

The Promise of Educational and Career Guidance:
Motivating At Risk Students to Aspire for their Future

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The purpose of my plenary address is to describe how Educational and Career Guidance can be used as a powerful tool to motivate at-risk students to aspire for their future. We all know that successfully achieving one's life goals begins with a teacher believing in a student's ability to reach beyond. One way of measuring the strength of a nation is its ability to take ownership over the fact that a number of risk factors will result in many citizens being unable to participate equally in the world of work. Economic conditions contribute strongly to educational performance and students with disabilities face significant educational and workforce transition challenges throughout the world. From my perspective, the term "at-risk" includes all students who have not achieved their true potential. The reason for this more inclusive definition is to focus our attention as career educators on designing learning experiences that promote opportunities for optimal development among all youth. As career educators, our role in society is to create the social capital needed to maintain a strong and vibrant economy. Social capital¹ refers to the broad range of academic, social/emotional, and career planning skills² that are necessary to successfully compete for high paying 21st Century jobs. At-risk youth also need to possess the social capital needed to continue beyond a secondary education and possess occupational goals that lead ultimately to jobs offering livable wages.

There is no shame in the fact that at-risk youth exist in every society, especially societies where economic gains are matched with increasing income disparity. While this can be considered a natural consequence of a growing and vibrant economy, it takes courage as an educator and a nation to accept the existence of an at-risk population and embrace this as a challenge to directly address, not an embarrassment to avoid. There is no question in my mind that Singapore's career educators can become the world leaders in designing effective strategies for working with at-risk youth.

Singapore has already emerged internationally as a standard for excellence in many areas including your approach to 1) maintaining a self-reliant and competitive workforce that values work and making a contribution to the economy, 2) providing housing access to all, and 3) establishing premier educational models in delivering math education and more recently linking social emotional learning to academic and career development. As Singapore along with other post-modern societies experience a widening economic gap between rich and poor, the importance of career and workforce development becomes paramount if the ideals of democracy are to be realized.

¹ Author(s): James S. Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 94, Supplement: Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structure pp. S95-S120.

² American School Counselor Association. (2003). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

The question I often hear when discussing how to improve the lives of at-risk students is: How can one person make a positive difference when so many of the life challenges all youth encounter are outside the classroom? With family playing such a critical role in establishing the psychological template needed for positive development, it seems a daunting task to expect a single educator to change a child's life trajectory.

And yet, Master Career Educators make a positive difference every day and in every classroom. Making a positive difference comes in many forms: the smiling face, improved test scores, and the look of wonder when a child figures out the answer for the first time. A powerful glow emanates from Master Career Educators. This glow permeates their work, style, and daily interactions. Master Career Educators cannot help but make a positive difference.

Master Career Educators ultimately walk alone comforted by their "original" thoughts and ideals. Emerson long ago addressed the importance of self-reliance³ when he wrote:

To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all (men), — that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost,— and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment.

Neitzsche⁴ also wrote long ago about what I call the Master Career Educator when he spoke of the overman – a superman – whose strength came in the fact that he or she continues to strive toward excellence. Constantly questioning one's methods, goals, and ideas, the overman seeks to re-create themselves new and fresh.

Master Career Educators' biggest challenge is mediocrity. Mediocrity will always be with us. It rises from contentment and a desire to maintain the status quo. Mediocrity is a harbor filled with low expectations. The echoes of low expectations are often found in phrases such as "be realistic," "let's just do what we need in order to get the job done," or "I would teach better if I had better students."

My experience with at-risk populations has been from working with inner-city youth living in communities characterized by high poverty rates and violence⁵. Surveys indicated that 94% of the students we worked with had been exposed to violence either directly as a victim or

³ Emerson, R.W. (1844) Self-Reliance

⁴ Neitzsche, F. W. (1909/1976). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Random House; reprinted in *The Portable Nietzsche*, New York: The Viking Press, 1954 and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

