

THE POLITICS, PROBLEMS, AND POSSIBILITIES OF
IMPLEMENTING A SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAM
IN A COMMUNITY IN OKLAHOMA:
A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

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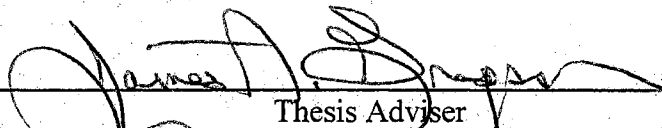
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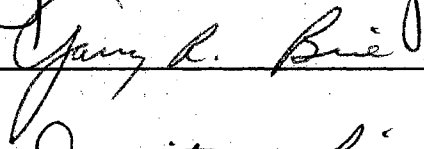
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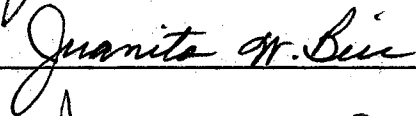
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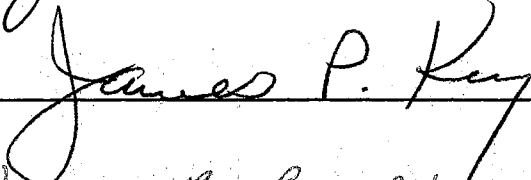
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction	1
Background of the Problem	2
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose	3
Research Questions	4
Rationale for a Qualitative Design	4
Conceptual Framework	5
Researcher Subjectivity	8
Significance of the Study	13
Limitations	14
Definitions of Terms	14
Other Terms	20
Summary	21
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	22
Introduction	22
Setting the Stage	24
Role of Religion	24
Puritan Influence	24
Current Concerns	27
Influence of Classical Education	29
Classical Curriculum	29
Colonial Schools	32
Role of Vocational Education	33
Production Efficiency Model	34
Progressive Education Model	35
Vocational Education and the Industrial Era	36
Conflicting Education Philosophies	37
Criticism of Progressive Education	38
Federal Involvement in Education	40
National Education System Debate	41
Examples of Federal Intervention in Education	42
Decade of Attack	46

Chapter	Page
Contemporary Issues Leading up to School-to-Work	49
Tech Prep Model	50
Decade of Reform Issues	52
Education and the Information Age	52
The Effect of Education on Business/Industry	54
Comparing American Schools to Foreign Schools	56
A Direction for the Future	59
School-to-Work Legislation	61
School-to-Work Dissension	62
School-to-Work in Conflict with Classical Education	63
The Effect in Oklahoma	66
Summary	68
 III. METHODOLOGY	 71
Introduction	71
Rationale for a Descriptive Case Study Research Design	71
Context of the Study	73
Setting of the Study	77
Participants	80
Data Collection Methods	82
Interviews	82
Participant Observation	86
Document Collection	88
Data Analysis	88
Issues of Rigor	91
Credibility	91
Triangulation	91
Member Checks	93
Long-term Observation	93
Transferability	94
Dependability	94
Confirmability	96
Ethics	98
Summary	98
 IV. FINDINGS	 99
Introduction	99
Question #1: What are the Socio-Political Factors that Impact School-to-Work Initiatives?	101
Positive Aspects of Federal Government Intervention	102

Chapter	Page
Negative Aspects of Federal Government Intervention	110
Partisan Issues	121
Overlap of Partisan and Philosophical Issues	129
Question #2: What are the Academic Concerns that have Impacted the Implementation of School-to-Work Initiatives?	130
Progressive Philosophy is Supported in School-to-Work	130
Classical (Liberal Arts) Education Philosophy in Conflict with School-to-Work	132
Strengths of the Progressive Approach in School-to-Work	133
Weaknesses of Progressive Approach in School-to-Work	141
Strengths of Classical (Liberal Arts) Education Philosophy	144
Weaknesses of Classical (Liberal Arts) Education Philosophy	146
Other Academic Concerns of School-to-Work: Tracking	150
Overlap of Educational Philosophy and Political Issues	153
Question #3: What is the Impact of Business/Industry Involvement on School-to-Work?	158
Positive Aspects of Business Involvement in Education	159
Geographic Considerations Impact Economics	168
Negative Aspects of Business/Industry Involvement	169
The Overlap of Economic Issues and Philosophic Issues	177
General Findings	179
Positive Effects of the School-to-Work Controversy in our Community	179
Negative Effects of the School-to-Work Controversy in our Community	181
Summary of Findings	185
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS	186
Summary	186
Conclusions	187
General conclusions	187
Political conclusions	190
Philosophic conclusions	194
Economic conclusions	201
Conclusions About the Effects of the School-to-Work Controversy in this Community	204
Recommendations	205
Suggestions for Further Study	211
Closing Remarks	212
REFERENCES	213

Chapter	Page
APPENDIXES	220
APPENDIX A - COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL PROFILE CHARTS	221
APPENDIX B - PARTICIPATION SOLICITATION LETTER AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES	228
APPENDIX C - DOMAIN AND TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS	234
APPENDIX D - INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL ...	243
APPENDIX E - TABLES OF FINDINGS SUMMARIES	245

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act was signed into legislation in 1994 by President Clinton as a comprehensive educational reform bill which advocates the integration of occupational and academic curriculum to better prepare students for the workplace. The main premise of School-to-Work is to provide students with career information and workplace experiences throughout grades K-12. By providing students with exposure to careers and relevant work experiences, the intent is to help students make better career choices and acquire marketable job skills that will allow them to move into high wage, high skills jobs upon graduation. The three components of School-to-Work are school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. As a comprehensive educational reform movement, the purpose is to help students transition from school to work, and to help business/industry find more qualified workers for the workplace.

Specifically, the School-to-Work Act provides federal funds to states to implement School-to-Work initiatives. Individual states apply to the federal government for funds through a grant which outlines the School-to-Work program that each state proposes according to the guidelines established under the Act. The individual states

designate a fiscal agent within the state that will coordinate the program and disperse the School-to-Work money. Through regional councils and local partnerships (consisting of schools, businesses, parents, and teachers), school districts apply to their respective state agency for School-to-Work funds through a grant which outlines their local partnership's specific School-to-Work plan that complies with the federal guidelines. Individual teachers can then apply to the local partnership for funds to conduct School-to-Work activities and acquire career materials for their classrooms.

School-to-Work is unique in many respects in that it is a coordinated effort by education authorities, business leaders, and lawmakers to form a "partnership" in designing an educational reform bill. Also, the funding for School-to-Work is intended to be "seed" money to initiate educational reform and build local partnerships between schools and area business/industry. According to the School-to-Work Act of 1994, the funding expires on October 1, 2001 with the expectation that this will be sufficient time for school and business partnerships to form and be self-sustaining so that federal funding will no longer be required (School-to-Work, 1994).

Background of the Problem

The topic of School-to-Work in my community and state has been a controversial subject for approximately two years. Many educators, administrators, business leaders, and patrons regard School-to-Work as a positive educational reform bill which will help students transition from the classroom to the workplace. However, many other citizens have denounced School-to-Work and its implications for educational reform. These

polarized views have created controversy over the implementation of School-to-Work in my community.

Statement of the Problem

The United States public education system has been highly criticized in recent decades for graduating students with low academic achievement and who are poorly prepared for the workplace (Commission, 1988; Daggett, 1994; SCANS Report, 1991). The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 was federal legislation intended to help public education build business and education partnerships in order to improve the quality of our education system and make America's students better prepared for the workplace. However, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 has been highly criticized as an educational reform platform by numerous factions of society on both a national and state level (Bond, 1996; Hearne, 1995; Murphy, 1996). As schools in Oklahoma have attempted to implement School-to-Work initiatives, various political factors, social concerns, and academic criticisms have surfaced which have affected the implementation of School-to-Work programs. There must be a thorough understanding of these concerns and controversies if we are to understand the public resistance to educational reform as outlined in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994.

Purpose

Guiding this research study was the overarching question that has surfaced with the introduction and implementation of School-to-Work: Why is there such controversy regarding the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994? There has been much concern,

confusion, and frustration voiced by both opponents and supporters of School-to-Work as arguments have been made both for and against this educational reform movement. The purpose of this study was to examine some of the controversial issues surrounding School-to-Work and to develop a deeper understanding of the politics, problems, and possibilities of implementing a School-to-Work program in a community in Oklahoma.

Research Questions

The specific research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the socio-political factors that have impacted the implementation of School-to-Work initiatives?
2. What are the academic factors that have impacted the implementation of School-to-Work initiatives?
3. What is the impact of business/industry involvement in School-to-Work?

Rationale for a Qualitative Design

One general definition of research is the documentation and recording of information that is observed in life. The best way to conduct research depends on the research topic and the purpose of the research. Some problems are well-suited for quantitative research while other problems are best-suited for qualitative research. Scientific research (positivistic research) is largely dependent on formulating and testing hypotheses through manipulation of variables and then recording the results in numerical form. Certain research requires this positivistic approach in establishing the *what* that is occurring in a given phenomenon. However, qualitative (post-positivistic) research

design focuses on the *how* and *why* of a given phenomenon (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989). In examining the controversies surrounding School-to-Work, some of the most important data centers on *why* people are either for or against this educational reform movement. Understanding people's perspectives, viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are central to developing insights to the School-to-Work controversy. As Merriam (1988) explains "...research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p. 3).

Therefore, a qualitative (post-positivistic) research design is most appropriate for this research study as it attempts to address *how* people perceive School-to-Work and *why* they are either for or against this educational reform movement. Also, qualitative research acknowledges "multiple realities" of a given phenomenon as opposed to a single reality (Merriam, 1988); it lends itself to "naturalistic inquiry" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which is studying human actions in natural settings; and it takes into account the researcher's background, biases and involvement in the phenomenon which become an integral part of the research study (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989). These aspects of qualitative research were all relevant to this research study examining the controversy surrounding School-to-Work.

