

Question 17 was designed to determine how participants felt their teachers had contributed to their life skills development. The means for this question were SKHS 2.60 and WST 2.87, which indicated that 72% of the WST students credited their teachers in contributing to their life skill development compared to 65% of students attending SKHS.

Question 18 was designed to determine how participants felt their parents had prepared them to work well with others. The means for this question were SKHS 2.87 and WST 3.19, which indicated that 80% of the WST population believed that their parents had prepared them to work well with others while 72% those attending SKHS gave their parents the same credit.

Question 19 was designed to determine how participants felt their high school (SKHS or WST) had prepared them to handle changes in their routine and adapt to new

demands at school and at work. The means for this question were SKHS 2.76 and WST 3.29. The means to this question indicated that 12% more of the WST population (82%) felt that WST had provided them with the skills to handle change and adapt to new demands at school or in the work place while 70% of the population attending SKHS felt they possessed similar skills.

Question 20 was designed to determine how participants felt their high school (SKHS or WST) had prepared them to work well with others. The means for this question were SKHS 2.87 and WST 3.23. The means to this question indicated that 81% of the WST population believed that WST had prepared them to work well with others while 72% of the SKHS population felt that their respective high school had prepared them to accomplish the same.

Question 21 was designed to determine how participants felt their high school (SKHS or WST) had improved their ability to understand their teacher's and employer's expectations. The means for this question were SKHS 2.81 and WST 3.1, which indicated that 8% more of the WST population felt they had an understanding of what teachers and employers expected from them than those attending SKHS.

Question 22 was designed to determine how participants valued life skills compared to academic skills. The means for this question were SKHS 3.15 and WST 3.29. The means to this question indicated that 81% of the WST population and 79% of the SKHS population shared similar beliefs that life skills were equally important to learn as academic skills.

Question 23 was designed to determine how participants felt their parent high school had provided life skills training. The means for this question were SKHS 2.44

and WST 2.52. The means to this question indicated 61% of the SKHS populations and 63% of those attending WST felt that their parent high school had provided them with life skills training.

Question 24 was designed to determine how the educational programs at their respective schools had prepared them to enter into post-secondary education. The mean for this question were SKHS 2.69 and WST 2.98, which indicated that 75% of those attending WST felt better prepared to enter post-secondary education compared to 67% of the graduates who attended SKHS.

Question 25 was designed to determine how participants viewed their need to improve their life skills. The means for this question were SKHS 2.56 and WST 2.73, which indicated that a small majority from both high schools, 64% attending SKHS and 68% attending WST, felt that they did not need to work at improving their current life skills.

Question 26 was designed to determine how participants valued the need to improve their life skills (reverse scoring question). The means for this question were SKHS 2.95 and WST 2.73, while the results remained constant to Question 25, at 68% for the WST population, the group at SKHS raised to 75%. This indicated that a great majority of those who attended SKHS placed greater value at working to improve their current life skills than those attending WST.

Question 27 was designed to determine how participants viewed the importance of teaching life skills compared to academic study. The means for this question were SKHS 2.87 and WST 2.88, which indicated that both groups feel that it was equally important to teach life skills as it was to teach academic study.

Question 28 was designed to determine how prepared the participants felt they were to enter either college or the workforce with the skills they currently possessed. The means for this question were SKHS 2.82 and WST 3.23, which indicated that 10% more of the population attending WST felt they were prepared to enter either college or the workforce compared to those attending SKHS.

REVIEW OF OVERALL RESULTS

The overall means for the study questions were determined utilizing the four-point Likert-scale of total responses of the two separate groups. The total of each survey Likert-scale value was analyzed for the groups' means of each question. The means from total question per population was analyzed to determine the difference in response of the two groups. See Table 3 for individual questions Likert scale score results.

Table 3

Individual Questions Likert Scale Scores

Question No.	SKHS	WST		Question No.	SKHS	WST	
1	2.5	3.31		15	2.69	3.12	
2	3.16	3.35		16	3.13	3.15	
3	2.58	3.42		17	2.6	2.87	
4	2.87	3.1		18	2.87	3.19	
5	2.71	3.13		19	2.76	3.29	
6	2.85	2.87		20	2.87	3.23	
7	2.87	3.08		21	2.81	3.1	
8	2.63	3.33		22	3.15	3.29	
9	2.56	3.04		23	2.44	2.52	
10	2.63	2.79		24	2.69	2.98	
11	2.98	3.1		25	2.56	2.73	
12	2.84	3.21		26	2.95	2.73	
13	2.74	2.94		27	2.87	2.88	
14	2.69	2.98		28	2.82	3.23	

The overall results were SKHS means 2.78, SD 0.189, WST means 3.06, SD 0.225, df 54. The t-test results $t = 5.082$, $P < 0.001$, indicate an extremely statisically significant difference exists between the two groups at the p=0.01 level. See Figure 1 for a visual represenation of this data.

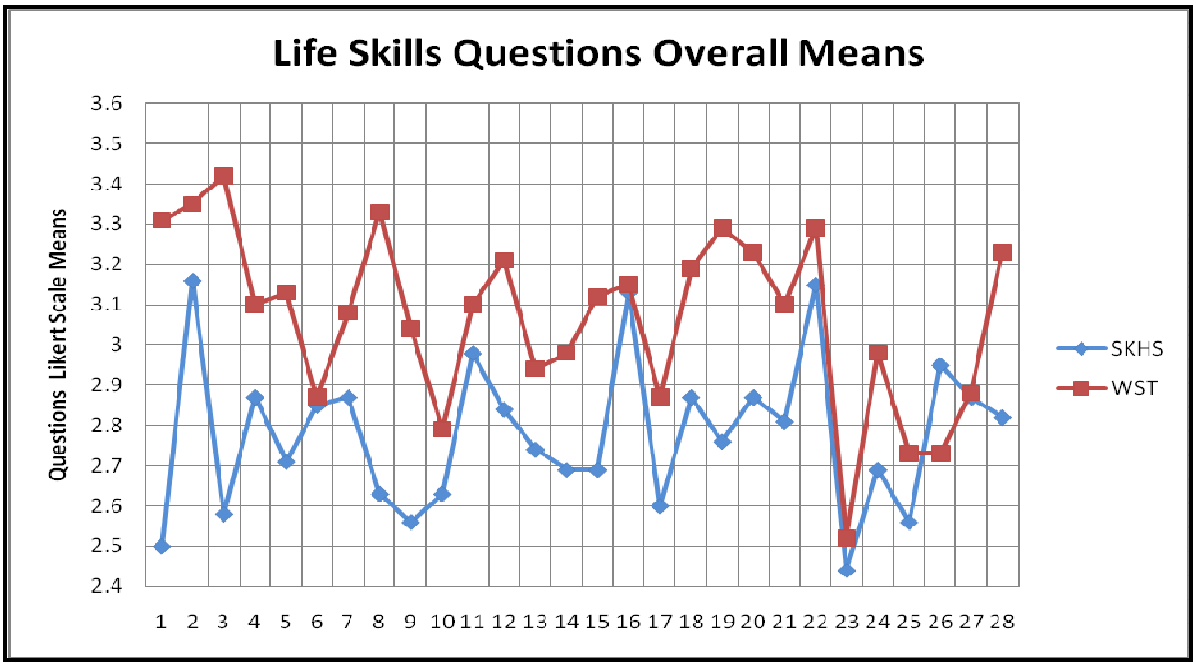

Figure 1. Life Skills Survey Questions Overall Means

UNDERSTANDING AND VALUE OF LIFE SKILLS ANALYSIS

Questions 2, 6, 7, 22, 25, 26, and 27 were designed to determine level of understanding and value the participants placed on learning and using life skills. The means for each question by group is listed on Table 4 and a visual representation of this data can be viewed on Figure 2.