⁵ Howard, K. A. & Solberg, V. S. (2006). School counseling as a method for achieving social justice. *Professional School Counselor*, 94, 278-294. Solberg, V. S. H., Carlstrom, A. H., Howard, K.A.S. & Jones, J. E. (2007). Classifying youth at-risk for high school non-completion: Role of exposure to violence and resilience on 9th grade outcomes. *Career Development Quarterly*, 55, 313-327

indirectly by knowing someone who experienced violence⁶. With regard to test scores, the 15 year old students were working on average with the reading and math skills of a nine year old. By average, this means that half of the 15 year olds were below the nine year old level. I have witnessed the power of Master Career Educators' ability to empower these students with goals and attitudes that have resulted in their going on to colleges and universities. I have seen what happens when a school devotes its complete attention to starting with young preschool-age children living in poverty and high crime neighborhoods and deliver them to the most prestigious upper secondary high schools in the United States. In these schools, it was a teacher who made the difference. A teacher who made the decision to devote his or her life to creating learning opportunities that transformed at-risk youth into productive and successful adults. A teacher who possessed three critical characteristics: vision, courage, and magic.

Vision

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

A bird does not sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song.

Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still⁷

The song for Master Career Educators is the vision that underlies the purpose and essential meaning of their work. The melody is a deep understanding that the work they do serves a larger purpose. This larger purpose is helping all students develop the career and workforce readiness skills needed to successfully secure occupations with liveable wages. This larger purpose is helping all students discover meaningful work that aligns with their self-determined goals and aspirations.

In the Singapore context, this vision integrates Social Emotional Learning indicators with career and workforce development indicators. To be successful in obtaining 21st Century jobs, we must prepare all youth to be ready to take advantage of new emerging occupations that will be created to address foreseen and unforeseen issues and challenges. "Green jobs" is an example of an emerging industry that allows students with science, technology, math and engineering skills (STEM) an opportunity to use those skills in ways that directly improve their communities and the future of our planet. [SLIDE 6]

Our vision must include preparing all students for a highly modern world of work characterized by: High technology and speed of information, rapid change in the world of work,

⁶ Howard, K. A. S. (2009). Personal communication.

⁷ Chinese Proverbs

rapid social change, time and space alterations due to increased global interactions, and the disembedding of identity from traditional societal expectations.

The Singapore Ministry of Education's Social Emotional Learning (SEL) framework provides additional developmental benchmarks that directly relate to career development (Figure 1). The categories of SEL include self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship management, and responsible decision-making. A number of ways in which SEL directly applies to career development include the: 1) ability to recognise strengths, needs, and values, 2) perspective taking as it relates to being able to work effectively with others, 3) ability to manage stress, 4) ability to be self-motivated and disciplined, 5) ability to engage in goal setting and demonstrate organizational skills, 6) ability to work effectively with others, and 7) ability to engage in self-reflection and career decision-making. Student outcome indicators that match for both the SEL and career development models include: 1) Engaging in career planning and career decision-making, 2) establishing a sense of purpose as indicated by identifying educational and occupational goals, 3) Finding and using information that will help in making informed career decisions and facilitate positive transitions, 4) using technology and media effectively such as the ECG Portal system and the ePortfolio feature that allows students to record and share media samples, and, 5) understanding systems and complex relations as it relates to how one seeks desirable occupation and education opportunities and how to be successful once on the job or in school.

Workforce readiness skills can be expanded to include a number of additional areas that have been identified as part of the Career Clusters model, 21st Century skills, and resiliency skills (Figure 2). The world of work is changing rapidly and academic skills, while necessary, are not sufficient for preparing youth to successfully manage the rigors and challenges that they will face. Multimedia technology skills and social skills are two critical areas all students need to be successful and other more resilience based skills are also needed such as being able to learn how to learn, actively engaging in stress and health management, and being proactive and engaged learners.

Adapting Neo and Chen's Singapore model of Dynamic Governance⁸, we can judge our success as educators by the degree to which our graduates possess the ability to manage the anxiety associated with future uncertainty in a manner that allows them to take advantage of emerging educational and occupational opportunities (Figure 3). Workforce readiness is indicated by tracking whether graduates were able to successfully transition into educational and occupational pathways that align with their defined career goals. While ability can be defined in relation to a number of the workforce skills, additional capabilities include 1)

⁸ Neo, B. S. & Chen, G. (2007). *Dynamic governance: Embedding culture, capabilities, and change in Singapore*. Singapore: World Scientific.

maintaining a future orientation in relation to their career goals and the strategies to achieve those goals, 2) engaging in reflective reexamination of those goals and strategies, and 3) reaching out to others and outside resources to develop new skills and identify new strategies that will help continue their development and increase the likelihood of achieving self-determined career goals.