Conceptual Framework

Much of the controversy surrounding School-to-Work is centered around two opposing philosophies: Pragmatism/Progressivism vs. Classicism. (It should be noted that "progressivism" is an educational philosophy that stems from the general

philosophical school of thought of pragmatism). Pragmatism is an American movement in philosophy that can be traced back to the mid-1800's to the writings of C. S. Pierce and William James (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Pragmatism is focused on the practical application of information and is concerned with actions and consequences of thoughts and beliefs. It emphasizes concrete actions rather than abstract thought. Elias and Merriam (1995) give a concise explanation of pragmatism:

Pragmatism accepts both the relativism and pluralism of world views. This attitude is most in keeping with the nature of human persons and the evolving world. The centrality of human experience is another dimension of pragmatic thought. Experience is placed in opposition to all authoritarian ways of arriving at knowledge. Pragmatism emphasizes the consequences of actions in the determination of truth or goodness. Thus, there are no absolutes in knowledge or in morality. A final characteristic of pragmatism is its emphasis on social reform as a legitimate concern of philosophers. In this aspect, some pragmatists were close to Marx in seeing the task of philosophy as not only understanding, but also changing the world in which we live (p. 48).

John Dewey, the father of progressivism, embraced the pragmatic philosophy in his development of educational theory during the early twentieth century. In education, Dewey was concerned with the practical application of knowledge learned. He advocated learning by direct experience, teaching academic material through occupational education, and responding to social problems through education. Progressive education is the practice of the pragmatic philosophy (Wirth, 1983; Gregson, 1994). The terms "progressivism" and "pragmatism" are often used interchangeably in education circles. (For the purpose of this study, the term "pragmatism" will be used when explaining the general philosophy and "progressivism" will be used to described the educational theory promoted by John Dewey).

Classicism, on the other hand, is a philosophy that is rooted in the Greek classical approach to education with emphasis on rigorous intellectual development, moral absolutes, and individual freedoms. The aim of classical education is the total development of the human person and an understanding of the human condition. The focus of classical curriculum is on teaching the "Great Works" to develop intellectual abilities through rhetoric (speaking and writing persuasively) and through intense contemplation of Truth and Reality. Knowledge is power in its own sake. Classical education has been the dominant educational paradigm in the U. S. since the colonial period when the immigrants brought their European heritage with them. Classical education is the basis for the liberal arts approach to education and has come to mean the foundation for college preparation and higher learning (Elias & Merriam, 1995).

These two philosophies play an important part in understanding the controversies surrounding School-to-Work, and therefore, the researcher needs to use a dual lens in conducting research on this topic. In examining these controversies, the researcher must have a solid understanding of these opposing philosophies in order to comprehend the complex issues that stem from School-to-Work educational reform legislation. It is important to be able to see from both "world views" to fully understand the arguments that are presented by either supporters or opponents to School-to-Work. It would not serve well to choose one philosophy or "lens" over the other in examining the controversial issues because the bias of that lens may unfairly portray the opposing philosophy. The intent is not to prove that one philosophy is better than the other for that would only serve to further divide these two camps. Obviously, a philosophy cannot be either "right" or "wrong", it is simply the values and beliefs that govern the way a person

perceives reality. In the case of School-to-Work, it would be advantageous if the researcher can acknowledge the merits of both philosophies with the hopes of transcending dualistic thought and finding common ground that would mutually satisfy both the classical (liberal arts) supporters and the pragmatists.

Perhaps my personal lens is somewhat tainted as I worked in business/industry for eleven years and I understand the pragmatic philosophy. Being able to apply knowledge to the workplace is imperative to successful job performance. However, as an English teacher with an M. A. in English and a strong liberal arts background, I also support teaching the "Great Works" of literature and history as we strive to help students achieve higher levels of understanding, develop intellectual abilities, grasp abstract concepts, and understand the human condition. My personal lens may appear contradictory, but I believe it is possible for these two philosophies to coexist harmoniously. Therefore, the conceptual framework used in this study to examine the controversies surrounding School-to-Work is a "dual" lens of a classicism and pragmatism.

Researcher Subjectivity

In qualitative case study research, the researcher becomes an integral part of the research study. The notion of "researcher as primary instrument" (Merriam, 1988, p. 19) emphasizes the important role the researcher plays in the case study. The researcher becomes the "lens" through which all data is filtered, and takes the place of an inanimate survey instrument or questionnaire. Therefore, a description of the researcher's biases, experiences, and philosophy is important to understanding the case study itself. Perhaps I offer a unique perspective on the topic of School-to-Work -- as an educator with eight

years in public education and Master's degree in liberal arts, and as a human resource analyst with eleven years in business/industry and Bachelor's degree in business administration. Also, as a parent with a son in elementary school, I am concerned about the quality of education he will receive in the public schools, and I fully understand the parental concerns that surface both for and against School-to-Work. I openly admit that I expect my child to attend college upon graduation. Therefore, as I fluctuate in and out of education and business/industry and fulfill my role as a parent, I realize this unique combination allows me to view School-to-Work from many perspectives.

I first learned about the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 when I was completing my Ed. S. degree in May, 1995. I read a journal article about President Clinton signing new educational reform legislation in 1994 which outlined a program for helping students transition from school to the workplace. I thought this sounded like an excellent idea. Since I had been a teacher for four years and had worked in the petroleum industry for eleven years, I realized the need for doing a better job of bridging the gap between education and business/industry. It seemed to me that education and business/industry had historically functioned as separate institutions. I agreed with business and industry that there was little that our educational curriculum offered to help prepare students for the demands of the workplace. School-to-Work, it seemed to me, offered an avenue for bridging the gap between education and work.

My views on School-to-Work come largely from my own educational background and work experience in business/industry. After I had received a B. S. in Education and a M. A. in English and had taught secondary English for two years, I decided to try a different career path. A local petroleum company was hiring for various positions in

1980 so I decided to apply. The only job I "qualified" for with a liberal arts (classical) degree was a secretarial job. The personnel managers who reviewed my resume decided since I could type and I could spell, I naturally would make a good secretary.

Quite frankly, I resented the fact that six years of college acquiring both a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree only qualified me for a secretarial job. I admittedly had no real marketable skills except typing and shorthand which were courses I took when I was a junior in high school. However, I knew I had worked as hard for my Master's degree in English as the MBA graduate sitting next to me. It was discouraging to realize that the long hours I had spent in the college library doing research, the volumes of books I had read, and the stacks of literary critiques I had written and had presented in my classes seemed to be of value to no one. Fortunately, soon after I was hired as a secretary, I was promoted to a technical writer in another department because I had an M. A. in English with a technical writing course on my transcript. So, my liberal arts degree got my foot in the door of a major corporation and after being promoted to a professional position, I doubled my salary in six months from my previous teaching salary.

It was obvious that in order to progress further in the company, I would need a business or technical degree. Therefore, I obtained a second Bachelor's degree (this time in business administration) by attending night school while working as a technical writer. This business degree allowed me to move into the Human Resources department where I definitely found my niche. I worked as a college recruiter for eight years and worked one year in job evaluation. As a recruiter, I interfaced with various levels of management, interviewed candidates for jobs, and organized college recruiting trips. As I interviewed geologists, geophysicists, engineers, accountants, and computer programmers, I received

a broad exposure to lots of technical and business degree programs from various colleges. Even though I had no formal education in the petroleum industry, I learned much about the operations and business aspects of the oil industry as a part of my regular job duties. As a job evaluation analyst, I interviewed job incumbents about their job duties, wrote job descriptions, and evaluated job grades. I even accompanied my husband on an overseas transfer to the United Kingdom, and I worked with U. K. national salary administration in our company's U. K. office which gave me first-hand experience in the "global economy".

Throughout my eleven years in the petroleum industry, I received several promotions and complimentary performance evaluations. My supervisors always commented that my strengths were written communication skills, oral presentation skills, interpersonal skills, human relations skills, and time-management skills. My weakness was always listed as "computer skills". Realizing that I was "technologically challenged", I took a number of computer training workshops which has helped me even today learn new computer software.

As I have returned to education in the last few years, I feel that my strength in the classroom is the ability to bridge the gap between education and business/industry. Specifically, I feel I can show students the relevancy of the subject matter to the real world, i.e. the relationship between theory and application. That is why I found School-to-Work to be a logical and practical education reform movement. If educators could expose students to the workplace while they are in school, students could see how their academic subjects apply to the work world. Also, as corporate recruiter, I always felt we should have a better qualified pool of job candidates from which to select. When interviewing candidates for jobs (both college graduates and non-college graduates), it

was apparent that most candidates had little to no prior work experience. Those graduates who did have either summer work experience or co-op work experience in business/industry had a definite advantage in the hiring process. Non-college graduates, in particular, had few job skills and little relevant experience to offer. Therefore, my business work experience had convinced me that School-to-Work would help individual students be more employable, would benefit business/industry in finding more qualified workers, and would strengthen our economy as a whole.

Consequently, I was totally astonished that people in our community could be so adamantly opposed to the School-to-Work program. My own support for School-to-Work prompted me to research the opposition to this educational reform bill. I was genuinely interested in finding out more about this controversy and why there was such resistance to educational reform as outlined in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. Through my involvement with the early implementation stages of School-to-Work in my community, I became fairly knowledgeable about the School-to-Work legislation, the funding guidelines, and the integration of occupational and academic curriculum. However, I quickly learned that there is more involved than understanding the "mechanics" of School-to-Work. I became a co-learner in this research process as I began to understand the values, beliefs, attitudes, and philosophies that are major part of the School-to-Work controversy. It became apparent that as a qualitative researcher I was not just attempting to study School-to-Work, but I was studying people, and trying to understand people and learn from them.

Significance of the Study

In the case of educational issues, philosophical considerations have always played an important role in determining the purpose and direction of educational theories and practices (Noll, 1997). However, education is only a part of the entire social, economic, and political web of complex relationships of a society. As such, education cannot be viewed in a vacuum. It must be viewed in relationship to all of the dimensions that surround human existence.

