AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARD OKLAHOMA'S SCHOOL-TO-WORK SYSTEM

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CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Introduction

Two critical conditions must be realized in America . . . and soon. First, we must more effectively educate our young people. In order to this, we must design school experiences that are so relevant, interesting, and personally rewarding that students stay in school, stay engaged, and continue to learn. Second, we must produce many more qualified workers. In particular, we need people who have the skills to function effectively within increasingly sophisticated employment situations (Parnell, 1985). These have long been important national issues; now they have become national priorities.

In Oklahoma, these objectives are being partially accomplished through an ambitious School-to-Work system. Oklahoma's School-to-Work system was intended to help Oklahoma's young people progress smoothly from school to work by making connections between their education and career (Oklahoma School-to-Work System, 1995).

If School-to-Work is to succeed in Oklahoma, it must continue to build upon quality, market-driven instructional programs as well as public acceptance. Therefore, a significant success indicator, and perhaps central to the issue of sustainability, will be the

degree to which key stakeholders, specifically parents, embrace and support Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. This study should provide the needed information to the National School-to-Work office, Oklahoma's School-to-Work office, and Oklahoma's local School-to-Work partnerships regarding parental attitudes toward Oklahoma's School-to-Work system.

If parents hold a negative view of School-to-Work, as it relates to their children, they may hinder local School-to-Work efforts. This has been evidenced in Oklahoma during the past three years through communities including Idabel, Ponca City, and Mustang opting out of their School-to-Work partnerships because of strong and vocal parental opposition to the School-to-Work initiative.

Conversely, parents who have a positive predisposition toward School-to-Work can assist in creating a framework for sustainability of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system beyond federal funding. Continuation of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system is largely dependent upon strong parental support. This includes parental advocacy with local school boards, local school administrators, educators, the general public, their children, and legislators.

Statement of the Problem

Existing Oklahoma research has indicated that parents play a major role in their children's selection of academic course work and career paths (Oklahoma School-to-Work System, 1995). The problem is that for School-to-Work to continue to survive after federal funding ceases, it needs parental support in Oklahoma. Past research, as

identified in the review of literature, has indicated parental support of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system has influenced other key School-to-Work stakeholder groups including parent advocacy groups, local school boards, school administrators, educators, the general public, students, and legislators. Through this secondary study of parental perceptions, School-to-Work efforts might be modified so that parental support is strengthened. Therefore, there is a need to: (a) determine parental perceptions statewide toward Oklahoma's School-to-Work system; (b) test acceptance of particular School-to-Work components among parents; and (c) identify parental willingness to allow their children to participate in local School-to-Work activities. Determining which groups of parents are most positively or negatively predisposed to School-to-Work activities will direct efforts to openly communicate with those groups and perhaps secure parental support.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze selected characteristics of urban and rural parents in terms of parental attitude toward School-to-Work. Those characteristics were identified in terms of education and income and existing attitudes as indicated by responses to selected statements. The research question this study attempted to answer was "Are there differences between rural and urban populations in terms of attitudes toward Oklahoma's School-to-Work System?" In order to determine the research question, this study also examined the differences in income and education level of the study participants.

Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Define the demographics of rural and urban parents in the study.

2. Identify perceived factors that contribute to either positive or negative attitudes toward School-to-Work.

3. Identify parental predisposition toward allowing their own child to participate in Oklahoma's School-to-Work activities.

4. Identify parental predisposition toward supporting future funding for sustainability of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system.

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of the study were:

1. Parents are key stakeholders in the development of a School-to-Work system.

2. Parental perceptions about School-to-Work are crucial to the success of School-to-Work partnership formation and development.

3. Strong parental support of School-to-Work could enhance the development of local School-to-Work efforts and assist in sustainability.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study were:

1. The study would not attempt to predict the success of School-to-Work based on parental perception.

2. The study did not intend to directly influence existing parental perceptions about School-to-Work.

3. The study would be limited only to Oklahoma parents of pre-school and school aged children.

4. The study (telephone survey) would be conducted during evening hours through calls to private homes, potentially increasing the number of subjects contacted to reach the identified sample size of 500 parents of school aged children.

5. The study eliminated participation of those parents who worked in the evening, including those employed in retail, service sector, or shift work.

6. The study was limited to identifying support or lack of support for student participation in Oklahoma's School-to-Work system, but did not provide for clarification of positive or negative perceptions.

7. The primary and majority of literature cited is from technical reports and agency sponsored studies as opposed to more empirical or theoretically accepted literature.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are offered to provide clarity and consistency throughout the study:

School-to-Work System - A system which helps young people progress smoothly from school to work by making connections between their education and career. The system is a cooperative effort of elementary and secondary education, vocational-technical education, and higher education to engage all youth in the lifelong acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to pursue meaningful, challenging, and productive career pathways into high-skill, high-wage jobs. Examples of such programs are cooperative education, internships, school-based enterprises, career academies, tech prep programs, and youth apprenticeships (Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, 1996).

School-to-Work Opportunities Act - The federal legislation that developed systems coordinating all activities in state and local programs to address the career education and work preparation needs of all students (Oklahoma Department of Vocational Technical Education, 1996).

Oklahoma School-to-Work Office - Staff of the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education located in Stillwater, Oklahoma. The School-to-Work staff consists of the state coordinator, a curriculum specialist, an evaluation specialist, a staff liaison with responsibility for business, industry, and labor involvement, a marketing/communication specialist, a finance specialist, and support staff. The scope

of responsibility includes the systemic implementation of School-to-Work in Oklahoma through local partnership delivery.

School-to-Work Technical Committees - The 13 School-to-Work technical committees are comprised of approximately 225 representatives of education, labor, business and industry, employment and training, and other partners. These committees guide the development of policies and strategies for the Oklahoma School-to-Work system.

Marketing School-to-Work - All activities that carry forward the School-to-Work mission, including information dissemination, image-building, promotion, and publicity. The Marketing Technical Committee is charged with conducting research, developing strategies, and implementing activities to create awareness for Oklahoma's School-to-Work system.

High Performance Workplace - A workplace model that suggests that a robust, thriving economy can be sustained if more sophisticated, technically advanced, and efficient production techniques are employed. This type of workplace requires workers with advanced academic and technical skills that enable them to learn on the job, adapt to rapidly changing technology, and work in teams to solve problems. High performance workplaces are often seen as a strategy to reach "high skill, high wage" employment, because they restructure firms to offer economic incentives for workers with multiple skills and talents. In addition to economic development potential, higher performance workplaces may help drive school reform by providing educators with a set of skill competencies that are required for marketplace success.

SCANS - The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) convened in February 1990 to examine the demands of the workplace and to determine whether the current and future workforce was capable of meeting those demands. The commission was directed to: (a) define the skills needed for employment; (b) propose acceptable levels in those skills; (c) suggest effective ways to assess proficiency; and (d) develop a strategy to disseminate the findings to the nation's schools, businesses and homes (The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1991).

Work-Based Learning - Work-based learning is a general term encompassing five mandatory activities which include: work experience; a coherent sequence of job training and work experiences which are coordinated with the activities in the school-based learning component; workplace mentoring; instruction in general workplace competencies such as positive work attitudes, employability skills, and broad instruction in all aspects of industry. The work-based component may include unpaid work experience such as job shadowing along with paid work experience, job shadowing, internships, school-sponsored enterprises, and on-the-job training for academic credit (Gray & Herr, 1998).

Significance of the Study

The body of knowledge regarding parental perceptions toward School-to-Work, and specifically Oklahoma's School-to-Work system, was limited. This was due in large part to the relative infancy of School-to-Work both in Oklahoma and nationwide. The national School-to-Work office identified parents a key stakeholder group in the success of local School-to-Work efforts (Hoye, 1995). The Oklahoma School-to-Work office

staff also determined parents were key to the success or failure of statewide school-to-work efforts, hypothesizing that parental support would equate to the success of School-to-Work at the local level (Oklahoma Department of Vocational Technical Education, 1995). Conversely, strong parental opposition to School-to-Work could limit the ability to implement or create sustainability for School-to-Work. If attempts are made to educate parents in an effort to change attitudes, one must know where problems exist and where efforts should be directed. Currently, information does not exist which identifies those problem areas with parental perception.

This study is a portion of a larger parental study which was designed to cover many other objectives such as: (a) past participation in career counseling; (b) rating of education and other local institutions; and (c) identifying perceptions about the outcomes of School-to-Work activities. The larger study served as a follow-up to initial parental research conducted in Oklahoma in 1994. More specifically, it served to identify factors to be addressed in order to impact parental support for School-to-Work. This secondary study served to answer specific research questions previously identified in this chapter. In addition, it identified categories of parents by selected demographic and perceptual data. One result may be the ability to organize public relations efforts to educate parents of the relative value of School-to-Work concepts and activities. The significance of this study will be to determine the niche populations of rural and urban parents with particular perspectives on School-to-Work in an attempt to direct public awareness, two-way communication, and outreach efforts to those key parental groups.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I is an introduction to the study. The remainder of the study is presented in four chapters. Chapter II is a review of the literature relevant to the study. The methodology of the study is presented in Chapter III. Chapter IV presents the research findings. Chapter V includes the implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This review addressed School-to-Work literature. Particular consideration was given to literature which illustrated parental perceptions of School-to-Work. Seven sections follow:

1. Introduction
2. A Historical Overview of Education Reform Leading Toward School-to-Work
3. An Overview of School-to-Work
4. The School-to-Work Umbrella
5. The Emergence of School-to-Work at the State and Local Level
6. Previous Parental Research on School-to-Work
7. Summary

A Historical Overview of Education Reform Leading Toward School-to-Work

Over the past two decades, numerous commissions and reports have called for reform in education. Much of the concern centered on a perceived and proven lack of

achievement in the United States' public education system. According to A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the country's standing and ability to compete in a global economy was seriously undermined by "a rising tide of mediocrity" (p. 175) in the academic preparation of students. That concern, notably on the part of the federal government, has centered not only on student achievement, but also on the resulting impact on economic and technological competitiveness of the United States on the international scene. The concern emanated from a lack of responsiveness of the American education system to the changing needs of an increasingly complex and high-performance workplace.

In 1986, the William T. Grant Foundation established a 19-member Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship, more commonly known as the Commission on Youth and America's Future. The commission's charge was to evaluate current knowledge, to stimulate new ideas, and to increase communication among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, thus helping our nation chart a better future for youth. Subsequent work of the commission addressed the needs of the nearly half of all 16-24 year old youth who were not likely to go on to college. The commission dubbed those youth "the forgotten half" and predicted that both economic and social prospects for those youth appeared grim (William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship, 1988).