The Singapore Education and Career Guidance (ECG) Developmental Model describes both the process and outcome associated with this vision of workforce readiness (Figure 4). The ECG Developmental Model defines workforce readiness in terms of the degree to which students are proactive, resilient, and adaptive. Proactive students are engaged in learning activities because they find them meaningful and enjoyable⁹ and they maintain a future orientation in order to effectively align learning opportunities with desired occupational goals. Resilient students perceive stressful and difficult life events as challenges to overcome, not threats to be avoided. Resilient students rely on their connections with adults and peers to successfully navigate through these challenging events¹⁰. Adaptive students maintain a few goals, seek out ways to optimize their skills and opportunities to successfully obtain those goals. When challenged, adaptive students have back-up plans to compensate for these challenges and thereby keep moving forward rather than getting knocked down.¹¹

The ECG Developmental Model articulates how age appropriate career development activities result in students developing the career search skills and career decision-making skills needed to develop into a quality worker. These career development activities focus on facilitating career awareness, career exploration, and career planning. The ECG Portal – ecareers.sg – was designed specifically to offer an online system that supports the development of career search and career decision-making skills.

The vision for Master Career Educators is a song of hope. A song of hope that when provided with optimal learning environments all students – especially those at-risk – will develop the tangible career development and workforce readiness skills needed to help them secure occupations offering livable wages.

⁹ Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human development*. New York: Plenum.

¹⁰ Solberg, V. S. H., Carlstrom, A. H., Howard, K.A.S. & Jones, J. E. (2007). Classifying youth at-risk for high school non-completion: Role of exposure to violence and resilience on 9th grade outcomes. *Career Development Quarterly*, 55, 313-327. Solberg, V. S. H. (2006). *Success Highways*. Denver, CO: ScholarCentric.

¹¹ Baltes, P. B. (1997). On the incomplete architecture of human ontogeny: Selection, optimization, and compensation as foundation of developmental theory. *American Psychologist*, 52, 366-380

Courage

A bit of fragrance clings to the hand that gives flowers

Trumpet in a herd of elephants; crow in the company of cocks; bleat in a flock of goats.

Don't think there are no crocodiles because the water is calm¹²

One of the more remarkable experiences I have had in the short time I have been coming to Singapore is visit to one school in particular. I was asked to make a presentation about a curriculum I have developed in the United States. What impressed me was not that Heads of State from other countries had visited the school or that newspaper reports had chronicled the incredible impact of their impressive work. What impressed me was the Principal's attitude. I was asked by the Guidance Branch to meet with Principal and School founder Ms. Chua Yen Ching and her first question to me was basically: Who are you and why do you even think you have anything that would help my students? It is easy to know whether a person has worked with at-risk youth. There are emotional scars from witnessing loss and tragedy. There is a deep understanding that the world for so many of our students is not fair – students should not be exposed to violence, they should all be loved and cared for, they should not be hungry. Our students with disabilities should all have access and be included – but their not. When I meet people, it is easy to tell whether they have been touched by these experiences because there is an anger brewing inside and a commitment to do everything in their power to make sure that the next student they work with has a better chance. When you have not worked with at-risk students, it is easy to infer that bad things happen to bad people. It is easy to hold on to the assumption that people's character alone determines their life outcomes. It all becomes more complicated when we listen to their stories and watch helplessly as talented students make bad decisions or tragically lose their life in a car accident on the eve of starting their first day at the university or lose their life because they were standing outside a party when someone driving by decided to begin shooting into the crowd.

As the leader of Northlight school, Ms. Chua Yen Ching does not believe that any curriculum developed for any student will necessarily work for her students. She wants to know that the curriculum was created with her students in mind. She is a leader who has a clear vision of what is needed in her school and critically examines any new curriculum or intervention model. Her Northlight School staff's creed is SERVE:

Sincere in our mission
Exemplary in our conduct
Real in our relations

¹² Chinese and Malay Proverbs

Valiant in our efforts
Engaging in our thoughts

Teachers from Northlight school believe that every child is capable of doing more, learning more, and being a model Singapore citizen. This characterizes the courage needed to work with at-risk youth. Being real in one's relations with youth means that you are ready to be impacted by what you learn about their lives. Exemplary in conduct means that if you want students to believe they can change, then we as educators must model change by committing ourselves to improving our own professional and personal lives. Being valiant means reaching towards our highest hopes and aspirations for our students and ourselves. Northlight school teachers understand that fragrance clings to the hand that gives flowers because they are committed to doing whatever it takes to reach every child.