Philosophy attempts to make sense of an often confusing and frustrating world. In that vein, examining how different philosophical schools of thought impact education is most certainly a worthwhile endeavor. While there are no easy answers to the many dilemmas which face public education, philosophy can help us understand the complexities of the educational arena. Fundamental axiological questions to address include: Should education teach "what is" or "what should be"? Does education shape a society and merely reflect a society? What part should social developments, economic conditions, and political perspectives play in defining the purpose and direction for education, or should they play a part at all? These and other questions are universal concerns and timeless issues that are worthy of continuing discussion, debate, and research as we attempt to generate new ideas, help direct change, initiate progress, advance our understanding, and contribute to our knowledge of educational theory and practice.

This case study examining the controversies surrounding School-to-Work lends itself to furthering our understanding of philosophical differences which affect

educational policies and practices. As our society is a complex, dynamic, and changing entity, it is helpful to examine the underlying motivations for educational reform and to examine the reasons for resistance to educational reform movements. This case study may help open constructive dialogue between legislators, business leaders, education authorities, parents, teachers, and concerned patrons in an attempt to acknowledge the merits of opposing viewpoints in an effort to develop sound educational policies and practices.

Limitations

The scope of this study was limited to a community in Oklahoma which is a predominately white-collar, highly educated, affluent, mid-sized community. This a fairly unique community in that it is small enough to maintain a small town atmosphere, but it also has a large concentration of wealth and a highly educated population. The major employers in the community are comprised mainly of oil companies, educational institutions, health care, and financial institutions. Therefore, there are more white-collar than blue-collar employment opportunities. Also, there is very little racial or ethnic diversity in this community.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are from the Glossary of School-to-Work Terms from the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education (1996) and are pertinent to the discussion of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act:

Academic Preparation - Courses representing state graduation or college entrance requirements.

Applied Academics - Courses such as principles of technology, applied mathematics, applied biology and chemistry, applied communications, and applied social studies that focus on subject matter concepts as they are applied to real-world problem solving.

Apprenticeship - Registered apprenticeship describes those apprenticeship programs which meet specific federally approved standards designed to safeguard the welfare of apprentices and which are registered with the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT), U. S. Department of Labor (in some states through state apprenticeship agencies or a council approved by BAT). It is a relationship between an employer and employee during which the worker, or apprentice, learns an occupation in a structured program sponsored jointly by employers and labor unions or operated by employers and employer associations.

Articulation - A process for coordinating the linking of two or more educational systems within a community to help students make a smooth transition from one level to another, without experiencing delays, duplication of courses, or loss of credit. Horizontal articulation generally refers to student transfer of credit from one program to another within one institution or from one institution to another; vertical articulation refers to the transfer of credit from a lower-level institution to a higher-level one. The term is used both in higher education and in a secondary/postsecondary connection.

Basic Skills - Essential academic and personal abilities that enable a person to succeed in school and the workplace. Traditionally referred to as the three R's (reading,

writing, and arithmetic), in recent times both educators and employers expanded the definition to include a number of cognitive and interpersonal abilities, including the capability to think and solve problems, communicate information in oral and written forms, work effectively alone and in teams, and take personal responsibility for one's own self-development.

Career Awareness - Helping students understand the role of work, one's own uniqueness, and basic knowledge about career clusters and different occupations with those clusters.

Career Exploration - Helping students discover their individual interest, abilities, values, and needs by exploring jobs and how they fit into the world of work through hands-on exploration, career assessment, career videos, job shadowing, career mentoring, or actual job experience.

Career Major - A coherent sequence of courses or the field of study that prepares a student for a first job. It should integrate academic and occupational learning, integrate school-based and work-based learning, establish linkages between secondary schools and postsecondary institutions; prepare the student for employment in a broad occupational cluster or industry sector; typically include at least 2 years of secondary education and at least 1 or 2 years of postsecondary education; provide the students, to the extent practical, with strong experience in and understand of all aspects of the industry the students are planning to enter; result in the award of a high school diploma or its equivalent, a certificate or diploma recognizing successful completion of 1 or 2 years of postsecondary education, and a skill certificate; and it should lead to further education and training.

Certification - The provision of a certificate or award to individuals, indicating the attainment of skills or knowledge, usually as a result of a training system.

Connecting Activities - Those activities which are programmatic or human resources that are intended to help link school- and work-based educational programs. Connecting activities match students with the work-based learning opportunities of employers, provide a school-site mentor for each students, provide technical assistance to employers and school, provide assistance for finding appropriate jobs, link participants with community services, collect and analyze postprogram results and link youth development activities with business/industry strategies for upgrading the skills of their workers.

General Track - A series of secondary course work which is characterized by a less rigorous and more broadly defined curriculum and prepares students neither for college nor for workforce entry.

Integrated Learning - The "horizontal" bridging across academics and vocational areas of the curriculum to provide students with exposure to both disciplines and ultimately how to apply them.

Local Partnership - An entity responsible for local school-to-work programs.

Mentoring - Matching a professional with a student who has similar career interests. The mentor advises and provides a role model for the students. In the work-site learning component of the school-to-work system, the mentor is called upon to provide actual skill training to the student who is employed in the workplace.

Occupational Cluster - A grouping of occupations from one or more business/industries that share common skill requirements.

Passport - A state-issued, school-validated document demonstrating that a student has met state and/or national competency standards in at least one occupation. Passport recipients are encouraged to seek business/industry-issued credentials, certificates, or licenses and include these in the passport.

Performance Standard - The minimum level of achievement or rate of progress that indicates when a goal or objective has been met.

Plan of Study - A planned, coherent sequence of courses leading to or supporting a career major.

School-Based Learning - Instruction that includes (1) career exploration and counseling in order to help students who may be interested to identify and select or reconsider their interests, goals, and career majors; (2) initial selection by interested students of a career major not later than the beginning of the 11th grade; (3) a program of study designed to meet academic standards and to meet the requirements necessary for a student to earn a skill certificate; and (4) regularly scheduled evaluation to identify academic strengths and weaknesses of students and the need for additional learning opportunities to master core academic skills.

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, higher education, and business/industry partners 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.

School-to-Work Opportunities Act - The federal legislation to develop systems that coordinate all activities in state and local programs to address the career education and work preparation needs of all students.

Shadowing - A career exploration process in which a student follows a worker on the job for a designated period of time to learn about the worker's career.

Skill Standard - Specifies the level of knowledge and competence required to perform successfully in the workplace. These standards may be specific to a given occupation, cross occupational lines, or apply to groupings of occupations. Skill standards can be tailored to any business/industry to reflect its particular needs and economic environment.

Skill Certificate - A portable, business/industry-recognized credential that certifies that a student has mastered skills at levels that are at least as challenging as skill standards endorsed by the National Skill Standards Board.

Tech Prep - A technical education program linking the last two years of high school with the first two years of postsecondary education and offering a coherent program of study integrating academic and vocational education. Tech Prep programs typically lead to an associate degree but can lead to a bachelor's degree.

Work-Based Learning - Consists of work experiences; a coherent sequence of job training and work experiences that 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 participatory skills; and broad instruction in all aspects of a business/industry. The work-based

component may include paid work experience, job shadowing, school-sponsored enterprises, and on-the-job training for academic credit.

Work-Site Learning - Activities that encompass all of the components of work-based learning, except that the educational process has to occur on site in business and industry.

Workplace Mentor - An employee or other individual, approved by the employer at a workplace, who possesses the skills and knowledge to be mastered by a students and who instructs the student, critiques the performance of the student, challenges the student to perform well, and works in consultation with classroom teachers and the employer of the students.

Youth Apprenticeship - A school-to-work option designed to expose students to work-day realities. Participants spend part of each school week at a work site and are treated as regular employees. The experience at the work site provides part of the student's instruction. Youth apprenticeship is an employer/school partnership, preceded by career exploration, integrated academic and structured job training, and work-site experience. (Because *youth apprenticeship* is often confused with *apprenticeship*, work-site learning is becoming a more common term used to describe the student learner's experiences.)

Other terms

Other terms needing clarification in this study are:

Classicism - an educational philosophy rooted in the Greek classical educational approach of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. This philosophy emphasizes intellectual

development and moral absolutes, and the aim of education is "to produce the good and virtuous man" (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 14). Classicism is closely aligned with liberalism or liberal arts education, and, therefore, this study will use the term "classicism" as a synonym for the liberal educational philosophy in order to minimize the confusion between a liberal education philosophy and a liberal political viewpoint.

Progressivism - an educational philosophy advocated by John Dewey in the early 1900's in the U. S. This philosophy emphasizes a practical approach to education including "learning by doing", child-centeredness, learning through occupations, and the role of education in a democratic society (Elias & Merriam, 1995).

Summary

This qualitative descriptive case study examined the controversies surrounding School-to-Work in a community in Oklahoma. While many people support School-to-Work initiatives which will help prepare students for the workplace, others criticize School-to-Work as an educational reform bill. Using a "dual lens" of two philosophical schools of thought, classicism and pragmatism, this research study attempted to provide a balanced critique of School-to-Work in an effort to develop a deeper understanding of the controversy surrounding this educational reform movement.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

To fully understand some of the major issues surrounding School-to-Work, one needs a general understanding of the history of the United States education system. It has often been said that we cannot know where we are going until we know where we have been. History is important to us because it informs us of the past, helps us understand the present, and suggests a path for the future (Pulliam, 1991, p. 265). Therefore, looking at our educational system from an historical perspective helps illuminate some of the controversies we face today.

History can also help us in other ways. It can help us understand the “logic of change” as it helps us see why we have certain values, habits, morals, government, and economies and how new ideas evolve that affect these structures and assumptions. Also, history gives us a *perspective* from which to view our world (Session & Wortman, 1992, p. 161). People of the past lived differently than we do today, but from them we see how many things may superficially change while the underlying human condition and human nature stays the same. This helps us understand how people's perspectives on current educational issues may be different, but how these different perspectives may have a

legitimate basis if we look at where their ideas originated, how they have been impacted by significant events over time, and how they may still have relevancy today.