Table 4

Understanding and Value of Life Skills Questions Likert Scale Means

Question	**S2**	**S6**	**S7**	**S22**	**S25**	**S26**	**S27**
SKHS	3.16	2.85	2.87	3.15	2.56	2.95	2.87
WST	3.35	2.87	3.08	3.29	2.73	2.73	2.88

A t-test was used to determine the difference between the two groups. The results were: SKHS means 2.92, SD 0.204 and WST means 2.99, SD 0.255, df 12. The t-test results were, t=0.602, p=0.559, which are not considered statistically significant.

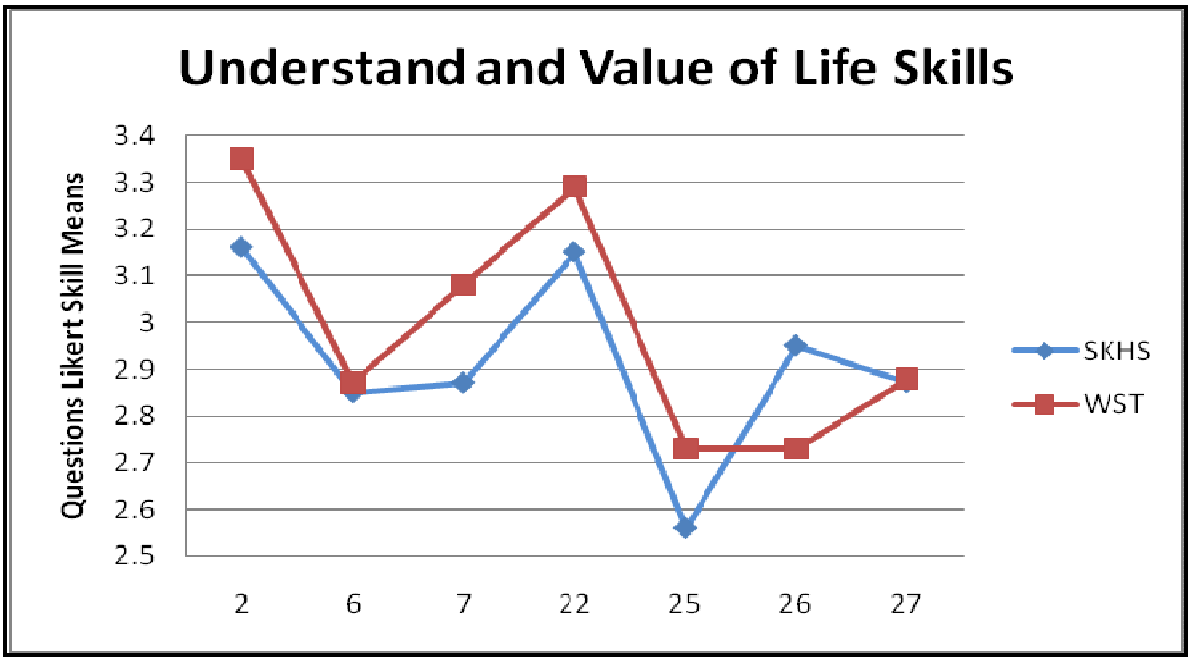

Figure 2. Understanding and Value of Life Skills

ANALYSIS OF PARENT'S INFLUENCE ON LEARNING LIFE SKILLS

Questions 11, 12, 16, and 18 were designed to determine level participants gave credit to their parental figures in their learning life skills. The means for each question is listed on Table 5 and a visual representation of this data can be viewed on Figure 3.

Table 5

Parent's Influence on Life Skills Questions Likert Scale Means

Question	**S11**	**S12**	**S16**	**S18**
SKHS	2.98	2.84	3.13	2.87
WST	3.1	3.21	3.15	3.19

A t-test was used to determine the differences between the two groups. The results were: SKHS means 2.96, SD 0.131 and WST means 3.16, SD 0.048, df 6. T-test

results were, t=2.965, p=0.025, which are considered statistically significant at the p=0.05 level.

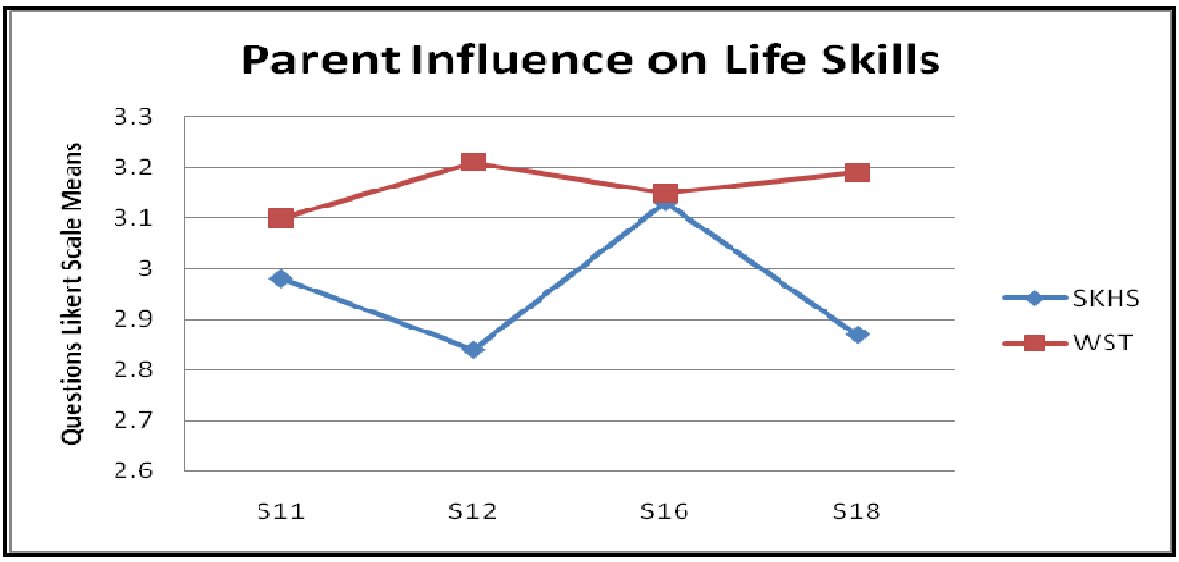

Figure 3. Parent Influence on Life Skills

ANALYSIS OF TEACHER'S INFLUENCE ON LEARNING LIFE SKILLS

Questions 8, 10, 17, 19, 20, and 23 were designed to determine the level that participants gave credit to their teachers in their learning life skills. The means for each question by group is listed on Table 6 and a visual representation of this data can be viewed on Figure 4.