Our school leaders also need to promote leadership development among all educators in the building. Our leaders must understand that Master Career Educators need space to take risks in implementing their visionary ideas. Our leaders must understand that if we try new and innovative curriculum and it fails, then we are one step closer to success. [Success Highways Curriculum and working with Special Education].

When attempting to design innovative curriculum to reach at-risk students, teachers and the administration should consider adopting an approach similar to the methods and dynamics occurring in improvisational jazz. Improvisational jazz is unique in that each of the four to five members that make up the group are themselves talented artists who are expected to add value to the musical composition. Each member is expected to support the development and evolution of the melody and the direction of the music is inspired by each member taking an opportunity to showcase his or her talents and abilities¹³. Improvisational jazz lives in the moment and values a spontaneous, evolving, responsive approach to music. It encourages risk taking and trial and error within a supportive environment.

I believe that the Jazz metaphor has direct application to how we approach the design of creative and innovative programs for at-risk students. Peter Senge's¹⁴ often quoted phrase from his book The Fifth Discipline describes the idea of innovative learning organizations. He defines them *"as organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together."* In education, these learning organizations have become described as professional

¹³ Hatch, M. J. (Winter, 1999). Exploring the Empty Spaces of Organizing: How Improvisational Jazz Helps Redescribe Organizational Structure. *Organization Studies*.

¹⁴ Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Currency Doubleday, page 3.

learning communities¹⁵. Professional learning communities often consist of five to six educators who come together to create new and innovative practice strategies to solve an agreed upon problem. Once innovative strategies are identified, it takes courage on the part of these team members to “sell” the ideas to the school as a whole and therefore developing leadership and communication skills are necessary for a professional learning team to be successful. And, to be successful, professional learning communities need to have administrators who actively support risk-taking and openly trust that the talents of the team members will evolve to successfully address the problem. The Center on Education and Work’s Project Management System is an example of one support strategy to help Professional Learning Communities establish goals, action strategies, timelines, communication strategies and evaluation plans. This strategy was used recently in a ½-day workshop during the Mass training for the ECG portal. In the United States we are fortunate to be able to work with teams of educators from 16 schools around the country. These teams used the project management system in two days of initial planning and receive monthly webinar support to help them successfully implement the ePortfolio system throughout their respective schools.

The success of the professional learning team does not rest with any one individual but with the melody of activity that occurs as the “collective aspirations” of these courageous Master Career Educators devote themselves to “learning how to learn” new innovative strategies deemed necessary to improve student learning.

In their book titled *Dynamic Governance*, Neo Boon Siong from the National University of Singapore and Chen Geraldine from Nanyang Technological University describe how educational institutions in Singapore were impacted by the transition into a knowledge based economy in the late 1990’s¹⁶. They describe that in order for Singapore to remain competitive as an economic force, education needed to transform its methods in order to produce graduates capable of mental flexibility and creativity and to produce graduates who were more entrepreneurial and innovative. As a result, Neo and Chen report that the Ministry of Education committed itself to the goal of helping every child reach his or her true potential. Slogans were enacted to capture the change in emphasis such as “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” and “Teach Less, Learn More.” Neo and Chen summarize a number of sweeping proposals introduced in the 2002 Ministry of Education WorkPlan Seminar by Minister Teo Chee Hean. Among these proposals included school management changes that emphasized more autonomy and authority at the school level, expanded development opportunities for principal leadership; curriculum and assessment changes that emphasized creativity and

¹⁵ Vescio, V., Ross, D. & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and teacher education*, 24, 80-91.

¹⁶ Neo, B. S. & Chen, G. (2007). *Dynamic governance: Embedding culture, capabilities, and change in Singapore*. Singapore: World Scientific.

innovation; and educational structure changes that emphasized more choice for students by offering new and diverse curriculum subjects.