However, it is important to acknowledge that our sense of history is largely reliant on widely varying interpretations of historical facts. For example, Pulliam (1991) points out "Bernard Bailyn is an example of an author who feels the schools have generally supported educational equality, while Michael Katz argues that they have served the special interest of the dominant middle-class whites" (p. 6). This discrepancy in interpretation presents a paradox. If one does believe that history plays a significant role in understanding the present and determining the future, these conflicting views of history make it difficult to develop a "correct" history with a "correct" diagnosis of the present and a "correct" prescription for the future. Indeed, American education is faced with many complex dilemmas. A person's interpretation of history determines what events one considers to have been the most significant in shaping our present education system and what direction our future education system should take. Volumes have been written on American education which is testimony to the significance education plays in our society. This review of literature will trace some major historical factors that have helped shape American public education and continue to be issues today: the role of religion in public education, the role of classical (liberal arts) education in school curriculum, the role of vocational education in public schools, and the role of the federal government in American education. All of these contribute to the contemporary issues that have led up to the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 and play a significant part in the controversy surrounding this educational reform legislation.

Setting the Stage

The early American colonists set the stage for what has followed in the American educational arena for over two hundred years. While modern American education seems plagued with a myriad of concerns and controversies, it is helpful to examine the early beginnings of education in our American society. A look at colonial life reveals that American education has long been a point of controversy in our country. Many of the issues we face today in American education are an outgrowth of Puritan values, Western civilization traditions, and democratic ideals.

Role of Religion

As many early colonists originally came to America to escape religious persecution, we cannot forget the significant role religion has played in the founding of our nation. Most of the early Europeans who immigrated to America were Protestants. They immigrated to America to escape religious oppression in England (Pulliam, 1991). Religious groups such as the Pilgrims, Puritans, and Quakers helped shape and define many aspects of life in the new land, including education. In fact, early American schools were predominantly church schools where children were taught mainly for the purpose to read the Bible (Pulliam, 1991; Swanson, 1992).

Puritan Influence

Though church schools existed, Puritans and other religious groups in the early colonies saw education as the responsibility of the parents. Families were given the

responsibility of educating their children in the orthodox religious faith of the Puritan community with the help of their church for religious teachings. However, as early as 1642, some states (such as Massachusetts) decided that parents were not adequately training their children and, eventually many New England colonies required each town to set up a local school for its children (Pulliam, 1991). The curriculum in these early colonial schools were mainly religious and the textbooks were primarily the Bible, the New England Primer, and the catechism. Elementary schools focused on the four R's which were religion, reading, writing, and arithmetic. School masters were certified and approved by the minister of the community. The conditions of the schools were grim and the treatment of children were very harsh with whipping posts as "flogging" was a standard punishment for misbehavior. This was consistent with the Puritan beliefs which were rooted in the Calvinist doctrine that man was believed to be inherently evil with the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, one of the purposes of early schools was to teach children how to overcome their evil nature and to prevent idleness which was the "devil's workshop". The Puritan "work ethic" directly stems from this notion that idle hands were a source of evil and that hard work was rewarded through material wealth which was a sign of God's blessings (Sessions & Wortman, 1992).

Over the generations, some the Puritan beliefs such as the evil nature of children and the use of corporal punishment have lost favor in our society, but many Puritan ideals and values are still ingrained in our American culture. The "work ethic" and economic prosperity of this country are rooted in Puritan core values. The early colonies were rich in natural resources and commercial opportunities, and the colonists set the pace for our country's development and economic prosperity which was achieved predominately

through hard work that stems from the Puritan tradition (Sessions & Wortman, 1992). Of course, the moral values formed through Christian beliefs and Biblical scriptures are still dominant in our culture. Among the values that stem from our Puritan heritage include “respect for authority, postponing immediate gratification, neatness, punctuality, responsibility for one's own work, honesty, patriotism and loyalty, striving for personal achievement, competition, repression of aggression and overt sexual expression, respect for the rights and property of others, obeying rules and regulations” (Pulliam, 1991, p. 35). There is growing concern, however, that these values represent the dominant white middle-class culture and ignores the values of other cultures that have become increasingly prominent in our society. Multicultural studies advocate a tolerance and acceptance for other values that may exist in African-American, Hispanic, and American Indian cultures. However, these other cultures may not have a value system consistent with the Puritan value system that dominates our culture (Pulliam, 1991). Some people contend that our society, through education, learn about and accept this multicultural quality of America, while others support the need for maintaining a dominant American culture, through education, which other ethnic and racial groups can adopt if they choose to live in this country.

While religious teachings were prominent in early colonial schools, the separation of church and state as defined by the First Amendment has forbidden religious teachings in public schools. However, this has not eliminated the discussion of the role of religion in our educational system as issues such as school prayer continue to be debated (Swomley, 1997). Many religious issues stemming from the early colonial period continue to surround our current education system. Today, those who support religious

conservative views strongly believe in parental rights and strong moral values as evidenced in such groups as the Christian Coalition and Citizens for Excellence in Education (Noll, 1997). The increasing number of home-school advocates see the moral decay in public schools as reason to school children at home to protect them from undesirable influences. More and more parents are electing to home school their children particularly in the early childhood which is a critical period in developing values and morals (Swanson, 1992; Hearne, 1995).

Current Concerns

The increased political activities of the “religious right” today has spawned new discussion of the role of religion in education. The increased problems of drugs, gangs, shootings, and violence in schools is evidence of the moral decline of our young people (Swanson, 1992; Schaffley, 1996). As conservative religious groups become more aggressive in their attempts to reclaim public schools from the hands of “left-wing liberal organizations”, more friction has recently developed. Some people see the increased involvement of the religious right as a positive step in refocusing Christian values in public schools so students will receive a moral foundation. James Dobson, a prominent Christian spokesperson, explains:

The entire debate over our schools focuses on the issue of moral absolutes. That will shock some of my readers, but it is what I believe. God Himself is the Author of a universal law by which all things are governed. He has established an immutable standard of right and wrong that transcends time and space. Math, science and other academic inquiries flow from the acknowledgment that all truth is God's Truth, and nothing has meaning apart for Him. In generations past, of course, schools were designed to teach those principles, and discipline was intended to enforce them. Public schools and private higher education all had religious missions and conformed to scriptural dictates. Harvard, Yale, Princeton

and the College of William and Mary were Christian colleges, devoted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But those days are gone. Now we have succeeded in gutting our institutions and divesting them of their moral underpinnings. We have passed laws forbidding any official support for matters of faith, prohibiting the posting of the Ten Commandments on school walls and muzzling those who would utter a word of praise or petition to the Almighty. In this remarkably successful campaign to demoralize our education institutions, we have created for ourselves meaningless, ineffective and godless monuments to man's arrogance. It is our vulnerable children, and those in generations to come, that are sacrificed on the altar of secularism. I pray that someday we will again lay hold to the wisdom of those who have gone before us. (Dobson, 1998, np).

To others, however, the momentum of the religious right poses a negative influence on public education because they wish to inflict their "agenda" on society as a whole. As religious conservatives take over more and more seats on local school boards and gain more political clout in national politics, many fear the religious right will take over educational policies. The main target of religious conservatives in public education includes eliminating sex and AIDS education in schools, removing self-esteem programs, banning certain books from school libraries, and eliminating multi-cultural curriculum programs in public schools (Arocha, 1993). Many people are wary of religious groups infiltrating education because they fear they will use the education institution as a means of indoctrinating children in religious beliefs that may contradict their parents' or families' beliefs. The reason for the separation of church and state in the Constitution was to prevent a dominant religious group inflicting their own religious viewpoints on others. Obviously, the role of religion in American education stems back to our early American heritage. Whether or not one agrees with religious influences in schools is a subject of much debate. However, one cannot deny the heavy influence of religion in the establishment of early American schools as colonists exercised their newly found religious freedom which extended into the education of their children. Specifically, the

issues of parental rights, academic excellence, and Christian values are among these topics of increased controversy in today's education arena which have their roots in our early colonial period.

Influence of Classical Education

The colonists, of course, were immigrants from Europe. Therefore, they brought with them a rich European heritage. These European traditions can be traced back to medieval Europe which was heavily influenced by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Classical education is deeply rooted in Greek classicism with emphasis on rigorous intellectual development. In this educational philosophy the aim of education is the total development of the human person and a broad understanding of the human condition through reading and discussing the "Great Works" of literature, history, and philosophy. This basic foundation provides intellectual development as well as moral development as students study, ponder, and debate the concepts of Reality, Truth, and Quality. As students grapple with difficult and perplexing intellectual and philosophical issues, they learn to read, write, analyze, synthesize, discuss, debate, and think critically about significant human dilemmas (Elias & Merriam, 1995).

Classical Curriculum

The original classical curriculum consisted of rhetoric, logic, and grammar which were part of the trivium that was taught in ancient Greece. These courses were believed to teach students to analyze, debate, and communicate information and ideas effectively. There were also advanced subjects of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and harmony

(music) (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Some of the core values associated with classical education is found in the writings of Plato, whom many consider to have had the greatest influence on Western civilization (Session & Wortman, 1992). Plato contemplates the state of the ideal society in his famous work, The Republic, as he explains how the world is divided into two parts: the physical, concrete world and the abstract, ideal world. He views the physical world inferior to the abstract world of ideals because the physical world is imperfect, shallow, and impermanent. Plato believes that only through the quest for ideal truth, beauty, and goodness in the abstract world can a person acquire the basis needed for action in the physical world (Session & Wortman, 1992, p. 172).

In the following excerpts from The Republic, Socrates discusses with Plato how education of the arts contributes to the harmony and goodness of man and is central to the formation of the ideal society:

So fine speech, fine music, gracefulness, and fine rhythm are all adapted to a simplicity of character, and I do not mean simplicity in the sense we use it as a euphemism for foolishness, but where the mind has established a truly good and fine character. -- Most certainly.

