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Virginia Beach Middle School Work and Family Studies Teacher's Implementation of the Virginia Workforce Readiness Lesson Plans

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**Virginia Beach
Middle School Work and Family Studies Teacher's
Implementation of the Virginia Workforce Readiness
Lesson Plans**

**A Research Paper Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the
Department of Occupational and Technical Studies at Old
Dominion University**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science**

**by
Carole Wilson Forbes
August 2008**

Approval Page

This research paper was prepared by Carole Wilson Forbes under the direction of Dr. John Ritz in OTED 636, Research Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment for the Degree of Master of Science in Career and Technical Education with a concentration in Work and Family Studies at Old Dominion University.

APPROVED BY: _____ Date _____
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Carole Wilson Forbes

Table of Contents

	Page
Approval Page	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter	
I. Introduction	1
A. Statement of the Problem	2
B. Research Goals	2
C. Background and Significance	3
D. Limitations	6
E. Assumptions	6
F. Procedures	7
G. Definition of Terms	7
H. Overview of Chapters	8
II. Review of Literature	10
A. A Brief History of Education in America	11
B. The Impact of NCLB on Education	14
C. The Changing Workforce	16
D. 21 st Century Skills	17
E. Workplace Readiness Skills in Education	18
F. The Virginia Connection	19
G. Summary	20
III. Methods and Procedures	22
A. Population	22
B. Instrument Design	23
C. Data Collection	23
D. Statistical Analysis	24
E. Summary	24
IV. Findings	25
A. Work and Family Studies in the Middle School	26
B. The Integration of Workplace Readiness Skills	29
C. Workplace Readiness Lesson Plans and the Middle School	32
D. Summary	38

	Page
V. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations	39
A. Summary	39
B. Conclusions	40
C. Recommendations	45
VI. References	47
VII. Appendices	49
A. Virginia Beach City Public Schools Middle Schools	50
B. Research Study Survey	51
C. Cover Letter Accompanying Survey	52

List of Tables

Table 1. Returned Surveys	Page 26
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List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1. The Focus of Work and Family Studies	28
Figure 2. Workplace Readiness Skills and Career Exploration	29
Figure 3. Teaching Without the Virginia Workforce Readiness Lesson Plans	30
Figure 4. The Nature of Work and Family Studies	31
Figure 5. Teachers Responsibility Toward Teaching Workplace Readiness Skills	32
Figure 6. The Need for Separate Plans for the Middle School Level	33
Figure 7. Written for Middle School	35

Chapter I

Introduction

The challenges high school and college graduates face as they enter the workforce are being made even more difficult by the lack of preparation they receive in school to face the challenges of the business world. Today's worker must not only possess a solid core of knowledge, but they need the ability to apply this knowledge in real world settings. American business is said to be driven by "digital globalization." Rapidly changing technology has quickened the pace of change in business as well as made the world smaller by providing effective communication systems (McLester, 2006).

There is a direct relationship between the educational system and the success of tomorrow's workforce. Business leaders do not believe that schools are providing students with the skills that they need to be successful in the workplace. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, in conjunction with The Conference Board and Corporate Voices for America, released "The Workforce Readiness Report Card" in September of 2006. The purpose of this study was to find if America's educational system was keeping up with the changing face of business. What the study showed was that there were philosophical differences between businesses and the American educational system (McLester, 2006).

In 2002 the federal government passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which focused on mastery of core subjects. Although a solid academic background is a requirement for success in business, schools are failing at teaching students how to apply the core of knowledge they possess. Business owners also identify "soft skills"

such as work ethic, professionalism, and teamwork as areas of weakness in entry level workers need (National School Boards Association, 2007).

The Virginia Beach Office of Career and Technical Education has recognized this need and has developed a curriculum complete with lesson plans for the purpose of integrating Workplace Readiness Skills into classrooms at both the middle and high school levels. This research study was undertaken to determine if the Middle School Work and Family Studies teachers were integrating Workplace Readiness Skills into the course requirements to assist students with their eventual entry into the American labor force (National School Boards Association, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine if Virginia Beach Middle School Work and Family Studies teachers were incorporating Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans as lessons for the improvement of student career preparation skills.

Research Goals

The following research questions were established to address this problem:

1. Are Virginia Beach middle school teachers using the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans?
2. Does the Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies curriculum need to be correlated with the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans?
3. Do the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans need to be revised for effective use at the middle school level?

Background and Significance

High school and college graduates face a business world far different than the average worker of fifty years ago. In the past most people held only one or two jobs over their lifetime. The global economy and rapidly advancing technology have created a situation where the average worker is expected to hold as many as ten to fifteen jobs over a lifetime (Kay, 2005). Businesses are realizing that high school graduates do not have what is being referred to as 21st century skills. Skills for the 21st century include academic accomplishment, as well as “soft skills” such as a “good work ethic, a positive attitude, independence and initiative, self presentation skills, attendance and teamwork” (National School Boards Association, 2007).

In 1985, the University of Virginia’s Demographics and Workforce Section of the Weldon Cooper Center began the process of looking at what qualities employers across Virginia were looking for in entry level employees. The Virginia Department of Education used this study to formulate an instructional activity unit entitled Enhancing Workplace Readiness Skills in 2001. This document highlighted 13 skills deemed necessary for success in the workplace. Many other states and universities, as well as private organizations, have conducted similar studies revealing similar results. In 2006 “The Workforce Readiness Report Card” was issued by the Partnership for 21 Century Skills in conjunction with The Conference Board and Corporate Voices for Working Families. The study’s results were said to be “amazing and sobering (McLester, 2006). The study revealed that high school graduates were unable to apply learned skills in the workplace environment. College graduates fared better but deficiencies were noted in

written communication skills which may leave the worker with the inability to be promoted within the company (McLester, 2006).

Driven by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, American education has been based on mastery of the core subjects. This system of education does not produce graduates with the ability to apply the knowledge they have gained within real daily work and life situations. With the majority of the funding going to core subjects there have been drastic cuts in subjects such as art, music, career and technical education, drama, computer technology, as well as after school athletics. It is in these areas that many believe students develop the ability to apply the core knowledge (McLester, 2006).

In response to these findings, the Hampton Roads Workforce Development Board, known as Opportunity Inc., joined forces with the Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Office of Technical and Career Education. Opportunity Inc. granted the school district a \$223,000 contract to create and distribute a curriculum that addressed the 13 skills deemed necessary by the Virginia Department of Education. The Virginia Beach School Board took the goal of workplace readiness one step further by adopting the workforce readiness initiative as one of their goals for the 2006-2007 school year. This was also the year that the Virginia Department of Education began including competencies within course frameworks that required inclusion of Workplace Readiness Skills in class activities. The Virginia Beach school board provided funding to develop an online assessment of workplace readiness skills. Students who passed this assessment received a certificate and letter of verification from the Virginia Beach Economic Development Department. These documents can enhance the students' marketability

when job seeking by providing proof of their knowledge and competence in work related skills.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, all career and technical education teachers in Virginia Beach were required to complete a two hour introduction to the Virginia Workplace Readiness Curriculum and were provided a copy of the curriculum. The document was a massive collection of background information, lesson plans, and support material such as activities, student handouts, and ready to use teacher materials. Teachers were encouraged to incorporate these curriculum activities in their lesson planning. At the time many of the middle school Work and Family studies teachers felt that being asked to incorporate workplace readiness was overwhelming since they were already teaching the Virginia state course competencies for Work and Family Studies, as well as supporting the Virginia Standards of Learning, whenever possible. At this time most, if not all, of the middle school Work and Family Studies teachers were unaware that the state had added requirements to the state level course framework that required inclusion of Workplace Readiness Skills in class activities. Other teachers noted that many of the workplace competencies were an intrinsic part of our existing curriculum and therefore no additional lessons or plans were necessary. Many of the teachers noted that the Workplace Readiness curriculum was geared toward the high school level and many adaptations would be needed to make the plans appropriate for the middle school student.

The Work and Family Studies curriculum at the middle school level is revised periodically to ensure alignment with changing Virginia state competencies. The curriculum writing committee must ensure that all state competencies are addressed, as well as making sure the Work and Family Studies curriculum is in aligned with the

Virginia Standards of Learning wherever possible. This time consuming task carried a large financial commitment that would increase if additional time was taken to either re-write workplace readiness lesson plans or to align selected lesson plans with the middle school curriculum.