Neo and Chen have outlined the key contextual ingredients needed for creating powerful professional learning communities designed to generate innovative practice strategies that result in all at-risk youth reaching their true potential. These ingredients include 1) principals who have developed the leadership skills needed to support and value risk-taking among his or her teachers; 2) leadership that invites failure as an opportunity to learn, not a threat to be avoided; 3) enacting engaging career curriculum and assessment that emphasizes new creative solutions; 4) seeking out innovative practice strategies to support youth's development of the workforce skills needed to be successful in the 21st Century world of work; 5) expanded educational structures that seek out new learning pathways such as the one's created in Northlight school; and 6) providing school credit for structured real world of work learning opportunities.

One consideration when establishing professional learning communities is to carefully determine when to change team membership. Neo and Chen accurately portray the importance of Singapore's method of changing leadership as an effective means of rethinking current practice in order to bring in fresh ideas and avoid inefficiency. Moreover, individuals who engage in creative and innovative practice generally become bored and lose interest once the innovation is completed. One consideration is to try and maintain the personnel of a given professional learning team throughout the development and implementation phases of the innovation in order to maintain the vision, enthusiasm, and knowledge capital that originally sparked the ideas. Once the innovation has been implemented however, it is important to evaluate personnel and leadership with regard to ensuring that team members have the skills and personality type needed to sustain the innovation over time. In addition it is likely that different skill sets will also be needed if and when decisions are made to scale up the innovation from one school to a larger number of schools or settings.

It is also important to acknowledge the personality type and resolve of Master Career Educators. When engaging in creativity and innovation, one can predict that someone at sometime will be offended. Someone at sometime will challenge the reasonableness of the ideas. The Malay proverb speaks on the importance of conformity and staying within traditional practice when it describes how one should "trumpet with the herd of elephants."

By definition, designing creative and innovative practice strategies for working with at-risk youth will challenge traditional practices – that is precisely what makes them creative and innovative. David Whyte refers to innovators as organizational change agents and likens them

to “outlaws.”¹⁷ To design creative and innovative practice strategies that maximize the potential of all students, Master Career Educators must understand the rules and traditional standards, and like an outlaw they seek ways to change them. And, Master Career Educators keep a watchful eye because they know that even if the water is calm, crocodiles are waiting to attack.

Magic

A child's life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark.

*Teachers open the door. You enter by yourself*¹⁸

*Master Career educators cannot help but make a difference everyday*¹⁹

Master Career Educators know that reaching at-risk youth begins with connecting to their hearts and minds. We connect to their minds by helping all youth understand the relevance of current educational opportunities to their own self-determined occupational goals. We connect to their hearts by creating authentic relationships with youth such that the teacher is perceived more as a mentor than an educator. Reaching at-risk youth continues by providing learning environments that offer key ingredients for promoting optimal development.

Reaching minds begins with helping students establish occupational and life goals and then helping them become aware of the range of learning activities and course work that will help them achieve those goals.

The research based goal setting model titled Selection, Optimization, and Compensation by Paul Baltes has found that adults throughout their lifespan are healthier and more successful when they 1) select and maintain about three goals (selection), 2) taking advantage of opportunities needed to develop the skills and resources needed to achieve those goals (i.e., optimization), and 3) engage in back-up plans when they experience difficult challenges (compensation)²⁰. Northlight school is capturing the imagination of at-risk youth and helping them to re-engage in education because students now understand how school prepares them for a future that they themselves have selected.

The ECG portal provides a valuable tool for helping to capture the minds of all students. As career educators, it is vital to help every teacher in every course begin the term with an

¹⁷ Whyte, D. (2001). *Crossing the unknown sea*. New York: Riverhead Books.

¹⁸ Chinese and Malay Proverbs

¹⁹ Solberg, V. S. H. (2003). *The Master Educator's Toolkit: Vision, Courage, and Magic*. Italy's 5th National Congress on Vocational Guidance, University of Padova, Italy (Invited Keynote Address).

²⁰ Baltes, P. B. (1997). On the incomplete architecture of human ontogeny: Selection, optimization, and compensation as foundation of developmental theory. *American Psychologist*, 52, 366-380.

investigation of the careers that rely on the skills being taught in that course. Writing a paper that investigates the career can also incorporate interviews with people in the world of work. The idea is to expand the exploration activity to align with other writing skill development activities so that career development becomes a means to supporting student's academic development. The ECG portal system helps students learn about the educational pathways needed to achieve a given occupational goal and the other courses that will help them prepare to enter those educational pathways. An ePortfolio stores these occupational and educational explorations so that students can refer back to them at a later time when they are ready to make important career decisions.