Also in 1986, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report stated priority should be given to the integration of academic and vocational skills to improve the labor force. The SCANS report went on to assert that past technology of mass production emphasized assembly line work. The 1991 SCANS

report also asserted that current demands on business and workers are different, and indicated that firms and their workers must meet world class standards.

Recent publications on the status of U.S. education point to many disturbing facts regarding quality. The publication America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages (Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1990) made a comparison between students in the United States, Europe, and the newly industrialized countries and concluded, among other things, that America may have the worst School-to-Work transition system of any advanced industrial country. The report went on to present two major factors that contributed to the failure to produce a highly educated workforce: (a) lack of a clear standard of achievement; and (b) irrelevancy of class work to the world of work. The SCANS report pointed out that more than half of America's young people leave school without the knowledge or foundation required to find and hold a good job (Commission on Skills of the American Workforce). These and other grim facts, such as low student scores on most international tests and high school dropout rates, led President George Bush to declare that America's schools must be transformed since the days of the status quo are over (Alexander, 1991).

The suggestions from the initial SCANS report, released in 1986, were soon mandated in federal legislation. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 included trend-setting legislation calling for all state departments of education, local school systems, and local schools to produce well-rounded educated workers for the workforce of tomorrow through the integration of academic and vocational training (Warnat, 1991). This legislation included Tech Prep programs designed to serve as a catalyst to initiate and implement this educational

revolution and carry the United States into the next century. By focusing on proficiency in mathematics, science, communication, and technologies, the Act brought educational relevancy to the "forgotten half" (Parnell, 1991a, p. 19). By highlighting the concept of articulation between common education, vocational education, postsecondary institutions, and industry, Tech Prep broadened educational opportunities and promised a higher standard of living to the majority of American students. Moreover, by including women, minorities, and students with special needs, Tech Prep helped bring these groups into the mainstream of American education and American life. Tech Prep legislation, found within the Carl D. Perkins legislation, effectively served as the precursor to what has become known as School-to-Work (Gray & Herr, 1998).

For the first time in two decades, mismatches between education, training programs, and employer needs were being seriously addressed. New ways of conducting occupational education, training, and retraining were being devised. Business and industry proclaimed that they no longer needed just blue-collar and white collar workers. Dale Parnell (1991b) indicated that companies need smarter, more flexible employees who could perform a variety of tasks, from installing and monitoring welding robots to reprogramming them if production rates dropped. Ernest Lynton, professor at the University of Massachusetts, as cited in The Forgotten Half, dubbed this new breed of worker as "blue-and-white-striped collar workers"—production employees who are paid to think (Parnell, 1991b).

Continuing to move in the direction of merging academic and technical education to benefit both students and future employers was the work of the Southern Regional Education Board, Jobs for the Future, Education Commission of the States, National

Center for Research in Vocational Education, and other entities. Those organizations were devoted to addressing the changing nature of the workplace and to upgrading approaches to learning in America's schools. Acknowledging the large percentage of growth in the technical and low-paying, service-sector job markets, the work of those organizations, along with the impact of educational reform initiatives such as Tech Prep and High Schools that Work, served as the foundation for many of the 1990s educational reform initiatives including Goals 2000, the New American High Schools, and School-to-Work. This growth in low-paying, service-sector jobs was referenced in a related joke told in 1998 by Oklahoma State University Professor Dr. Garry Bice who stated "President Clinton was making a speech recently. He said 'The economy is great. We've just created one million new jobs.' And a man in the crowd said 'amen' . . . I've got three of them." (G. Bice, Personal Communication, August 17, 1998).

Overview of School-to-Work

In 1994, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act was signed by newly inaugurated President Bill Clinton. The Act, jointly funded by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, provided $2.3 billion seed money, or venture capital, to states and communities to develop systems and partnerships designed to prepare young people for further education and careers.

The original impetus for this reform was a growing anxiety during the 1980s that America's youth were not prepared for the rapidly changing world of work. This view gained support and well publicized complaints from business about the quality of many

job applicants (Bassi, 1996; Smith, 1996). Initially, the School-to-Work strategy was seen as appropriate for the "non-college bound" or the "forgotten half."

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 articulated an education reform strategy that included school-based, work-based, or connecting activities. The Act included numerous innovative approaches to classroom teaching such as guided learning experiences outside of the classroom, usually within a workplace, in addition to increased career counseling and guidance. The suggested educational reforms were categorized in the Act as school-based, work-based, or connecting activities.

The problems with the education of this "middle half" had particularly serious economic consequences because these were the individuals who actually carried out the work in the core manufacturing and service industries (Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1990; William T. Grant Foundation, 1988). Thus, School-to-Work programs tended to focus on developing a strategy for this middle segment of the student population. U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley characterized the problem as needing schools that "are more personalized and equip our young people with both academic and technical skills to succeed in the classroom, the workplace, and the community" (Riley, 1996).

Since inception of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act, various views about the School-to-Work strategy have evolved. Advocates have argued that the approach has the potential to serve as a basic model for all secondary schools (Business Week, 1996). The 1994 Carl Perkins Act also emphasized that funded programs should prepare students for high quality careers but also maintain student options for postsecondary education (Kazis

& Goldberger, 1995). Thus, School-to-Work was intended to prepare young people for both work and college.

The School-to-Work Umbrella

Nationally, School-to-Work was intended to link students, schools, and the workplace in order to ensure that students had the opportunity to experience the workplace as an active learning environment. In addition, School-to-Work activities attempted to ensure that young people understood how what they learned related to what they earned (Hoye, 1995).

School-to-Work was also intended to move beyond many other previous education reform efforts to encourage secondary and postsecondary education linkage to develop School-to-Work systems by cooperatively enlisting the support of other audiences (Olczak, 1995). Those audiences included employers, labor unions, civic and community groups, parents, students, and other public and private sector organizations. Essentially, School-to-Work was to reflect a new way of thinking about the common goal of preparing young people for entry into the workforce.

The School-to-Work approach to learning was based on the fact that individuals learn best relating and doing what they learned in school to their experiences as workers (Hoye, 1995). Traditional general track and vocational education programs were based on the premise that students who did not go on to college needed to be taught a skill they could utilize to make a living for the rest of their lives. The School-to-Work approach embraced the concept that education for all students should be made more useful to multiple future careers and lifelong learning.

Central to implementation of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 was the "roll-out" strategy loosely framed in the legislation. It called for states to create a School-to-Work system comprised of three fundamental elements: (a) school-based learning; (b) work-based learning; and (c) activities connecting the two. School-based learning programs were intended to restructure the educational experience so that students learned how academic subjects related to the world of work. Teachers were expected to work together with employers to develop broad-based curricula that would assist students in understanding the skills needed in the workplace. Students, in turn, would actively develop projects and work in teams, much like the modern workplace. Teachers would work in teams to integrate generally separate disciplines to create projects that were relevant to work and life in the real world (Oklahoma School-to-Work System, 1995).

Through work-based learning, students were to develop broad and transferable skills. Work-based learning would provide students with opportunities to study complex subject matter, as well as vital workplace skills in a hands-on "real-life" environment. Working in teams, solving problems, and meeting employers' expectations were identified as workplace skills that students learned best under the direction of work-based, adult mentors.

Connecting activities between schools and workplaces have not been naturally occurring. This connectivity appeared to require a wide range of efforts to integrate the worlds of school and work to ensure that the student was not "the slender thread" that connected the two. Connecting activities were intended to provide program coordination and administration and to integrate the worlds of school and work through activities such

as school and business exchanges, teacher externships, and student internships (Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, 1995).

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 served to create an umbrella under which educational efforts such as Tech Prep, High Schools that Work, Cooperative Learning, Work-Site Learning, Apprenticeship, Job Shadowing, and other programs could merge. These programs had a common goal of creating relevant, real-world learning for students while cooperating with business and community partners to ensure a better educated and prepared future workforce.

The Emergence of School-to-Work at the State and Local Level

Oklahoma's School-to-Work efforts began in 1995, with the receipt of planning grant money from the national School-to-Work office. This followed an unsuccessful attempt to receive monies during the first funding cycle. In late 1995, Oklahoma was officially awarded a grant issued through the U.S. Department of Labor in the amount of $19 million over a 5-year period. Administration of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system is provided by the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education which serves as the fiscal agent and as the liaison agency for the state's School-to-Work advisory panel and 13 working technical committees.

Oklahoma's School-to-Work system was established based on the existing labor market region model. Oklahoma's School-to-Work system was divided into 11 regions with the establishment of Regional Councils. Within those 11 regions were 41 local

partnership councils, all centered on local area vocational-technical education schools as the nucleus (Oklahoma School-to-Work System, 1996).

Oklahoma's School-to-Work system has evolved during the first three years of implementation. Oklahoma's early School-to-Work history was fraught with much conflict, due in large measure to the fractious nature of the original School-to-Work Executive Council appointed by Governor Keating in late 1995. Executive Order 95-22, passed in 1995, established the council to recommend policies for the development and implementation of a School-to-Work system. The council was further authorized to provide leadership in developing criteria for communities to form local partnerships. Following eight months of unsuccessful attempts to flow federal School-to-Work money to local partnerships, the Oklahoma legislature failed to pass legislation establishing the group as a permanent School-to-Work governance structure. Therefore, the School-to-Work Executive Council ceased to exist.

Currently, Oklahoma's School-to-Work system is led by a recently formed statewide School-to-Work advisory panel comprised of educators, business people, labor, parents, and private sector citizens. Some members have served on both the executive committee and the current advisory panel. The first council was identified by Governor Frank Keating. The new advisory panel was appointed by the Oklahoma School-to-Work office.

Oklahoma has not passed comprehensive School-to-Work legislation, although limited legislation and policy changes have occurred to create a foundation for School-to-Work. These actions included: HB 1549 which required joint teacher professional development between higher education and vocational education; Oklahoma Challenge

2000 designed to provide a strategic plan for Oklahoma's educational entities to establish common course objectives for lower-division general education core subjects; HB 1462 which created the "Worker Training Development and Loan Advisory Task Force" to review job training activities within the state; SB 500 which established work-site learning; HB 2246 which created the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation; the adoption of *Learner Outcomes: Oklahoma State Competencies* by the State Board of Education in 1990; and HB 1017, the State Education Reform and Funding Act which was ratified by state ballot in 1991 and required career counseling. The Act mandated that counselors be placed in secondary schools by 1995 and elementary schools by 1999 to receive state accreditation. The Act also required career awareness in elementary schools and career exploration in grades six through ten. Furthermore, the Act established *Priority Academic Student Skills (*PASS*)* which incorporated academic skills and workplace basic skills (McCharen, 1994).

