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Follow-up Study of a Work Experience Cooperative Education Program at Falls Church High School in 1979

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FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF A
WORK EXPERIENCE
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM
AT FALLS CHURCH HIGH SCHOOL IN 1979

A STUDY
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

By
Charlotte June Hartell

April 1980

This research paper was prepared by Charlotte June Hartell under the direction of Dr. Malvern L. Miller in VIAE 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iii
Chapter	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 A REVIEW OF LITERATURE	7
3 METHODS AND PROCEDURES	13
4 FINDINGS	17
5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	29
REFERENCE LIST	34
APPENDICES	37

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1	Profile of WECEP Classes by Years According to Race and Sex	17
2	Profile of Completers Interviewed by Years According to Race and Sex	18
3	Weekly Gross Income of WECEP Completers Interviewed Working Full Time	24

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Each year more money is spent on educational training of the country's youth and adults than is spent on the country's defense. Those monies are spent by federal, state, local agencies, private schools, labor unions, employers from the private sector, and others. A large amount of that money (Krishan, 1976) is spent on youths and adults in public school vocational training. Vocational training is conducted as part of programs designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as semiskilled, skilled workers, technicians, or sub professional people in all types of businesses and industry.

Despite the large investment in people for employment purposes, the country's needs may not be satisfied. According to (Krishan, 1976, p.2) "the success (or failure) of vocational education programs is measured only partially and often intuitively rather than analytically using economic and statistical analysis techniques." Without proper evaluative processes no one really knows if all these programs are doing what they are suppose to do.

One of those vocational programs designed to meet not only some of the country's employment needs, but also the needs of some of disadvantaged youth, is a Work Experience Cooperative Education Program (WECEP). WECEP is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and administered as a Special Program through state vocational education departments in some twenty states.

Among the WECEP programs in Virginia, one of the oldest is at Falls Church High School in the Fairfax County public school system. After six years of operation, a formal analytical follow-up study seemed to be a necessary component in the program's evaluative process. The analysis of the data that was gathered in this study helped make decisions in planning the program's future, as well as providing program accountability.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to evaluate information and opinions from former WECEP program participants at Falls Church High School to determine the program's effectiveness. The participants' patterns of employment, education, work attitudes, family lifestyle and their correlation to the objectives taught in the WECEP program were studied.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Intuitively it is thought WECEP at Falls Church High School is a "good" program. There are always students waiting to be placed in WECEP when a vacancy occurs, which is not often. High employment levels during the school year are achieved by all participants with the aid of the coordinator.

To better understand the program goals and outcomes desired, a look at the objectives are necessary. The objectives of the WECEP program are designed to assist the student in becoming successful in the following areas:

1. Provide the opportunity for program participants to have a job while they earn and learn.

- a. Assist students in finding a job,
 - b. Coordinate the job and classroom activities so that working is a good experience.
2. Prepare students for full time employment through this cooperative work training program that is related to their interests.
 - a. Develop skills necessary to enter the world of work,
 - b. Develop in the student human relations skills,
 - c. Develop a positive attitude towards working,
 - d. Develop an awareness of the different occupations available to him,
3. Instill in the students an improved self-concept,
 - a. Motivate students to become better students, remain in school, or pursue further training and full time work.
 - b. Develop confidence so he/she becomes a productive citizen.

Without data from former participants as to patterns of employment, education, work attitudes, and lifestyle after program completion, there can be no real basis for accountability and decision making for the program's future. Other programs, similar in nature to WECEP, for the disadvantaged with characteristics similar to Falls Church can benefit from this study.

Further impetus for the study came out of the rules and regulations covering the Vocational Amendments of 1976. It clearly states that "results of student achievement, results of student employment success

and results of additional services that the State provides under the Act of special populations" must be evaluated for each program every five years. Federal Register Vol. 42, p No. 191, Oct 3, 1977.

LIMITATIONS

This follow-up study was limited to a random sample of disadvantaged (special needs) students who completed 9th grade WECEP at Falls Church High School. The findings and conclusions reached in this study are limited primarily to use of Falls Church and Fairfax County programs because of geographic limitations as well as the specific make-up of program participants. There are some similarities and generalizations that can be made on a very limited basis to other WECEP programs.

ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions that were made in this follow-up study were: (a) a random sample of enough former students from each class could be located; (b) former students randomly chosen would grant interviews for use in data collection; (c) sample participants would answer interview questions as honestly as possible without bias; and (d) questions could be developed that would provide the necessary data.

PROCEDURES

A random sample was taken from students who were in the seven classes. Eighteen (18) participants were drawn. Each participant was contacted by phone or in person and an appointment for a personal interview was set. The same specific questions were asked each

participant by the same interviewer. Approximately 30 minutes were allotted for each interview. The data was analyzed and the results of this are reported in the remainder of this paper.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Work Experience Cooperative Education Program (WECEP) is a cooperative work experience program made up of 14-16 year olds who are disadvantaged in at least two areas. The program is at the 9th grade level.

Falls Church High School is an urban public high school with a heterogeneous population of some 2200 students in 9th through 12th grade.

Completers are the students who completed ten months of WECEP at Falls Church High School in the 9th grade.

Cooperative Program is a vocational education program where all students work part-time for pay and receive on-job-training.

Coordinator is the person who teaches the students in the work experience part of the class in the classroom which is a two period block, as well as helps place and coordinate the students on the job.