... What if a man labours much at physical exercises and lives well but is quite out of touch with the arts and philosophy? Is he not in good physical condition at first, full of resolution and spirit, and becomes braver than he was before? -- Certainly.

But if he does nothing else and never associates with the Muse? He never has a taste of any learning or any investigation; he has no share in any reasoned discussion or any other form of culture; even if he had some love of learning in his soul it soon becomes enfeebled, deaf, and blind as it is not aroused or nurtured; and even his senses are not sharpened. -- That is so, he said (Session & Wortman, 1992, p.180).

Obviously, the roots of a classical education run deep. The value placed on "education of the mind" and intellectual and cultural development has a long history in

Western thought and tradition which stem from the classical education of the ancient Greeks.

Eventually, classical education came to encompass religious teachings as well after its encounter with the medieval Christian church. Augustine of Hippo viewed classical education as an important part of Christian education. He saw the merging of moral education and intellectual education because he believed the virtues of Christianity could be advanced by the intellectual education of the Greeks (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p.15). Hence, we see the marriage of Christian education with the classical education philosophy. Some of the similarities found in religious teachings and classical teachings are also found in teaching methods such as the "teacher as master" concept where the school master lectured and students memorized verses or passages and recited them on request. While the methodologies may now vary somewhat, many private parochial schools today continue to offer a traditional classical curriculum (Latin, logic, and rhetoric) and religious teachings to build students' morals, character, and intellectual capacity which, classical supporters claim, are sorely lacking our public schools today (Swanson, 1992).

The classical curriculum has been the basis for the traditional liberal arts curriculum that has dominated public schools in the U. S. The traditional liberal arts curriculum emphasizes literature, composition, history, poetry, art, music, mathematics, and philosophy in order to develop an appreciation of the arts and culture as well as to develop intellectual abilities. A classical (liberal arts) curriculum was originally aimed at producing the "gentleman scholar" and the "cultured gentleman", and eventually came to

be the education for future leaders for both the church and the country (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p.16).

Colonial Schools

As more and more immigrants from all over Europe came to America after the Revolutionary War, public education became more prominent in order to educate new immigrants. The colonists modeled their schools after the European system with which they were most familiar. Classical curriculum was dominant in early American schools as evidenced in the Latin grammar schools and preparatory schools which prepared children for college or university. Free public schools for the general populous can be traced back to the period before the War of 1812 (Pulliam, 1991), and in those early schools we see the establishment of a strong classical education in American education.

Because our founding fathers had immigrated from Europe, they had been educated in the European education tradition which was the classical curriculum. Their strong classical educational background and their strong religious affiliations are what some people feel gave them their intellectual capacity and strong value base for forming our new country. Prominent statesman such as James Madison and Thomas Jefferson are among the leaders of the new nation that had both a strong religious and solid classical background (Swanson, 1992). Many traditional classical supporters feel that our public schools are no longer focusing on the subjects that will develop both the students' intellect and moral character needed in a democratic society.

Many academics have argued the merits of classical (liberal arts) education for all people. Hutchins (1953) is one classical education supporter who contends:

This is the education appropriate to free men. It is [classical (liberal arts)] education. If all men are to be free, all men must have this education. It makes no difference how they are to earn their living or what their special interests or aptitudes may be. They can learn to make a living, and they can develop their special interests and aptitudes, after they have laid the foundation of free and responsible manhood through [classical (liberal arts)] education. It will not do to say that they are incapable of such education. This claim is made by those who are too indolent or unconvinced to make the effort to give such education to the masses (Noll, 1997, p. 13).

Many classical education supporters contend that if classical (liberal arts) education is not taught in public schools, most students will never achieve intellectual enlightenment. Rigorous academic curriculum and exposure to the “Great Works” teach a person about human ideals, values, and principles. In order for citizens of a society to advance in life, students need the classical education background that prepares them for higher professions and a greater understanding of humanity. Classical (liberal arts) education for public schools, then, provides the intellectual and moral base on which a democratic society is founded.

Role of Vocational Education

While classical education was dominant in early colonial schools, vocational education was also seen as a necessary part of education in the colonies. William Penn and John Locke were among early supporters of trade skill training and working schools for the poor as a result of the English poor laws of 1562 and 1601 (Pulliam, 1991). Benjamin Franklin was another supporter of vocational education, and helped open an academy in Philadelphia in 1751. While Franklin supported intellectual and cultural enlightenment of the classical curriculum in the public schools, he also saw the need for practical subjects in vocational education. An academy was like an alternative secondary

school where students learned a trade. Some of the more practical subjects were offered at the academy such as merchandising, navigation, and mechanics. Eventually, eastern cities adopted the apprenticeship programs from European countries and some manual labor schools were built along lines suggested by the European educators Pestalozzi and Fellenberg (Pulliam, 1991, p. 94).

The craftsman workshop and the family farms were the basis of the economy throughout the 1700's and 1800's. Apprenticeships were among the earliest forms of vocational education and were especially useful in occupations such as blacksmiths, carpenters, and surveyors. To a large extent, a person's educational attainment was based largely on their social and economic background. For example, wealthy landowners often paid for private schooling for their sons or sent them abroad to study in Europe. The slaves and indentured servants received little to no education. The working class relied heavily on academies and apprenticeships for the education of their children (Pulliam, 1991). It is evident that in our country's early history, a person's social position and economic status determined the kind of education he/she was likely to receive.

Production Efficiency Model

With the onset of the industrial era at the turn of the century, the craftsman workshop gave way to the manufacturing plants and factories. Production processes and efficiency became the focus by the early 1900's. Vocational education became a much more prominent aspect of education as it provided manual training and skills that would prepare individuals for jobs in the growing industrial economy. David Snedden and Charles Prosser, two prominent players in the development of vocational education in the

early 1900's, supported this concept of vocational education (Wirth, 1983). They strongly advocated vocational education as a means for improving production and economic prosperity in the U. S. "What is good for business is good for America" was their philosophy (Wirth, 1983, p. 3). They, in fact, opposed teaching "functional facts" which were abstract and useless. They felt the goal for vocational education was to train individuals with trade skills that would mean immediate job placement and aid the industrial economy. Snedden's and Prosser's view of vocational education was limited to training individuals in routine jobs tasks to improve efficient production.

Progressive Education Model

John Dewey, a contemporary of Snedden and Prosser, was also a strong supporter of vocational education in the early twentieth century. He, like Snedden and Prosser, held high regard for the learner's experiences and believed in "learning by doing" which are fundamental elements of vocational education. However, Dewey held opposing ideas about the purpose of vocational education. He felt that to truly understand subject matter it must be taught in the context of real experience (Wirth, 1983). Learning had more meaning when applied to a life situation. Dewey, unlike Snedden and Prosser, felt that students should be educated through occupations rather than trained for specific trades (Gregson, 1994, p. 163). However, Dewey's "progressive" approach to vocational education was not embraced by the industrial society of the early twentieth century. The production efficiency model of Frederick Taylor's scientific management theory of 1911 established the dominant principles of the early 1900's and was the guiding premise for Snedden's and Prosser's view of vocational education (Gregson, 1994). Consequently,

the stigma that surrounds vocational education today is derived directly from the vocational education practices of the early twentieth century. Most people's perception of vocational education is still that of preparing workers with specific skills for specific blue-collar jobs in industry.

It is important to note that many institutions had a vested interest in vocational education at the turn of the century. Business/industry, educational reformers, social reformers, and organized labor all were "stakeholders" in vocational education. As a result, vocational education has had significant influence from many different groups. Vocational education served multiple purposes in our society in the early twentieth century. Vocational education was looked upon to meet the needs of business/industry, provide educational reform, solve social problems, improve economic mobility, and satisfy the expectations of labor unions. While vocational education has been effective in providing some job training for business/industry and has helped lower unemployment rates, it has struggled to satisfy all the demands that has been placed upon it (Kantor & Tyack, 1982).

Vocational Education and the Industrial Era

The production efficiency perspective of vocational education was compatible and congruent with the early twentieth century mass production economy of the Industrial Age. For nearly 100 years, vocational education in the U. S. has followed the doctrine set by Snedden and Prosser. Individuals have trained for specific jobs with specific skills and this approach was sufficient during the Industrial Age which was dominated by manufacturing plants, steel factories, and assembly lines. The industrial workplace was

characterized by repetitive tasks, manual skills, and often, heavy labor. The “man” was synonymous with “machine” and, as such, was viewed as a cog in the wheel which could be easily replaced. Production efficiency was the goal of the industrial economy. The goal then of vocation education was to aid the industrial economy by providing manual training and jobs skills that would enhance mass production (Wirth, 1983).

With the urbanization of America during the Industrial Age of the early twentieth century, families left the farms and workshops and poured into the cities to obtain jobs in factories and plants. Factory-like schools were established to accommodate the growing number of children to be educated. Mass production of education became the norm as children were herded through schools in large numbers and received the traditional education dose that was prescribed by education authorities (Wirth, 1992). The guiding purpose of classical, traditional education in public schools was to prepare children for college. Those students who did not “cut it” went the vocational route. During the Industrial Era, classical, traditional education came to be education for the academic elite who went on to college and eventually white-collar professions. Vocational education was for the working class and the purpose was to learn a trade for a blue-collar job.

Conflicting Educational Philosophies

Obviously, the vocational and classical (liberal arts) education philosophies of the early twentieth century had opposing philosophies and goals. While these philosophies were in direct contrast with each other, the industrial economy warranted the development of manual skills needed in the industrial workplace. Vocational education met the need in our society for skilled workers that enabled manufacturing,

transportation, and production plants to flourish. During the Industrial Era of the early twentieth century, learning a “trade” often guaranteed an employee stable employment, a livable wage, and a comfortable standard of living. Working conditions were often grueling with the blare of machinery, unsafe work environments, and hard, physical labor, but the compensation offered by large industries made the work bearable.