This research study was developed to provide data to determine if the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans were being incorporated and no further expense would be justified. If the lesson plans were being used within the middle school classroom would re-writing the lesson plans or aligning the lesson plans with the school district curriculum make a difference in the frequency workplace readiness skills were taught at the middle school level, and the additional financial outlay would be justified.

Limitations

The following limitations were recognized with regard to this study:

1. This research study was limited to Virginia Beach Middle School Work and Family Studies teachers.
2. This study was limited to data gathered during the 2007-2008 school term.
3. This study limited lesson plans to those provided to the teachers in the Virginia Workplace Readiness curriculum.
4. This study was limited to teachers with vocational Work and Family Studies teaching licensure.

Assumptions

In this study there were several factors, which were assumed to be correct. The assumptions were as follows:

1. All Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies teachers had received a copy of Workplace Readiness lesson plans.
2. Virginia Beach Middle School teachers were incorporating workplace readiness skills into their lesson plans.
3. Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies teachers believed workplace readiness skills should be integrated with daily lesson plans.

Procedures

Data for this research were collected from Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies teachers. The surveys were then reviewed to determine if workplace readiness skills were being taught at the middle school level. The need for revision of the lesson plans to address the needs of middle school students was determined as well as the need to align the lesson plans with the existing curriculum.

Definition of Terms

To assist the reader in understanding the terms used in this research study, the following list was created:

- **Core Academic Subjects** - Those subjects that provide base knowledge in the instructional areas of English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.
- **Middle School** - Educational institution that teaches students in the sixth through eighth grades.
- **Opportunity Inc.**- Hampton Roads Workforce Development Board.
- **Work and Family Studies** - “Family and Consumer Sciences programs in Work and Family Studies prepare middle school, high school and adult students for roles related to family life, work life and their interrelationships through

curriculum integrated with problem-solving strategies” (Ohio State University, 2008).

- **Workplace Readiness Lesson Plans** - Lesson plans developed by the Virginia Beach City Public Schools Office of Technical and Career Education in conjunction with the Opportunity Inc. to enhance workplace readiness among high school students in Virginia Beach Public Schools.
- **Workplace Readiness Skills** - A set of skills needed to be successful in the workplace.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter I introduced the problem of the study which was to determine if Virginia Beach Middle School Work and Family Studies teachers were incorporating the Virginia Workforce Readiness Lesson Plans as a portion of their classroom lesson plans for the improvement of student career preparation skills. The research goals were outlined and asked three questions: Are Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans being utilized by Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies teachers? Does the Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies curriculum need to be correlated with the Virginia Workforce Readiness Plans? And finally, do the Virginia Workforce Readiness Plans need to be revised for effective use at the middle school level? The background and significance outline the events that led to the study being undertaken as the importance of the findings to future curriculum development. Chapter II, Review of Literature, examines the existing knowledge in the field of workplace readiness skills, as well as the development of curriculum in American public schools throughout time. The middle

school concept is examined with regard to the role it assumes in a students career development and readiness. Chapter III, Methods and Procedures, discusses the methodology, instruments and techniques used to complete the study. This includes the survey used as well as the methods used for collecting, tabulating and analyzing the data. Chapter IV provides a detailed analysis of the research data that has been collected. A summary of the findings will be conducted in Chapter V. Conclusions will be drawn based on the data collected and recommendations will be made in light of future needs. This study will determine if Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies teachers are successfully incorporating workplace readiness skills into their courses or if more revisions or assistance is required.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

A crisis exists in American education so serious that, if left unchecked, could compromise our country's standing in both the domestic and international communities. What is this crisis? It is the failure of American schools to produce graduates with the skills to be successful in the modern and future workplace. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills and Conference Board in conjunction with Corporate Voices for Working Families and the Society for Human Resource Management joined forces and released the "Workforce Readiness Report Card" in September of 2006. This report surveyed over 400 Fortune 500 companies and discovered that high school and college graduates do not have the skills businesses look for in potential employees. American business leaders are not the only ones to voice this concern. The partnership for 21st Century Skills contracted a public opinion poll to determine what the American public thought of education in relation to the current business world. An astounding 80% of the registered voters contacted said they felt that the skills needed to be successful have changed over the past twenty years and the overwhelming majority agreed the public schools were not adequately keeping up with the changes in relation to preparing students to enter the workforce (McLester, 2006). The business world has changed from that of fifty years ago where a worker held one or two jobs through out their lifetime and changes within those jobs came gradually. A high school or college graduate of today and tomorrow can expect to hold 10 to 15 jobs over their lifetime (Kay, 2005). Technology has played a role in the changing workplace by demanding speeding up the pace at which business is conducted as well as bringing countries spread out by physical distance closer in a global

business community. The chairman of the board of the Intel Corporation once said “the biggest ticking time bomb in the U.S. is the sorry state of our K-12 education system” (Price, 2007). His intent with this statement was to drive home the point that the quality of education that our nation’s workforce receives will determine our global competitiveness.

A Brief History of Education in America

Teachers in American schools from the colonial times through the early 1900’s had very little guidance when deciding what to teach within their classroom. If a goal could be identified it would have been to help prepare the students for a successful life within a democratic society. Curriculum within the classroom consisted of basic academic skills, while students learned a vocation from parents or through apprenticeships (Rothstein, 2008).

Formal direction began to emerge in 1892 when the National Education Association formed the Committee of Ten. This group formed four major purposes for American High Schools (Johnson, 2003). The Committee of Ten recommended that High School consist of grades 7 through 12; they felt courses should be arranged sequentially and they set up the system of Carnegie units or credits that is used in a modified form today. The fourth recommendation was that students have very little choice in what they learn. Few elective classes were to be offered causing much discussion and began the trend toward pure academics taking the center stage in American education of the time. This could be described as the first of many “back to basics” movements that would be seen throughout American education.

The direction of American education took another major turn in 1918 when the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, commonly called the Seven Cardinal Principles, were published by the Commission on Reorganization of Secondary Education. The seven principles proposed included: health, academic skills, preparation for traditional, gendered household division of labor, vocational education, civic education, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character. Many believe the Seven Cardinal Principles attempted “to restore non-academic goals to importance” (Rothstein, 2008). Their intent was not to replace academic skills but to have non-academic subjects accompany the academics to enrich education. The Seven Cardinal Principles re-introduced the philosophy that education should prepare students for life within a democratic society.

The era of the Seven Cardinal principles were heavily influenced by the works and beliefs of John Dewey (1859-1952). Dewey believed that the main purpose of education was to “prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of information of prepared forms of skill which comprehend the material of instruction” (Lyons, 1998). Dewey advocated “child centered” education where students learn from active experiences that are enjoyable to the child. The influence of John Dewey and the Seven Cardinal Principles combined to allow Work and Family Studies known at the time as Home Economics to grow and thrive in the public education system. Home Economics of the time responded to the Cardinal Principles that called for preparation in the traditional gendered household division of labor. In other words female students were provided the opportunity to learn those skills they would need to successfully run a household as a part of their formal schooling. With few exceptions,

women of this era were offered few choices except to become wives, mothers and homemakers.

The Seven Cardinal Principles were examined again in 1957 when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite into earth's orbit. This success was achieved by the Soviet's by benefit of a large number of aeronautical engineers who were bolstered by research on rocketry originally written in German and French. Educational conservatives of the time pointed out that the number of students studying foreign languages had declined around the time the Seven Principles were adopted. They pointed out that the broad range of courses available were not academically demanding enough which was the reason the Americans failed to beat the Soviet Union into space (Jeynes, 2007). Educational liberals of the time felt the reason was that the conservatives refused to spend money on equipment and quality teachers to enhance learning in the fields of mathematics, science and foreign languages. Both theorists won in the end by convincing the government to raise standards in mathematics, science and foreign languages as well as significantly increase the amount of money given to education as a whole. This would be a rare compromise in American educational history where a shift toward basic academics was combined with enough funding to continue a liberal education as well.