Special Needs/Disadvantaged are used synonymously to mean students who have some of these characteristics: low reading ability, working below grade level in most areas, usually more than one grade below; poor health habits; indifference to responsibility; disruptive; failure syndrome; lack of confidence and success; minority or low socio-economic background.

SUMMARY

The need for a follow-up study of the WECEP program at Falls Church High School was evident based on Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 requirements and individual program evaluation processes. The study was undertaken with the desire to produce unbiased data that could be analyzed and used in program improvement, accountability and future planning.

The former WECEP students, the study participants, have answered specific questions regarding present employment, education, work attitudes, and family lifestyle questions asked by the interviewer. The data was developed from those answers.

A detailed review of literature on program follow-up studies, reports on youth unemployment, and disadvantaged programs of vocational education is discussed in the next chapter. The study tries to substantiate further the need of program follow-ups. Benefits that can accrue from programs such as WECEP are also explored in later chapters.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the literature, which includes a mandate from the federal government for such studies, has shown a need for follow-up studies for vocational education programs. The benefits that accrue from the investigation of employment success or nonsuccess of former students helps in program planning, employment prediction and aids in decision making, as stated by various sources. Teacher effectiveness, with the vocational student the program is designed to serve, is measured in follow-up studies according to Headrick (1979). The large numbers of unemployed youth under 24 years of age in the nation as a whole (over half of unemployed workers) has brought about "considerable interest in the nature, causes and consequences of youth unemployment," (Stevenson, 1978, p. 45). du Pont (1979) further substantiates those figures and opinions from employment in the state of Delaware. The success of employed youth is of considerable interest the researcher believes and shows program accountability of the WECEP program if there is high rate of completor employment.

No follow-up studies of WECEP programs or similar programs for the 14-16 year old special needs/disadvantaged student were found in any the review of literature. Follow-up studies were not prevalent in the cooperative work program in published form. There was a follow-up study of vocational graduates by Krishan, (1976) which included a post-employment study.

Dinger, (1973) did a follow-up study of the post school employment success of high school graduates from four high school Special Education Programs in Pennsylvania from a 3 year period. Copa, (1976) did a status of former high school students which included a questionnaire asking about employment and vocational education training. The review of the latter document shows some of the type of questions that were asked on an introductory or cover questionnaire as to the current status of the program completor.

According to Headrick (1979) data has only recently been used to measure the effectiveness of vocational programs. It was in the area of vocational education that follow-up of program completors was first added to its evaluative process. Follow-up is defined as one part of this entire process where, data, information, or opinions about or from former participants in the educational process is sought, "a former student is asked to express values and opinions about certain factors." p. 102.

Program effectiveness as determined through evaluative processes is mandated by the federal government and requested through the state for each funded program within a five year period, Federal Register (Oct. 3, 1977). Results of student employment success, results of additional services provided to special populations, (in this study special needs/disadvantaged), must be provided through the state. Programs which impart entry level job skills are to be evaluated according to the extent to which program completors and leavers find employment in related occupation and are considered well trained by their employers.

Krishnam (1976) states that to satisfy demands of program accountability vocational educators must have "data which are accurate, timely, and locally specific." To gather this type of data, follow-up studies which employ the participant-observer interviewer type case studies, as noted in Good (1959), is a method of collection that has been employed in this research.

Further verification of the need for more research of vocational education programs, such as the WECEP program for which a follow-up study is made in this paper, was conducted by R. G. Allen, W. P. Gorth (1979). These authors did a review of state surveys to study the quality of vocational education. The studies included the responsiveness of such programs to the needs of the students as well as those of the business community. Their conclusions demonstrated the value of research and included the need to identify strengths and weaknesses so that the quality and success of vocational education programs could continue to improve.

The needs of students in programs like WECEP to learn life skills such as consumerism, money management, and use of leisure time is addressed by Snyder (1979). He says because of the changing demands of a rationalizing and information type economy there must be a large growth in life-skills curriculum taught in schools. These subjects are already being taught in this WECEP program and it is hoped these follow-up studies show some of the positive results of teaching a basic life skills curriculum.

In reviewing literature available on youth unemployment the most complete studies of statistics were found in material compiled by the Bureau of Census and the Department of Labor for Vice President Mondale's Task Force on Youth Employment in 1979. Youth between the ages of 16-24 comprise about 27% of the population, yet over half of the nation's unemployed fall into that age bracket. Those unemployed youth, when divided according to race and ethnicity (in 1976) show white 15.7%, Hispanic 22.1% and black 42.5%. That same year in that unemployed group of youth, your chances of being unemployed if you were a school dropout were 25% and if you were a non-white school dropout, 33%. Those figures show the high unemployed rate of the special needs/disadvantaged youth who is also the type of person who is served in the WECEP program.

According to Bottoms (Oct. 1979), the prevention of unemployment among disadvantaged young people is better than solving its problem after it happens. It is hoped by the researcher that this study shows some of the results of those preventive measures. Bottoms further indicates that a program that coordinates "on-the-job learning and related school instruction" are among the services used to prevent and treat youth unemployment and help youth obtain stable employment (p.6).

This follow-up study is designed to show whether or not the positive preventive measures of youth unemployment has worked for the completors of the WECEP program in Falls Church. According to an Education U.S.A. Special Report (1972) educators recognize that it is realistic as well as essential in many cases, to have a work-study program that will help a student successfully enter the job market and yet hold that student in

school. That same report says it does take ingenuity to create such a cooperative work program that works especially where jobs for the under 18 group are scarce and carefully controlled by state laws which actually prohibit certain tasks.