Table 6

Teacher's Influence on Life Skills Questions Likert Scale Means

Question	**S8**	**S10**	**S17**	**S19**	**S20**	**S23**
SKHS	3.63	2.63	2.6	2.76	2.87	2.44
WST	3.33	2.79	2.87	3.29	3.23	2.52

A t-test was used to determine the differences between the two groups. The results were: SKHS means 2.65, SD 0.149 and WST means 3.01, SD 0.328, df 10. T-test results were, t = +2.3872, p=0.038. The results are considered to be statistically significant at the p=0.05 level.

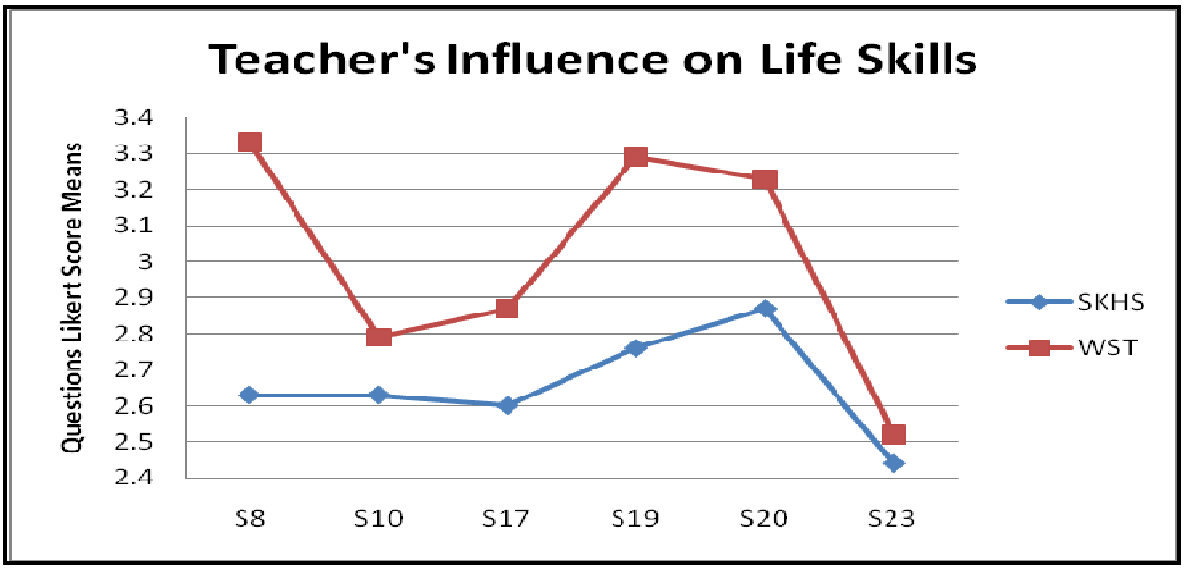

Figure 4. Teacher's Influence on Life Skills

PARENT-TEACHER-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

INFLUENCE ON LIFE SKILLS

Questions 1, 13, 14, and 15 were designed to determine the level of value participants placed on a good parent-teacher-school relationship in learning life skills. The means for each question by group is listed on Table 7 and a visual representation of this data can be viewed on Figure 5.

Table 7

Parent's –Teacher-School Relaitonship Influence on Life Skills Questions Likert Scale Means

Question	**S1**	**S13**	**S14**	**S15**
SKHS	2.5	2.74	2.69	2.69
WST	3.31	2.94	2.98	3.12

A t-test was used to determine the differences between the two groups. The results were: SKHS means 2.66, SD 0.0106 and WST means 3.08, SD 0.017, df 6. T-test results were, t=+4.369, and p=0.0047. The results are considered to be statistically significant at the p=0.01 level.

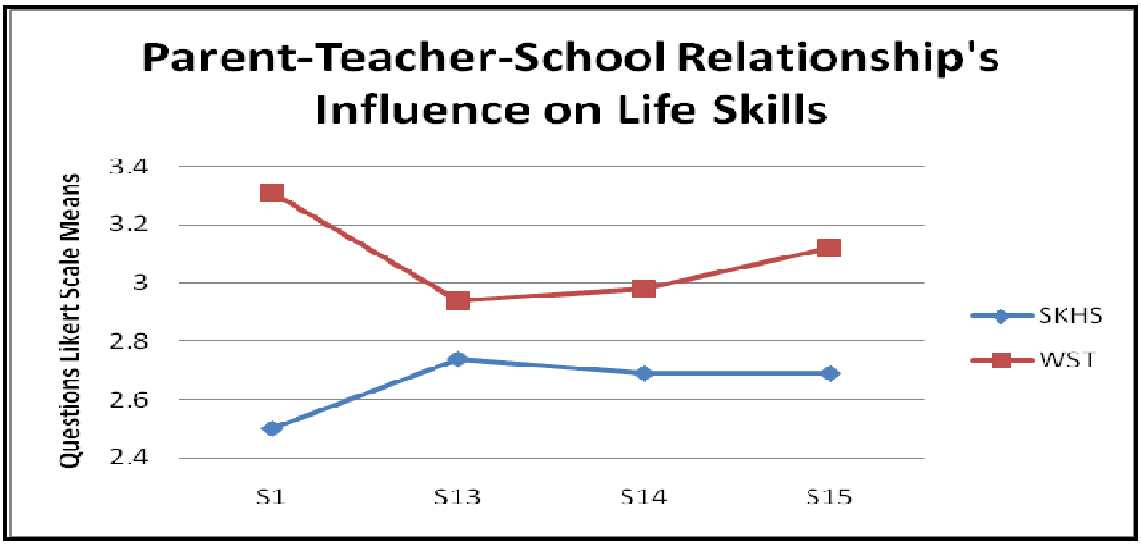

Figure 5. Partent-Teacher-School Relationship Influence on Life Skills

PREPAREDNESS OF PARTICIPANTS

Questions 3, 4, 5, 9, 21, 24, and 28 were designed to determine how prepared the participants felt in entering the workforce or post-secondary education as a result of their life skills training. The means for each question by group is listed on Table 8 and a visual representation of this data can be viewed on Figure 4.

Table 8

Preparedness of particapants Life Skills Questions Likert Scale Means

Question	**S3**	**S4**	**S5**	**S9**	**S21**	**S24**	**S28**
SKHS	2.58	2.87	2.71	2.56	2.81	2.69	2.82
WST	3.42	3.1	3.13	3.04	3.1	2.98	3.23

A t-test was used to determine the differences between the two groups. The results were: SKHS means 2.72, SD 0.12 and WST means 3.14, SD 0.014, df 12. T-test results were, t=+5.95, and p<0.0001. The results are considered to be extremely statistically significant at the p=0.001 level.