While Dewey, Snedden, and Prosser may not have agreed on the nature of vocational education, Dewey did believe that “Education through occupations [vocational education] consequently combined within itself more of the factors conducive to learning than any other method” (Dewey, 1916, p. 309). These vocational education supporters saw the traditional classical education curriculum boring, sterile, and irrelevant which they believed contributed to the high dropout rate of adolescent boys at the turn of the century, and which caused of serious social problems at that time (Rodger & Tyack, 1982). These vocational supporters saw the need for more practical subjects in the school curriculum and gradually vocational education made its way into public schools. Manual shop classes and vocational agriculture classes (and home economics for girls) were added to the traditional liberal curriculum.

Criticism of Progressive Education

Hailed by many as the single-most influential educational philosopher in America, Dewey's ideas on progressive thought have filled volumes of books. Two of Dewey's books, Democracy and Education (1916) and Experience and Education (1938), expound on the role of education in a democracy where education serves all the people (not a few academic elite), and the role of education in solving social inequalities. This Progressive

Era in education went through various stages of development from roughly 1900-1940 as many criticized the progressive approach to education. Many people were critical of Dewey's early experiments with progressive education and Dewey, in his later works, acknowledged some of the shortcomings of early attempts at progressive approaches. However, some of the beliefs that remain associated with the progressive philosophy are: 1) the child should be at the center of the learning experience, 2) education should meet the needs and interests of the child, and 3) the child should be an active, not passive, participant in the learning process. "Learning by doing" is still considered a primary progressive value.

However, critics of progressive education claim these progressive values are the very source of the problems in public education, namely "lack of discipline, child-centeredness, focusing on trivial problems, little attention to subject matter, anti-intellectualness, and a lack of a clear definition of the teacher's role" (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p.51). In fact, after World War II, Dewey was highly blamed for many of the ailments in American education. Elias & Merriam (1995) quote a letter printed in Life magazine (March 15, 1959) where President Eisenhower stated:

Educators, parents and students must be continuously stirred up by the defects in our educational system. They must be induced to abandon the educational path that, rather blindly they have been following as a result of John Dewey's teachings (p. 51).

However, the 1960's and 1970's saw a return to many of progressive ideologies promoted by Dewey. The 1960's, especially, was a period of social and political unrest and many people saw the social role of education in the same light as Dewey (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Dewey's progressive ideas advocated education for social change and

social equality, education as a means for the nation's economic prosperity, and education as a democratic entity in providing for all citizens.

Despite many attempts on behalf of many educators to implement Dewey's progressive education theory in the classroom over the last several decades, critics claim that the emphasis on "hands-on experience" has dominated "academic content". Even though in theory, Dewey advocated a strong academic content in addition to application, critics claim that in practice the academic content is often times less rigorous. Therefore, some critics believe that vocational education as promoted by Snedden and Prosser and the progressive education promoted by John Dewey are both intellectually inferior to the curriculum offered by traditional, classical education.

Federal Involvement in Education

As previously discussed, classical education has been viewed as the avenue for college preparation and higher learning and, therefore, seen largely as the education for the affluent, white, upper-middle-class. Vocational education, on the other hand, has been viewed as "trade" training and regarded as the education for the lower working class. Some argue that American education has historically spent an abundance of money and energy on trying to "level the playing field" to provide equal educational opportunities for all citizens. Through federal legislation and Supreme Court rulings, policies have been implemented to help "equalize" American education. Desegregation laws for racial integration and inclusion laws for disabled students are examples of legislation that have been passed to ensure equal educational opportunities for all American citizens (Noll, 1997). The exact extent of the effectiveness of these laws in

correcting inequalities in education is still a topic of much debate in American schools. Of equal concern is the degree to which federal government should be involved in public education. Conservatives, especially, are critical that the federal government continue to impose regulations and legislation on public education. The conflict over federal involvement in education, once again, stems back to the early history of our nation.

National Education System Debate

During the national period following the Revolutionary War, there was much debate about a national education system. While some statesmen favored a national education system as a means to providing a widely spread curriculum to the entire populous, other statesmen opposed it because it centered too much power in the federal government. The discussion of education intensified as the new republic acknowledged the need for an educated citizenry to sustain a democracy (Pulliam, 1991). Highly respected statesmen such as Thomas Jefferson greatly influenced the direction of education during the national period shortly after the American Revolution. Jefferson believed that all citizens should have equal opportunity for education in to protect our democracy. However, he opposed a national educational system that was submitted by other statesmen of that era. Jefferson believed in decentralization and supported a state system with local control, as did many early founders. Such men as Benjamin Rush and Samuel Smith submitted plans for a national education system as a means of ensuring a widely spread educational system for the entire nation. Several plans for a national education system were presented to Congress in late the 1700's but were declined (Pulliam, 1991).

It is helpful to acknowledge some of these early debates regarding the establishment of American public education in this country. Many of the political controversies that face public education today were topics of dissension very early in our country's history. As Pulliam (1991) points out:

Many of the founding fathers of the United States feared that leaving education in the hands of private families, churches, local communities, or philanthropic societies would not guarantee the survival of a democracy. Nevertheless, they were unable to promote a national system of education at any level. Considerable effort was made to obtain a national university but even that modest proposal was finally defeated. No educational provision was made in the Constitution so that the power to create schools fell to the states by default. This is very important today because there continues to be conflict over what powers rightfully belong to the federal government, to the states, and to local school boards (p. 55).

The debate today over federal government's role in public education can be traced to our country's early beginnings. To some, a centralized federal education system would offer a more consistent, widely spread, and standardized education program for the nation. To others, a federal education system would centralize more power in the federal government, would create more bureaucracy, and would be less responsive to the needs of the individual states and communities. These arguments are important in understanding the political pressures which exist in today's public education system.

... All through history, the progress of education has been linked to the whims of politics and public attitudes. It should be remembered that the reason we do not have a federal system of public schools in the United States is because of the political climate at the time of the writing of the Constitution (Pulliam, 1991, p. 57).

Examples of Federal Intervention in Education

Although the Constitution leaves public education in the hands of the states, there has historically been significant funding and guidance from the federal government. For

instance, the Northwest Ordinance of 1785 and the Morrill Act of 1862 were bills where federal land was given for educational purposes. The Morrill Act during the Civil War era was a bill where the federal government gave large land grants to states to establish universities. These state colleges were to teach agriculture and mechanical arts (often referred to as A. and M. universities) to meet the needs of the agricultural based economy of the 1860's (Pulliam, 1991; Davis & Botkin, 1994).

Another significant federal educational act was the Smith-Hughes Vocational Educational Act of 1917. Federal funds were provided to help pay the salaries for vocational instructors in high schools and helped provide money for vocational teacher training. The need for industrial and vocational education was increasing at the turn of the century as more skilled workers were needed in the plants and factories that emerged with the onset of the industrial age. Also, vocational education was seen as a means of meeting social needs by providing training and employment opportunities for lower socio-economic students (Pulliam, 1991).

In fact, vocational education has probably been impacted more by federal legislation than any other aspect of education in the U. S. "Since 1900, over fifty federal laws have dealt with vocational education in public schools. Of these laws, two significantly influenced the direction vocational schooling has taken: the Smith-Hughes Act (1917) and the Vocational Education Act (1963)" (Cuban, 1982, p. 47).

Historically, legislators have enthusiastically supported legislation and funding for vocational programs and education bills. According to Cuban (1982), a significant amount of federal money has been allocated for vocational education. "Annual appropriations totaled over \$600 million in 1978. The evident popularity of vocational

schooling with lawmakers rivals that of dams, river projects, and defense installations” (Cuban, 1982, p. 45). Despite significant federal funding and legislation, it is interesting to note that 1970's statistics indicate that only about 25% of high school students were enrolled in vocational curricula or in separate vocational schools (Cuban, 1982, p. 46). Although exact funding for vocational education is difficult to pinpoint, it accounts for only approximately 10% of the total amount spent on education in the U.S. (Gray & Herr, 1998).

Federal legislation continued to impact education throughout the 1930's and 1940's. The New Deal Acts under the administration of Franklin Roosevelt resulted in federal money used for vocational training for young men, loans to communities to build schools and libraries, and the National School Lunch Act of 1946 which provided money to school lunch programs (Pulliam, 1991). The G. I. Bill of 1944 was one of the most well-known pieces of federal education legislation which provided funds for veterans to continue to college whose education had been interrupted by World War II. Veterans of the Korean War and Viet Nam War were also able to take advantage of the G. I. Bill (Pulliam, 1991).

Since the 1950's, the federal government has passed numerous pieces of legislation that have impacted American education. Under both Republican and Democrat administrations, the federal government has responded to social, economic, and global conditions through education legislation. Probably one of the most significant examples of federal legislation for public education was the National Defense Education Act of 1958. This legislation was in direct response to the Soviet launching of the first space satellite, Sputnik. Seen as a threat to U. S. security and defense, the federal

government allocated funds for educational improvements in an effort to keep up in the “space race”. Federal NDEA funds were provided to recruit more teachers, to purchase laboratory equipment, to improve science instruction, to test bright and capable students, to provide more vocational education, and to conduct research on educational methods (Pulliam, 1991).

Another important federal education legislation was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which provided money for textbooks and instructional materials. Even though the money was allocated by the federal government, the control of the funds was left to individual states and local school districts. The main purpose was to allow disadvantaged children across the country access to quality instructional materials (Pulliam, 1991; McNeil, 1996).

In the 1960's, under the administration of Kennedy and Johnson, youth training programs such as the Manpower and Training Act of 1962 and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 were passed to help address growing unemployment. These Acts resulted in the Job Corps, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, and the Manpower Development Training Act Programs which helped provide young people with on-the-job training and skills needed in the workplace. These programs were targeted mainly toward high school dropouts, disadvantaged youth and minority students (Barton, 1994, p. 3).