The Work in America Institute said in 1978 that the "youth unemployment problem was due primarily to lack of opportunity and incentives rather than lack of will to work," Roscow (1979) p. 1. This premise will be examined by the Falls Church study and the program completors employment, or lack of, as well as their opinions on the subject will be sought and studied.

The National Advisory Committee to the Work in America Institute, p. 1, also felt that the primary focus in solving the problem of unemployment should be "private sector training and employment options." In this follow-up study, employment of Falls Church WECEP completors is probed and it is expected to show mostly private sector employment for these people. Dinger (1973) indicates that the potential for predicting employment of current program students is "measurably strengthened by investigating the post-student-employment success of recent program graduates" (p.3). Employment available and employment prediction is expected to be shown in this study.

As Thompson (1978) gave a strong recommendation for work-study program students, she quoted a survey conducted in 1977 by Continental Illinois Bank and Trust Company. "We found that our work-study students had better attendance records, their (job) retention rate was higher, and they had better performance records." p.38. This follow-up study hopes

to show what the record of the completors for the WECEP program (a work experience school program) has been and that it is comparable to the finding in the above report listed by Thompson.

Headrick, (1979) suggests that in making decisions about programs and the current employment patterns there is substantial correlation between follow-up data on job placements and market trends. As (Headrick 1979, p.106) states the actual use of data and information gathered in a follow-up study can be wide and varies depending on the specific needs of the locale. As the review of literature has indicated, there is a need to collect information on the WECEP program and teacher effectiveness, accountability, specific employment, and success of program completors. As Kenneth Hoyt (1979) said in a speech on youth employment "the bottom-line will be the extent to which youth/work/schooling problem has been alleviated" (p.21).

Chapter 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The methods used in determining the Work Experience Cooperative Education Programs (WECEP) effectiveness will be explained and the procedures used to collect the data during the follow-up study will be described in this Chapter.

RESEARCH METHOD

This follow-up study of Falls Church High School WECEP program completors was done by the original teacher-coordinator of all classes that were surveyed. A representative random sample of former students from all classes since program installation in February 1973 and concluding with the 1978-79 class were used in this study. The study was done through the use of an open-ended questionnaire using the interview method. The interviews were conducted and recorded on tape by the teacher-coordinator as a participant-observer.

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The Work Experience Cooperative Education Program (WECEP) of 10 months duration is taught at the 9th grade level in an urban Virginia public high school and has an average yearly student completor population of 14. Out of a total of 96 program completors during the period studied 18 were randomly selected for interviews. These students were all personally contacted by the interviewer either by telephone or in person and an interview time of approximately 30 minutes was set up.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT DESIGN

Questions developed for the interview were of two types. Historical information as to lifestyle patterns such as marital status, car ownership, hobbies, travel, and current employment as well as salary earnings was one set of questions. The other set of questions were six basic in-depth type of questions regarding program completors' values and his/her opinions of the WECEP program and its effectiveness. The main question for which answers were sought is evidence that the program is actually satisfying its objectives. The questions asked related to job preparation, employment, teacher's effectiveness, employment satisfaction, work attitudes, and general self-concept. It is believed that the participants' responses is representative of the general opinions on the program of all the program completors.

The original set of questions was first tested on two participants and then a discussion between them and the interviewer took place as to the clarity of the questions. The outcome was that the general understanding of the questions could be enhanced by beginning the questionnaire with an overall general question of these participants' design. This was added at their suggestion (See Appendix A). The point of the entire study then appeared to be clearer to the participants.

The bias or influence the interviewer might have over the study participant was kept at a minimum by consistently suggesting the responses could be either positive or negative.

One variable noted is the maturity of the participants according to their length of time removed from the program. Another variable is the length of employment experience between the age levels involved.

In some cases the inability of the participant to articulate his responses caused inadequate response to some questions unless further probing on the part of the interviewer was done. However, the coordinator, acting as interviewer was a positive factor in enlisting a response. Because of her knowledge of the participant she was able to explain some questions and encourage a response. This enhanced the participant's ability to respond. A partial transcript of one of the interviews is given in the appendix and shows some of the types of responses encountered in the interviews (see Appendix B for partial transcript of Kenny F.). Overall, it is not believed that external variables will influence the general validity of the study.

INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

An explanation of the interview to take place was made to the study participant. The interview proceeded in a private classroom setting and was tape recorded. The recording was an acceptable medium because the participants have all had previous classroom experience in WECEP recording on the same recorder used in the interview. It was not considered a strange or unusual occurrence by the participants because of their past familiarity with such a procedure in their former classroom.

The use of the tape recorder provides an accurate record of the interviews and an easy method of data collection from which analysis can clearly be drawn. A composite response for each question can be drawn with accuracy and confidence.

SUMMARY

Using random sampling of WECEP program completors, follow-up study participants were selected and an open-ended structured interview, using a questionnaire was conducted by the former program coordinator. The research study objective was to assess the program's effectiveness and make recommendations for its future. The findings of the follow-up study is reported in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents and gives an analysis of the data collected from WECEP program completors who were participants in the follow-up study made on the program at Falls Church High School. The study participants were 16 program completors who granted interviews. The interviewer, a participant-observer, was the former program coordinator. These students were all in the 14-16 year age bracket when participating in the WECEP program and were age 15-23 years old at the time of the study. The profile of WECEP classes by years according to race and sex is given in Table 1.