Oklahoma's School-to-Work system was to complete the third year of a five-year federal funding cycle in the fall of 1998. Continued funding from the Department of Labor was expected, with final funding in the year 2000.

Parental Perceptions of School-to-Work

Despite considerable energy, initial bursts of optimism, and abundant promises, a good many efforts to reform schools have failed during the past decades. Education reforms in the 1990s have been defined as "divided within and besieged without" (Farkas & Johnson, 1993). Key stakeholders such as educators, parents, business leaders, and school board members have been unable to overcome sharp differences over goals and

expectations for America's education system. This trend continued to be evidenced by increased parental concern.

> Trapped in a web of suspicion, extreme partisanship, competitiveness, and poor communication, parents as leading participants have often become the leading combatants, unable to reach common ground with educators. Once a cohesive public constituency in many communities, parents have digressed into factions and special interest groups, organized to defeat any reforms that appear to threaten their turf. Even those closest to the school system have resorted to adversarial tactics. (Mathews, 1996)

Parents, who might be expected to have an interest in the overall quality of education, have often pressured schools in order to win personal concessions, not to change the system (The Harwood Group, 1995). Katherine Boo, (1992) who reported on several leading initiatives in the Washington Monthly, came to much the same conclusion—that reforms had floundered, disillusioning the communities that had undertaken them. Boo found one problem common to all the efforts. While the specific proposals were often superb, the reformers were unable to master the process of change. In paying understandable attention to *what* they were changing, many neglected the question of *how* to put the changes in place. "Central to the issue was that the reformers forgot to involve parents. While paying lip service to the notion of citizen participation, they worked doggedly to keep the masses from messing with their plans" (Boo, 1992, p. 17).

Not involving parents, a typical "education centered" approach to reform, seemed to take for granted the long-standing, unstated commitment to public schools which implied that schools must merely demonstrate and communicate legitimate needs in order for citizens to respond with favorable support. Therefore, a reasonable hypothesis would assert that the public, particularly parents, could be rallied through the standard means of

publicity, marketing, and two-way communications, and that the buyers remain out there, waiting to be told of the benefits of the product. Any trouble between school officials and parents could simply be deemed a failure to communicate.

Parental Concerns (Anti-School-to-Work Sentiment)

"For many parents, the previous assumption [of lack of parental involvement] simply did not square with the way the public has often responded to reform. In fact, parents had an array of criticisms that explained why there was less support for school reform than was commonly believed" (The Harwood Group, 1993). An increasing number of parental stakeholders found the discussion of reform incoherent and irrelevant. School officials, educational experts, and special interest groups, appeared to be involved in a debate that lacked any promise of progress or possibility for real change.

Increasingly, research had indicated parents with concerns about education reform did not feel welcomed by the schools. A 1992 survey found that while nearly 60 percent of Americans thought parents and other members of the community should have more say in allocating funds, deciding curriculum, and implementing educational reform, less than 15 percent of administrators and only 26 percent of teachers shared this view (Farkas, 1992). Parents had grown increasingly frustrated, feeling that they had no control. This was compounded by a feeling that schools were black holes in which money was wasted through inefficient management. Most serious of all was the perception that the public schools were no longer really the "public's" schools. "A New Jersey parent, when asked who 'owned' the local schools, said he was not sure which

level of government had jurisdiction. But he was certain that the schools did not belong to his community. They were not, he said, 'our' schools"(The Harwood Group, 1993).

While educators continued to place a premium on educating the individual, suspicion continued to arise about schools working to create a new social or economic order through the schools. It was this argument, among others, that emerged over and over among parents who vocally attacked public schools and educational reform efforts such as Outcome-Based Education, Goals 2000, and School-to-Work.

It appeared activist parents would often sacrifice the unique benefits of a public school system and risk isolating children in homogeneous private or home schools in order to give them a good education. A California journalist made a similar point, "If I had to choose, I think most children would be better off with no public schools at all than with those we have now" (Seebach, 1995, p. 15A).

Parents who expected a traditional academic education for their children were sounding alarm bells against practices such as team-teaching, group activities, interdisciplinary course work, applied academics, and block scheduling. Skepticism appeared to stem from a belief that expecting the same standards from all students and integrating vocational studies in the core curriculum would lead to a "dumbing down" of academics and compromise the intellectual growth of high achievers. This was stated by one rural Oklahoma parent during a focus group session in Okmulgee County (Interview, July 23, 1996).

Critics suspected that career paths, an integral part of School-to-Work programs in many states, served as merely another form of vocational education. "The focus is training people to be workers and that's really the German-Soviet model. In this country,

people have individual rights and they should not be trained for a specific job," (p. 20) stated Kris Ardizzone, legislative director of the Eagle Forum in an article written by Chuong-Dai Vo (1997) and published in Techniques magazine. "With the federal government footing the bill, it's no wonder businesses like it so much. The fact that you put a high school student in a vocational track is to say 'we know you are not college-bound.' That is very discriminatory" (p. 22).

Jack Jennings, director of the Center on National Education Policy in Washington, D.C., said the criticism of school reform was multi-layered.

> There are three different strands of criticism: first, public schools are under intense criticism. Two-thirds of households don't have kids in schools, so most people don't have direct contact with schools and get their information from the media, which is very critical of schools. The second strand is conservatives calling public schools 'government schools,' implying they are socialist programs. So conservatives attack outcomes-based education, sex education, psychological education. And they also attack School-to-Work. The third strand is that most people want their kids to go to college because they think it will secure them a job. (Vo, 1997, p. 23)

Oklahoma, like many southern states, has weathered a strong storm of anti-School-to-Work sentiment orchestrated through publications by organizations such as the Eagle Forum and through the Christian Coalition's legislative scorecard which rated candidates in the 1994 and 1998 elections by their actual or perceived stance on School-to-Work and other issues. School-to-Work, along with partial birth abortion, was a topic of substantial discussion at the Oklahoma Christian Coalition Prayer Breakfast in 1997. Although nationally or regionally orchestrated by such organizations, the dissent was generally delivered locally through the voice of parents.

The parental assertions about School-to-Work range from what appeared to be reasonable concerns to what one parental focus group member in Tulsa, Oklahoma dubbed the "ludicrous, far-fetched, and outlandish" (Widmeyer-Baker Group, 1997, p. 8). New York Times columnist and senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Lynne Cheney, set the stage for much of the debate over School-to-Work. He commented:

> Many parents are angry about the $2.3 billion Federal School-to-Work plan. Instead of focusing on students in vocational education, these parents point out, School-to-Work programs, by law, include all students. And in practice, the programs assume unwarranted authority over their children's lives." (Cheney, 1998)

This was a theme sounded repeatedly in mounting conservative attacks on School-to-Work. "School-to-Work: Is Government Micro Managing the Lives of Our Children?" was the rhetorical question posed by the conservative Heritage Foundation on a flyer inviting liberals and conservatives alike to come hear "the truth" about how School-to-Work "requires students to participate in vocational training," forcing them to "choose a career pathway by the eighth grade" (Steinberg, 1997).

One parental concern that emerged often in focus groups was that career guidance related to School-to-Work might be asking students to choose career paths too early (Ogilvy, Adams, & Rinehart, 1995; Widmeyer-Baker Group, 1997). Another frequent parental perception was that School-to-Work is designed only for non-college bound students (Grossman & Newton, 1994; State of Louisiana, Office of the Governor, 1997). In fact, some early literature produced by the Departments of Education and Labor indicated that the national School-to-Work effort was geared toward students who were non-college bound and headed directly into the workforce. Mixed and differing messages perhaps contributed toward or created marketplace confusion.

A greater concern expressed during parent focus groups conducted in Okmulgee County, Oklahoma, was the fear that School-to-Work would "dumb-down" curriculum, leaving his child with, at best, a second-rate education (Interview, July 23, 1996). A more extreme fear was that children would be required to take curriculum that only prepared them for jobs selected by workforce development boards—instead of teaching basic knowledge and skills such as reading, writing, history, math, and science (Schlafley, 1998).

The greatest impediment to implementation of School-to-Work in Oklahoma and across the country had come in the form of strong parental opposition. It was originally organized through national groups and then disseminated via publications, e-mail, fax, and the Internet. This strong opposition had been delivered school district by school district, community by community, and state by state, by a very vocal and passionate advocacy group. In Oklahoma, those strong opponents were found among precinct and state level leadership in the Republican party who identify themselves as members of the religious right. Many are well educated, financially advantaged, and articulate strong biases against the public school system. While some of these individuals in Oklahoma appeared well connected politically and socially, many more have been disenfranchised within their own communities and have taken equally strong positions on other educational reform efforts such as House Bill 1017, passed in Oklahoma in the early 1990s which required career counselors in secondary schools by 1999, and Outcome-Based Education. This belief had been evidenced through publications such as Frosty Troy's Oklahoma Observer and policy analysis developed by Aldo Bernardo for a self-

described conservative think tank called the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, 1997; Troy, 1997).

It was this advocacy against many educational change efforts that served as the common denominator in the more outlandish attacks against School-to-Work in Oklahoma. Many of the criticisms against School-to-Work were merely recycled from the attacks against Outcome-Based Education in the early 1990s. Achieving victory in removing Outcome-Based Education from school districts across the state served to re-energize many of the same individuals to reorganize and focus their efforts on abolishing School-to-Work by resurrecting the arguments that generated suspicion and doubt before (Tulsa World, 1996).

Dissenting parental arguments articulated in publications of the Eagle Forum, a self-described conservative pro-family organization, were based upon such propaganda techniques as unwarranted extrapolation, name calling, bad logic, and fear. One powerful technique was to attach School-to-Work to the negative image of communism. In the flyer entitled The Link Between the Department of Labor, Industry and Education, Patty Stoner (1996) of Parents Involved in Education stated that, " The principle of combining schooling with productive labor is one of the first principles in the Marxist-Leninist theory of communist education." This comparison was echoed by Oklahoma representative Don Rubottom who stated in a letter to the editor of The Daily Oklahoman that, "...government should be a mediator between the powerful and the weak and not a conspirator of the powerful. Government dominated worker training designed to force down wages and 'fit' citizens into slots is anti-family and fascist" (Rubottom, 1995). Dr. Phillip Ring, one of Governor Frank Keating's appointees to the state School-to-Work

Executive Council, called School-to-Work "The finest, most refined, Marxist process ever developed by humankind" (Quaid, 1996). Perhaps one of the most extraordinary but least publicized references to communism was asserted by Linda Murphy, Deputy Director of the Oklahoma Department of Labor, who produced a document asserting that Superintendent of Public Instruction, Sandy Garrett, and the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Dr. Roy Peters, had been in Hanoi, Vietnam sharing School-to-Work information (Proceedings of the School-to-Work Executive Council Meeting, 1996).