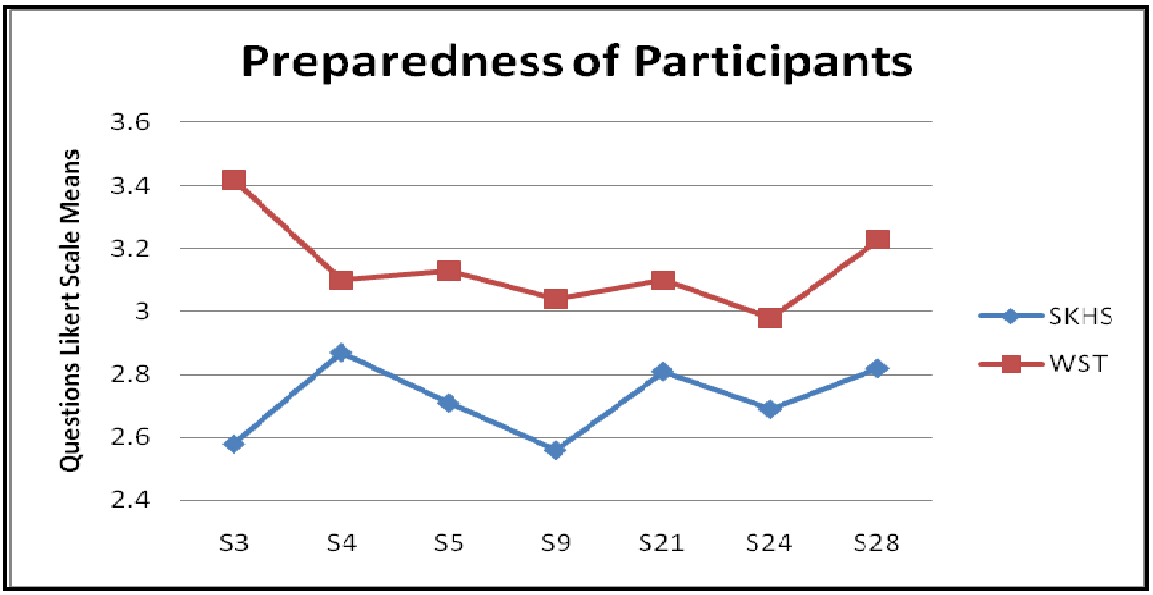

Figure 6. Preparedness of Participants

SKHS TEACHER'S INFLUENCE ON PARTICIPANT'S PREPAREDNESS

A comparison of Questions 8, 10, 17, 19, 20, and 23 which were designed to determine the level of teacher's influence on participant's learning life skills and Questions 3, 4, 5, 9, 21, and 24 which were designed to determine how prepared the participants felt they were to enter the workforce or post-secondary education was conducted to determine if a relationship exists between the two sets of data.

The means for each question for the SKHS population on teacher's influence and student's preparedness is listed on Table 9 and a visual representation of this data can be viewed on Figure 7.

Table 9

SKHS Teacher's Influence and Preparedness Questions Likert Scale Means

Question	**S8**	**S10**	**S17**	**S19**	**S20**	**S23**
Teacher's Influence	3.63	2.63	2.6	2.76	2.87	2.44
Question	**S3**	**S9**	**S4**	**S5**	**S21**	**S24**
Preparedness	2.58	2.56	2.87	2.71	2.81	2.69

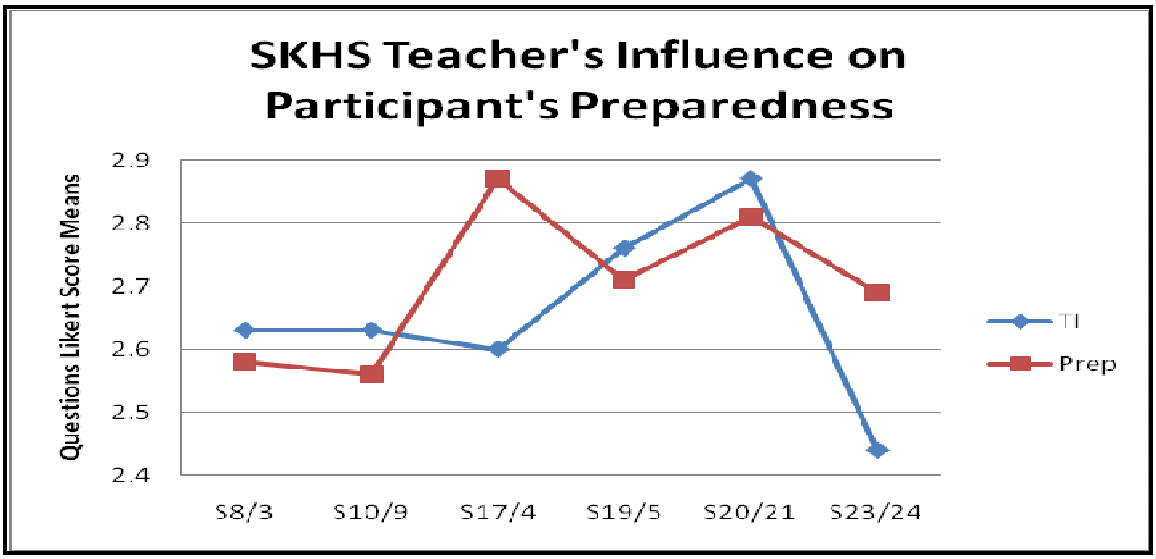

Figure 7. SKHS Teacher's Influence on Participant's Preparedness

A Pearson r test was used to determine if correlation or a relationship existed between the two sets of data from the SKHS population. The results were: SKHS preparedness means 2.70, SD 0.0125 and SKHS Teacher's Influence means 2.66, SD 0.018, df 4. The Pearson r test results were $r(4)=+0.267$, $p>0.05$. The results are considered not to be statistically significant.

WST TEACHER'S INFLUENCE ON PARTICIPANT'S PREPAREDNESS

A comparison of Questions 8, 10, 17, 19, 20, and 23 which were designed to measure teacher's influence on learning life skills and Questions 3, 9, 4, 5, 21, and 24 which were designed to measure the participant's preparedness to enter the workforce or post-secondary education was conducted to determine if a relationship exists between the two sets of data.

The means for WST population teacher's influence questions and means for participant's preparedness questions are listed on Table 10. A visual representation of the teacher's influence and participant's preparedness data can be viewed on Figure 8.