Table 1

PROFILE OF WECEP CLASSES BY YEARS

ACCORDING TO RACE AND SEX

FALLS CHURCH HIGH SCHOOL

	WHITE		BLACK		OTHER		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
1972-73	5	3	2	2			12
1973-74	9	5					14
1974-75	7	5	1		1		14
1975-76	11	4		1			16
1976-77	9	3	1			1	14
1977-78	5	3	2	3		1	14
1978-79	7	2	1		1	1	12
TOTAL	53	25	7	6	2	3	96

A comparison of the actual student population to the sample completors who have been interviewed in the study can be made by looking at Table 2.

Table 2
PROFILE OF COMPLETORS INTERVIEWED
BY YEARS
ACCORDING TO RACE, SEX

	WHITE		BLACK		OTHER		TOTAL	TOTAL STUDENTS IN CLASS
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE		
1972-73			1				1	12
1973-74	1						1	14
1974-75	1		1				2	14
1975-76	3	1					4	16
1976-77	1					1	2	14
1977-78		1	1	1			3	14
1978-79	2				1		3	12
TOTAL	8	2	3	1	1	1	16-17%	96-100%

Table 1 shows a total of 96 completors in years 1972-73 through 1978-79. The breakdown of male/female, black/white and other is given by years. In comparing the completors interviewed (see Table 2) you see that out of a total group of 53 white males eight were interviewed and out of 25 white females two were interviewed. Out of a total of seven black males, three were interviewed and out of six black females, one was

interviewed. The other group included Iranians, Filipinos, and Peruvians. From this other group of two males one was interviewed and from three females one of those was interviewed. Also Tables 1 and 2 show the exact year in which each person was a completor--overall 17% or 16 were interviewed out of the total of 100% or 96 completors.

As noted earlier, in Chapter 3, the first two participant completors were interviewed and then a discussion of the questionnaire took place. A question was suggested by one of the study participants which he felt really "says it all" and is the essence of the questionnaire. After the formulation of that question, the answers given by the two pilot participants, Brian and Kenny, are found in the appendix. (See Appendix A for a transcript.) This question was made number one and the explanation was made to each participant that this question was made up by two former WECEP students and added to the questionnaire as helping them to better understand what we were really trying to find out in the interview. The in-depth questions will be presented individually here. Sample responses and some composite responses will be given.

QUESTION 1: What, if anything, did WECEP do for you?

This question produced immediate response from all participants and in every interview, except one (out of 16), a positive list of results were produced readily by the participant program completors.

The initial response to Question 1 by almost all of the completors dealt with the general subject of getting jobs. Here are various ways they phrased that response: "It (WECEP) helped get me a job" or "gave me the opportunity for a job" --- "at a young age," "Taught me how to go get

a job on my own, to sell myself, go in for an interview and act like I really want a job." It taught me to "look at them (employers) just right and tell them what they want to hear." (WECEP) "taught me confidence when I go looking for a job because I know I can find one now." "It helped me get a better job than I would otherwise." In 94% or 15 of the interviews this was the single common response each completor mentioned without any additional comments or probing from the interviewer.

The one exceptional response was "nothing, oh, I don't remember." However, the interview was continued and some positive responses were made, but generally this participant was negative as to results of WECEP in her life. Partly her inability to articulate may have been responsible because English is her second language. Her general attitude was not one of negativeness to the interview. She seemed to want to be helpful.

There were many other responses to Question 1 and here are some of those responses. WECEP "gave me courage" - "better attitude - better outlook on life" - "Get along better, work with older people" - "taught me to be more responsible with money" "gave me confidence in myself" -- "respect, how to deal with people and take yelling" (criticism) "take care of money - learn to budget some" "establish employment connections that still help me" "manage my money in financial situations" "helped me plan for the future," "helped me understand my problems" and "it helped me sort out what I wanted to do because of the many job experiences."

The other questions asked in the interview brought about some duplication of responses that were made to Question 1 but also they did

get some more specific responses from the completors as here in Question 2.

QUESTION 2: Does what you learned in WECEP help you get a job when you go job hunting? How? Could it have helped more?

Response by all 16 completors to Question 2 was "yes" and many of the opinions were identical, as well as very specific, in response to, How? The most popular answer made by 70% of the participants was "learned how to dress properly, be neat, clean, polite and be prepared for the interview when I go" - "take care of my responsibilities in getting that job, like filling out applications." -- "How to carry myself, sell myself, what to say," - 50% of participants actually used the word "courage," "Taught me courage and enthusiasm to go look for a job." One interesting similar response by two different participants was "The employer recognized the name of WECEP and gave me a job on the past records of former WECEP students who were employees."

Perhaps the reason for such positive response to Question 2 is because all completor participants in the study are presently employed except two females. One of those is married, has a baby, and does not want to work at this time. The other female had been injured in an automobile accident and has a partially paralyzed hand preventing her working at this time. All working participants obviously believe their success at finding a job can be largely attributed to their participation as students in the WECEP program. They all exuded their confidence in finding a job by the manner of response given. This was further substantiated in completors responses to other in-depth questions.

Almost all of the study participants were eager to answer the questions relating to employment and share with their former coordinator (the interviewer) their employment success.

QUESTION 3: Do you feel you have a better job future because of what you learned in WECEP such as in your performance on the job, the satisfaction you get from working or your employability? How? or what could have been done in WECEP to make it more helpful?