The period in history from the mid 1960's through 1980 saw a decline in academic performance across the nation. This decline caused more and more political and education leaders to become active and involved in educational reform. The blame for this decline was primarily placed on John Dewey and his child centered policies. The Reagan administration felt that the schools had lost their preparation-centered nature that

had “made American schools great” (Jeynes, 2007). This was the beginning of a “back to basics” movement in America that has culminated with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act which places even more emphasis on basic academics by incorporating state and local accountability into the equation and providing for sanctions for those who do not meet minimum standards. In an educational system that has often fluctuated from one extreme to another, have we gone too conservative again? Charles Fadel, Global Education Lead for Cisco Systems, believed that this shift from one extreme to the other was common in American education and prevented recognition of what is really needed in education, which he felt was to achieve balance (McLester, 2006).

The Impact of NCLB on Education

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has been the driving force in American education since it became law in January of 2002. The purpose of the legislation was to improve the performance of schools by requiring the states, school districts and schools be held accountable for the level of achievement demonstrated by students within their jurisdiction. The legislation placed a focus on achievement of students in reading and mathematics, which has led to the creation of high stakes testing in many states. The criterion based tests used by many states have caused teachers to focus on the outcome of the test as the only measure of success causing many school systems to implement curriculum that “teaches to the test.” Unfortunately “teaching to the test” does not always allow for students to practice applying the information and skills in real-life settings. Robert Sternberg in his article, *Assessing What Matters*, stated that “when we teach only for facts, rather than for how to go beyond facts we teach students how to get out of date” (Rothstein, 2008). The inability of American students to apply learned skills has been

blamed on an imbalance of instruction. Charles Fadel stated that today we are placing too much emphasis on pure academics and not enough on the application or reasons to learn the skills. He believed that Americans have lost much of the creativity and deeper thinking it took in the past to become successful as a result of this extreme approach to education (McLester, 2006).

Enacting the NCLB legislation has had a ripple effect throughout the educational system. It caused states and local school systems to re-direct funding toward schools and programs that support the NCLB and less funding has been directed toward the art, music, drama and athletics. In Virginia Beach, middle school students were being pulled from elective classes such as Technology Education, Band, Chorus, Orchestra and Work and Family Studies in order to receive remedial instruction in the Core Subjects of English, Science, Mathematics and Social Studies, if they were deemed deficient in the “core” academic areas. The classes the students were missing out on were the ones that often demonstrated the real life applications of the academic subjects. The major focus of middle school education was to continue providing core academic instruction while introducing a career exploration component. Middle school students were offered a variety of overview courses that explored a variety of aspects of a large number of career choices. The students were able to narrow down career possibilities before committing to a complete course of study in a chosen field. Middle school exploratory courses were also the classes that promoted and allowed students practice in areas such as teamwork, critical thinking and work ethic, problem solving and application of technology. The variety of courses offered at the middle school level offered a wide overview of careers.

The Changing Workplace

The structure of modern business differed from that of fifty years ago in many ways. New forms of business organization and management have replaced jobs that were repetitious where the individual worker had no decision making authority with a system that often called on the worker to interact as a team member in designing daily job assignments, materials management and production scheduling (Department of Labor, 1999). The U.S. Federal government published a report in April, 1999, entitled *21st Century Skills for 21st Century Jobs*. This report compared basic elements of the workplace of the past with elements of new workplace organization to highlight the changes that have created the need for a new and different set of workplace skills than those of workers in the past. Comparisons were made between the workplace organization of the past which was hierarchical, rigid and function specialized, while the new economic system offered a workplace that was flexible, flat (non-hierarchical) and consisted of a network of multi/cross-functional teams. Job designs have changed from employees engaging in careers where they did one relatively simple repetitive job to positions where the employees have a broad spectrum of tasks to complete with multiple responsibilities being carried by each employee. Job designs often changed as technology advances requiring the employee to demonstrate flexibility and adaptive skills over time (Department of Labor, 1999). Businesses of the past would train workers to complete the narrow list of tasks required to complete their jobs. Although training was still conducted in business it had become quite costly since the characteristics of jobs change rapidly. A modern worker who had the ability to work in an autonomous manner adjusting and adapting to market changes was highly desired. Often workers who could not adjust were

unable to continue working for a particular business and found they were looking for the next of the anticipated 10 to 15 jobs a worker of the future may hold.

Another difference between in the workplace of the future included advances in technology which speed the pace of business and also have led to the development of what was called a “global economy”. The global connection consisted of four major systems that tie the welfare of our country to nations throughout the world. These systems were environmental systems, political systems, cultural systems and technological systems (Diaz, 1999). The employee of tomorrow must be aware of these connections and work within the new enlarged business system. The education of America’s workforce would play a vital role in the success of our country within the global economy (Walker, 2008).

21st Century Skills

Since the early 1990’s the American economy had evolved from one centered around industry to one that was knowledge based. Advances in technology have increased the pace of the business world and had created a global economy. The workplace of the future required new and different competencies than those of the past. The competencies for a successful worker were changing because the way the world conducted business had changed drastically. What were these competencies or skills needed for success in the workplace of the future? Definitions and specifications of workplace readiness skills were broad and varied from organization to organization. Common elements existed that tied them together. First workplace readiness skills were a combination of “hard skills” and “soft skills”. Hard skills were defined as the ability to function combined with technical expertise also known as basic knowledge skills. Soft

skills were the organizational and interpersonal skills also called applied skills. “The Workforce Readiness Report Card” identified the following skills as being “very important” to success at work. The hard skills or basic knowledge skills included: English (spoken), reading comprehension (in English), writing in English (grammar and spelling), Mathematics, Science, Government and Economics, the Humanities and Arts, and Foreign Languages. The soft skills or application skills identified were: critical thinking or problem solving skills, oral communications, written communications, teamwork, diversity education, information technology, leadership, creativity and innovation, lifelong learning, work ethic or professionalism and social responsibility or ethics (McLester, 2006).

Workplace Readiness Skills in Education

Workplace readiness skills were a requirement for all people in the U.S. workforce. The Workforce Readiness Report Card looked at the readiness of new workforce entrants in the Fortune 500 companies. The skill level of high school graduates was compared with the skill level of two year technical school graduates and those of four year graduates. The high school graduates fared the worst with none of the participants receiving an excellence rating in any category. Two year college graduates and technical school graduates only fared slightly better with 25% receiving a rating of excellence in information technology application. Four year college graduates scored the highest but were still deficient in written communications, writing in English, and leadership (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2004).

The call to teach workplace skills in education is not a new concept. In 1985, the University of Virginia’s Demographics and Workforce Section of the Weldon Cooper

Center began the process of looking at what qualities employers across Virginia were looking for in entry level employees. In 1991 the U.S. Department of Labor issued the *Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills*, also called the *SCANS* report. This report centered on the skills, competencies and personal qualities that were necessary to be highly effective in the workplace. With no federal mandate to require inclusion of these skills into the curriculum it was up to the states and local school systems to incorporate the findings in a manner they chose. The University of Virginia released an updated study to their original 1985 study in 1997 entitled *Virginia's Changing Workplace in the 21st Century*. This study reiterated the need to actively teach workplace readiness skills in the public schools. The overwhelming scope of what has been determined to be skills needed to be prepared to enter the American workplace has caused many organizations to call for these skills to be introduced as early as the elementary level and reinforced throughout a child's education. States and school districts across the nation were beginning to recognize the need to incorporate workplace readiness skills into their curriculum in order to ensure that students have ample time and opportunity to practice these skills before being called upon to use them in a workplace setting.

The Virginia Connection

The Virginia Department of Education, in response to the call for workplace readiness skills to be actively taught in schools, formulated an instructional activity unit entitled *Enhancing Workplace Readiness Skills* in 2001. This document highlighted 13 skills deemed necessary for success in the workplace. The Hampton Roads Workforce Development Board, known as Opportunity Inc., joined forces with the Virginia Beach

City Public Schools, Office of Technical and Career Education. Opportunity Inc. granted the school district a \$223,000 contract to create and distribute a curriculum that addressed the 13 skills deemed necessary by the Virginia Department of Education. The collection of lesson plans was released in the spring of 2006 and endorsed by Virginia's Governor Timothy Kaine. The Virginia Department of Education, Division of Career and Technical Education, began incorporating the Virginia Workplace Readiness Skills within the framework of each course starting with the 2006-2007 academic year. The Virginia Beach City public secondary school Career and Technical Education teachers were given individual copies of the lesson plans and asked to use them within their courses in order to assist teachers in complying with state competencies. As of March 2007, plans were being explored to distribute the curriculum throughout the state.