Table 10 *WST Teacher's Influence and Preparedness Questions Likert Scale Means*						
Question	**S8**	**S10**	**S17**	**S19**	**S20**	**S23**
Teacher's Influence	3.33	2.79	2.87	3.29	3.23	2.52
Question	**S3**	**S9**	**S4**	**S5**	**S21**	**S24**
Preparedness	3.42	3.04	3.1	3.13	3.1	2.98

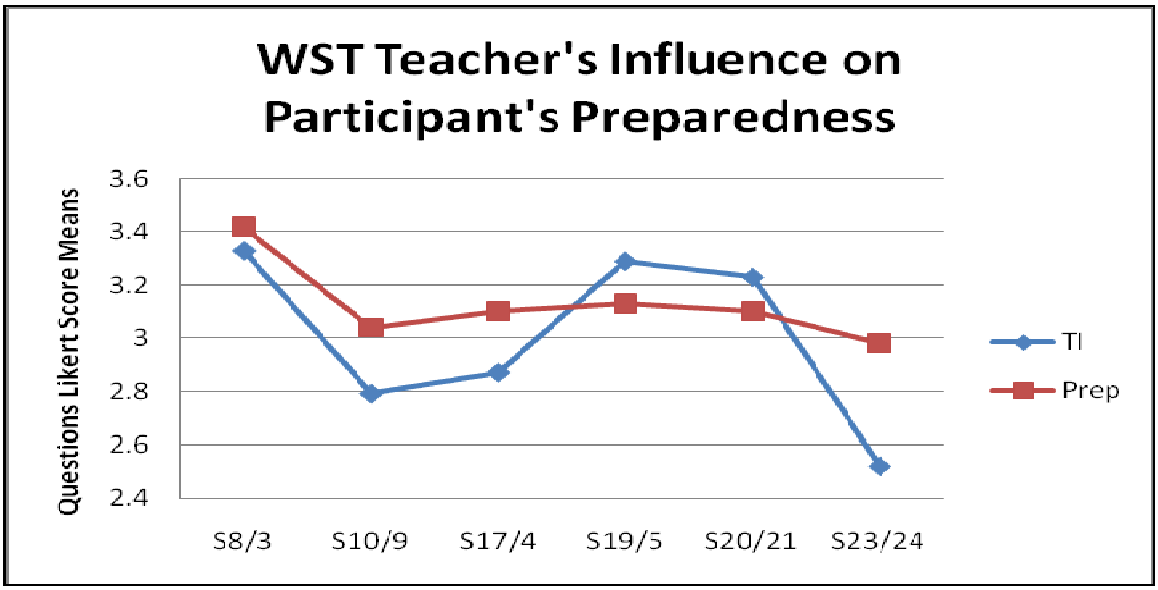

Figure 8. WST Teacher's Influence on Participant's Preparedness

A Pearson r test was used to determine if correlation or a relationship existed between the two sets of data from the WST population. The results were: WST preparedness means 3.13, SD 0.139 and WST teacher's influence means 3.0, SD 0.090, df 4. The Pearson r test results were $r(4) = +0.734$, $p<0.05$. The results are considered to be highly statistically significant.

SKHS PARENT'S INFLUENCE ON PARTICIPANT'S PREPAREDNESS

A comparison of Questions 11, 12,13, 14,16, and 18 which were designed to determine parent's influence on teaching life skills to the participants and Questions 4, 5,

9, 21, 24 and 28 which were designed to determine how prepared the participants felt they were to enter post-secondary education or the workforce were conducted to determine if a relationship existed between the two sets of data from the SKHS population.

The means for each set of questions for the SKHS population is listed on Table 11. A visual representation of the data can be viewed on Figure 9.

Table 11

SKHS Parent's Influence and Preparedness Questions Likert Scale Means

Question	**S11**	**S12**	**S13**	**S14**	**S16**	**S18**
Parent's Influence	2.98	2.84	2.74	2.69	3.13	2.87
Question	**S4**	**S5**	**S9**	**S24**	**S21**	**S28**
Preparedness	2.87	2.71	2.56	2.69	3.1	3.23

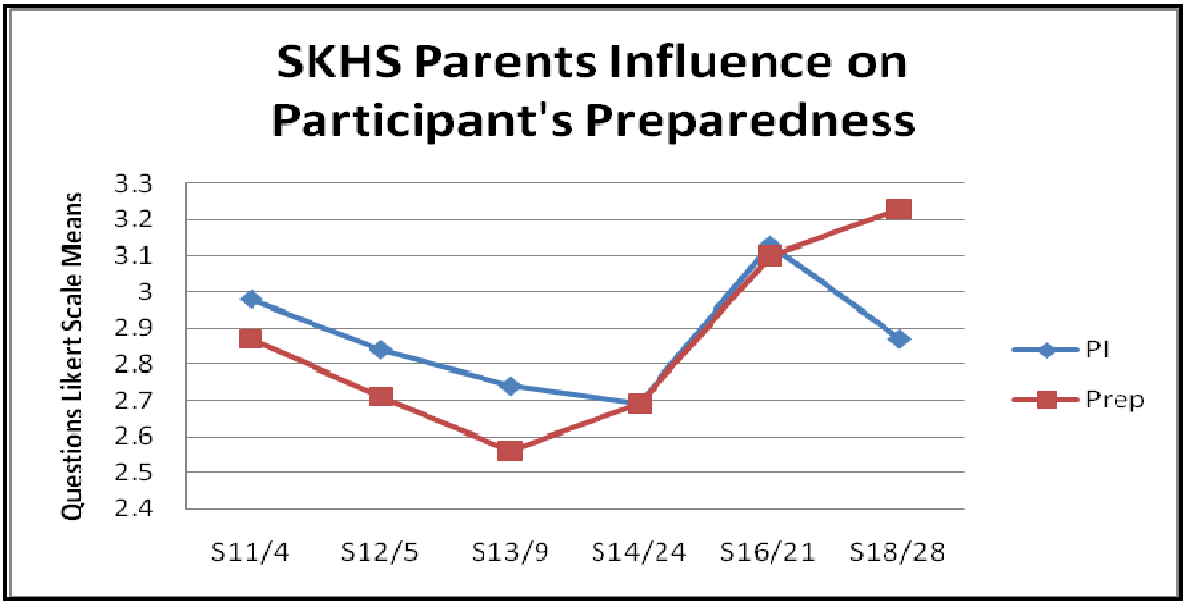

Figure 9. SKHS Parent's Influence on Participant's Preparedness

A Pearson r test was used to determine if correlation or a relationship existed between the two sets of data from the SKHS population. The results for the Pearson r test for these questions were SKHS Parents Influence means 2.88, SD 0.0217, and Preparedness

means 2.86, SD 0.056, df 4. The results of the Pearson r test were r(4)= +0.659, p >0.05. The results are considered not to be statistically significant.

WST PARENT'S INFLUENCE ON PARTICIPANT'S PREPAREDNESS

A comparison of Questions 11, 12,13, 14,16, and 18 which were designed to determine parent's influence on teaching life skills to the participants and Questions 4, 5, 9, 21, 24 and 28 which were designed to determine how prepared the participants felt they were to enter post-secondary education or the workforce were conducted to determine if a relationship existed between the two sets of data from the WST population.

The means for each set of questions for the WST population is listed on Table 12. A visual representation of the data means can be viewed on Figure 10.

