

Benchmark: Career Readiness in PK-8 School Setting

Sarah Bandfield

College of Education, Grand Canyon University

SCN510: Counseling for College and Career

Dr. Marcia Teemer

August 16, 2023

The importance of career exposure to elementary ages is evident. Additionally, the opportunities to reflect and discuss these ideas with others- peers, teachers, and family- has also been shown to increase the engagement such activities can have for students (Zhang et. al., 2022). The proposal submitted here includes the idea of self-reflection for elementary students through the use of the Holland Code while allowing for peer group activities, family opportunities for engagement, and community involvement.

Initially introduced in 1959, the Holland Code and theory for vocational personalities and work environments has stood up well to the test of time due to its “empirical testability and its user-friendliness” (Nauta, 2010). The theory holds that there are six different occupational themes or areas that individuals will each be drawn to based on their personalities. While research shows that often these areas continue to evolve and mature with individuals into young adulthood (Mottarella et. al., 2021), the ideas behind the theory are a strong starting point for younger students to be exposed to different areas of interests they may each have.

The program proposal would begin with introducing students to the different occupational themes in the Holland Code using the elementary descriptions: creators, do-ers, thinkers, organizers, helpers, and persuaders. Staff from Klamath Basin Behavioral Health (KBBH) would be included in this lesson, allowing them to discuss different paths that there may be in culturally sensitive terms, which is a strength in KBBH’s mission (*KBBH*, 2023). Following the age-appropriate introduction, students would then take an assessment on Truity.com (2022) where they would choose between pictures of people at work that appeal more to them. Based on these photo quiz findings, students would then collect information on a worksheet discussing the findings and different jobs that may be included in the interest area and what the student thinks of them. There would then be small group activities where students could discuss their findings and brainstorm different careers that would be of interest to different occupational themes. These activities would also include opportunities to look at careers that would be of interest to more than one occupational theme area.

Following these activities, students would take their findings home to their families which would include reflection questions for them to work through together. Part of the reflection would include whether their findings “match up” at all with other careers they see in their families and communities. This area could be one of the greater concerns due to our area’s diverse ethnicity and the views that often come from our close-knit families. However, having KBBH involved with the lessons can help reach many of our families that may not feel connected to the schools but are closer to the KBBH offerings. It is important for students to dream and plan for their own hopes for the future while also respecting their families and cultures. The Truity assessment and Holland Code can both support these areas without alienating students from families; the occupational themes and photo quiz both keep results vague and not specific to careers, allowing students and families to look at interests more than exact career planning. The larger concern that may come about is the fact that all of the Truity assessment pictures are photos of Caucasian people, which does not show the diversity of our schools. While the creator of this proposal has spent time looking for different similar photo quizzes that include more diverse individuals without success, it may be worth doing some additional research into this specific aspect.

The hope would be that this proposal would be an annual thing, where students could continue to see where their views may change a bit and what areas are more constant throughout the elementary years. Such activities allow for early exposure that can help grow interest in future careers and high school planning and graduation (Zhang et. al., 2022). Students more familiar with their own interests and how they relate to education are found to be more engaged in school and can show increased connections within the school environment. Additionally, findings from these activities can help teachers and counselors see where interventions may be and also increase connections with students on an individual basis. Annually continuing with this proposal could also allow for scaffolding activities to continue into junior high and high school years.

Another interesting idea to this proposal is the opportunities for community involvement. Having a vehicle career day, where different community members can set up their vehicles in the school parking lot to show the different careers that go along with the vehicles (examples not limited to but including first responder vehicles, traveling veterinarians, pest control, lumber companies, farm equipment, cars with logos for different business, food trucks, postal workers, and garbage collectors), would be a great way for community involvement to occur that can increase student engagement. Students could also use their Holland Code photo assessment findings to see which “career vehicles” may fall into the areas of interest.

In conclusion, career planning and exposure should not begin in the secondary level of education. By allowing students meaningful opportunities to look at different careers at younger ages while also opening conversations into planning for their own futures, students are more apt to have higher success and engagement in their school careers (Zhang et. al., 2022). Allowing assessments based on the Holland Code can help open doors that they may not yet be aware of while also allowing conversations to begin with their families, peers, teachers, and school counselors.

References

- KBBH: Innovative Wellness Programs*. Klamath Basin Behavioral Health. (2023).
<https://www.kbbh.org/>
- Mottarella, K., Fritzsche, B., Turner, D., & Whitten, S. (2021). Validity of The Party Exercise for Determining Holland Codes. *Career Development Quarterly*, 69(1), 84–91.
<https://doi-org.lopes.idm.oclc.org/10.1002/cdq.12251>
- Nauta, M. (2010). The development, evolution, and Status of Holland's theory of Vocational Personalities: Reflections and Future Directions for counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(1), 11–22. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018213>
- Truity Photo Career Quiz*. Truity. (2022). <https://www.truity.com/test/photo-career-quiz>
- Zhang, J., & Yuen, M. (2022). Social Connectedness and Career and Talent Development Self-Efficacy: Direct and Mediating Effects. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 50(3), 400–412. <https://doi-org.lopes.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/03069885.2022.2062590>