However, as post-World War II baby boomers entered the job market, youth unemployment continued to rise, and in his 1967 Manpower Message to Congress, President Johnson recognized that “ ‘we must bridge the gap between education and work’ ” (Barton, 1994, p. 4). Investigations revealed that two out of three students did not go on to college and the majority did not finish (Barton, 1994.) Therefore, the

Earning and Learning Act of 1968, written by the Department of Labor and the Office of Education in Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), recommended expanding student work experience, youth counseling, job placement, and more involvement of employers in schools. These provisions were eventually folded into the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 and were only minimally successful because it was administered solely by HEW with little support from the Department of Labor or business and industry in general (Barton, 1994, p. 5).

Career Education emerged in the early 1970's when it was determined that the "general track" in public high schools was not adequately preparing students for work. Created during the Republican administration of President Nixon, the intent of career education was to expose high school students to various careers as part of their high school experience. Many schools developed career fairs and speakers bureaus which was initiated mainly by school counselors. However, the program was short-lived because when federal funding was cut in 1981, the program disappeared (Barton, 1994, p. 7).

Obviously, the facts indicate that there has been much federal legislation throughout our history that has impacted American education. Many of the federal programs have provided funds to schools for various reasons including academic, economic, and social reasons. The issue that remains in question is whether this federal intervention has helped or hurt public education in this country.

Decade of Attack

The 1980's was a decade of much educational criticism. Many reports surfaced that described the abysmal failure of our American schools. Not only were schools not

adequately educating our youth, but a national crisis was developing. The infamous “Nation at Risk” was probably the most prominent attack on American education. The “Nation at Risk” was a report issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983 during the Republican administration of President Reagan. William Bennett, then head of the Department of Education and author of “Nation at Risk” claimed that America was “at risk” of losing its status as an economic superpower in the world. The U. S. was losing its competitive edge in the global economy because American schools were failing to equip American students with the technological skills needed to compete in the workplace. Test scores showed a steady decline. Employers were concerned with the low academic achievement of high school graduates as well as a lack of employment skills (Nation at Risk, 1983). Recommendations to salvage our schools called for strengthening curriculum in our schools, setting higher standards and expectations for students, and improving teaching conditions to attract, prepare, and retain better qualified teachers.

Another disappointing evaluation of American schools emerged in 1983 that echoed many of the same concerns as the “Nation at Risk”. High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America was written by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and it gained national recognition for its comprehensive research on American high schools. However, the review was dismal. Statistics from surveys showed that Americans were becoming less satisfied with the quality of education in American high schools, and test scores revealed that students were scoring poorer on standardized tests. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Testing Program (ACT) scores showed a steady decline. Also, international tests showed

that American students scored much lower than their international counterparts (Boyer, 1983). Compared to students scores in Japan, Germany, and France, American students did not measure up.

These negative reports were disheartening to educators, parents, and the general public. These reports were highly publicized and sparked much discussion about educational reform issues. Many people recognized that the system was broken but much of the debate centered on how best to fix it.

Recently, these attacks on American public schools has been refuted by education proponents. In The Manufactured Crisis (1995), Berliner and Biddle contend that many of these reports, ("Nation at Risk", in particular) "distorted facts", "oversimplified results", made "sweeping generalizations", and overall, presented "misleading information" about the test scores and academic achievement of American students. In a point by point commentary, these authors attempt to "set the record straight" about the information presented in the many reports attacking American schools. They reevaluate the test scores that were presented and depict what they believe to be a more accurate and fair portrayal of American schools. In particular, Berliner and Biddle (1995) believe that American education has been used as a scapegoat by politicians and business leaders to rest the blame of declining American productivity on insufficient public education instead of examining poor business practices and ineffective business management.

Whether or not one agrees with the negative criticism concerning the performance of American schools is another point of contention. Nevertheless, these reports have brought into full focus the direct correlation between the quality of education and our nation's prosperity. Specifically, the reports increased awareness of the impact of

education on the quality of the nation's workforce, the impact of education on a nation's economic well-being, and the impact of education on a nation's global presence and position.

Contemporary Issues Leading up to School-to-Work

A recurring issue that has been raised in many critiques of American education is that schools continue to offer predominantly the traditional classical (liberal arts) education to prepare students for college even though the majority of students do not receive a four-year college degree (Parnell, 1985; Commission, 1988). Statistics indicate that 50% of high school graduates do not go on to college. Of the 50% who do go to college, approximately 25% drop out of college before completing a baccalaureate degree. Therefore, 75% of students enter the workforce without a college degree or marketable skills. Dale Parnell (former president of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges) in his book, The Neglected Majority (1985), points out that our U. S. educational system focuses on the college-bound youth in America while little attention is given to the 75% of students who do not obtain a baccalaureate degree (p. 4). According to 1985 data cited in his book, 83% of the adult population did not have a baccalaureate degree, yet, our public education system is geared mainly for preparing youth for college. One of the biggest problems that Parnell mentions is that more students are falling into limbo. They are not on the college-bound track nor are they on a vocational track. They are on the "general track" in high school which means they simply take a host of unrelated elective courses and "coast" their way through high school. "Unfocused learning" is one of the main problems for a majority of high school

students. To be motivated, students must know ‘why they are learning, how this learning connects with other learning, and where this learning relates to real life’” (Parnell, 1985, p. 41).

Tech Prep Model

To help remedy this problem of unfocused learning, Parnell introduced the 2+2 tech prep program where students have an opportunity to explore various career clusters or occupation families while in high school. The tech-prep/associate degree is a four-year program starting with the 11th grade in high school and ending with the associate degree at the end of the sophomore year in a community, technical, or junior college. It is intended to run parallel to college-prep/baccalaureate degree programs. Students get a solid base of applied science, applied math, literacy courses, and technical programs as preparatory courses. The object is to give the students marketable skills and qualifications to obtain a meaningful career. The tech prep programs have been successful where they are available, but still reach only a limited number of students. Articulation agreements between high schools, vocational schools, and junior colleges are necessary in order to credits to transfer from one institution to another.

An important report emerged in 1988 that confirmed Parnell's concerns about the weakness of public schools not meeting the needs of non-college bound youth. The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship issued a report entitled, The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America, discusses the plight of disadvantaged youth, high school drop-outs, and at-risk students in our society. The report points out that our public education system concentrates on preparing students for

the next grade level and eventually college. For those students who do not move up the ladder or go on to college, they face years of "needless floundering that is damaging to them and a drag on our society" (Commission, 1988, p. 87).

There is a two-fold concern in neglecting/ignoring those students who do not receive college degrees. One concern is for the welfare of the individual student. Those students without degrees and no marketable skills are destined for low-paying jobs and a lower standard of living. Their overall quality of life diminishes when their income fails to meet their basic needs of shelter, clothing, food, and health care. The problem is further intensified if they are responsible for a family. An equally pressing concern is the effect on society as a whole. There is, of course, the current concern of an overburdened welfare system. Single mothers who cannot afford day care for children if they take a low-paying job is a contemporary example of how they cannot financially afford to work at jobs with low pay. Finally, there is concern about the economic viability of our society when students enter the workforce with no skills, no training, and no qualifications. Business and industry cannot remain competitive if they cannot find qualified workers to perform demanding jobs (Smith, 1995; Gerstner, 1994).

The economic ramifications of unskilled workers in our nation continues to be a major concern. The problem is further magnified by the continued downsizing of corporate America. The stable, high paying jobs in large business and industry, particularly in manufacturing, communication, and transportation have decreased, while low paying jobs in the service sector continue to increase (Commission, 1988). The high paying jobs that are available in business and industry are highly technological and require a high degree of technical skills. Furthermore, current statistics indicate that most

jobs in the 21st century will not require a four-year degree but rather highly technological skills and workplace competencies. "Labor experts estimate that 70% of jobs in the U. S. in the year 2000 will not require a four-year college degree" (Smith, 1995, p. 429).

Decade of Reform Issues

The 1990's have been a decade of heated reform discussions. Following the quake of highly publicized educational criticism of the 1980's, the public generally agreed that something must be done to salvage American education. Politicians, business leaders, and educators have become more involved in analyzing the conditions of current schools and have tried to develop strategies for the curing the ailing system.

Education and the Information Age

Since the relationship between education and work has been highly proclaimed, the discussion of today's workplace has intensified. The Information Age has replaced the Industrial Age and consequently has changed the kinds of skills needed in the workplace. The picture of the post-industrial workplace in the late twentieth century is much different than that of the early twentieth century. Much has been written recently about the changing face of the workplace in the late-twentieth century (Stewart, 1997; Howard, 1995). As a result of advanced technology and the dawn of the Information Age, our economy has shifted from an industrial-based economy to a knowledge-based economy (Webber, 1993). A company's competitive edge is based on knowledge - the ability to acquire knowledge and the ability to apply knowledge to improve and develop new processes, new products, and new markets (Davis, 1995). Some call this

“intellectual capital” (Stewart, 1997) or “human capital” (Wirth, 1992) and it has all but replaced raw materials of the industrial era. The information economy of the late twentieth century, has indeed, overtaken the industrial economy of the early twentieth century and has changed the concept of “work” along with it. Technological developments have impacted every aspect of our daily lives from transportation to communications, and, consequently, have changed the make-up of business/industry (Howard, 1995).

Also, globalization of the economy continues to intensify as U. S. companies invest overseas, distribute goods abroad, move plants to other countries, and hire foreign workers (Davis, 1995). Foreign companies also look to the U. S. for investments and business opportunities. As knowledge grows, information technology expands, and global competition increases, the way companies organize work and the way they do business has “changed the nature of work” (Howard, 1995). No longer is work fragmented into independent tasks to speed production as evidenced in the assembly line approach to work in the early twentieth century (Kinchloe, 1995). In today’s workplace, high-performance work teams, quality circles, and customer-driven business practices call for “systems thinking” (Rummler & Brache, 1990; Wirth, 1992). Employees must understand the “big picture” and the interrelationship of each part to the whole system. Workers must acknowledge that changing one part of the system affects the other parts of the system which requires a different perspective towards work and a more analytic thought process.