Table 12

WST Parent's Influence and Preparedness Questions Likert Scale Means

Question	**S11**	**S12**	**S13**	**S14**	**S16**	**S18**
Parent's Influence	3.1	3.21	2.94	2.98	3.15	3.19
Question	**S4**	**S5**	**S9**	**S24**	**S21**	**S28**
Preparedness	3.1	3.13	3.04	2.98	3.1	3.23

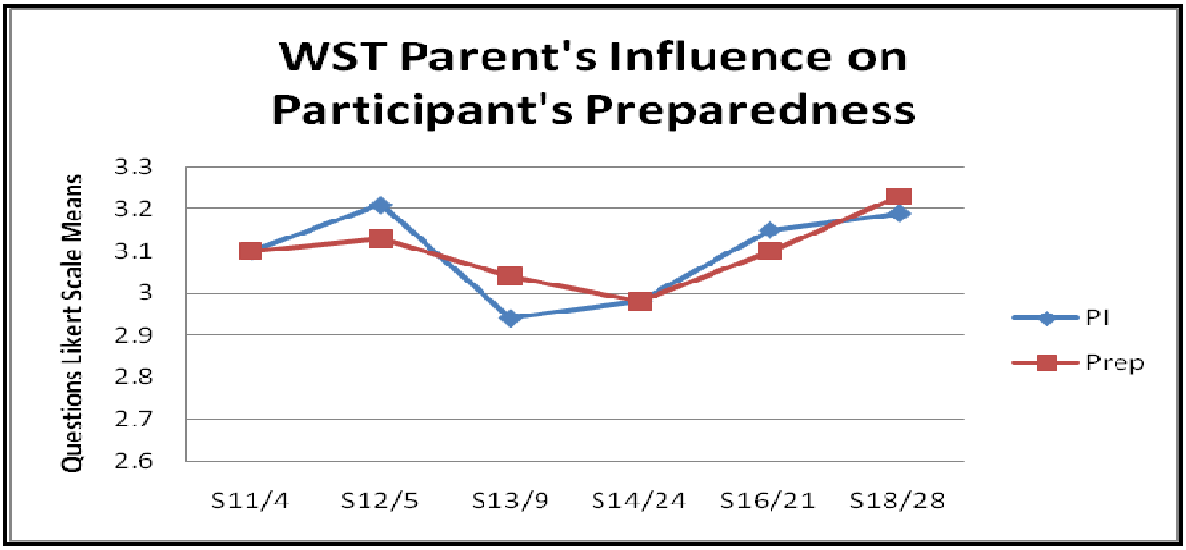

Figure 10. WST Parent's Influence on Participant's Preparedness

A Pearson r test was used to determine if correlation or a relationship existed between the two sets of data from the WST population. The results for the Pearson r test for these questions were Parents Influence means 3.1, SD 0.010, and Preparedness means 3.1, SD 0.006, df4. The results of the Pearson r test were $r(4)=+0.823$, $p < .01$. The results are considered to be highly statistically significant.

SUMMARY

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected from graduating senior attending South Kitsap High School and West Sound Technical Skill Center. The survey responses were segregated into two populations. A Likert-scale was used as the instrument to record responses to survey questions. Each group's responses were analyzed using frequency of responses and means. The individual question responses from the two groups were compared and differences noted. The researcher combined questions designed to determine the same research goals and reviewed the data as it applied to the research goals. A t-test was used to determine the significant difference where appropriate. Four sets of data from each population were analyzed to determine if a relationship (correlation) existed between teacher/parent's influence and participant's preparedness as it relates to the research goals. In Chapter V, the finding will be given meaningful conclusions based on the research goals and recommendations will be made for future studies.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

The problem of this study was to determine the relationship of teaching life skills at the secondary school level toward the attitude of preparedness of graduating high school seniors to enter the workforce and/or post-secondary education. The researcher attempted to analyze the data by groups consisting of all participants attending WST and SKHS and the four research goals.

The researcher attempted to determine participants' understanding and value of the importance of development of their life skills. Secondly, the researcher attempted to determine the influence parent's involvement had on student's development of life skills and how they may have contributed to participant's preparedness to enter post-secondary education or the workforce. Thirdly, the researcher attempted to determine the influence teacher's involvement has on participants in the development of life skills and how their influence may have contributed to participant's preparedness to enter post-secondary education or the workforce. Finally, the researcher attempted to determine what factor a good parent-teacher-school relationship has on the development of student's life skills.

The study was driven by the desire to gain understanding as to what the graduating seniors believed to be the importance of life skills in their post high school success and if they felt that they were prepared to enter post-secondary education or the workforce. It has been the researcher's personal observation in working with and attending college courses with newly graduated high school students that many of them lacked the life skills to deal with the issues which confront individuals during their daily routine at work or while attending secondary education. Skills such as effective

communication, teamwork, problem solving, and critical thinking are key life skills important for success at both post-secondary education and in today's workforce. These skills are lacking in many of the young graduates transitioning from high school into adult learning institutions and the workplace. Traditionally, life skills were taught to children from parents and extended family, but have since fallen to the sidelines. With the changing dynamics of modern families, the upbringing of more children is being entrusted to daycare facilities or to electronic babysitter (e.g., television). The task of learning life skills has become a training gap in America's educational process. In recent time, many educational institutions such as high schools have understood this gap in a child's social and academic development and have implemented programs to provide training in these skills. West Sound Technical Skill Center is one such facility which has incorporated teaching "employability skills" or life skills as part of it daily curriculum.

Summary

In conducting this study, the researcher hoped to determine if participants who attend an educational facility which promotes the teaching of life skills are provided with the sense of being better prepared for life after high school in post-secondary education or in the workforce than those participants who attend a typical high school. In better understanding student's attitudes toward learning and using life skills, the researcher hoped to grasp the importance of such training in today's educational world.

The target population of this study was two groups of graduating seniors (age 18 and older) from the local area school system. One group attended West Sound Technical Skill Center (WST) as part of their parent high school vocational curriculum program. This group consisted of graduating seniors which attended one of the 25 high schools

(including alternative schools) in the eight school districts surrounding Kitsap County, which include Bainbridge Island, Bremerton, North Kitsap, Central Kitsap, South Kitsap, North Mason, Peninsula, and Quilcene school districts. The second group of graduating seniors was from South Kitsap High School (SKHS), which is a typical representation of one of the 25 area high schools.

A twenty-eight Likert-scaled question survey was used to gather data. A Likert-scale was used to respond to the questions. The survey addressed the graduating student's attitudes toward understanding and value placed on life skills; the influence parents and teachers played in participant's learning life skills. The participant's feeling of preparedness to enter the workforce or post-secondary education and the importance of having parents involved with teachers and school in the development of life skills were sought.

One hundred-fifty surveys were distributed between the two populations. Seventy-five of the surveys were provided to teaching staff volunteers at WST and the other seventy-five were provided to two graduating senior volunteers from SKHS who distributed them to graduating seniors at SKHS. A total of one hundred-fourteen members of the Kitsap County region graduating class of 2010, representatives of 76% of the surveyed population, participated in this study.