Another perspective expressed by Joe Esposito, also an appointee to the governor's School-to-Work Executive Council, was that School-to-Work was comprised of nothing more than an implementation of SCANS competencies (Hoberock, 1996). Another concern, expressed by State Representative John Smallago of Tulsa and cited in The Daily Oklahoman, asserted that children would have their careers chosen for them by local industry in early childhood, or at birth. "Federal legislation calls for testing children beginning in the first grade to see what career they should choose" Smallago was quoted as saying. "But really, designers of the School-to-Work program would start guiding children even from the womb" he concluded. (Shawntel Promotes School-to-Work Idea, 1996). In an article published in The Daily Oklahoman, Dr. Phillip Ring, a dentist and parent, expressed his concerns through characterization that "students would be categorized into personality types and matched by the government with certain professions. Business will statistically decide what kinds of students we need for those jobs, and they're matching up newly measured students with newly measured human activity" (Quaid, 1996). This argument has surfaced in most anti-School-to-Work

material across the country including a flyer distributed by the Eagle Forum which drew a relationship between training dogs and educating children. The flyer claimed School-to-Work will "train children to be compliant workers" (Schlafley, 1998). Final arguments that surfaced more often nationally than in Oklahoma concerned the "Big Brother" collection of confidential student data and the assertion that, "Students will no longer receive high school diplomas but will receive certificates of skill mastery upon completion of School-Work, and those students without a skills certificate will not be able to procure employment" (Hearne, 1995, p. 20).

Support for School-to-Work

School-to-Work, both in Oklahoma and nationally, has undergone strong attacks from activist parents fueling much public debate through the media, local school boards, and local School-to-Work partnerships. This vocal minority has not significantly impacted the largest percentage of parents. In survey after survey, few parents indicated significant awareness of opposition to School-to-Work, primarily because it was a new concept for the vast majority. When presented with known strong criticisms of the program, more than 95 percent of parent respondents in Oklahoma and Arizona found such criticisms "far-fetched and irrelevant" (Widmeyer-Baker Group, 1997).

Unfortunately, those same parents, while indicating high support for components of School-to-Work such as career awareness, generally had low awareness of School-to-Work itself. It simply was not yet part of the American lexicon. During six parent focus groups conducted in 1997 by the Widmeyer-Baker Group, the following beliefs emerged among supportive parents:

1. Many guessed that School-to-Work was designed to move kids from schools directly into jobs.
2. Most missed the connections to academics and college.
3. Many confused it with traditional vocational education.
4. Many recommended changing the name from School-to-Work to something more like School-to-Careers (Widmeyer-Baker Group, 1997).

This lack of information frequently served as the foundation for much strategically targeted School-to-Work criticism. Trish McNeil, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education, was cited by Vo (1997) in an article printed in Techniques magazine. McNeil noted that parents often agreed with School-to-Work principles such as high academics and focused education, but "launch a statewide reform based upon those principles, and the public recoils" (p. 23).

What surfaced throughout dialogue with parents were the following beliefs about School-to-Work:

1. Preparing students for careers was a priority.
2. College was important, but was not the only path to success.
3. Success was defined by parents as self-sufficiency and financial stability.
4. A good education led to future satisfaction. (Jobs for the Future, 1993)

A national poll of 1,000 parents conducted by WQED Public Television station in Pittsburgh in late 1996 found that 66 percent of American parents said the education system in the United States should offer career preparation as an integral part of the school curriculum. More telling perhaps was that 84 percent of parents surveyed said career preparation should begin before or during high school, while 18 percent said career

preparation should begin in grammar school (WQED, 1996). Respondents to the initial statewide telephone survey of parents of school-aged children conducted by the Oklahoma School-to-Work office in early 1994 had similar results:

1. Half of Oklahoma parents surveyed felt students should begin receiving career preparation by middle school.

2. Thirty-one percent of parents felt high school was the appropriate age for career preparation.

3. Sixteen percent of parents indicated students should begin receiving information about career opportunities as early as elementary school (Grossman & Newton, 1994).

The WQED poll revealed that 24 percent of urbanites and 19 percent of rural respondents were more likely to call for career preparation in elementary school. Similarly, support for career preparation as part of the school curriculum increased to 71 percent among parents of children under 18 years of age and rose to 73 percent among working women participating in the poll (WQED, 1996).

Results were similar from a Washington state poll conducted in 1997. Of the 608 respondents, 87 percent indicated high schools should provide some form of career preparation and 74 percent of those respondents stated career education should begin prior to high school. While these results were impressive, the survey was conducted among the general population. Statistically these results could be extrapolated to the general population, but it would be unfair to conclude that parents held the same beliefs about career education with the same degree of perception as the general population (Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, 1997).

In Okmulgee County, Oklahoma, parents participating in focus groups, while unfamiliar with the term School-to-Work, expressed strong support for career preparation when asked about expectations for their child's education. One parent summed that belief up well:

> I expect that my child's education should reinforce the belief that she has some control over her own destiny... that what she does in school will help her figure out what she will do the rest of her life. Parental input with plans of study reinforces that this is a serious time to start looking down the road. (Interview, July 23, 1996)

An Altus, Oklahoma parent has had all three children involved in School-to-Work activities. The parent provided the following testimonial later used in a business brochure developed by the Oklahoma School-to-Work office:

> My three children in Altus public schools are gaining much through the School-to-Work program. From job exploration to job shadowing, they are gaining first-hand knowledge of careers and the steps needed to achieve career goals. For the first time, they are beginning to understand how school relates to the world of work. (S. Brown [personal communication], November 1996)

Both nationally and in Oklahoma, parental beliefs about the value of a college education remained strong. Parental support for School-to-Work appeared contingent upon successfully linking School-to-Work to future college enrollment, not to vocational education (Morrison Institute on Public Policy, 1996). While parents recognized that many educational options were available, 88 percent of Oklahoma parents indicated college was the number one preference for their children. "Other things are great, but my kid is going to college" was a recurring theme. Of those parents, 46 percent indicated they thought their child would go to college on scholarships and grants, 21.7 percent planned to split the cost of college tuition with their child, while only 19 percent

indicated they had plans to fully fund their child's advanced education (Grossman & Newton, 1994).

This strong belief system about the value of college education was reflected in messages tested for School-to-Work. In national focus groups, 67 percent of parents chose the message "School-to-Work gives kids some real choices about their futures; it gives them academic training and the skills to succeed in college and careers" as their number one preference (Widmeyer-Baker Group, 1997). For many parents, success was defined as self-sufficiency and financial stability. Many parents viewed School-to-Work as a means of achieving those goals. "Our son is more motivated. School-to-Careers changed his attitude toward learning. Now he's more confident and more self-sufficient" (Borens, KOTV Newscast, 1997).

The Widmeyer-Baker Group (1997) spoke with parents from a rural mountain state, northern urban parents, southern urban parents, western suburban parents, southwestern urban/suburban parents, and midwestern suburban parents during focus groups conducted in 1997. That research did not separate findings by urban, suburban, or rural parent responses, but rather, provided a composite report. In the Widmeyer-Baker Group report, parents indicated they believed School-to-Work instilled responsibility and a strong work ethic.

Parents also believed School-to-Work could help students achieve a good education leading to future career satisfaction (Jobs for the Future, 1993). An Oklahoma home schooling parent said the following:

> In home schooling, we really value hands-on education. I think School-to-Work has promise for all students and that's exciting. The problem in so many schools is that too many children are not there to learn. Hopefully

> they can find something they are interested in. They can step on the gas pedal. (Interview, July 23, 1996)

During the same focus groups in Okmulgee County, one parent likened School-to-Work to an "education supermarket" where kids get to choose what is best for them (Interview, July 23, 1996).

Louisiana parents defined a "good education" as one that comprised both strong academics and relevant application. Statewide, 88 percent of respondents agreed that most high school students would benefit from involvement in work activities that allowed students to use and apply what they learned in school (State of Louisiana, 1997). Likewise, parents in the Widmeyer-Baker (1997) focus groups agreed that School-to-Work made learning relevant for students, and more importantly, that it motivated students to succeed in school and careers.

Summary

Due to the number of young people who are finishing high school and beginning college or careers, School-to-Work has tremendous opportunity for success, but only with parental support. Literature has indicated, but did not substantially address, differences in belief and support between urban and rural parents. This study attempted to shed light on that issue. According to recent studies, the number of out-of-school youth between the ages of 17 and 27 will increase from 24 million to approximately 30 million by the year 2010 (Education Week, 1997). Additionally, research pointed out that even those parents who strongly supported public schools were not eagerly embracing educational reform efforts like School-to-Work. They did not voluntarily talk about public schools

beyond preparing their own individual children for the future. During focus groups, an Okmulgee, Oklahoma father, when asked about his support for School-to-Work, stated that the schools should teach "the basic essentials that are going to get my child through life" (Interview, July 23, 1996). Throughout recent research, people across the nation, as well as in Oklahoma, defined the basics as reading, writing, and arithmetic. They also frequently mentioned teaching interpersonal skills that students will need to "fit into" society and social norms such as respect for others. For most parents, support for Oklahoma's School-to-Work system centered on the perception that School-to-Work did, indeed, assist students in that transition.

While parental critics of School-to-Work insisted that no one could predict skills tomorrow's workers would need, they appeared either disingenuous or dangerously simplistic. Negative parental pressure has impacted effective formation of some School-to-Work partnerships nationally and in Oklahoma. This was orchestrated primarily through national organizations and implemented at the state level through groups such as the Eagle Forum and Christian Coalition whose primary constituency is parents. While the climate has calmed somewhat since the 1996 election cycle, strong opposition remains and has been reflected at the congressional level in reauthorization funding proposals.

It has remained obvious that although no one knows the future impact of technology, there appear to be certain keys to success. Both business and industry, as well as the general public, have indicated that tomorrow's jobs will require more skills and greater flexibility. Additionally, they will require greater communications and interpersonal skills as well as a well-rounded work ethic. Those skills have been

identified by business and industry as key learner outcomes of School-to-Work initiatives. Both in legislation and in practice, School-to-Work was designed to provide students with the relevant academic and applied education that would prepare them for further education, and ultimately, for careers.