This question was the most difficult for the completors to answer. In analyzing the question, it is really too long and complex. Amplification by coordinator was necessary in most cases. The completors knew what employability meant because they remembered it from WECEP. They knew they had a job and through the response on Question 2 showed their confidence in always finding future employment. Interviewer would substitute "Do you like working" and 94% or 15 answered yes. One said, "I always get bored easily on every job I wish I could have learned better in WECEP how to stick to a job." This was definitely a minority response.

Several completors mentioned they had learned in WECEP how to "try a job, at least for awhile, before quitting because it does get better sometimes," and "get to know people first before you quit." This was an important objective in WECEP that the student should give a job a good 30 days before quitting over dislike or problems. Pressure, by the

coordinator, was often exerted on the students to do this. Apparently, it was a lesson learned by several completors who mentioned they "learned to stick to a job in WECEP" as a response to question three.

The other responses to Question 3 centered primarily around three themes:

1. WECEP helped in getting along with people,
2. WECEP caused completors to like working,
3. completors learned to like earning money.

Examples of these responses are: "WECEP taught me to have to get along with people to be successful at working," "I didn't like working before, but I liked my job when I was in WECEP and found out I liked working," "it helped me want to make money instead of laying around like I did before." This latter response was an example of about one third of the completors on the subject of earning money. One completor said, "The biggest thing WECEP did for me was to show me how to make money." A statement like this doesn't say enough, but as a participant-observer, the interviewer understands that response to mean WECEP develops an interest in earning money and shows him how it is done by working. By doing hard work, using initiative, doing the job the way the boss wants, regular attendance, and by asking for salary increases when you think you deserve them the former WECEP student completor did, indeed, learn in WECEP how to "make money."

Evidence of this success at working is available in every completor interview (14 out of 16). All were working, part-time, if in school and full time if out of school. All of the completors were currently

employed in jobs in the private sector. Individual incomes ranged from \$160 a week to \$400 for full time workers age 18 - 23 years old. (See Table 3.)

Table 3
WEEKLY GROSS INCOME OF
WECEP COMPLETORS INTERVIEWED - AGES 18-23
WORKING FULL TIME

	\$160-200	\$201-240	\$241-280	\$281-320	\$321-360	\$361-400
NUMBER OF COMPLETORS	2	3	1	1	1	2

QUESTION 4: Can you think of any way WECEP has helped you to get along with people?

This question brought about more specific responses to the already majority opinion of the program completors that WECEP did help in getting along with people. This subject was mentioned in responses in two previously asked questions. The responses to this question were almost identical except for one negative response. The majority opinions are well stated in this example: "WECEP taught me that to be successful on the job, I have to understand other people and the way they feel no matter what their personality is because I have to get along with all the people in order to work with them."

Other opinions that amplify their positive responses were: "WECEP helped me go out and meet more people," "It is easier for me to talk to people now, especially employers," and "I learned from WECEP that you need to open up to people."

The evidence, through the responses given, is certainly that much is attributed to the WECEP program as the completors learned to deal with people in the work places. The strong feelings they have on how that has affected their success on the job is also brought out through the responses.

QUESTION 5: How do you feel about yourself? Are you happy - What are your plans and goals for the future?

This question deals with self-concept, satisfaction with life, future goals. Each person questioned indicated happiness with themselves. Some still felt they wanted to achieve more than they have now, either in the way of a diploma, or a better job, but thought this would come with time through their own efforts. The majority of the completors seemed to realize they could "make things happen if they wanted them to happen." The confidence each showed now was outstanding according to the participant-observer when she looks back two to six years ago, depending on completor being questioned, a few had already graduated, a few were very close to graduation needing only 1 or 2 credits, one had passed the GED, some are still in school, and some, even though not finishing school, seemed to be happy with their current status. As mentioned earlier, all are employed making very good salaries when compared to others across the country in their age category with the

same background. In some cases students mentioned the WECEP "teacher helped with developing self-confidence by talking to me and letting me talk to her."--"By the teacher getting close to you, telling you the importance of things, and what your responsibilities are, you are more willing to listen." More evidence that could show the reason for the completors strong self-concept might be drawn from the responses to Question 6 which relates to teacher effectiveness given later in this chapter.

QUESTION 6: If you were asked to serve on a committee to select a new teacher-coordinator for WECEP, what do you think that coordinator should be like? What assets should he/she possess or what things should he/she be able to teach well?

The responses were in three general categories and were generally mentioned in the following order:

1. factors of personality and general philosophy of the coordinator
2. knowledge about jobs and employment in the community,
3. be able to know and teach money management.

The most response was given to personality and the philosophy of student acceptance by the coordinator. This was such a strong response that many of those will be listed here to show the completors feelings. Coordinator should be "friendly - all teachers are not friendly" - "polite - nice to students" - "have patience" - "not get mad easily" - "loose - understand students" - "teacher must be able to get close to students so students will listen" - "get involved with students" - "be

able to find out what each student does best" - "know where people are at" and "works well with kids and knows what kids are doing." Along this same line of responses were comments that really reflect teacher philosophy such as, "they should be able to work with all kinds of people and help all people alike," and last but certainly not least, "it should be a person that understands that all people want to learn and want to be someone and they should treat all alike."

The next most mentioned quality was knowledge about jobs and employment within the community. A composite response by the majority of study participants is contained here. "That person must know a lot about working and all the different types of jobs available, especially jobs in our community. That person must be able to talk both to students and employers and be able to work things out. That person must be smart about a lot of things and be able to find other people jobs."