The Likert-scale score for each question was calculated for each group. The survey question values were individually analyzed to compare the responses of both groups. Like questions designed to measure the same research goal were grouped together and compared between the two target populations. Using a t-test, the means of

responses provided was compared and statistical significance was determined for each question and grouping.

The questions designed to determine participant's view on preparedness and teacher's influence as well as the question's design to determine participant's preparedness and parent's influence where analyzed to determine if significant relationship existed between the two groups responses. A Pearson r test was used to determine if a relationship existed between the four sets of data points gathered from the two independent populations. The means of responses provided for each question were compared to determine their relevance to the overall statistical significance. The data from each group was analyzed and compared against the WST and the SKHS population for differences and relationships.

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher attempted to determine the relationship between graduating student's sense of preparedness to enter post-secondary education or the work force and life skill training at the high school level. There were four basic goals that guided the study.

Research Objective 1 - Determine student's understanding and value of life skills as part of their educational growth. The survey questions were designed to ask the various important aspects of life skills on the student educational process. Cumulated results means of SKHS 2.92 and WST 2.99, suggest that the participants shared an equal belief that having good life skills was an important and valuable asset to have and/or acquire. The analyzed data from the surveys t-test of t=0.602 is not considered statistically significant. The data show that no statistically significant difference between

the two groups understanding and value of life skills, indicating that both groups shared the same belief in the value of having life skills.

Research Objective 2 - Determine the influence parent's involvement contributes to student's development of life skills and preparedness of student to enter post-secondary education or the workforce. The cumulated data results means of 2.96 for the SKHS and 3.16 for the WST groups suggest that both populations felt that their parent's involvement was key in their development of life skills. The analyzed data from the surveys t-test results of t=2.965 is considered statistically significant at the p=0.05 level. The results shows that a statistically significant difference between the influence of parent's involvement in student's development of life skills. The results indicate that the WST population felt they had received greater influence from their parental figures in the development of life skills than those attending SKHS and in turned felt better prepared for life after high school.

Research Objective 3 - Determine the influence teachers contribute to student's development of life skills and preparedness of student to enter post-secondary education or the workforce. The cumulated data results means of 3.01 for the WST group compared to the means of 2.65 of the SKHS group suggests that a relatively larger number of the WST students believed that their teachers had significant influence on their development of life skills. The analyzed data from the surveys t-test of t=2.387 is considered statistically significant at the p=0.05 level. The results shows that there is a significant statistically difference between the two groups. The data indicate that WST graduates gave their teachers more credit in contributing to their feeling of preparedness to enter either post-secondary education or the workforce than those attending SKHS.

Research Objective 4 - Determine the effect the parent/teacher/school relationship contributes to student's life skills development. The cumulated data results means of WST 3.08 and SKHS 2.66 suggests most of the WST students believed that having a good parent-teachers-school relationship has had a positive influence on them developing life skills. The analyzed data from the surveys t-test of t=4.369 is considered statistically significant at the p=0.01 level. The results shows that a statistically significant difference between the two population exist. The data indicate that WST senior believe that having a good parent/teacher/school relationship has contributed to their development of life skills.

For Research Objective 2 and 3, a second set of questions designed to measure the sense of preparedness of the populations for entering post-secondary education and/or the workforce was also used. Cumulated results means of SKHS 2.72 and WST 3.14, suggest that the participants from WST believed they felt they were better prepared to enter post-secondary education and or the workforce than their peers from SKHS. The analyzed data from the surveys t-test of $p<0.0001$ is considered extremely significant difference between the WST student's attitudes toward feeling prepared as it relates to their life skills development. The data indicate that the WST graduates had more confidence in their abilities to success in either the workforce or post-secondary education than those who attend SKHS.

A comparison of teacher's and parent's influence questions to a set of questions designed to determine participant's feelings of preparedness to enter post-secondary education and/or the workforce as described in the previously stated Research Goals 2

and 3 was conducted to deduce if a relationship existed between the sets of data from each population.

In regard to Research Objective 2, the analyzed data from the surveys showed SKHS parent's influence means of 2.88 and preparedness means 2.86 with a Pearson r test results of $r = +0.659$, which is not considered statistically significant. These results suggest that there was no correlation or relationship between SKHS parent's influence and the feeling of preparedness of the SKHS population.

The analyzed data from the surveys showed that the WST population cumulated data results means for parent's influence was 3.10 and preparedness means was 3.10. The Pearson r test results were $r = +0.823$. This result is considered statistically significant at the $p=0.01$ level, which suggests that there exists a very significant positive relationship between parent's influence and the WTS population's feeling of preparedness. The results indicate that the WST parent's influence did contribute to student's feelings of preparedness for post-secondary education or entering into the workforce.

In analysis Research Objective 3, the data from the surveys showed cumulated results of the SKHS teacher's influence means of 2.66 and preparedness means of 2.70 with a Pearson r test results of $r = +0.267$, which is not considered statistically significant. Once again the results showed that no correlation or relationship exists between the SKHS teacher's influence and the feeling of preparedness of the SKHS population.

In evaluating the WST population, the analyzed data from the surveys showed that cumulated results was WST parent's influence means of 3.13 and preparedness

means of 3.0, with a Pearson r test results of r = +0.734. This result is considered statistically significant at the p=0.05 level. These results suggest that there is a significant positive relationship between WST teacher's influence and the WST population's feeling of preparedness.

WST has long incorporated the teaching of life skills into its curriculum and the teaching staff actively employs teaching life skills as part of their daily class course of instruction. The results reflect the positive influence which this curriculum has played in the student's perspective of preparedness to enter life following high school. The cooperation between teachers and parents is another vital element which is key to the development of effective life skills by these graduates. Parent's involvement and participation is both encouraged and demanded by the WST teaching staff. WST is not a traditional high school but an alternative high school based on teaching the vocational skills. The school utilizes teaching employability skills which its students require to become fully functional adult members of our present society.

The respondents overall indication was that the WST population responded positively more often to questions related to all aspects of understanding, valuing, learning and using life skills than those attending SKHS. The WST population indicated that they possessed a higher level of preparedness to enter the workforce or post-secondary education than the SKHS population.

In conclusion to the research goal of determining whether life skills training may influence the preparedness of graduating high school students entering post-secondary education and/or the workforce, the statement was proven true. The finding of the analysis data collected and the statistical test results clearly supports the claim that

teaching life skills at the secondary school level greatly influences the attitude of being prepared and contributes to graduates confidence in entering the workforce and/or post-secondary education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Life skills are an important part of the social and academic development of children and young adults. Educators at all levels must understand the important role life skills plays in the social and educational development of young individuals as they mature into fully functional members of American society. Educators at all levels of primary and secondary education must recognize the need to evaluate current curriculum to seek out ways to incorporate the teaching of life skills as part of their classroom daily practices. Life skills training should be incorporated into each and every level of childhood educational programs to ensure a new generation of Americans receive the knowledge and skills of the various aspects of life skills training so as to ensure their successful transition from secondary education to the workforce or post-secondary education.