Reaching hearts is about helping at-risk students become engaged and motivated to want to learn. Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory has found that students are motivated to engage in activities because they find them meaningful or enjoyable. The secret is that students perceive school activities as meaningful and enjoyable when they feel a strong connection to teachers and peers.²¹ Self-determination theory refers to internal motivation as behavior that is performed because the activity – such as attending school – is deemed meaningful and enjoyable. Alternatively, external motivation is defined as behavior being driven by outside pressures such as fear of failing to meet others expectations or being forced to complete activities. By building a relational connection with their students, Master Career Educators transform students from an external locus of motivation to an internal locus of motivation – students who felt forced to come to school now do so willingly because they find the experience meaningful and enjoyable. Emerson addressed the power of this relational connection when he wrote that:

Friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, it is the inspiration that comes to one when they find that another believes in them and is willing to trust them.

An example of a curriculum designed to help teachers create strong relational connections with students is the Success Highways curriculum²². Success Highways is a research-based curriculum that is implemented in classroom settings and engages both the teacher and students in authentic conversations²³. Teachers are provided with structured cues on how to share their own stories in relation to key life challenges that everyone faces at one

²¹ Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human development*. New York: Plenum.

²² Solberg, V. S. H. (2006). *Success Highways*. Denver, CO: ScholarCentric.

²³ Solberg, V. S., Howard, K. A., Blustein, D. L. & Close, W. (2002). Career development in the schools: Connecting school to work to life. *The Counseling Psychologist, 30*, 705-725. Howard, K. A. & Solberg, V. S. (2006). School counseling as a method for achieving social justice. *Professional School Counselor, 94*, 278-294. Solberg, V. S., Close, W. & Metz, A. J. (2001). Promoting success pathways for middle and high school youth: Introducing the Adaptive Success Identity Plan for School Counselors. In C. Juntunen & D. Atkinson (Eds.), *Counseling Strategies*, (pp. 135-157). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

time or another. By sharing the fact that even teachers are challenged when addressing real life issues, students become aware that teachers are real human beings. The result is that students perform harder for these teachers because they do not want to fail in meeting the teacher's high expectations. Academically, the program has been found to result in stronger connections with teachers and has been found to improve grades and attendance²⁴.

Reaching at-risk youth occurs by providing learning environments that offer scientifically validated ingredients for promoting optimal development²⁵. These critical ingredients include written exercises, information about the world of work, modeling experiences, building support systems, mastery experiences, encouraging adults, anxiety management, and relational connections with teachers and peers.

Written exercises are most effective in promoting career development when students articulate their short-term goals or behavioral intentions. Written exercises can also be effectively used to help students articulate how course related skills and knowledge link to specific occupations and to identify the educational pathways needed to achieve those occupations.

Individualized interpretations involve providing assessments that help students become aware of their career interests, skills and values. The assessments are provided as part of the ECG portal. Success Highways also uses assessments to help students become aware of the resiliency skills that they need to develop in order to make successful school to work to life transitions²⁶

Information about the world of work needs to be incorporated throughout the curriculum. In addition to connecting each course to an occupational search experience, teachers need additional career related information to help them anchor their lessons in real world applications. Teachers will engage in these activities once they understand that making school relevant increases engagement for all students.

Modeling exercises are important for teaching various career search skills such as interviewing, having adults from the world of work discuss their occupational experiences, or

²⁴ ScholarCentric.com

²⁵ Bandura, A. (1986). Self-efficacy. In *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory* (pp. 390-453). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Brown, S.D., & Ryan Krane, N. (2000). Four (or five) sessions and a cloud of dust: Old assumptions and new observations about career counseling. In S.D. Brown & R.W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling psychology* (3rd ed.: pp.740-766). New York: Wiley. Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human development*. New York: Plenum.