The subject matter the coordinator should be able to teach was, according to the response, simply said by the majority completors, "They should be able to teach how to get along on jobs and be able to teach about money management."

In analyzing the completors responses to this question, which really deals with teacher effectiveness, the most important factor to these former WECEP students is the teacher's personality and the way that person acts to them coupled with knowledge of employment and the community. If that coordinator produces jobs for them the coordinator is "smart" to that completor because smart was mentioned by so many of the students in regards to knowing about employment. The completors have

also realized the importance of managing the money they earn and associate its control back with the person that got them started working.

In summarizing this chapter on the findings of a follow-up study on WECEP program completors, a large number of responses were made to the questions asked and it is believed they were valid because of similarity and depth of responses. Several questions brought out the same responses but in the opinion of the researcher this proved the validity of the questions and responses. It is believed conclusions can be made on the programs effectiveness and that some recommendations for the programs future can be made. The study summary, conclusions, and recommendations will follow in Chapter five.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

This follow-up study on WECEP program completors was done in an effort to determine the program's effectiveness. Information and opinions were gathered from completors to find out about their employment, attitudes towards work, self-concept, future plans or expectations and how, if at all, these opinions could relate back to their participation in WECEP in the 9th grade at ages 14 or 15. Also, they were asked, "What, in their opinion, does it take to make a good WECEP teacher-coordinator." By finding out this information and those opinions it was thought by the researcher that the WECEP program's effectiveness could be evaluated more analytically.

The method used in this study was to randomly select the potential participants from program completors since the program's inception in 1973, and through the completion of the school year 1978-79. A set of background and in-depth questions were asked by an interviewer, who acted as a participant-observer. With permission of the completors, a tape recording was made of the interview.

The findings show a majority of positive responses to all questions related to the benefits the individuals received from participation in the WECEP program. All completors who were able to work, (88% of study participants), are currently employed. In their opinion they like

working, are successful on the job and feel confident about themselves. WECEP was credited, by the completors, for a large measure of what they perceived as success in finding that job and working.

CONCLUSIONS

If the objective of the program is to make the student employable, give him confidence in himself so that he can readily be employed and feel successful, then the researcher believes the findings indicate a large measure of success of the program.

Most of the students said that WECEP made a difference in their lives. Their attitude was different as a result of WECEP and their employment success was attributed to participating in the WECEP program. Their income was average or above average, for people of their age and background.

The single most frequent opinion, of the entire group questioned, pertained to the job opportunity afforded them at a young age (14-16 years old) because they were members of the WECEP program. They all gave credit to the teacher-coordinator who helped them find suitable jobs where they could earn money and learn through training in the classroom and on the job. There they learned to be good workers. Many program completors who had not achieved much success in life, before their work experience in the 9th grade, found themselves successful in the real world of work.

An important conclusion made by the researcher from the findings is that the Work Experience Cooperative Education Program (WECEP) has a positive lasting effect on these special needs students in their life in

fostering successful employment for them. To further validate this finding more studies could be done. A control group of similar youth (special needs and same ages) who were not in WECEP could be asked questions regarding their life style, employment, and self-concept to see if their success is different from the WECEP completors. Another study that would also validate the finding on employment would be to question the employers of these completors to find out how the employer evaluates his employees' work success.

Another question to be answered is, did the WECEP program successfully combat the "failure syndrome" resulting from apathy and lack of self-confidence on the part of the special needs/disadvantaged students?

According to the participant-observer-interviewer, the completor's self-concept has improved from age 14 to age 18-23. All except approximately 5% felt confident of their place in life. They consider WECEP has helped teach them many things like getting along with people, learning to like "making money," and being able to earn that money. Success, as measured by happiness, improved self-concept, confidence, and knowing how to work is an objective reached by a large majority of program completors. Therefore, yes, WECEP has successfully combated the "failure syndrome."

The success of the program in getting the student to complete work for his high school diploma can not be fairly made at this time on the basis of the evidence. Some have graduated, one has received his GED and some are very close, with only a few remaining hours to complete and some

are still in high school. Most profess a strong interest in completing that work for a high school diploma and some even sought information at the close of the interview on how to complete the necessary work. But one would have to say that on the basis of the inconclusive evidence derived from the interviews that the success of the WECEP program at getting the students to complete work for a high school diploma cannot be shown at this time. According to stated program objectives, a high school diploma is not necessarily the only, or most desired outcome of the WECEP program. Program success does not hinge on students staying in school and earning a diploma from high school, even though this is a highly desirable outcome in most cases.

Another major point made by the completors is that the coordinator must have the ability and be a salesman of the program. Employment is what really counts to those students and they know that person must be capable in that area. It a part of the job where results can be seen immediately by the students. The conclusion reached by the researcher is the coordinator must be able to do this part of the job or the program will fail because program success hinges on employment of all students in most cases.