Summary

Throughout this Review of Literature the need for American schools to incorporate workplace readiness skills in the daily curriculum has been called for over and over again. Historically American schools and our economy have thrived when we teach our children the skills necessary to be successful within our society. These skills not only addressed success in the workplace but success in daily home and interpersonal life. Although ideally the skills should be spread throughout all subjects both academic and elective until the "pendulum" swung again and the NCLB was modified to a point where the teacher could begin teaching total skills for life and not just skills to pass the high stakes tests. It would fall on the shoulders of the elective teachers to incorporate as many workplace readiness skills in their daily plans as possible. No evidence of a comprehensive curriculum of workplace readiness skills that specifically addresses

middle schools students has been found. The Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans were written primarily for use in the high schools. Prior to shouldering the expense of distributing these plans to all middle schools in Virginia, their effectiveness should be determined. Is the set of plans “age appropriate” for effective instruction at the middle school level? Are there enough lessons within each of the 13 sections so repetition does not become an issue throughout the seven years of secondary instruction? Are additional plans necessary? Are the plans a good idea but need to be rewritten specifically to the middle school level? Are the plans good but aligning them with the state and local curriculum make them easier to incorporate into daily plans? This study provides answers to these questions and will guide the future of actively teaching workplace readiness skills in Virginia Beach and possible the entire state of Virginia. In Chapter III, the methods and procedures used to collect data to answer the research questions will be discussed.

Chapter III

Methods and Procedures

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the procedures used to gather data which was used to address the problem of determining if Virginia Beach Middle School Work and Family Studies teachers were incorporating the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans, as daily lesson plans for the improvement of student career preparation skills. Chapter III provides more details on the population used in the study and the design of the research instrument created for this study. Data collection methods and statistical analysis procedures used in determining the use of Workplace Readiness lesson plans in Virginia Beach middle schools is reviewed.

Population

The population of this study consisted of 28 teachers under contract to teach courses designated as Work and Family Studies at the middle school level for the 2007-2008 school year. The Work and Family Studies courses, currently recognized by the state of Virginia and offered by the Virginia Beach City Public School system, are: Teen Living 6 for sixth grade students, Teen Living 7 and Financial Fitness for Life offered in the seventh grade and Teen Living 8 and Career Skills offered in the eighth grade. There were fourteen middle schools in the city of Virginia Beach. A table of the schools and the number of Work and Family Studies teachers assigned to each school is listed in Appendix A.

Instrument Design

The researcher developed a survey titled *Implementing Workplace Readiness Skills in Virginia Beach Middle Schools*. The survey consisted of both open and closed questions. The questions used in the survey were designed to determine the extent the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans were being utilized within the middle school classroom. The questions formulated also determined if teachers felt the need to alter the plans before implementation or used them as written. The survey also determined if separate workplace readiness plans were necessary in the middle school curricula. The survey was given to the entire population of Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies teachers. The survey used in this report can be found in Appendix B.

Data Collection

The surveys were sent to all Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies teachers via the inter-school mail system. The surveys contained a cover letter that explained the purpose of the study and guaranteed participants confidentiality. Prior to survey distribution Mrs. Linda Spruill, Virginia Beach City Public Schools Work and Family Studies Program Director, sent an e-mail to all teachers within the population endorsing the study and encouraged a complete and timely response. Completed surveys were used to compile data for further analysis. A copy of the cover letter sent with the surveys can be found in Appendix C of this study.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected from the survey of Work and Family Studies teachers was tabulated and analyzed using several methods. The frequency and number of responses were calculated and a percentage was obtained to determine the number of teachers using the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans. A Likert Scale with a five point forced choice was used to identify attitudes toward integrating workplace readiness skills in the middle school curriculum as well as attitudes regarding the specific set of plans known as the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans. The mean for each question was calculated. Additional comments provided were noted and used to support statistical findings.

Summary

Chapter III showed the methods and procedures used to collect the relevant data necessary to address the purpose of this study which was to determine the use of the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans among Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies teachers. The results from statistical analysis of the data received will be presented in Chapter IV of this study.

Chapter IV

Findings

Chapter IV presents the tabulated data as well as an overview of the responses from the surveys sent to the twenty-eight (28) Work and Family Studies teachers under contract to teach at the middle school level during the 2007-2008 school term. The problem of this study was to determine if Virginia Beach Middle School Work and Family Studies teachers were incorporating the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans, created by the Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Office of Career and Technical Education in conjunction with Opportunity Inc., as daily lesson plans for the improvement of student career preparation skills. The research goals that were established to address this problem were:

1. Are Virginia Beach middle school teachers using the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans?
2. Does the Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies curriculum need to be correlated with the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans?
3. Do the Virginia Workforce Readiness plans need to be revised for effective use at the middle school level?

The survey developed to address the research goals was sent to each of the twenty-eight (28) Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies teachers at the fourteen (14) Virginia Beach City Public Middle Schools. Table 1 lists the fourteen (14) Virginia Beach Middle Schools, the number of Work and Family Studies teachers at each

school, as well as the number of surveys returned from each school. A total of twenty-three (23) surveys were returned to the researcher, representing 82.14 percent of the population.

Table 1. Returned Surveys

Virginia Beach City Public Schools	Work and Family Studies teachers	Total number of surveys returned
Bayside	1	1
Brandon	2	0
Center for Effective Learning	1	1
Corporate Landing	2	2
Great Neck	1	0
Independence	2	2
Kempsville	2	2
Landstown	3	2
Larkspur	3	3
Lynnhaven	2	2
Plaza	2	2
Princess Anne	3	3
Salem	3	2
Virginia Beach	1	1

Work and Family Studies in the Middle School

The Virginia State Department of Education describes the focus of middle school Work and Family Studies courses as “career exploration” where the courses offered at the high school level are labeled as “work focused.” These descriptions often lead to differing opinions about the focus of Work and Family Studies courses at the middle school level. Where do workplace readiness skills fit into the middle school Work and Family Studies curriculum? Should middle school teachers be helping students explore careers or prepare for careers, or both? The first six questions included in the survey explored the respondents’ opinions of the purpose of Work and Family Studies within the

middle school, as well as the role of workplace readiness skill within these classes and the teachers' responsibility toward facilitating workplace readiness skills required by the state of Virginia.

The first question in this survey looked at the focus of Work and Family Studies at the middle school level to determine what the respondents felt the focus should be. The question read:

1. I feel the focus of middle school Work and Family Studies classes should be exclusively career exploration.

Strongly Agree____
Agree____
Uncertain____

Disagree____
Strongly Disagree_____

An analysis of the responses was conducted using the Like scale with a five point forced choice, with five points being assigned to the response strongly agree, four points for agree, three points for uncertain, two points for disagree and one point for strongly disagree. The data gathered from the surveys indicated that 1 teacher strongly agreed and 1 teacher agreed each representing 4.34 percent of those surveyed, that the focus of middle school Work and Family studies should be exclusively career exploration. Two teachers or 8.69 percent were uncertain. Ten teachers disagreed with the statement representing 43.47 percent, while 9 teachers or 39.13 percent strongly agreed. The mean response to this question was calculated to be 1.83, revealing that a majority of the teachers surveyed disagreed with the statement. Figure 1 graphically represents the response to this question.