For some parents, School-to-Work has remained the unknown "monster in the dark." Meanwhile, the majority of parents appeared to view School-to-Work as a positive way to assist them in providing their children with academic focus, a responsible work ethic, exposure to a host of possible careers, and the ability to help pay for future educational opportunities. They recognized School-to-Work was ultimately about helping children find their way through the educational maze to productive, satisfying careers.

While most parents did not take criticisms of School-to-Work seriously, they did associate School-to-Work with controversy unless there was significant proactive outreach to the parental audience. In addition, parental support did not generally translate into positive parental action to help in creating viable School-to-Work activities at the local level. In other words, parental advocates did not appear to be concerned with creating community support in the way that parental opponents worked to derail local School-to-Work efforts. Positive feelings did not translate into proactive action. The greatest challenge to Oklahoma's School-to-Work system has been creating broad-based understanding of School-to-Work objectives and enlisting parental support at the local level to ensure sustainability. One Okmulgee County parent summed it all up, " School-to-Work will work if you can get parents involved, otherwise it won't fly!" (Interview, July 23, 1996).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to conduct a secondary analysis of data to determine existing parental attitudes toward Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. The initial data was collected by the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education's School-to-Work office as part of a statewide parent survey.

Within the initial study, the randomly selected subjects were Oklahoma parents of pre-school and school aged children representing each of Oklahoma's 77 counties. The written survey instrument was administered via telephone. The telephone survey methodology was utilized because it allowed for the collection of data to serve as a follow-up to a similar survey administered to Oklahoma parents in 1994. Although many questions were replicated from the 1994 parent survey, additional questions related to specific School-to-Work components, potential funding mechanisms, and enhanced demographic information were added to the 1998 instrument.

This chapter describes the procedures for conducting the study. The specific sections are:

1. Population of the Study
2. Design of the Study

3. Instrumentation

4. Data Gathering Procedures

Population of the Study

The research sample for the primary study was composed of parents of pre-school and school aged children living in both rural and urban Oklahoma. The total population of parents surveyed was 500, with at least two respondents from each of Oklahoma's 77 counties. After the initial 154 telephone interviews were completed, a modified, stratified random sample was used to proportionally divide the remaining 346 interviews among all Oklahoma counties based on Oklahoma's population distribution. The 1994 instrument was administered to a control group and then refined to ensure both validity and reliability. The same procedure was employed with respect to the 1998 parent survey instrument.

PGI Graphics located in Oklahoma City provided the database of Oklahoma listed and non-listed telephone numbers of known households where children under the age of 18 were present. Sample sizes were proportionate to the number of households in each county compared to the state's total.

Design of the Study

This research project was a secondary analysis of a larger statewide parent survey conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education. The specific research questions focused on in this study included determining selected parental attitudes toward School-to-Work among rural and urban parents as measured

against demographic data of income and education. Additional demographic data gathered for the purpose of this secondary study included age, gender, and marital status of the participants, as well as the number of children 18 years of age and under living in the home. For the purpose of the study, urban parents were defined as those residing in the counties surrounding the urban centers of Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Respondents viewed as Oklahoma City urban area respondents were those residing in Oklahoma, Cleveland, Canadian, Grady, McClain, Pottawatomie, Lincoln, Logan, and Kingfisher counties. Subjects in the Tulsa urban sample consisted of those residing in Tulsa, Osage, Washington, Rogers, Wagoner, Okmulgee, and Creek counties. Parents from all other counties statewide represented the rural sample. The total distribution of respondents in the 500 sample survey included 236 urban parents and 261 rural parents.

Instrumentation

The six-page survey instrument was developed and validated by personnel in the School-to-Work office at the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education and refined with assistance from Barry Newton, the researcher who conducted the 1994 and 1998 statewide telephone surveys. This study serves as a secondary analysis of specific data identified on that instrument and collected as part of that primary study.

The survey instrument was written but conducted orally by telephone, taking an average of 15 minutes for completion. The responses were recorded on the written instrument. Broad to specific questions ranging from qualifying and demographic questions to beliefs and behaviors related to School-to-Work were included in the

instrument. Twenty-five questions were identified on the primary instrument to collect information to determine:

1. parent rating of local public services including local schools, vocational-technical schools, and colleges;
2. parent perceptions of the purpose of local schools to educate and prepare students for a career;
3. parent perceptions as to when schools should begin to expose students to career opportunities;
4. when parents begin to discuss career aspirations with their children;
5. parent participation in career counseling for their children;
6. parent perception regarding what their child may do after high school graduation, and if continuing education, how the student will afford expenses.

Questions designed to address the specific research questions within this secondary research project explored:

1. parent perceptions which contributed toward either positive or negative attitudes toward School-to-Work programs;
2. existing parental perceptions toward specific School-to-Work activities;
3. the likelihood of the parent supporting local school district taxes or legislative appropriations for continued support for School-to-Work programs;
4. the following selected demographics of households and parents:
    a. Education
    b. Income

Those questions were reflected specifically in questions 13h, 13j, 13k, and 13m, along with questions 14 and 15 on the instrument shown in the Appendix.

Data Gathering Procedures

The introduction to the instrument was designed to solicit and acquire voluntary participation, as well as to reflect the name of the interviewer since multiple callers would be needed to complete the 500 surveys identified in the sample. Information on the participant which would identify the subject for coding purposes, but would serve to ensure confidentiality, was also included. Those items of data included the phone number of the subject, the county code which was used for cross-tabulation purposes, and the local zip code, also used for cross tabulation.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter analyzed data from the study investigating the differences in rural and urban parental perceptions of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. Five hundred parents of pre-school and school aged children were randomly selected as the sample for the study. A modified, stratified, random sample according to county population was utilized. Two parents per county (154 total participants) were selected initially, with the remainder (346 total) of the 500 parent sample selected based upon population distribution. Findings are organized based on the study objectives. Following each objective is the analyses and pertinent findings related to that objective.

Objective 1: Define the Demographics of Rural and Urban Parents Who Participated in the Study

Oklahoma residents who were parents of pre-school and school aged children under eighteen years of age and currently living in the home comprised the subjects for the study. Tables I and II reflect the demographics of the survey respondents based on rural or urban residence.

Table I revealed the gender, age, and marital status of the respondents, and identified the number of children in the household. As indicated in Table I, the respondent group included a nearly even distribution of parents between urban and rural Oklahoma households. Participants in the study included 239 urban parents and 261 rural parents. Similarly, nearly as many fathers (235) and mothers (265) participated. The respondents were divided into seven age categories. A bell curve distribution showed nearly half of the participants to be 35 to 44 years of age with approximately one-fourth of the respondents older or younger than the median age. Interestingly, 90 percent of the participants in the study were married, and nearly two-thirds of all participants had two or more children under the age of eighteen living in the home (62.9 percent of urban respondents and 71.5 percent of rural respondents).

Table II identified the respondents' education, employment status, and income. This table revealed greater disparities between the two cohorts. Urban parents were more likely to have pursued education beyond a high school diploma with 69.5 percent achieving some college, a bachelors degree, or post-baccalaureate education. Only 57 percent of parents living in rural Oklahoma had pursued any education beyond high school.

With respect to employment, there were no substantial differences among urban and rural participants, with almost 80 percent of each group employed either part-time or full-time. Income comparisons among urban and rural parents revealed noteworthy differences. Seventy-five percent of urban households reported an annual income exceeding $35,000. Conversely, 51 percent of rural households reported an annual income of less than $34,999.

TABLE I

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER, AGE, MARITAL STATUS, AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE, AND BY RURAL AND URBAN RESIDENCE
N=500

	Rural N=261		Urban N=239	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gender				
Male	124	47.5	111	46.4
Female	137	52.5	128	53.6
Total	261	100%	239	100%
Age				
18-24	11	4.2	4	1.7
25-34	67	25.7	51	21.3
35-44	122	46.7	130	54.4
45-54	50	19.2	51	21.3
55-64	6	2.3	3	1.3
65-74	2	.8	0	0.0
75+	0	0.0	0	0.0
No Response	3	1.1	0	0.0
Total	261	100%	239	100%
Marital Status				
Married	235	90.0	214	89.5
Single	26	10.0	258	10.5
Total	261	100%	239	100%
Number of Children < 18 Yrs of Age				
One	97	37.2	68	28.5
Two	114	43.7	118	49.4
Three	41	15.7	39	16.3
Four	7	2.7	11	4.6
Five	1	.4	2	.8
No Response	1	.4	1	.4
Total	261	100%	239	100%

TABLE II

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY EDUCATION LEVEL, EMPLOYMENT STATUS, AND INCOME LEVEL, AND BY RURAL AND URBAN RESIDENCE
N=500

	Rural N=261		Urban N=239	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Education Level				
High School or Less	112	42.91	73	30.54
Baccalaureate or Less	139	53.26	140	58.57
Post-Baccalaureate	10	3.83	26	10.89
Total	261	100%	239	100%
Employment Status				
Employed full time	184	70.5	165	69.0
Employed part time	23	8.8	25	10.5
Student	4	1.5	8	3.3
Retired	6	2.3	1	.4
Not employed outside	41	15.7	39	16.3
home	3	1.1	1	.4
No Response				
Total	261	100%	239	100%
Income Level				
$0 - $34,999	120	51.28	54	25.00
$35,000-$74,999	97	41.45	115	53.24
$75,000-$100,000+	17	7.26	47	21.76
Total	261	100%	239	100%

Analysis

Tables III through VIII provided an analysis of rural and urban parent perceptions of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system as evidenced by responses to selected perceptual questions. Income and education levels of the parents were also examined with respect to the study questions. The N's were less than the total number of participants in some tables based on the number of "no responses."

Objective 2: Identify Factors That Contribute to Either Positive or Negative Attitudes Toward School-to-Work

Tables III, IV, and V addressed Objective 2 of the study to identify perceived factors that contribute to either positive or negative attitudes toward School-to-Work. Table III provided a comparison of rural and urban parents based on their level of agreement that School-to-Work gives students a sense of responsibility and purpose. The table revealed general agreement with this statement, with responses ranging from 90 to 98 percent among rural and urban respondents from all income and education categories. Examination of educational status and household income revealed no positive or negative perceptual differences worthy of examination. Likewise, disagreement remained below ten percent within all cohorts, although it was most substantial among rural parents with a post-baccalaureate education and among urban parents with household income in excess of $75,000.

