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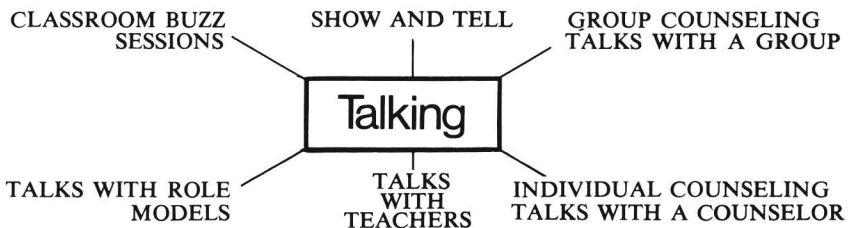
A DIALOGUE THEORY FOR VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

How can we help the young child relate his career aspirations to the world or reality? The standard school curriculum offers numerous opportunities when coupled with the world of events out of school. Children must be given greater opportunity to talk about their reactions to the world. Through dialogue children can express their preceptions of what is occurring around them. Children are extremely perceptive in spotting the various roles adults play. Our role as counselor demands that we explore the child's interpretation of the vocational world by increasing the amount of career dialogue both in classrooms and counseling sessions (Goodson, 1970). It is the purpose of this paper to offer a vocational development model that will increase the verbalizations of children and relate them to career exploration. An underlying assumption of this position assumes that children are interested in the world of work and the jobs they see others perform. Research by Nelson (1962) indicated that children express interest in occupations as early as third grade. Wrenn (1962) argued for a systematic presentation of occupational information because of increasing occupational training requirements for entry into the world of work.

Without question talking is one skill that children learn prior to entering school. Children love to talk on the school bus, in the corridor, and at recess. Occasionally, they are permitted to talk in class. Teachers do the talking in most classrooms and children sit and listen. It is an assumption of this paper that the learned behavior of the classroom situation is transferred to counseling encounters. The child enters counseling with the same expectation that he carries into the classroom. He expects to be talked at, and not with, in counseling. It seems to me that as counselors we need to explore every possibility to use the talking skill of children to stimulate career development and other interests of children.

In reaching out to children, the counselor might be more successful if attention is given to the following interaction model that focuses on talking:

FIGURE 1. DIALOGUE INTERACTION MODEL



The model has as its central core increased emphasis on dialogue in all school activities. Classrooms must be places where children can and will express themselves about varied interests. In too many schools children are not really expected to contribute via verbalization, unless it is *the* right answer that the teacher wants. Show and Tell sessions are not enough for they permit talking only when the teacher has decreed it appropriate. This lack of talking practice inhibits career development in that children do not develop the skills necessary for successful verbal exploration of the work world. As counselors, we need to concentrate on improving the dialogue ability of children to discuss their aspirations and vocational fantasies.

Career exploration by young children demands a variety of approaches and techniques be utilized by the counselor and teacher. The use of group counseling, career days, curriculum units, field trips, simulation games, or play therapy *all* rely to some degree on talking. A child who does not talk or receive considerable support from teachers to develop this skill is not likely to use it well in any of the above. The test of good career exploration will center around the ability of the child to express his aspirations via the spoken word.

Counselors will need to support those school activities which encourage youngsters to develop verbal facility. What are some specific counseling activities to support talking between children and teachers. For example:

1. *Curriculum* innovations—Counselors should visit classrooms as a participant and help teachers stimulate discussions. The counselor's skill in interpretation, probing and clarification could be taught to teachers to help them lead more pupil-centered discussions. Teacher education has not prepared many of the practicing teachers to lead pupil-oriented discussions. Role models from the world of work can be invited in to discuss their job with children. Teachers should encourage visitors to bring the tools of their trade; uniforms, etc.
2. *Teacher* assistance—the counselor helps the teacher understand his individual needs and anxieties in working with the children in his classroom. Career development activities are a valid opportunity to help the teacher identify the aspirations or goals of their students.
3. *The counselor* helps the teacher present information on the world of work. In many situations this will be more effective in small groups led by the counselor and teacher working together.
4. *In-service* training conducted by counselors for the staff to increase their understanding of child development. Teachers need to understand why children talk and how to encourage this skill via classroom activities.

Career development for young children can be further strengthened by exploring the natural curiosity that children possess. Children are constantly asking "What is that?" "What does it do?" "What are you doing?" and similar questions. As counselors, we need to capitalize on this virtue of children by relating it to career development activities. The following activities could be correlated with classroom goals and involve children to a greater degree. For example:

1. *Puppet dialogue*: the puppets could be dressed in the typical costumes of various workers and act out some of their routine functions.