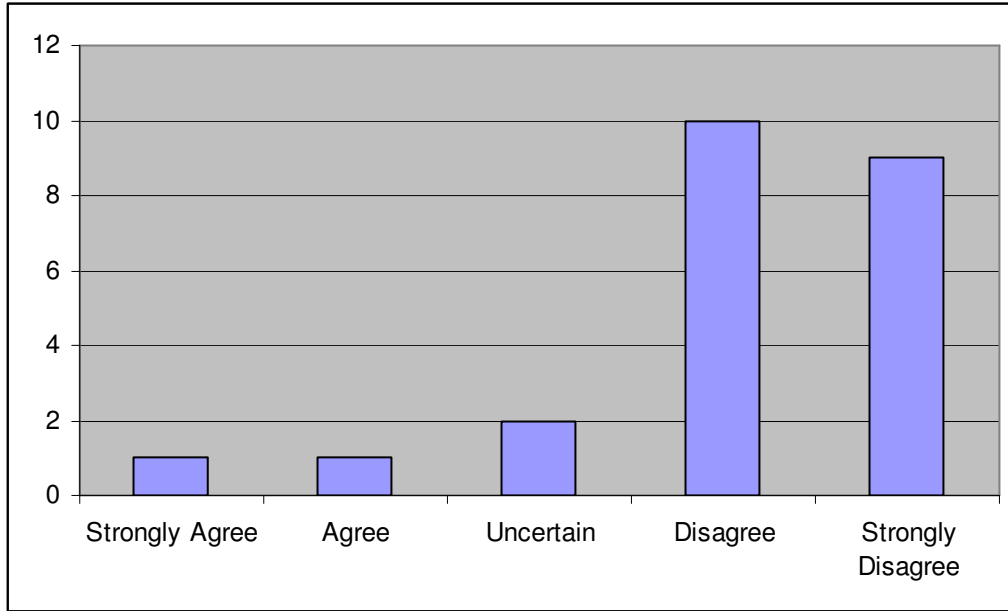


Figure 1. Question 1 - The Focus of Work and Family Studies

The second question addressed the connection between workplace readiness skills and career exploration. It read:

2. I feel workplace readiness skills are an integral part of career exploration.

Strongly Agree____
 Agree____
 Uncertain____

Disagree____
 Strongly Disagree____

The data gathered from the surveys indicated that eleven teachers strongly agreed with the statement representing 47.8 percent of those surveyed. Ten teachers agreed with the statement representing 43.4 percent. The categories of uncertain and disagree had one tally each representing 4.34 percent each, while strongly disagree had zero responses.

The mean was calculated at 4.34 indicating agreement with the statement that workplace readiness skills were an integral part of career exploration. Figure 2 illustrates the findings of survey Question 2.

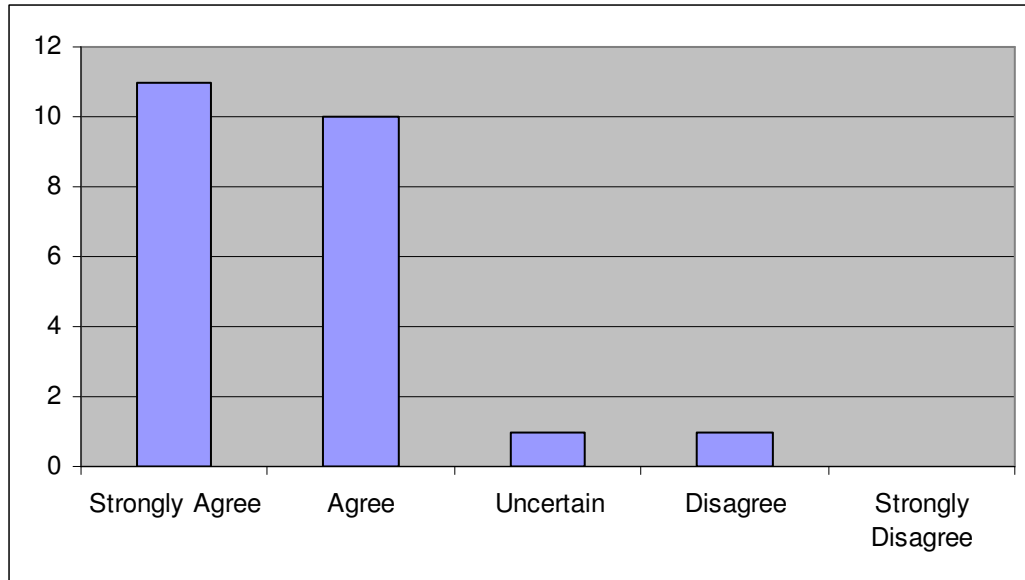


Figure 2. Question 2- Workplace Readiness Skills and Career Exploration

The Integration of Workplace Readiness Skills

The teachers were asked if they felt they already integrate workplace readiness skills without the assistance of the Workforce Readiness lesson plans. The question was a closed form forced choice question that read:

3. I am actively integrating workplace readiness skills **without** using the provided Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans.
- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Strongly Agree _____ | Disagree _____ |
| Agree _____ | Strongly Disagree _____ |
| Uncertain _____ | |

In response to the question one teacher indicated that she strongly agreed with this statement representing 4.34 percent of respondents. Sixteen teachers indicated that they agreed with the statement representing 69.56 percent. There was one tally each for uncertain and strongly disagree while four teachers indicated they disagreed with the statement representing 17.39 percent of responses. The mean response for this question

was 3.52 indicating that the respondents agreed with the statement. Figure 3 graphically represents the responses for Question 3.

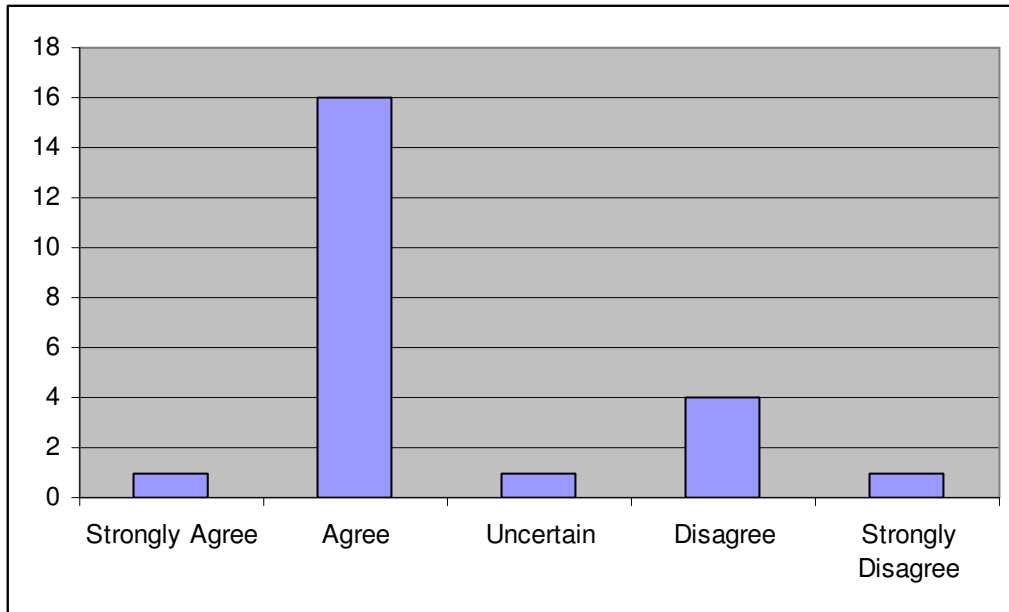


Figure 3. Question 3 - Teaching Without the Virginia Workforce Readiness Lesson Plans

Question 4 asked if the teachers felt the nature of Work and Family Studies already includes many workplace readiness skills. The survey question read:

4. I feel Work and Family studies, by nature, includes many workplace readiness skills within the context of the curriculum.

Strongly Agree _____	Disagree _____
Agree _____	Strongly Disagree _____
Uncertain _____	

Analysis of the responses indicated that eight teachers strongly agreed with the statement representing 34.78 percent of responses while 56.52 percent or thirteen teachers indicated an agreement with the statement. Two teachers checked uncertain representing 8.69 percent while there were zero responses for the categories of disagree

and strongly disagree. The mean was calculated to be 4.26 indicating agreement with the statement. Figure 4 graphically represents the findings of Question 4.