This study demonstrates the influence of learning life skills has on the feelings of preparedness of graduating seniors to meet the challenges of life after high school. It shows that parents and teachers working together can influence young adults in positive ways and assist them in developing the skills and abilities which are essential in tackling the demands of post-secondary education and becoming a vital part of today's ever evolving workforce. Additional studies are warranted to be conducted in this area, using larger samples and in different locations nationwide, so as to truly evaluate the importance of teaching life skills by both parents and academic teachers. Furthermore,

the sampling of ethnic minorities was very limited in the population of this study and analysis of the research data did not separate the differences between racial groups. More studies should be conducted which target more ethnic minority populations to evaluate how cultural differences may influence life skills development and how life skills may or may not contribute to ethnic minorities preparedness for post-secondary education and/or entry into the workforce.

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Appendix A

June 7, 2010

Dear Graduating Student:

Old Dominion University (ODU) and I are conducting a study on the influence of life skills (employability skills) training in secondary education system in preparing graduating seniors to enter post secondary education or the workforce. As a graduating high school student, your insight is highly valued. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in this important study. Though your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated, you must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. If you are under this age do not return the survey.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can help this cause by taking 10-15 minutes to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to your class volunteer at the end of this class session**.** Please place your completed survey in the seal envelop provided and put it in the box the volunteer has place by the door when you exit. Completing and submitting the questionnaire implies that you consent for us to use the information for the current study. We have no way to identify you personally and will only report the information as a whole for the class of 2010.

There is no request for identifying information on this questionnaire and no effort will be made to match you with your responses to the questionnaire beyond this initial contact. Your answers are completely confidential and will be reported only as summaries, with no identification used. No names will be linked to responses. Please respond to each question openly and honestly without reservation. If there are questions that you are not comfortable answering, you may most certainly skip those questions. While you are not obligated to participate in this study, your responses are very important to completing my studies at ODU. This information is also very valuable as a variety of secondary educational institutes consider modifying their academic curriculum to meet the needs of current and future students. Rest assured that your refusal to participate in any part of this study will not affect your relationship with any educational institution.

Should you have any questions concerning this letter and/or this study, please do not hesitate to contact Antonio Juarez, via email at ajuar001@odu.edu or by phone at

360-315-3498 or Dr. John Ritz, study advisor, via email at jritz@odu.edu. Please contact Antonio Juarez via email or phone if would like the final results of the study sent to you. You may also contact Dr. Ritz at the ODU office in the STEM Education and Professional Studies for further information regarding human participation in research studies.

Thank you for your interest in this important study and in the academic preparation of students at West Sound Technical Skill Center and its region high schools. We look forward to receiving your responses.

Sincerely,

Antonio E. Juarez, OTED Graduate Candidate, Dr. John Ritz, Chair
Department of STEM Education and Professional Studies, Old Dominion University

Appendix B

Life (employability) Skills Survey

The purpose of this questionnaire is to secure information from graduating seniors in the Kitsap county region attending South Kitsap High School and graduating seniors attending West Sound Technical Skill Center. Specifically, the questionnaire is designed to assess your perceptions of the importance of learning life (employability) skills; its influence on how you perceive your preparedness to enter college or enter the workforce; and the level of influence you perceive that different individuals had on your life skills development. In addition, the questionnaire asks you some questions for demographic use only.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and greatly appreciated and though we value your input, you must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. The information you provide will assist the University in evaluating the influence life skills have on preparing graduating high school students for employment or continuing to college. Therefore, your response is vital. However, you are under no requirement to participate in this study. Should you decide to participate in this study, please return the completed questionnaire to the Student Volunteer when you complete it or if a pre-addressed, postage paid envelope was provided to you with this survey please return it via mail no later than June 17, 2010.

The responses you provide will remain confidential. There is no request for identifying information on this questionnaire and no effort will be made to match you with your responses. Thank you for participating in this important study. Through your participation, we will ensure that valuable training is provided at the high school level.

Part 2 – SKHS Life (employability) Skills Survey

For the purpose of this study, life skills (employability skills) are defined as a set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily human life; and the skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to

achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to the organizations strategic directions.

Please respond to the following items by **darkening the circle next to the response** that most adequately reflects your perception of how much you agree or disagree with the statement, as shown in the example below.

Life skills (employability skills) have great value in today's educational system.
○Strongly agree ●Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

Start the survey here:

1. The educational program at SKHS/WST teaches life (employability) skills as part of its curriculum.

   ○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

2. Life skills (employability skills) are important because they provide me with the ability to perform more effectively at work, school and daily life.

   ○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

3. The education program at SKHS/WST has prepared me to enter the workforce.

   ○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

4. I feel that I have the skills to cope with entering post secondary education (college).

   ○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

5. I feel I have more confidence in my ability to be a valuable contributing factor to any organization because of my education at SKHS/WST.

   ○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

6. Life skills are just feel good tools which have little to do with preparing someone to enter college or find a job.

   ○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

7. I understand the importance of life skills in preparing someone to enter college or the workforce.

   ○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

8. The teachers at SKHS/WST contributed significantly to my development of life skills.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

9. The educational programs at SKHS/WST have prepared me to enter the workforce.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

10. The teacher's at SKHS/ parent high school (WST students) has played a vital role in my development of life (employability) skills.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

11. Parents are the main contributors in the development of life skills in their children.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

12. My parent's involvement in my high school education has had a positive effect on my development of life skills.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

13. A good parent-teacher-school relationship is an important element in the development of life skills in children.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

14. A good parent-teacher-school relationship is an important element in the overall academic development of children.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

15. I have developed good life skills by attending SKHS/WST.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

16. I have developed good life skills mainly through my upbringing and parental influence.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

17. I have developed good life skills as a result of my teacher's influence.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

18. My parents have taught me to work well with others.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

19. At SKHS/WST, I have learned how to handle changes in my routine and adapt to new demands at school or at work.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

20. At SKHS/WST, I have learned to work well with other people.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

21. My understanding of what my teachers and or employers expectations of me has been improved by attending SKHS/WST.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

22. Life skills are equally important as having strong academic skills.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

23. I have had little life skills development training at SKHS/WST.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

24. The educational programs at SKHS/WST have prepared me to better handle entering the college.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

25. I need to work at improving my life skills.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

26. I find little value at working on improving my life skills.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

27. Too much importance is placed on academic study rather than teaching life skills.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

28. I am prepared to enter either college or the workforce with the skills I currently possess.

○Strongly agree ○Agree ○Disagree ○Strongly disagree

Questions for demographic purposes only

1. What is your gender?
   ○Male ○Female

2. What is your race?
   ○White ○African-American ○Other

3. What is your age?
   ○under 18 ○18 ○19 ○over 19

4. Do you attend West Sound Technical Skill Center?
   ○Yes ○No