²⁶ Solberg, V. S., Gusavac, N., Hamann, T., Felch, J., et al., (1998). The Adaptive Success Identity Plan (ASIP): A career intervention for college students. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 47, 48-95. Howard, K. A. & Solberg, V. S. (2006). School counseling as a method for achieving social justice. *Professional School Counselor*, 94, 278-294. Solberg, V. S. H. (2003). Exemplarian Action Research: Conducting Vocational Psychology in School Settings. *Giornale Italiano Di Psicologia Dell'Orientamento*, 5, 14-25

having students and teachers report their career goals and plans. Success Highways uses modeling as a central method by having classroom based discussions regarding ideas and strategies for addressing academic and life challenges. The curriculum for using the ECG portal also incorporates classroom discussions as a means of promoting peer to peer modeling.

Building effective support systems occurs by helping students understand that they have access to various resources at school and the community. Mastery Experiences are the critical learning experiences needed to build competence as indicated by self-efficacy or confidence beliefs. Mastery experiences in relation to career development involve the successful direct practice of various of career search skills²⁷. Encouraging, mentoring adults support students by helping them believe in their ability to successfully reach their goals and aspirations. Learning how to manage the anxiety that accompanies change is important in helping students to be willing to take risks and seek out new challenges. Finally, relational connections with adults and peers are critical to providing the relational environment in which students feel they belong and are supported.

Success Highways offers these optimal ingredients and the reason I refer to them as magical is that what happens when at-risk students are exposed to learning experiences that incorporate those critical ingredients is impossible to imagine. I have witnessed on more than one occasion how skeptical observers become converts to the idea of how easily using these methods are able to capture the minds and hearts of at-risk youth. The conversations are powerful, real, and translate into at-risk students committing to themselves in ways that show up on test scores, attendance, and school behavior.

The ECG portal is also a tremendous resource for capturing the hearts and minds of students. Students identify occupational goals and learn not only the educational pathways needed to reach those goals, but the importance of their school courses as providing the foundation for their future success. The ECG portal makes school meaningful. The ECG portal also has the ability to capture the hearts of students when conversations about the ECG portal experiences are shared in classroom settings. Engaging in real conversations about the career exploration experiences adds value to the lesson by building the connections between students and their teachers and peers.

A publication from the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth titled *Guideposts for Success* can be used to evaluate the degree to which schools are offering

²⁷ Solberg, V. S., Good, G., & Nord, D. (1994). Career search efficacy: Ripe for intervention and applications. *Journal of Career Development, 21*, 63-72. Solberg, V. S., Good, G. E., Fischer, A. R., Brown, S. E., & Nord, D. (1995). Relative effects of career search self-efficacy and human agency upon career development. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 42*, 448-455.

all youth the necessary opportunities for developing workforce readiness skills.²⁸ The guide reflects a critical examination of over 30 years of youth development literature. What makes the guide a valuable resource is that it is written in everyday language so that all school educators, parents, and community stakeholders can engage in conversations about whether and how to implement the Guideposts' recommendations. As a career educator, the Guideposts provide a tool for evaluating the degree to which the school is offering comprehensive opportunities for career and workforce development and whether such opportunities are available for all youth.

Master Career Educators naturally engage in magic everyday. Master Career Educators spark motivation in youth by creating a strong relationship with their students. Each student is treated as an individual with unique needs, talents, and challenges. By sharing an interest and something about themselves, the Master Career Educator forges a strong and lasting connection with students. This occurs by creating authentic conversations about real issues and responding to students in a real way. Students know which teachers are real. Students respond by working harder because the last thing they want to do is let down their teacher. Today's students have skills and knowledge of the world that we never had at their age. Master Career educators know how to channel these skills and talents in ways that relate to the occupational goals and have a meaningful connection to academic courses.

In closing, Master Career Educators know that they leave a mark on every page of every child they meet. The mark they leave is designed around empowering each child with the resiliency skills needed to navigate life's challenges in pursuit of self-determined goals and aspirations. Master Career educators know that they open the door by creating a wonderful learning environment. A learning environment filled with high expectations, hope, and encouragement. And Master Career Educators know that students must choose to enter. It helps that Master Career Educators stand ready at the door with a smile and an open hand. Inside the door they have prepared a classroom environment that offers all of the critical ingredients necessary for optimal development. Finally, while all of us may know that a bit of fragrance clings to the hand that gives flowers. The secret is that every day Master Career Educators bring to school a very special flower. And the name of this special flower is *inspiration*.