Table IV also addressed Objective 2 of the study aimed at determining perceived factors which contribute to positive or negative attitudes about School-to-Work. Table IV illustrated interesting differences which emerged between urban and rural respondents when asked whether or not School-to-Work distracts from their child's studies. Rural parents were more likely than urban parents to indicate they believed School-to-Work did indeed distract from their child's studies. Between one-fourth and one-fifth of all rural parents agreed with the statement. Household income and education level of the parent had no bearing on the findings. Urban parents indicated less concern (8 to 9 percent) that School-to-Work distracted from their child's studies.

TABLE III

SUMMARY COMPARING PERCEPTION THAT SCHOOL-TO-WORK GIVES STUDENTS A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND PURPOSE BY EDUCATION AND INCOME, AND BY RURAL AND URBAN RESIDENCE

	Rural (N=261)				Urban (N=239)			
	Agree	Percent	Disagree	Percent	Agree	Percent	Disagree	Percent
Education Level of Parent								
High School or less	101	92.66	8	7.34	72	98.63	1	1.37
Baccalaureate or less	129	95.56	6	4.44	117	92.86	9	7.14
Post-Baccalaureate	9	90.00	1	10.00	25	96.15	11	3.85
Total	239		15		214		11	
Income Level of Parent								
$0 - $35.000	115	96.64	4	3.36	50	96.15	2	3.85
$35.000 - $75,000	85	90.43	9	9.57	106	98.15	2	1.85
$75.000 - $100,000+	14	93.33	1	6.67	40	90.91	4	9.09
Total	214		4		196		8	

TABLE IV

SUMMARY COMPARING PERCEPTION THAT SCHOOL-TO-WORK DISTRACTS FROM A CHILD'S STUDIES BY EDUCATION AND INCOME, AND BY RURAL AND URBAN RESIDENCE

	Rural (N=261)				Urban (N=239)			
	Agree	Percent	Disagree	Percent	Agree	Percent	Disagree	Percent
Education Level of Parent								
High School or less	28	27.45	74	72.55	11	15.94	58	84.06
Baccalaureate or less	29	22.66	99	77.34	24	20.17	95	79.83
Post-Baccalaureate	2	22.22	7	77.78	3	11.54	23	88.40
Total	59		180		38		176	
Income Level of Parent								
$0 - $35,000	28	25.45	82	74.55	9	18.37	40	81.63
$35,000 - $75,000	21	23.80	67	76.14	14	14.14	85	85.86
$75,000 - $100,000+	4	25.00	12	75.00	9	20.98	34	79.07
Total	53		161		32		159	

Table V addressed the third survey statement aimed at identifying perceived factors that contribute to either positive or negative attitudes toward School-to-Work as stated in Objective 2. When asked if parents agreed that School-to-Work gives students a better chance of getting a good job after graduation, some notable differences emerged between study participants. While no major proportional differences were found among rural and urban parents based on the level of educational attainment, urban parents with a post-baccalaureate education were most likely to agree.

Income as a Factor

Rural and urban households, based on income, were also compared in Table V. Differences in perception emerged related to income, with support greatest among lower income households and least among the most economically advantaged. Rural parents with household income under $35,000 per year showed the highest proportion of agreement with the survey statement (95.73 percent), followed by both rural and urban parents with incomes ranging from $35,000 to $75,000. Participants with household incomes above $75,000 per year were least likely to support the statement. This was particularly true of the wealthiest urban households where nearly one-fourth of all respondents (24.44 percent) indicated they did not believe that School-to-Work gives students a better chance of getting a job after graduation. Interestingly, urban respondents making $75,000 and more per year disagreed with the statement in greater proportions (24.44 percent) than did urban participants making $0 to $35,000 a year and $35,000 to $75,000 a year combined (21.54 percent).

TABLE V

SUMMARY COMPARING PERCEPTION THAT SCHOOL-TO-WORK GIVES STUDENTS A BETTER CHANCE OF GETTING A GOOD JOB AFTER GRADUATION BY EDUCATION AND INCOME, AND BY RURAL AND URBAN RESIDENCE

	Rural (N=261)				Urban (N=239)			
	Agree	Percent	Disagree	Percent	Agree	Percent	Disagree	Percent
Education Level of Parent								
High School or less	97	88.99	12	11.01	64	88.89	8	11.11
Baccalaureate or less	124	93.23	9	6.77	109	83.21	22	16.79
Post-Baccalaureate	9	90.00	1	10.00	24	92.31	2	7.69
Total	230		22		197		32	
Income Level of Parent								
$0 - $35,000	112	95.73	5	4.27	46	88.46	6	11.54
$35,000 - $75,000	80	86.02	13	13.98	99	90.00	11	10.00
$75,000 - $100,000+	13	81.25	3	18.75	34	75.56	11	24.44
Total	205		21		179		28	

Objective 3: Identify Parental Predisposition Toward Urging Their Own Child to Participate in Oklahoma's School-to-Work Activities

The purpose of Objective 3 of the study was to determine parental predisposition toward allowing their own child to participate in Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. When asked about their willingness to urge their own child to participate in a School-to-Work program, the data shown in Table VI revealed some provocative differences between urban and rural respondents.

Education as a Factor

Rural parents with a post-baccalaureate education clearly differed in their support and were the least likely to encourage their children to become involved. Compared to other parents who disagreed with involving their children in School-to-Work, parents with a post-baccalaureate education (30 percent) overshadowed rural parents with no more than a high school diploma (5.9 percent) and rural parents with no more than a baccalaureate degree (8.4 percent) in their non-support. This post-baccalaureate group was also markedly different from their urban counterpart. Only 12.5 percent of urban parents with the same level of education were non-supportive.

Income as a Factor

Comparable proportions of both rural and urban respondents with household incomes under $35,000 agreed with the question, with rural respondents indicating a slightly more supportive attitude (93.64 percent) than urban parents (86.27 percent).

TABLE VI

SUMMARY COMPARING WILLINGNESS TO URGE CHILD TO BE INVOLVED IN SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAM BY EDUCATION AND INCOME, AND BY RURAL AND URBAN RESIDENCE

	Rural (N=261)				Urban (N=239)			
	Agree	Percent	Disagree	Percent	Agree	Percent	Disagree	Percent
Education Level of Parent								
High School or less	96	94.12	6	5.9	61	89.71	7	10.29
Baccalaureate or less	120	91.60	11	8.4	99	81.15	23	18.85
Post-Baccalaureate	7	70.00	3	30.0	21	87.50	3	12.50
Total	223		20		181		33	
Income Level of Parent								
$0 - $35,000	103	93.64	7	6.36	44	86.27	7	13.73
$35,000 - $75,000	83	90.22	9	9.78	94	90.38	10	9.62
$75,000 - $100,000+	13	81.25	3	18.75	29	74.36	10	25.64
Total	199		19		167		27	

In addition, Table VI illustrated that 90 percent of both rural and urban parents with household incomes between $35,000 and $75,000 indicated willingness to involve their child in School-to-Work. Disagreement among rural and urban households was also compared based on income. Middle income rural and urban respondents were in tandem (9 percent) with unwillingness to involve their child in School-to-Work. In addition, the number of rural and urban parents in the highest income bracket not willing to involve their child in School-to-Work exceeded parents in all other income brackets combined. In Table VI, income appeared to be a discriminating source of difference.

Objective 4: Identify Parental Predisposition Toward Supporting Future Funding for Sustainability of Oklahoma's School-to-Work System

The final two tables addressed Objective 4 of the study to identify parental predisposition toward supporting funding for sustainability of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. Table VII provided a comparison among rural and urban respondents indicating likelihood of supporting a local school district tax ear-marked for School-to-Work activities by both income and education. Some differences between rural and urban parents' perceptions on this issue appeared to exist although they cannot be attributed solely to either educational attainment or income level of the respondent. When combined and based on either education or income, more than one-third of all respondents indicated they were very likely to support a local tax. More than 50 percent of both cohorts combined stated they were somewhat likely. Urban parents, however,

were less likely to support the question. In fact, urban respondents with the highest income were the least likely (23.00 percent) to support local school district taxation. This group was also markedly different from their rural counterpart. Only 5.88 percent of rural parents with the same level of household income ($75,000 to 100,000 per year) were non-supportive. Perhaps not surprisingly, other cohorts not very likely support a local tax for School-to-Work were rural and urban parents with a high school education or less (13.59 percent and 18.57 percent respectively).

Table VIII yielded interesting data related to Objective 4 of the study aimed to identify parental predisposition toward supporting future funding for sustainability of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. It compared rural and urban respondents on the likelihood of supporting legislative funding for School-to-Work, and examined income and education as potential factors. Most likely to support legislative funding were rural parents with a post-baccalaureate degree (70 percent) and a household income greater than $75,000 (58.82 percent). Least likely to support the stated question were urban parents with incomes greater than $75,000 annually who indicated more than 22 percent disagreement. Surprisingly, other groups unwilling to support legislative funding for School-to-Work were widely varied. They included rural respondents with a high school education or less (14.42 percent), urban parents with some college experience (20.59), and middle income respondents from both rural and urban areas at 14 percent disagreement each.

TABLE VII

SUMMARY COMPARING LIKELIHOOD OF SUPPORTING LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT TAX FOR SCHOOL-TO-WORK BY EDUCATION AND INCOME, AND BY RURAL AND URBAN RESIDENCE

	Rural (N=261)						Urban (N=239)					
	VL	%	SWL	%	NVL	%	VL	%	SWL	%	NVL	%
Education Level of Parent												
High School or less	33	32.00	56	54.37	14	13.59	16	22.86	41	58.57	13	18.57
Baccalaureate or less	44	33.85	78	60.00	8	6.15	49	35.51	61	44.20	28	20.29
Post-Baccalaureate	4	40.00	5	50.00	1	10.00	10	38.40	15	57.70	1	3.90
Total	81		139		23		75		117		42	
Income Level of Parent												
$0 - $35,000	41	36.61	62	55.30	9	8.04	20	39.22	23	45.10	8	15.69
$35,000 - $75,000	29	30.85	53	56.38	12	12.77	36	31.58	62	54.39	16	14.04
$75,000 - $100,000+	5	29.41	11	64.71	1	5.88	12	25.53	24	51.06	11	23.00
Total	75		126		22		68		109		35	

VL = Very Likely SWL = Somewhat Likely NVL = Not Very Likely

TABLE VIII

SUMMARY COMPARING LIKELIHOOD OF SUPPORTING LEGISLATIVE FUNDING FOR SCHOOL-TO-WORK BY EDUCATION AND INCOME, AND BY RURAL AND URBAN RESIDENCE

	Rural (N=261)						Urban (N=239)					
	VL	%	SWL	%	NVL	%	VL	%	SWL	%	NVL	%
Education Level of Parent												
High School or less	32	30.77	57	54.81	15	14.42	19	27.14	42	60.00	9	12.86
Baccalaureate or less	54	41.54	64	49.23	12	9.23	47	34.56	61	44.85	28	20.59
Post-Baccalaureate	7	70.00	2	20.00	1	10.00	11	42.30	14	53.85	1	3.85
Total	93		123		28		77		117		38	
Income Level of Parent												
$0 - $35,000	40	35.71	61	54.46	11	9.82	18	35.29	29	56.86	4	7.84
$35,000 - $75,000	35	36.84	46	48.42	14	14.74	37	32.46	61	53.51	16	14.04
$75,000 - $100,000+	10	58.82	5	29.41	2	11.76	15	33.33	20	44.44	10	22.22
Total	85		112		27		70		110		30	

VL = Very Likely SWL = Somewhat Likely NVL = Not Very Likely

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze selected characteristics of urban and rural parents in terms of parental attitude toward School-to-Work. Those characteristics were identified as educational attainment and household income. These two characteristics were measured against existing attitudes indicated by responses to selected statements.

