

Transition Considerations for Students Who Are Gifted

The need for early opportunities for career planning is strongly supported in the research literature on gifted education. There are a number of issues that may make career development challenging for students who are gifted, including the following.

- **Multipotentiality**
Many students who are gifted have multiple passions or talents, and it can be difficult to identify or decide on a career path that will accommodate these diverse interests.
- **Personal investment**
The types of careers that many students who are gifted tend to aspire to often require extensive post-secondary training, which can have personal, social and financial implications.
- **Geographical and socioeconomic mobility**
For many students who are gifted, particularly those from rural areas, pursuing the careers they are interested in means having to leave their home communities. This can create conflicted feelings.
- **Expectations of others**
The career expectations of parents, teachers and peers can exert tremendous pressure on students who are gifted.
- **Innovativeness**
Many new career options are the direct result of the ingenuity of individuals who are gifted. For example, the field of biomechanical engineering did not exist until someone combined interests in biology, mechanics and engineering. Technological breakthroughs are constantly making new career paths possible. If necessary, individuals who are gifted need to be prepared to “invent” their own careers. However, combining several disciplines into one career path requires greater investment than focusing on a single discipline.

Dr. Michael Pyryt proposed a number of essential career development components for students who are gifted. They include the following.

- **Self-awareness and self-concept development**
Students who are gifted can make thoughtful career choices by developing awareness of their personal aptitudes and interests. Tools for enhancing self-awareness include standardized personality inventories, such as Holland’s Vocational Preference Inventory, or informal questionnaires, such as the Career Issues Survey.

Transition Considerations for Students Who Are Gifted *continued*

- **Overcoming gender stereotypes**
It is important that students who are gifted, particularly young women, develop positive expectations for success in their future career path. There are a number of techniques for encouraging young women to broaden their thinking about career options, such as providing mentors and career days only for young women.
- **Creative problem solving**
Training students in creative problem solving can build their capacity for dealing with career-related challenges.
- **Interpersonal effectiveness**
An effective style of communicating can help students who are gifted handle the many social and work-related situations they will face in their careers. They need to develop assertiveness, flexibility, empathy and awareness of their own feelings.
- **Time and stress management**
These skills can help students who are gifted cope with challenges of personal investment, geographic mobility and expectations of others. Students need to learn a variety of strategies so they can choose what works best for them.
- **Content acceleration**
Allowing students who are gifted to accelerate their education is one way to reduce the heavy time and financial commitments required to pursue certain careers. Potential opportunities for acceleration include early entrance to university, part-time university coursework, distance education and advanced placement.

These essential components of career development can help students who are gifted to overcome some of the challenges they may face. These components should be considered in planning for transition and developing goals for junior and senior high students who are gifted.

References

Pyryt, Michael C. "Career Education for the Gifted: Complexities and Recommendations." *The Alberta Counsellor* 24, 1 (1998), pp. 13–17.