It is the major conclusion of this study, which is derived from the findings, that the program objectives are being met by the Work Experience Cooperative Education Program at Falls Church High School. With values and opinions taken to a specific set of questions from 17% of the total program completors, since its inception in 1973 until the close of the 1978-79 school year, it is thought that those responses are

representative of all the program completors. In at least 94% of the cases, it is believed by the completors that WECEP had affected their lives for the best. They received help towards successful employment, have a job where they feel happy and are more confident in their lives because of some of the things they learned in the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing the findings of the follow-up study on the WECEP program, the researcher makes three recommendations which she thinks are natural outcomes of the study. These are:

1. The WECEP program should be continued at Falls Church High School.
2. A control group of similar students (in age and special needs), not in WECEP, should be studied so that further program validation could be made.
3. A questionnarie to the employers of the WECEP Program completors could be designed and used for further validation of this study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DISCUSSION BETWEEN KENNY & BRIAN

Q: WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DID WECEP DO FOR YOU?

B: Gave us more responsibility in life, do more things, get a better job.

K: Get a better outlook in life.

B: Better attitude, better, you know, just others.

K: Make out better in business world.

B: Gives you more.

K: I know a lot more now than when I just started. I didn't know nothing about the job, whereas now I know a little bit and that's the truth. I came up in the summer asking if I could get into a class and got in. That was my first job, pretty good, worked there, got fired, worked again, quit, came back, worked there, got fired and now I'm working where I am at now.

Q: THINK YOU ARE GOING TO GET FIRED AGAIN?

K: Hope not. Not for awhile.

Q: DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING BY GETTING FIRED?

K: Yeah.

Q: DID WECEP HELP IN ANY WAY TO MAKE YOU FEEL THAT WAY ABOUT GETTING FIRED?

K: It didn't have nothing to do with WECEP about getting fired, I just got tired of work, but really it wasn't my fault at the time, but I got fired. The first time because they said I could have every Saturday off to go bowling and they called me up on Saturday and the boss told me to come to work, and I said I am going bowling and they said, quit bowling, and I said, quit work.

Q: BRIAN, CAN YOU THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO SAY?

B: Repeat that question again.

Q: WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DID WECEP DO FOR YOU?

APPENDIX B

DISCUSSION WITH KENNY

Q: What is your name?

A: Kenny F.

Q: Where do you live now, Kenny?

A: Sterling, Virginia.

Q: And, you were in my class back in 1973, 74, I believe. Does that sound about right? And, are you working?

A: Yes, I am.

Q: Where?

A: Karin's Florist.

Q: Seven Corners?

A: Yes.

Q: And, what is your job there?

A: I am a floral designer and salesman.

Q: When did you start working there?

A: It will be seven years ago this October.

Q: Is that right?

A: That's right.

Q: Have you earned a promotion?

A: Many.

Q: Many. If it wouldn't embarrass you, I'd be interested in your gross weekly salary approximately. If you don't care to answer that, that's all right.

A: Uh, right now? It's three hundred dollars.

- Q: Okay. Your total income in 1979 was approximately 52 weeks times that.
- A: Well, we'll say fifteen thousand dollars.
- Q: Very good. Do you own a car?
- A: Three.
- Q: Three. Okay. Approximately the model, years of them?
- A: I have a 67 Volkswagon, a 72 Pontiac LaMans and a 69 Plymouth Barracuda.
- Q: Do you repair those yourself?
- A: Yes, I do.
- Q: I remember that. Don't you sort of take care of the vans and see that they are kept up where you work?
- A: Oh yeah. Any questions they ask, If somethings wrong with it.
- Q: You don't actually repair them now do you?
- A: No I let the gas station take care of that. If it is something minor.
- Q: Are you responsible for taking them to see that they are cared for?
- A: No, the drivers are.
- Q: But you use to do that, didn't you?
- A: Oh, yes.
- Q: Yes, I seem to remember that. You are married?
- A: Yes, I am.
- Q: A year, going on a year?
- A: A year in May.

Q: Is that right. You are buying a house or comdominum?

A: We are buying a townhouse.

Q: Do you have a hobby?

A: Working on my cars.

Q: Your cars. That's right. And did you travel outside of Virginia in 1979?

A: Yes I did. Went to Florida.

Q: For a vacation?

A: Yes.

Q: I have a few general questions I wanted to ask you Kenny. I don't know, it's been a number of years since you were in the program, the work experience program that I was your coordinator of, but actually, most of the questions center around the first one, but I will get a little more specific. Did WECEP do anything for you? And if yes, what? And if no, what could it have done?

A: Well, first of all I was given a job opportunity.

Q: The same job you are still on?

A: The same job. It's quite a while.

Q: You had your own on-job training.

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Training, on the job.

A: Yes, on the job. I started out as a gopher, running up and down the steps, getting things for the designers, the salesman, whatever. Whatever they asked me to do, that's what I did. And then I started

driving the truck a little bit, and I learned the area, very slowly, reading a map, which you have to learn to do.

Q: Do you recall, did we learn to read the map in WECEP? I know I have incorporated that later as time has gone on but I wasn't sure we were doing that then.

A: I don't really remember, the only thing I remember is the phone, is having answered the phone which I thought I would never use the phone. Now I answer the phone twenty, thirty times a day, well I must be professional. That's the main point when you answer the phone to be pleasant. That's the thing I remember mostly is the telephone and learning how to use it in class.

Q: Isn't that interesting. The telephone unit.

A: Which I thought at the time was ridiculous, but it wasn't, it turned out different.

Q: Yes, a lot of money really happens because of the telephone.

A: Our business is, sixty percent.

Q: Sixty percent?

A: Well, now I am guessing. Well, we do have our shop and have a walk-in trade, this store has been there for twenty-four years and we still have quite a clientele on the telephone, but at the same time we still have the walk-in business also. But when other people are slow in the shops then the way to keep busy is on the telephone.

