

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

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The development and implementation of a comprehensive and systemic career development program, The Career Institute, provided the mechanism through which one school community addressed students' career development and college readiness needs while also attending to their academic and personal-social development. The Career Institute consisted of a series of interventions that helped middle grades students relate personal, social and academic considerations to college and career. The activities were accomplished during the school's advisory program. In this qualitative research study, researchers analyzed data drawn from descriptive comments, observations and artifacts as well as students' and advisory teachers' surveys (Grades 6-9) across 2 years (2008-2009, 2009-2010). Findings indicated that after participating in Career Institute activities, students linked important pieces of their personal/social development to academic and career development. Students demonstrated an expanded and expanding sense of possibilities related to careers; became more specific and realistic about their career and college goals; and became more self reflective in thinking about college and career opportunities. Advisory teachers believed that the Career Institute helped students prepare for college early and with a career goal. This study offers a grounded look at how one school helped middle grades students envision a future with postsecondary and career goals, and offers a model of collaboration to help other schools visualize ways to construct paths that foster and facilitate students' college and career readiness.

The call to infuse college and career readiness across secondary education curricula is gaining momentum. In the Common Core State Standards, student learning objectives (K-12) are informed by College and Career Readiness

(CCR) "anchor standards." President Obama (2010) referred to CCR as he urged educators to create a "new vision" that would help students build capacity for successful postsecondary opportunities. Recent national conferences,

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