The major research question developed to guide the study was: "Are there differences between rural and urban populations in terms of attitude toward Oklahoma's School-to-Work system?"

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Define the demographics of rural and urban parents in the study.

2. Identify perceived factors that contribute to either positive or negative attitudes toward School-to-Work.

3. Identify parental predisposition toward allowing their own child to participate in Oklahoma's School-to-Work activities.

4. Identify parental predisposition toward supporting future funding for sustainability of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system.

The instrument used in gathering data for the study was developed by the Oklahoma School-to-Work office in conjunction with PGI Graphics of Oklahoma City. This study served as a secondary analysis of the twenty-six question survey conducted by PGI Graphics in the Spring of 1998. The total sample size in both the primary and secondary study was 500 parents statewide, with a nearly equal distribution of rural and urban respondents. All respondents were parents of pre-school and school aged children.

Descriptive data to describe the population was gathered on the primary instrument and outlined in Chapter III. The demographics of age, gender, marital status, employment status, and number of children under the age of 18 in the home were included in the instrument.

Conclusions

Although the study identified noteworthy findings in some areas, it also revealed questions which should be considered in examining differences between rural and urban parental perceptions of School-to-Work. This is particularly true as levels of income and educational attainment are evaluated. Based on the study's findings, the following implications and conclusions were offered to address the four stated objectives of the study.

Study Objective 1 attempted to define the demographics of rural and urban parent participants in the study. A few interesting demographic findings were revealed. Participants were almost evenly divided among fathers and mothers. Urban parents were most likely to have completed education beyond high school as compared to only fifty-seven percent of rural parents. Income differences were also substantial among rural and

urban participants. Those with the lowest levels of household income resided in a rural setting, while half of all urban respondents had annual household income between $35,000 and $75,000 annually. Also noteworthy was that one out of four urban participants reported household income above $75,000 per year. Clearly, a wide household income disparity exists between rural and urban study participants. The level of educational attainment also varied widely. Those two factors may play a large role in determining parental perceptions about Oklahoma's School-to-Work system.

Three questions addressed Objective 2 of the study which was to identify perceived factors that contribute to either positive or negative attitudes toward School-to-Work. There appeared to be no major differences among rural and urban parents' perceptions that School-to-Work gives students a better chance of getting a good job following graduation based upon educational attainment. Therefore, multiple factors may contribute to parent willingness to urge their child's involvement in School-to-Work.

Noteworthy differences existed among parents residing in rural and urban areas in terms of belief that School-to-Work distracts from a child's studies. Rural parents were more likely than urban parents to indicate that they believed School-to-Work did indeed distract from their child's studies. Nearly one out of four rural parents expressed this belief as compared with less than nine percent of all urban respondents. One implication could be that where parents reside might influence their opinions. This also served to address Objective 2 of the study.

In addition, strong agreement was found among rural and urban parents in terms of belief that School-to-Work provides students with a sense of responsibility and purpose. It could be concluded that multiple factors contribute to the development of

both positive and negative beliefs about School-to-Work. In this instance, income, education, and place of residence did not appear to be independent factors.

The study revealed provocative differences among parents in respect to willingness to involve their own child in Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. This question was designed to address study Objective 3 which related to parental predisposition for allowing their own child to participate in School-to-Work activities. Rural parents with a post-baccalaureate education were least likely to encourage their child to become involved. Income also appeared to play a role in formation of perceptions. Disagreement among rural and urban parents with household income above $75,000 per year was greater than all other income levels combined. Therefore, an implication might be that a high level of household income is one factor which contributes to a negative perception of School-to-Work. Advanced education might also be a factor in determining whether parents will or will not allow their own children to become involved in School-to-Work activities.

The two final questions within the study asked parents to identify likelihood for supporting either a local school district tax or legislative funding for School-to-Work continuation. They attempted to meet Objective 4 of the study which was to determine parental predisposition toward supporting future funding for sustainability of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. Major differences emerged among rural and urban parents in terms of willingness to support a local school-district tax. Urban respondents with household income above $75,000 per year were least likely to support local school district taxation and differed markedly from their rural counterparts with similar

household income. In terms of educational attainment, rural and urban parents with the lowest levels of education were also least likely to support local taxation.

Differences also emerged among rural and urban parents in terms of willingness to support legislative funding for School-to-Work. Rural parents with a post-baccalaureate education and household income above $75,000 per year were most positively predisposed to the question. Conversely, least likely to support the stated question were urban parents with the same household income of $75,000 and above. The implication exists that household income has some role in determining parental willingness to support state legislative funding for School-to-Work, but marked differences exist between rural and urban dwellers.

Recommendations

The state of Oklahoma has embarked upon a comprehensive rethinking about the way students are educated in the classroom and the way they are prepared for both continuing education and future careers. A statewide School-to-Work initiative has been undertaken to design relevant, interesting, and personally rewarding school experiences to engage students in lifelong learning. Secondly, School-to-Work activities in Oklahoma have focused on partnering with business, industry, labor, and community leaders as well as parents and educators to provide real-world experiences for students that reinforce academic learning and provide an introduction to workplace skills. If School-to-Work in Oklahoma is to succeed beyond the federal funding cycle, it must be built on quality instructional and work-place programs, must be implemented effectively, and must benefit from wide-spread public acceptance. The problem statement of this study

asserted that for School-to-Work to continue to survive after federal funding ceases, it needs parental support in Oklahoma. A significant indicator of sustainability will be the degree to which parents embrace and support Oklahoma's School-to-Work system, urge the participation of their own children, and agree to support long-term funding.

Based on the need for parental support, this study holds some implications for the outreach, the communication, and the engagement of parents as well as suggestions for additional research. It is hoped the insights gleaned from parents through perceptions related to School-to-Work will be used to reflect upon and to improve the implementation and practice of School-to-Work in Oklahoma. This section will address recommendations for practice. The concluding section will suggest recommendations for further research.

First, it is recommended that continued efforts be made to reach both urban and rural parents representing all levels of educational attainment and household income with basic information on Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. While no major differences were found among those two parental groups with respect to some beliefs about School-to-Work, the number of non-respondents to many of the perceptual questions within the study leads the researcher to conclude that a large proportion of parents may not yet have enough knowledge of the School-to-Work system to assess their own opinions about it. The findings of this study appear to support this observation.

Second, it is recommended that those engaged in marketing efforts at the state and local level utilize the findings of this study to re-evaluate their outreach efforts to parent stakeholders. Observation of demographic frequencies lead to the conclusion that parents are not a homogeneous group in regard to their beliefs about Oklahoma's School-to-

Work system. Their willingness to support or not support specific components of School-to-Work, as revealed through levels of agreement to survey questions, is based upon complex factors such as level of household income, educational attainment, and whether the parents reside in a rural or urban setting. Those observations were most pronounced in regard to income level, with the highest levels of income indicating whether parents support or do not support School-to-Work efforts. This study serves to shed light on the discriminating differences in both awareness and willingness to sustain School-to-Work among various parental cohorts. It is hoped this information will be utilized to create two-way dialogue with parents in an effort to gather opinions and concerns. Informed critiques of School-to-Work should be both welcomed and beneficial. Obtaining such could be accomplished through informal or formal qualitative data gathering endeavors such as parent advisory groups or focus groups.

Third, the problem statement reflected in this study indicated that for School-to-Work to continue to survive after federal funding ceases, it needs parental support in Oklahoma. If the problem statement holds true, this study reveals that much work must be done to secure parental support from those groups of parents indicating proportionally high levels of non-support for School-to-Work activities and future funding endeavors. Based upon the research findings, the highest levels of non-support in terms of willingness to involve their own children in Oklahoma's School-to-Work system existed among upper income urban parents. Rural parents with highest levels of household income followed close behind. In addition, the wealthiest of urban parents were also least likely to believe that School-to-Work provided students with a good job following graduation. The study also identified which parental cohorts were least likely to support

either local school-district taxation or legislative funding for School-to-Work. Those least likely to support a local school-district tax were rural and urban parents with the lowest levels of education.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will be utilized to provide awareness and education to this specific niche population of parents in an effort to elicit understanding and support should a local school-district tax strategy be undertaken. Of course, this is not to assume that better understanding will lead to better acceptance of School-to-Work. As noted earlier, understanding, accepting, and learning from the critiques of the informed public which does not accept School-to-Work should be encouraged. Further, the findings of this study identified urban parents with household incomes in excess of $75,000 annually as the least likely to support legislative funding. If Oklahoma's School-to-Work leaders plan to attempt legislative funding during the remaining two years of the federal grant, it is hoped that much work will be undertaken to communicate with and elicit support from that influential urban cohort.

Fourth, it is recommended that the findings of this study be examined and utilized to support development of strategies to engage the active support of parents most likely to advocate either a local school-district tax or legislative funding to sustain Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. Eighty-nine percent of rural parents and eighty-one percent of urban respondents in the primary study from which this secondary analysis was derived indicated they believed School-to-Work activities were an important part of their child's education and should be continued. This study served to further identify those groups of parents, based upon residential setting, educational attainment, and level of household income most supportive of continued funding. Since the modified, stratified random

sample included parents from each Oklahoma legislative district, it is hoped the leaders of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system will utilize appropriate findings to assist them in securing continued funding.

Recommendations for Further Research

Findings revealed areas where additional research could provide information to better understand, and potentially impact, parental perceptions about Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. The findings of this study indicated differences based on income among rural and urban parents in urging their own child to participate in Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. Further research is needed to determine where and why those differences emerged. Secondly, since the findings of this study indicated an apparent income-based difference among rural and urban parent perceptions that School-to-Work gives students a better chance of achieving a good job following graduation, further research, possibly qualitative, is needed to identify causal factors.