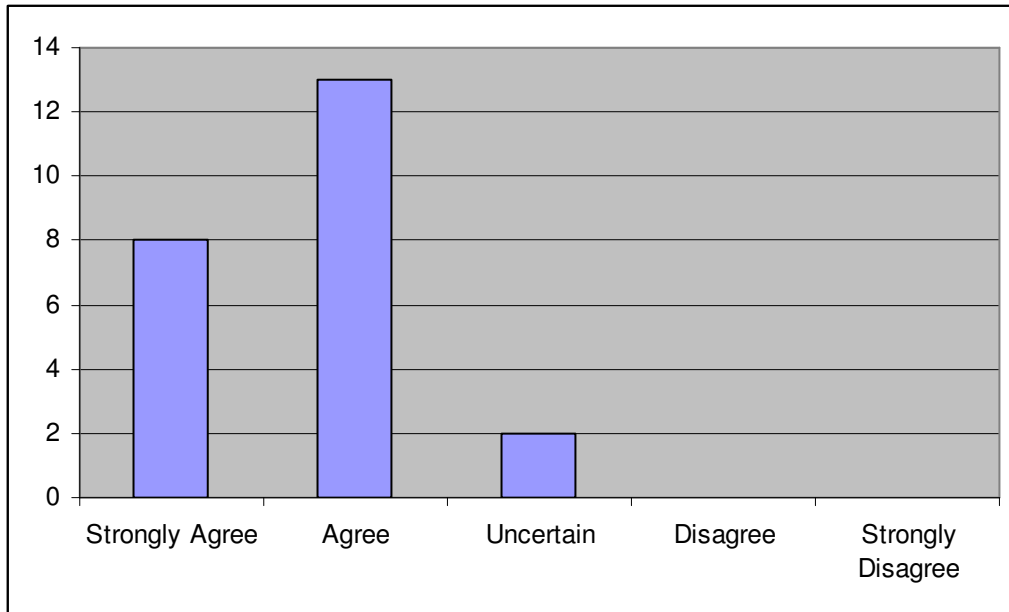


Figure 4. Question 4 - The Nature of Work and Family Studies

Question 5 explored opinions surrounding teachers’ responsibilities toward teaching workplace readiness skills. Future curriculum revisions in Work and Family Studies will include Workplace Readiness Skills as a requirement however it has not yet been included as a requirement in any Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies course curricula. Question 5 read:

5. It is the teachers’ responsibility to incorporate workforce readiness skills during the implementation of a middle school course curriculum.

Strongly Agree_____	Disagree_____
Agree_____	Strongly Disagree_____
Uncertain_____	

The data from the returned surveys revealed that only two teachers strongly agreed with this statement representing 8.69 percent of responses. Thirteen teachers agreed that it was a teacher’s responsibility to incorporate workforce readiness skills in

their lesson plans representing 56.52 percent of the total response. Four teachers were uncertain about the statement representing 17.39 percent of the total response while two teachers or 8.69 percent indicated they disagreed with the statement. There were zero responses that indicated a strong disagreement with the statement. The mean score was 3.73 indicating agreement with this statement. Figure 5 is a visual representation of the data collected from Question 5 responses.

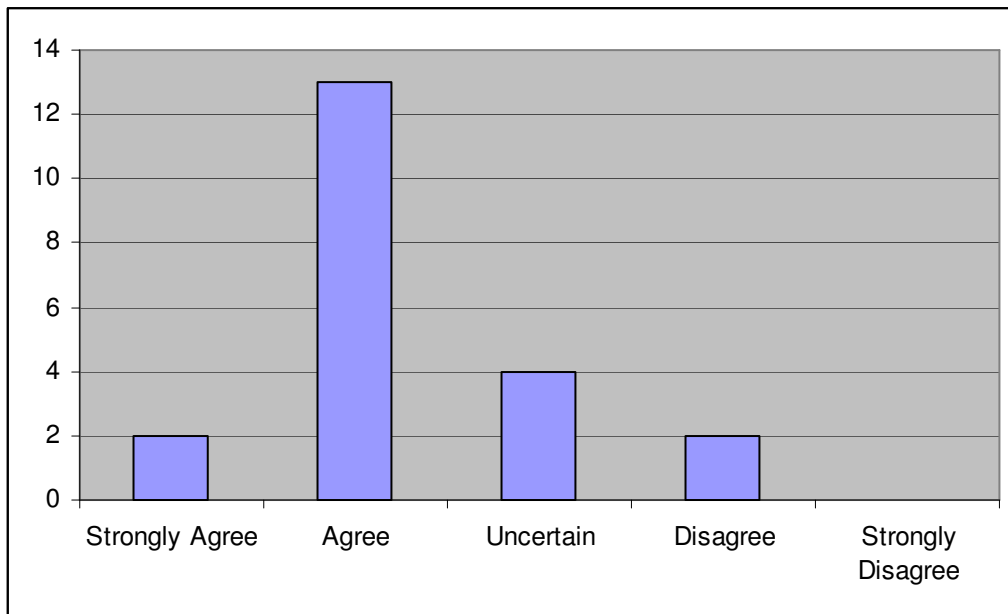


Figure 5. Question 5 - Teachers Responsibilities in Teaching Workplace Readiness

Workplace Readiness Lesson Plans and the Middle School

The Workplace Readiness Lesson plans that are the focus of this study were originally written for and intended to be used by high school level Career and Technical education classes. Question 6 addressed the need for a separate set of lesson plans that were written for the middle school level student. Question 6 in the survey read:

6. There is a need for separate workforce readiness lesson plans at the middle school level.

Strongly Agree_____

Disagree_____

Agree_____

Strongly Disagree_____

Uncertain_____

The data gathered from this question indicated an overall uncertainty among the teachers surveyed with a mean score of 2.78. There were a total of two answers that were in strong agreement that represented 8.69 percent of the total. Five teachers or 21.73 percent indicated agreement. Three teachers representing 13.04 percent were uncertain while 52.17 percent or twelve teachers disagreed with the statement. One teacher, representing 4.34 percent of responses strongly disagreed with the statement. Figure 6 graphically indicates the results of the data compiled from Question 6.

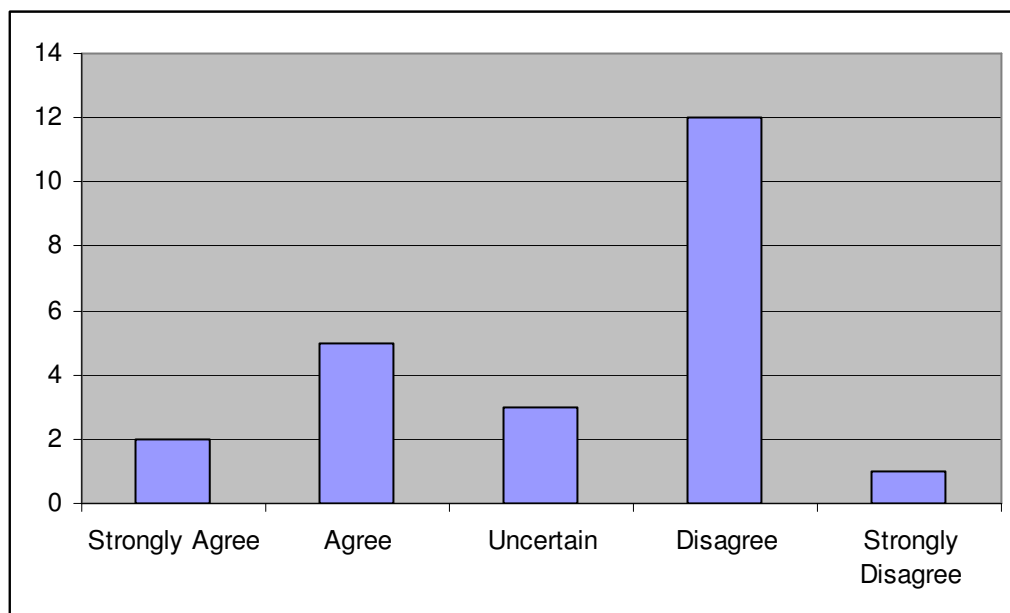


Figure 6. Question 6 - The Need for Separate Plans for the Middle School Level

The seventh question asked if the teachers have attended the required training sessions and have received the binder containing the Workplace Readiness lesson plans. The training was a professional development activity offered to all Career and Technical

Education teachers in Virginia Beach during the summer of 2006. The survey question read:

7. I have attended the required training session and have received a copy of the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans.

Yes _____ No _____

From a total of 23 survey participants 78.26 percent or 18 teachers indicated that they had attended the required training session and have received the binder that contains the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans. Five teachers representing 21.73 teachers indicated that they have not yet received the materials of the training.