- Q: Yes, very vital. Okay. Can you think of some things that you wished you had learned? Things that might have been helpful? Maybe you shouldn't even say WECEP. Are there some things you wish you had learned when you were in school?
- A: Yes, everything. I wish I would have put myself forth a little more. It would have made the job easier, but I was very fortunate as I had a very patient boss, as I was very stubborn.
- Q: Yes, I remember that.
- A: Stubborn, yes, but talented.
- Q: That's right. You hit it right there.
- A: It takes a combination of things, the boss, the people you work with. Of course, the teacher that got me the job. Or I would never have gotten it or never started. Well as far as that is concerned I wish I would have stuck with it a little bit more, younger, before I got out of high school.
- Q: That is interesting.
- A: Before I even got to high school. Just stick with it. Even if I couldn't make it, just say I couldn't make it.
- Q: Sure.
- A: Everybody is at least an average student.
- Q: Do you think you could look back on any one experience, diverting a little bit from our question sheet here, but can you look back on any one or two experiences in the elementary school at that age that might have affected your not having more interest in putting

yourself into it more, as you put it? This is something that people are always trying to wonder why are there certain people who do not get out of school-

A: I feel actually, that it's not the school, not really, but the kid has a problem somewhere else. It's not the school. Of course, maybe they are trying to do it to hurt somebody, and of course really hurting themselves. Maybe they are angry --- Maybe they need someone to help --- I had problems with vocabulary, spelling, very poor. I can spell, but not very well.

Q: Why do you think you had trouble with reading? Why do you think you didn't like to read?

A: Depends on what is going on at home.

Q: I tend to agree with that. A lot of it is home.

A: Once they figure out they can go out to do it on their own, they don't want the same rotten world, they want to do something better. They want to try for something better, for whatever they are living, if they are unhappy in staying there, it's foolish to begin with - you have to try to do better than wherever you are.

Q: That's very interesting. This is one of my questions here and it leads right from what you are saying. I said, are you happy with your place in life today?

A: Well, yes.

Q: And do you think you have a lot of job satisfaction?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: And, how do you feel you perform on the job? How do you feel about it? Kind of hard to answer, but it is not hard if you look back to those promotions that you -

A: When I started out, I said I was a gopher, then I became a driver and started working on arrangements and then started designing them. Of course, I had help, but I started out as low as you can go, and I'm a designer. It's quite an accomplishment, I would think. I'm proud of myself.

Q: Yes, you do a very nice job. Yes, of course, let's go on. Of course, you have only had one job, so you might not be able to answer this one except let me phrase it a little bit different. My question is, Does what you learned in WECEP help you get a job when you go job hunting? Do you think when you have to go to get a job again, do you think any of your experiences from WECEP would help you to get a job at this point?

A: I don't know. I think right now all it would affect would be the very beginning. I got the job, I've got experience. Seven years at 22 years old is a lot of experience in the florist shop or anywhere else. It all gets back to the opportunity, which is the main point. That's the first step. And the rest is, you can't be there with me, it's up to the employer and myself.

Q: Did WECEP help you to establish goals for your life in the areas of education, employment or living in general? Can you explain that?

A: Could you explain that?

Q: Okay, I don't know whether you remember or not, but I tried always to deal to some extent with goals, helping you to understand. You made goal posters, remember, when you found out what the definition of a goal was and we planned short term goals at the time for that year and I tried to get you to at least think what goals were.

A: Now I know what you are speaking about. Now, I've never written them down. I've thought about them, get married one day, house - hopefully you have help - you can't do it by yourself today, it's impossible. We did have help. Uh, to be good at what I am doing, right? And, those are goals - now, to possibly open a store one day because I am doing very well and I am not going to stop. Of course, I can better my self as a designer. Mr. D. will not be there forever, his son will be - and I will be. If I can leave it that way or go on to higher goals, open my own store.

Q: Do you think WECEP helped you in any way to make those goals? Or, if they didn't help you do you think that there could have been ways we could have encouraged you in the 9th grade to be more goal oriented. You mentioned two or three times that you wished you had applied yourself more or wished that you had stuck with it longer. Was there something we at the school could have done in the program, that we didn't do that would have been helpful.

A: It goes back a little further again then, because the school in earlier years.

Q: Okay, like what you said awhile ago. Let's move on. Can you think of any way WECEP has helped you to get along with people?

A: Encouraged me to meet people, be pleasant to people, say "hello."
Of course I met my boss through WECEP, and all the people there. In that way, yeah.

Q: If you had to help with the selection of a new WECEP teacher-coordinator, what three things would you consider the most important asset a teacher should possess? Now, it -

A: Patience.

Q: Okay, patience.

A: Yes, lots of patience.

Q: Do you have any other suggestions?

A: Let's see, that's a hard one.

Q: Well, and it's been a long time too, since you have been in the classroom to note such things. Can you think of anything that really helped you, maybe that you learned from that teacher, that really helped you with your work directly. I don't want to be leading you too much, but that gives you another area to think about. I found that the ones directly from my classroom, can have, - it a little easier for them to answer it.

A: Another thing a WECEP teacher needs to be-well there was more freedom in the classroom, you could do the things you wanted to do, or the things you could do better.

Q: With direction?

A: With no direction. You could do what you wanted to do, enjoyed doing, interested in, such as sports, even, just anything.

Q: Well, thank you very much, Kenny, was there anything else you might want to add?

A: No.