The researcher believes that findings from the above recommendations would provide information to assist the Oklahoma School-to-Work office and Oklahoma's forty-one local School-to-Work partnerships in efforts to secure parental support for and to learn more about Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. The results could assist in targeting sub-groups of parents for additional information and education, as well as in eliciting support from those parental groups most positively predisposed to particular aspects of the School-to-Work system.

As sustainability of the Oklahoma School-to-Work system emerges as a priority, data from this study should serve to identify those parental cohorts who can best serve as

spokespersons for particular aspects of the system. As future funding issues emerge, the data from this study should be re-analyzed to guide School-to-Work system architects in determining which parental audiences are most likely to be supportive and influential in establishing either legislative or local school district funding. Findings can also serve to identify those parental groups least likely to favor financial support for sustainability.

It is hoped that the results of this study will promote further research in the recommended areas. A greater effort must be made to engage parents in the development and sustainability of Oklahoma's School-to-Work system. Understanding current parent perceptions, as indicated by levels of agreement to questions in this study, will serve to create a stronger, more targeted, communications link with them while also serving to inform the framers and implementors of School-to-Work initiatives. The ultimate goal should be for both rural and urban Oklahoma parents to support a strong and vibrant School-to-Work system that will assist in providing a smooth transition from the classroom to work for Oklahoma's children.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION SCHOOL TO CAREER SURVEY - 1998

Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education
School to Career Survey—1998

Interviewer: _____ Telephone: _____
Countycode: _____
Zip Code: _____

Hello, I'm _____ with PGI Research, an Oklahoma market research firm. We're conducting a survey on education and would like to ask you a few questions. This is not a sales call, nor will you be asked to buy anything. This is a voluntary market and opinion survey. It will take approximately 15 minutes of your time. May I have your verbal permission to conduct this interview with you? _____ Yes. _____No. If no, please thank, and terminate interview.

For the purpose of this survey I need to speak to a parent who has at least one child under the age of 18. Do you fit this category?

(IF not a parent or no children under 18, politely terminate interview.)

1. First, I would like you to rate the following institutions or organizations in your community or neighborhood based on the quality of service you feel they provide?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	DK/NR
Your local police department	1	2	3	4	9
Local fire department	1	2	3	4	9
Local elementary school	1	2	3	4	9
Local middle school or jr. high	1	2	3	4	9
Local high school	1	2	3	4	9
Local vocational-technical school	1	2	3	4	9
Local or regional junior college	1	2	3	4	9
Local or regional 4-year colleges	1	2	3	4	9

I am going to read you a series of statements and ask you to indicate if you either AGREE or DISAGREE with each statement.

		Agree	Disagree	DK/NR
a.	The primary responsibility of high school should be to prepare students for jobs or careers in business or industry upon graduation	1	2	9
b.	The primary responsibility of high school should be to prepare students for college	1	2	9
c.	High schools should spend more time teaching skills to prepare students for the workplace	1	2	9
d.	High schools spend too much time preparing students for college and not enough time preparing them for careers	1	2	9
e.	Vocational-technical programs require the same rigorous standards as the college preparatory programs	1	2	9

		Agree	Disagree	DK/NR
f.	High schools should spend more time making students aware of the different career opportunities available and the kinds of course work needed to prepare for them	1	2	9
g.	I would encourage my son or daughter to take courses in high school which will prepare them for a job in the workplace	1	2	9
h.	I expect my son or daughter to go to college	1	2	9
		(If disagree to "h", skip to "j")		
i.	I expect my son or daughter to finish college	1	2	9
j.	A general high school education is all a student needs to get a job after graduation	1	2	9
k.	Graduates of vocational-technical schools have as good an education as those who graduate from college	1	2	9
l.	Graduates of vocational-technical schools have as good a chance of getting a job as graduates from colleges	1	2	9

3. When should schools begin to provide students with information about different career opportunities?

1) ____ Elementary school 2) ____ Middle school or junior high
3) ____ High school 9) ____ DK/NR

4. Do you talk to your child or children about their career aspirations or career goals?

1) ____ Yes 2) ____ No 9) ____ DK/NR

5. Has your child or children begun to consider a career or particular job after high school?

1) ____ Yes 2) ____ No 9) ____ DK/NR
Skip to 7 Skip to 7

6. At what grade level did your child seriously begin to talk about their career or job after high school?

1) ____ First grade 2) ____ Second 3) ____ Third 4) ____ Fourth 5) ____ Fifth
6) ____ Sixth 7) ____ Seventh 8) ____ Eighth 9) ____ Ninth 10) ____ Tenth
11) ____ Eleventh/junior 12) ____ Twelfth/senior 13) ____ Primary school
14) ____ Middle school/junior high 15) ____ High school 16) ____ College
17) ____ Other: _____ 99) ____ DK/NR

7. Have you participated with your local school in a counseling session, a special day to learn about careers, career related field trips, or other programs to determine what classes or coursework your child should take to prepare for college or a career?

   1) ____ Yes 2) ____ No 9) ____ DK/NR

8. Has your child worked at a part time job that is related to their career goals?

   1) ____ Yes 2) ____ No 9) ____ DK/NR

9. What are the chances your son or daughter will attend the following schools when he or she is ready to pursue a career?

4-year college or university	____ Very good	____ Some	____ None
2-year junior or community college	____ Very good	____ Some	____ None
Vocational-technical school	____ Very good	____ Some	____ None

(If child will not attend any school, ask 10, else skip to 11)

10. What would you say is the main reason your child will not attend a college or vocational-technical school ?

    _____ 99) ____ DK/NR

11. Which of the following describes the means by which your child will be able to afford their education after high school?

	YES	NO	DK/NR
Parents pay all expenses	1	2	9
Student and parents split expenses	1	2	9
Student pays all expenses	1	2	9
Student gets scholarships or grants	1	2	9
Parents pay with help from scholarships	1	2	9

Other _____

12. How familiar are you with the school business and community based program called school-to-work or school-to-career?

    1) ____ Very familiar 2) ____ Somewhat familiar 3) ____ Not familiar 9) ____ DK/NR
    (If respondent is Not familiar or answers DK/NR, read the following explanation of school-to-work, then proceed with #13)

School-to-work or school-to-career is a way to prepare students for college and the job market by allowing them to take academicclasses in high school along with opportunities to job shadow or intern with local business, earn college credits through coursework at local vo-tech schools, do career exploration, learn entreprenuerial skills through a school-run business, or gain work experience at a local business.

13. Next, I would like to ask you if you agree or disagree with the following statements about the school-to-work or school-to-career program.

		Agree	Disagree	DK/NR
a..	I think students should have an opportunity to Learn about many different careers (Awareness)	1	2	9
b.	I think students should have an opportunity to Have local businesses work one-on-one with students (mentoring)	1	2	9
c.	I think students should have an opportunity to spend the day observing a professional in their particular field of interest. (Job Shadowing)	1	2	9
d.	I think students should understand the relationship between academic course work and the real world.	1	2	9
e.	I think students should learn how to seek, obtain, And retain jobs.	1	2	9
f.	I think schools should organize academic classes Around various areas like health, fine arts, business, Science and technology, and engineering and manufacturing (career clusters)	1	2	9
g.	I would like to participate in a one-on-one Session to plan my child's educational coursework and examine his/her career goals.	1	2	9
h.	I would urge my child to get involved in the school to work program.	1	2	9
i.	I think school-to-work will give my child a good opportunity to learn skills needed to get a job after graduation.	1	2	9
j.	I think school-to-work distracts from a child's studies.	1	2	9
k.	I think school-to-work helps a student gain a sense of responsibility and give them a sense of purpose.	1	2	9
l.	I think school-to-work will help cut down on the number of students who drop out of school before graduation.	1	2	9
m.	I think school-to-work gives students a better chance of getting a good job following graduation.	1	2	9

n. School-to-work is a program mainly for average or below average students to help prepare them for a job after high school. 1 2 9

14A. Do you think these kind of School-to-Work or School-to-Career activities are an important part of your child's education and should be continued? 1 2 9

14. How likely would you be to support a local school district tax or other funding program specifically ear-marked for school-to-work activities?

1) ____ Very likely 2) ____ Somewhat likely 3) ____ Not likely 9) ____ DK/NR

15. How likely would you be to support legislative funding for statewide school-to-work activities?

1) ____ Very likely 2) ____ Somewhat likely 3) ____ Not likely 9) ____ DK/NR

In conclusion, I need to ask you a few questions about your household for comparison purposes.

17. Are you: (1) ____ Married or (2) ____ Single? 9) ____ NR

18. Which of the following best describes your employment status:

1) ____ Employed full time
2) ____ Employed part time
3) ____ Student
4) ____ Retired
5) ____ Not employed outside the home
9) ____ NR

(Ask only if married, else skip to 20)

19. Which of the following best describes your spouses employment status:

1) ____ Eemployed full time
2) ____ Employed part time
3) ____ Student
4) ____ Retired
5) ____ Not employed outside the home
9) ____ NR

20. How many children under the age of 18 do you have?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9) ____ NR

21. What's the school level and gender of the child (children)?

Male	pre-school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	post HS
Male	pre-school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	post HS
Male	pre-school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	post HS
Male	pre-school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	post HS
Female	pre-school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	post HS
Female	pre-school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	post HS
Female	pre-school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	post HS
Female	pre-school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	post HS

22. Please indicate the last grade of school you have completed. Please stop me when I reach the right category.

1) ____ Some high school 2) ____ High school graduate 3) ____ Some college
4) ____ College graduate 5) ____ Post graduate 9) ____ NR

23. Into which of the following age groups do you fall? Please stop me when I reach the right category.

1) ____ 18–24 2) ____ 25–34 3) ____ 35–44 4) ____ 45–54 5) ____ 55–64
6) ____ 65–74 7) ____ 75+ 9) ____ NR

24. Into which of the following income categories does your total household income fall? Please stop me when I reach the right category.

1) ____ Under $15,000 2) ____ $15–19,999 3) ____ $20–24,999 4) ____ $25–34,999
5) ____ $35–49,999 6) ____ $50–74,999 7) ____ $75–100,000 8) ____ Over $100,000
9) ____ NR

25. Gender of respondent (Do not ask): ____ Male ____ Female

"This completes our interview. Thank you very much for your time."

****

Verified by: _____ Time: _____

VITA

Patricia Kay Crabbe

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED PARENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARD OKLAHOMA'S SCHOOL-TO-WORK SYSTEM

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