The remaining questions of the survey pertained only to those teachers who had received the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans. The five teachers who have not yet received the materials were asked not to complete the remainder of the questions. The data collected for the next two questions will be based on responses from the 18 teachers who have received the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans.

Question 8 examined the grade levels the Workplace Readiness lesson plans were intended to reach. The words as written were intentionally placed in bold type indicating that the teachers were not making personal revisions to the plans before using them in the classroom. The survey question was a five point forced choice question. The question read:

8. I feel the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans **as written** are appropriate for the middle school level.

Strongly Agree _____ Disagree _____
Agree _____ Strongly Disagree _____
Uncertain _____

The data revealed that zero (0) teachers strongly agree with this statement. Three teachers representing 16.66 percent of the responses agreed with the statement. Seven teachers were uncertain about the statement, which comprised 38.88 percent of teachers who have received the plans. Six teachers disagreed with the statement while two teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. These groups represented 33.33 percent and 11.11 percent of the total responses respectively. The mean for the data was 1.56 indicating overall disagreed that the plans were appropriate for the middle school level. Figure 7 graphically represents the data in Question 8.

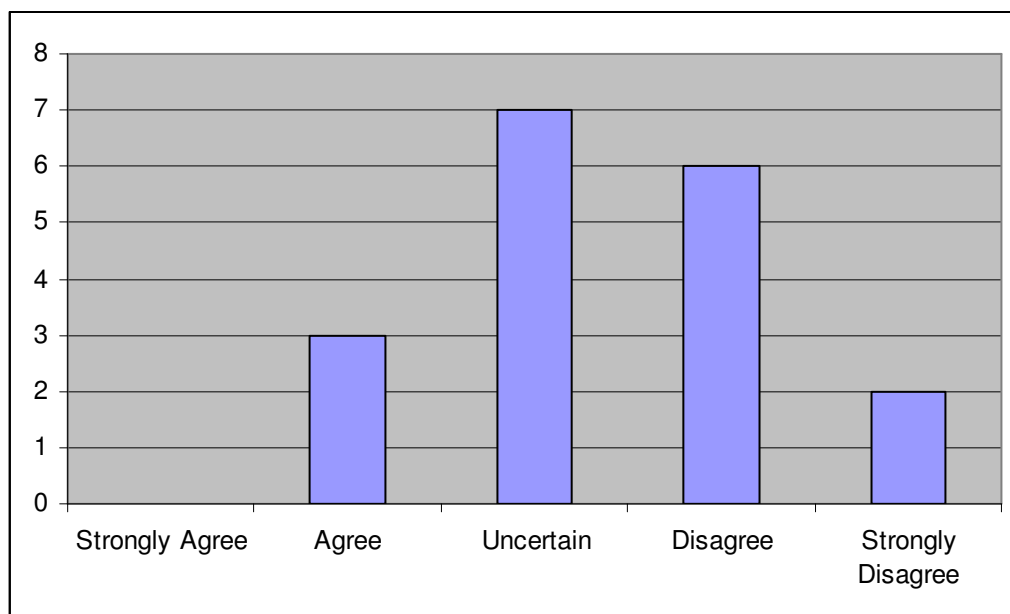


Figure 7. Question 8 - Are the Plans Written for Middle School?

The ninth survey question simply asks if the teachers were using the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans provided. Of the eighteen teachers that had received the lesson plans five indicated that they were using the plans representing 27.77 percent of the total while 13 gave a negative response representing 72.22 percent of the total.

The thirteen teachers who indicated they were not using the lesson plans were asked to respond to survey Question 10. This question explored the reasons the teachers were not using the lesson plans. The survey question read:

10. If you are not currently using any of the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans, indicate why (check all that apply):
 - a. I do not feel there is a need for separate lesson plans_____
 - b. I do not have time to integrate the lessons into my plans_____
 - c. Other _____ Please explain_____

Three teachers representing 23.07 percent of the total felt there was not a need for separate lesson plans to teach workplace readiness skills. Four teachers indicated that there was not time to integrate the plans into daily plans representing 30.76 of the response. The remaining 8 teachers representing 61.53 percent selected the “other” category and wrote in a variety of reasons. Three of the eight teachers commented on time in a variety of ways. One teacher indicated they did not have time to go through the massive set of plans, while two teachers noted that we see many of these students for only nine weeks and time does not permit them to add much more than what is required in our course curriculum. Following on the notion of time one teacher indicated that our curriculum was “rich” and fills the allotted time with students alone. One teacher felt they were already integrated in our lessons while another indicated that she integrated workplace readiness skills where they fit in with course curriculum. One teacher felt that workplace readiness skills were not needed in all of the courses.

Survey Question 11 was directed toward those five teachers who indicated that they were using the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans. Question 11 read:

11. I am actively involved in using the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans **as they are written.**

Yes _____

No _____

One teacher representing 20 percent of the five teachers indicated that she was using the lesson plans as they were written while the remaining 4 or 80.00 percent indicated that they were not.

Question 12 asked the teacher if they were making personal revisions or adaptations to the plans. All five teachers representing 100 percent indicated that they were making revisions.

The final question in the survey explored the reasons why the teachers were making revisions of adaptations to the lesson plans. Survey Question 13 read:

13. If you are altering the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans please indicate why (Check all that apply):
- a. The plans are not written for middle school level _____
 - b. The plans require more time than is available _____
 - c. The plans do not correlate with course curriculum _____
- Other _____ Please explain: _____

Two teachers representing 40.00 percent checked selection “a” indicating they felt the plans were not written for middle school students. One teacher representing 20.00 percent checked selection “b”, the plans required more time than was available. There were zero (0) responses for selection “c”, the plans do not correlate with course curriculum. The remaining 40.00 percent or two teachers selected “other”. Their explanations included that they adapt the plans to the time and technology available. Some of the plans did not seem to hold the interest of the middle school students and each class has a different make up and adaptations must be made to address the needs of specific classes.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher collected, sorted and tabulated the results of the survey sent to twenty-eight middle school Work and Family Studies teachers in the Virginia Beach City Public Schools. The data revealed the percentage of teachers actively utilizing or not utilizing the Virginia workplace Readiness lesson plans as a means of incorporating Workplace Readiness Skills in instructional activities. The results of the survey also revealed reasons the teachers gave for their use or non-use of the provided lesson plans. Chapter V will present a summary of the data collected as well as conclusions and recommendations based on the responses gathered from the survey.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a summary of the research. The conclusions along with the recommendations provided in this chapter were based on the information collected, sorted, and tabulated by the researcher for this study.

Summary

The Work and Family Studies curriculum is a dynamic and ever changing set of goals and expectation that guide students toward success both at home and in a work environment. Prior research has demonstrated that both high school and college level graduates are entering the modern workplace without a complete set of skills needed to be successful within the business world. In response to this need the Virginia Department of Education developed a unit of study, entitled Enhancing Workplace Readiness Skills, in 2001, which highlighted 13 areas deemed necessary for successful introduction into the workplace setting. The Workplace Readiness lesson plans were developed by the Virginia Beach City Public Schools Office of Career and Technical Education in conjunction with Opportunity Inc., the Hampton Roads Workforce Development Board. The set of lesson plans was unveiled and distributed to all Virginia Beach Career and Technical Education teachers in 2006. The same year the Virginia Department of Education began including a competency in the framework for every Work and Family Studies course that required Workplace Readiness Skills be “demonstrated” in class activities.

The problem of this study was to determine if Virginia Beach Middle School Work and Family Studies teachers were incorporating the Virginia Workforce Readiness

lesson plans, created by the Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Office of Career and Technical Education in conjunction with Opportunity Inc., as daily lesson plans for the improvement of student career preparation skills. The following research questions were established to address this problem:

1. Are Virginia Beach middle school teachers using the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans?
2. Does the Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies curriculum need to be correlated with the Virginia Workforce Readiness plans?
3. Do the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans need to be revised for effective use at the middle school level?

The results of this study will assist the Virginia Beach Office of Career and Technical Education in determining if the lesson plans are an effective means of incorporating workplace readiness skills in class activities as mandated by the current state competencies. The study results will help determine what the most effective and cost efficient way of assisting the teachers in the implementation of this mandate and act as a guide for the committee rewriting the curricula for Work and Family Studies courses in Virginia Beach middle schools.