²⁸ National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth, (2006). *Guideposts for Success*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

Figure 1: Connection Social Emotional Learning to Career Development

Singapore MOE Social Emotional Learning Model	Application to Career Development
<i>Self Awareness</i>	Self-perception; Recognising strengths, needs, and values Self-efficacy
<i>Relationship Management</i>	Communication; Social engagement, and building relationships Helping, seeking and providing
<i>Social Awareness</i>	Perspective taking Appreciating diversity Respect for others
<i>Self Management</i>	Impulse control and stress management Self-motivation and discipline Goal setting and organizational skills
<i>Responsible Decision Making</i>	Problem identification and Situation analysis; Problem solving; Evaluation and reflection; Personal, moral, and ethical responsibility

Figure 2

Career Clusters	21st Century Skills	Resiliency Skills
Academic Foundations	Academic skills	Building Confidence
Communications	Financial literacy	Establishing Stronger Relational Connections
Problem Solving and Critical Thinking	Civic literacy	Managing Academic Stress
Information Technology	Health literacy	Promoting Well-Being
Systems	Creativity	Increasing Motivation
Safety, Health and Environment	Critical thinking and problem-solving	
Leadership and Teamwork	Communicate effectively	
Ethics and Legal Responsibilities	Collaborate well with others	
Employability and Career Development	Flexibility and adaptability	
Technical Skills	Self-direction and productivity	
	Leadership and responsibility	
	Information, media and technology skills.	

Figure 3

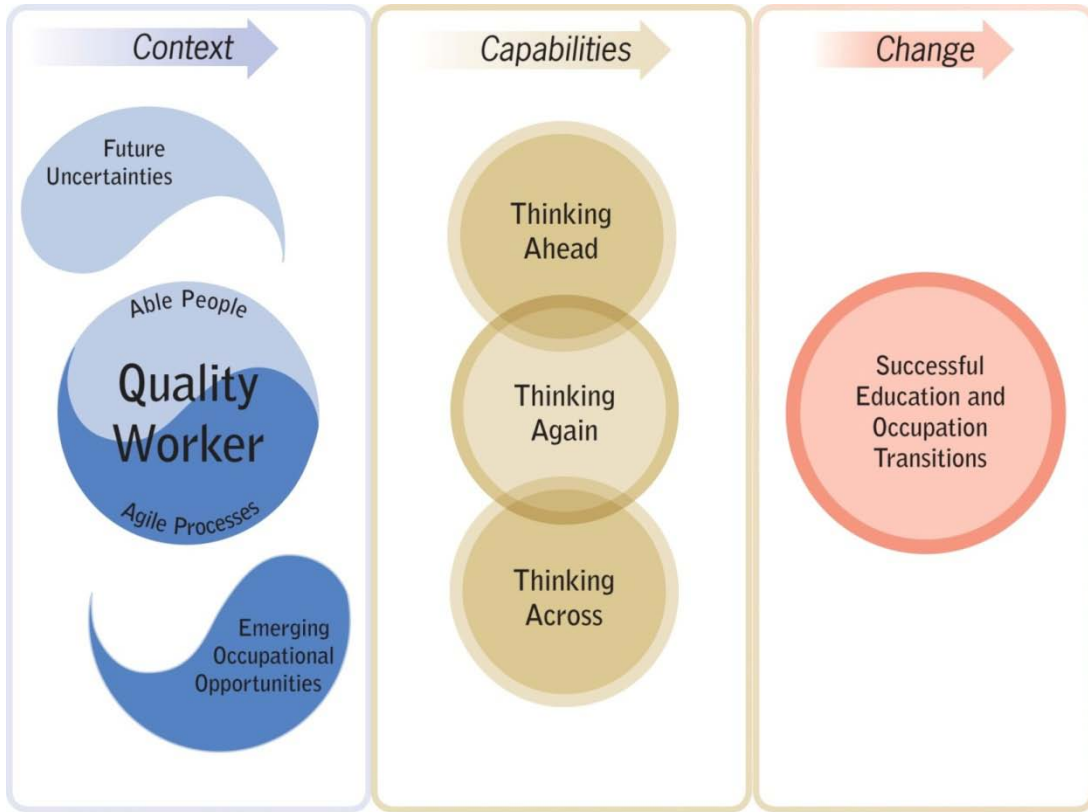


Figure 1.1 Framework adapted from Dynamic Governance System by Neo and Chen

Figure 4