A nurse could be working with a patient, or a welder working on a child's bike. The puppet dialogue has unlimited potentiality in the hands of creative counselors and teachers.

2. *Simulation games*: vicarious learning affords each child the opportunity to test his tentative decisions in group situations. Games that deal with career aspirations will permit the child to explore what workers do and relate this to "real" life. The psychological-sociological implications of career decisions must be explored with children at a level commensurate with their stage of development. The *Life Career Game* developed by Boocock (1967) has excellent potential for working with sixth graders. Students seem to be excited and motivated by the game situation which emphasizes dialogue.
3. *Photograph analysis*: children in grades K-6 could collect, organize, and present a series of pictures that deal with specific occupations available in their local region. Each photograph presents ample opportunity to discuss with children their attitudes and feelings about different types of work. The *Rochester Career Guidance Project* had 5th graders take pictures of workers in the neighborhood and develop a bulletin board display of the different jobs. Some of the workers were then invited into the classroom to describe in greater detail what they did.
4. *Role-playing dialogue*: this particular technique is excellent for dealing with affective reactions of children. Children are given the opportunity to try out the way they feel and have others respond to them. The teacher and counselor work together to identify those encounters which arouse emotion in the class. If the children have witnessed a scene in which a policeman or other type of worker responded in a crisis situation the event permits the role-players to "try-out" the situation. Role-playing requires a teacher and counselor to be sensitive to feelings and relate them to career aspirations. Role-playing is designed to stimulate reflection and discussion. It is a central thesis of role-playing that one verbalizes his reactions to common experiences.
5. *Dream interpretation dialogue*: by examining the vocational daydreams of children the counselor secures further data regarding the career aspirations of children. In group and individual counseling sessions, these vocational daydreams provide rich material about what children are thinking. Material related to the occupational dreams should be provided by the counselor and teacher as a part of curriculum goals. The classroom is an excellent environment to elicit discussion about job wishes as they appear in various daydreams that children have. The occupational dreams of children provide the counselors with valid reasons for introducing real data into the class. Children then have the opportunity to examine and relate their perceptions to reality. Each child can be encouraged to list on a 3 x 5 card the occupations he has dreamed about. Class discussion or field trips to some of these job sites would be very appropriate.
6. *Open-ended situations*: the teacher and counselor could design stories that deal with workers in various conflict situations in which there may be several alternatives. It is essential for children to realize that there may not be a single right answer or solution. This approach

demands that both counselor and teacher are able to tolerate ambiguity. The responses children provide may be helpful in a diagnostic sense. Inappropriate decisions by the child in situations dealing with careers may mean more information is needed. For example, a boy who wants to be a nurse might be ridiculed by other children. Further exploration of careers for male nurses would be beneficial for the group and alleviate some of the misconceptions regarding worker roles and stereotypes.

7. *Audio recordings*: youngsters can be introduced to the noise of the world of work and be given opportunity to explore the meaning of noise as it relates to them. They speculate and interact with the sounds of a *real* world and hear people at work. Field trips are vital adjuncts to this activity and take children into the world of work, perhaps to plants where their fathers work. The language arts are an excellent vehicle to develop communication skills and introduce the sounds of work.

Activities such as these are not commonly used by practicing elementary school counselors or teachers. Counselors themselves rely on talk, but often it is only their voice that permeates the counseling session. If we are to have a reasoned eclecticism in counseling, then it is essential that practicing counselors develop a broad repertoire of activities. Children must be listened to and encouraged to discuss their ideas. As Leonard and Stephens (1967) succinctly suggested, we must impress upon children the need to develop good communication skills. The ability to communicate is crucial to later vocational success. By stressing verbal dialogue as crucial in vocational development, counselors will be helping young children achieve some measure of success in later life.

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LE DEVELOPPEMENT PROFESSIONNEL DES JEUNES ENFANTS FACILITE PAR UNE THEORIE DU DIALOGUE

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Les jeunes enfants présentent des intérêts marqués pour le monde du travail. Le programme des études de l'école élémentaire renferme des possibilités très variées permettant la mise en branle d'activités reliées au développement de la carrière. Les conseillers et les enseignants, par leurs interventions verbales, peuvent initier tout un ensemble d'activités, comme les jeux de rôle, les jeux de carrière et certaines autres démarches. Les fantaisies professionnelles des enfants peuvent être traduites en démarches réalistes au sein du programme. L'école élémentaire constitue un lieu logique de discussion des intérêts et des aptitudes. La présentation du matériel professionnel par les multi-media et le dialogue animé peuvent faciliter le développement de la carrière. Les enfants, qui ont une compréhension de leurs intérêts et de leurs aptitudes seront, selon l'A., plus en mesure de planifier de façon réaliste leur carrière.