Conclusions

The data compiled from the survey revealed not only answers to the research question but also supplied insight into the attitudes and opinions of the teachers regarding the Workplace Readiness lesson plans. The researcher aimed to analyze three research goals in this study.

1. Are Virginia Beach middle school teachers using the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans?

The tabulated data revealed that of the 23 survey responses, (82.14 response rate), 78.29 percent of the teachers had attended the training and received a hard copy of the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans. From the group of 18 teachers who had the lesson plans only 5 teachers, representing 27.77 percent, said they were using the lesson plans. The conclusion that can be drawn from this data indicated that the majority of the teachers that responded to the survey, 72.23 percent, were not using the lesson plans.

2. Does the Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family Studies curriculum need to be correlated with the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans?

The majority of teachers surveyed indicated that they were not using the lesson plans (78.26%) and of those teachers the majority of the teachers, representing 53.84 percent, indicated time in one form or another as a factor involved in not using the plans. At first glance it may be assumed that correlating the lesson plans with course curricula would assist the teachers in incorporating the lesson plans without a major time investment. Question 8 of the survey changed the direction of the conclusion by demonstrating that the teachers disagreed with the idea that the plans, as written, were appropriate for middle school students. Therefore, it can be concluded that it would not be an effective use of time to correlate lesson plans that are not age appropriate for the target audience.

3. Do the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans need to be revised for effective use at the middle school level?

The response to the survey demonstrated that the teachers felt Workplace Readiness is an important part of career exploration and that it was an appropriate part of the Work and Family Studies curriculum. The survey revealed that the teachers agreed they felt they were already incorporating many workplace readiness skills within their lesson plans without using separate lesson plans. The survey also indicated from the results of Question 6 that there was uncertainty among the teachers whether a separate set of plans is needed at the middle school level. Based on the uncertainty of the teachers regarding the need for separate lesson plans this researcher cannot conclude with certainty that revisions to the Workplace Readiness lesson plans would make them a tool that teachers would use with more frequency.

Recommendations

This research has demonstrated that the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans were not an effective means of highlighting Workplace Readiness Skills within the middle school setting. Based on the findings of this study the researcher makes the following recommendations in order to support the teachers in fulfilling the requirement of including workplace readiness skills in class activities.

1. Correlate the Work and Family Studies course curricula with the 13 Workplace Readiness Skills identified by the Virginia Department of Education in 2001(Martin, 2001). These are the skills that the Workplace Readiness lesson plans were based. The middle school teachers surveyed felt they were already incorporating many of these skills

in their lesson plans, by identifying where these skills are already being used it can be determined where additional support is called for.

2. Create lesson plans geared toward the middle school to fill the “gaps” identified in Recommendation 1. This would answer a need without creating the time and financial demands that creating an entire set of lesson plans focused on the middle school level would create.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Virginia Beach Middle Schools and the number of Work and Family Studies teachers at each school.

Appendix B – Survey – Incorporating Workplace Readiness Skills in Virginia Beach Middle Schools

Appendix C – Cover Letter

Appendix A. Virginia Beach Middle Schools and the Number of Work and Family Studies Teachers at Each School

Virginia Beach City Public Schools	Work and Family Studies teachers
Bayside	1
Brandon	2
Center for Effective Learning	1
Corporate Landing	2
Great Neck	2
Independence	2
Kempsville	2
Landstown	3
Larkspur	3
Lynnhaven	2
Plaza	2
Princess Anne	3
Salem	3
Virginia Beach	1
	29 total

Appendix B – Survey Instrument

Incorporating Workplace Readiness Skills in Virginia Beach Middle Schools

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent that the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans are being used within Virginia Beach middle school Work and Family and Studies courses.

Please complete the following survey and return it within 1 week through the “pony”. Results will be available at the first Roundtable meeting for the 2008-2009 school year. Please place an “x” next to the answer that best reflects your opinion.

Questions:

1. I feel the focus of middle school Work and Family Studies classes should be exclusively career exploration.

Strongly Agree _____
Agree _____
Uncertain _____

Disagree _____
Strongly Disagree _____

2. I feel workplace readiness skills are an integral part of career exploration.

Strongly Agree _____
Agree _____
Uncertain _____

Disagree _____
Strongly Disagree _____

3. I am actively integrating workplace readiness skills **without** using the provided Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans.

Strongly Agree _____
Agree _____
Uncertain _____

Disagree _____
Strongly Disagree _____

4. I feel Work and Family Studies, by nature, includes many workplace readiness skills within the context of the curriculum.

Strongly Agree _____
Agree _____
Uncertain _____

Disagree _____
Strongly Disagree _____

5. It is the teachers' responsibility to incorporate workforce readiness skills during the implementation of a middle school course curriculum.

Strongly Agree _____
Agree _____
Uncertain _____

Disagree _____
Strongly Disagree _____

6. There is a need for separate workforce readiness lesson plans at the middle school level.

Strongly Agree _____
Agree _____
Uncertain _____

Disagree _____
Strongly Disagree _____

7. I have attended the required training session and have received a copy of the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans.

Yes _____

No _____

If you answered **NO** to Question #7 your survey is complete. Thank you.

If you answered **YES** to Question #7 please answer the following questions.

8. I feel the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans **as written** are appropriate for the middle school level.

Strongly Agree _____
Agree _____
Uncertain _____

Disagree _____
Strongly Disagree _____

9. I am using the Virginia Workforce Readiness lesson plans.

Yes _____ No _____

If your answer to Question #9 is **yes** please skip to Question #11.
If your answer to Question #9 is **no** please answer question #10.

10. If you are not currently using any of the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans, indicate why(check all that apply):

- a. I do not feel there is a need for separate lesson plans _____
 - b. I do not have time to integrate the lessons into my plans _____
 - c. Other _____ Please explain _____
-
-

Your survey is now complete. Please use the space at the end of the survey for questions or comments.

11. I am actively involved in using the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans **as they are written**.

Yes _____ No _____

12. I am actively using the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans **with personal** revisions or adaptations.

Yes _____ No _____

If, your answer to Question #12 is **NO**, your survey is now complete.
Please use space at the end of the survey for questions or comments.

13. If you are altering the Virginia Workplace Readiness lesson plans please indicate why(Check all that apply):

- a. The plans are not written for middle school level. _____
- b. The plans require more time than is available _____
- c. The plans do not correlate with course curriculum _____
- Other _____ Please explain: _____

Please use this page for additional comments. Thank- you.

Please use this space to add any comments or questions you may have about the topic of this study.

Ruled lines for writing additional comments or questions.

Appendix C. Cover Letter

June 5, 2008

Carole W. Forbes
2634 Bracston Rd.
Virginia Beach VA 23456

Dear Colleagues,

American business is conducted in a global community that is driven by rapidly changing technology. Workers of the future must possess a solid core of knowledge as well as the ability to apply this knowledge in real world settings. Research studies show that high school graduates entering the workforce are lacking in skills needed to become successful. These skills are often called Workplace Readiness Skills or 21st Century Skills.

The Virginia Beach Office of Career and Technical Education has recognized the need to focus on workplace readiness skills and has developed a set of lesson plans that focus on these skills. These plans were distributed over the past two years to all public school career and technical education teachers in Virginia Beach.

I have undertaken a research study to determine if these lesson plans are being used within middle school Work and Family Studies courses. My goals for this study are: to determine if the lesson plans provided are being used, decide if the lesson plans be aligned with our course curriculum and to see if the need exists to re-write the plans geared only toward the middle school student. This project is part of my M.S. program of studies in Career and technical Education at Old Dominion University.

I hope you will find time to complete the attached survey. Your responses will remain confidential and will help guide us as we revise the middle school Work and Family Studies curriculum in the summer of 2009. You are not required to participate in this study but your input would be greatly appreciated. Please return the attached survey to me within 10 days via the enclosed pre-stamped envelope. If you have any questions or concerns or would like a copy of the survey results, please contact me by e-mail. Thanks you for your help.

Sincerely,

Carole W. Forbes
Work and Family Studies
Princess Anne Middle School

CaroleW.Forbes@vbschools.com