Furthermore, information technology, the global economy, and work structure have changed the skills needed in the post-industrial workplace. Mental skills and

interpersonal skills have replaced manual skills. Many of the stable, high-wage jobs in manufacturing, transportation, and utilities are drying up, and the high paying jobs that are available in business and industry are highly technological and require a high degree of technical skills and critical thinking skills (Commission, 1988). Two major reports, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) Report issued in 1991 and the Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want published in 1990 by American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) explain the skills needed in the current workplace. The workplace skills needed in today's workplace include interpersonal skills, information skills, technological skills, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills (SCANS, 1991; Carnevale, 1990). Employers also are concerned that employees are lacking personal qualities such as responsibility, self-esteem, self-management, and integrity which are vital to successful performance in a workplace setting (SCANS, 1991).

The Effect of Education on Business/Industry

Schools have been criticized for not teaching the kinds of skills needed in today's workplace. Consequently, employers cannot find qualified workers which creates an economic drain on the nation's economy. The workers who are hired need extensive training which becomes a huge expense to employers (Smith, 1995). Obviously, as employers spend billions of dollars on corporate training, productivity and profits suffer. Hedrick Smith, in Rethinking America (1995) discusses the "new global game" and he explains how and why the Japanese have been able to take over a large share of the global market for many products which originated in America, and, in the process, put American

companies out of business. The reason, according to Smith, is largely attributed to the way American students are educated. For instance, Americans put more emphasis on individual achievement than on team achievement. There is more individual competition in our schools' classrooms with very little emphasis placed on team work (Smith, 1995, p. 6). Smith also refer to IBM's chief executive officer, Lou Gerstner who claims in his book Reinventing Education:

... thirty percent of companies cannot reorganize work activities because employees can't learn new jobs and twenty-five percent can't upgrade their products because their employees can't learn the necessary skills'. Poor schooling is such a competitive drag, that corporate America must spend \$30 billion a year on remedial education for its new workers and is losing \$25 billion to \$30 billion more each year because of low levels of workers literacy - - a total of \$60 billion annually...We can't squander \$60 billion and remain competitive (Smith, 1995, p. 429).

The dilemma facing public education is what to do about this poor state of affairs.

Some critics contend that the reason schools are "dumbing down our kids" is because more and more curriculum emphasizes "affective" learning which focuses on student's feelings, attitudes, and beliefs rather than what they know or can do (Sykes, 1995, p. 10).

No longer are schools emphasizing homework, academic achievement, and intellectual development, but instead emphasize social development and self-esteem. It is more important that our students "feel good about themselves" than it is to learn something (Sykes, 1995). And, yes, most agree that poor schooling does affect American business. Sykes also cites IBM's CEO, Lou Gerstner, who says "American businesses are now spending \$30 billion on workers' training and lose an estimated \$25 to \$30 billion a year as a result of their workers' weak reading and writing skills. . ." (Sykes, 1995, p. 23).

Also, "In a recent year, the Bell South Corporation in Atlanta found that fewer than 10

percent of their job applicants met minimal levels of ability for sales, service, and technical jobs” (Sykes, 1995, p. 23). Furthermore, “In late 1992, executives at Pacific Telesis found that 60 percent of the high school graduates applying for jobs at the firm failed a company exam set at the seventh-grade level” (Sykes, 1995, p. 23). The answer, according to some critics, is a return to a strong classical education and a rigorous academic curriculum (Sykes, 1995).

Comparing American Schools to Foreign Schools

While many of the studies conducted in the last decade indicate that American students are achieving lower academic standards, claims are made that our American education system has deteriorated. Another perspective is that our American educational system has not necessarily deteriorated, but it has failed to respond to *change* (Daggett, 1994). The problem is that the United States has shifted from an industrialized nation to a technological/information-based society and our education system has failed to change along with it. American education the 1990's is still the industrialized model that was created in the 1900's to accommodate an industrialized nation. This model served the United States well during the industrial age of mass production. A general education culminating in a high school diploma was the ticket for many well-paying assembly line jobs in factories and plants. However, those jobs are gone, and today's students must compete in a global market for highly technological jobs (Daggett, 1994).

Today, the United States must compete globally with other nations for the world market place. Asian and European countries have been aggressive in improving their

education systems while the United States has stood still. They have surpassed us in terms of academic achievement (Daggett, 1994).

Daggett acknowledges that in comparing educational standards from other nations, one must consider the culture, history, and level of economic development of the various countries involved. North American, European, and Asian nations are the most advanced nations in the world, but all of these countries' schools differ in terms of days per year, hours per day, use different assessment criteria, have different educational philosophies, have different levels of cultural homogeneity and diversity, and have a wide range of education agenda. Therefore, a simple comparison of test scores is not a fair reflection of our students' abilities (Daggett, 1994, p. 2).

Daggett's approach, as Director of the International Center for Leadership in Education, Inc., was to not only analyze test scores of American students and international students but to analyze the curriculum of American schools and foreign schools to find out what schools in other countries do differently. Studies showed that the biggest difference between American schools and international schools is that American schools continue to define educational standards as the "accumulation of content knowledge" (Daggett, 1994, p. 2). Other industrialized nations define excellence in terms of "application knowledge -- the ability to use one's knowledge in a variety of situations" (Daggett, 1994, p. 3). As Daggett explains, "America focuses on content nearly as an end in itself, while Europe and Asia increasingly focus on the utility of the knowledge learned" (Daggett, 1994, p. 3).

Using Bloom's Taxonomy as a reference points, curriculum from American, Europe and Asia were compared. Bloom's Taxonomy has been used in U. S. education for several decades and measures the following hierarchy of levels:

1. Awareness
2. Understanding/Comprehension
3. Application
4. Analysis
5. Synthesis
6. Evaluation

Even though American schools teach the higher level skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in many areas such as algebra, literature, and physics, nowhere in the curricula is application taught. "Students may be able to perform at the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, but that does not mean they can apply that knowledge to real-world situations" (Daggett, 1994, p. 38). Therefore, the biggest reform effort for American schools should be the integration of *application* courses into the curriculum in addition to theoretical information.

After evaluating the curriculum data of American and international schools, Dr. Daggett contends that America needs to reassess what it means to be educated. He says:

... Are we concerned simply with students moving up on Bloom's Taxonomy to higher and higher levels of knowledge in a subject, or should we also be concerned with their ability to apply the knowledge that they have learned? The figures clearly show that American students are far behind in their ability to apply the information that they learn. America's fixation on preparing students for higher education alone is a primary cause of this unfortunate circumstance. The International Center contends that these data prove beyond a doubt that America must move its curriculum beyond preparing students for more school and start

preparing them for life as well, as European and Asian nations have done (Daggett, 1994, p. 43).

There are clearly different viewpoints in the literature concerning the state of American schools and the direction public education should take. Tests indicate American students are falling behind students in other countries, reports show a decline in academic achievement, and business/industry complain that students coming out of schools are poorly prepared for the workplace (Boyer, 1983; Commission, 1988; Parnell, 1985; Smith, 1995). The reason, according to some critics, is education has strayed too far from the classical (liberal arts) curriculum, and yet other studies show we still are still mired in an outdated model of education which is failing to keep up with the demands of business/industry in a highly technological, global economy. These conflicting positions make it difficult to assess the "reality" that exists about public education in the U. S. today.

A Direction for the Future

As the 21st century looms before us, measures have been implemented that attempt to help education catch up with the demands of the next century. Simultaneous to the publication of the SCANS report, the U. S. Department of Education (under the Republican administration of George Bush) issued America 2000: An Education Strategy in 1991. America 2000 included six national education goals adopted by the President and the governors in 1990. America 2000 is a strategy to achieve those goals. It states by the year 2000:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.

2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in American will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4. U. S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. Every school in American will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning (America 2000, 1991, p. 19).

Obviously, these goals are ambitious by anyone's standards, and, perhaps are unrealistic. However, supporters believe education will achieve more by striving to reach the highest goals. The four-part America 2000 Education Strategy includes approaches for making schools more accountable, improving schools for future generations, and developing communities where learning can occur. The document contends that even after eight years since the U. S. was declared a "Nation at Risk", America still has not improved our education system. The U. S. is standing still while other countries are passing us by, even though we are spending 33% more money per public school that we did in 1980 (America 2000, 1991, p. 15).

In an attempt to help school accomplish the national education goals, Goals 2000; Educate America was passed in 1994 under the Democrat administration of President Clinton. This legislation was passed to authorize federal money to be allocated to states in an effort to accomplish the eight national education goals (Goals 2000 includes the

original six national education goals that were part of American 2000, plus two additional goals providing professional development for teachers, and for establishing community, business, and parental partnerships.) The intent of Goals 2000 is to improve academic achievement from K-12 in all subject areas, with particular emphasis on math and science. It addresses world-class academic standards, how to measure these standards, and how to ensure students meet these standards. This legislation is an “umbrella” that promotes school-to-work transition as well as other educational reforms. Government funds are given to schools who submit applications describing their school improvement process (Goals 2000, 1994; Paris, 1994).

School-to-Work Legislation

Finally, the most recent (and controversial) education legislation to be passed was the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 signed by President Clinton. This legislation is intended to help students make a better transition from school to the workplace. The federal funding provided by this legislation is to be used as “seed” money to help schools build business and education partnerships in order to provide students with more exposure to the real world of work. There are three components to School-to-Work:

- 1) School-based learning - career awareness, career exploration, career counseling, and career guidance in identifying employment interests and education goals;
- 2) Work-based learning - a planned program of job training, job shadowing, mentoring, and work experiences relevant to a career major;

- 3) Connecting activities - coordinating school-based and work-based learning components; matching students with employers; establishing liaisons between schools, employers, students, and parents (School-to-Work, 1994).

The general emphasis of the School-to-Work Act stresses integration of academic learning and occupational learning. It calls for increased participation of business and industry in helping schools plan curricula and incorporate work-based learning experiences. The mechanics of School-to-Work involves federal funds which are allocated to individual states and then are disbursed to local partnerships who have submitted a plan of School-to-Work activities which meet the federal guidelines.

There are several purposes that encompass School-to-Work. It is a national education reform bill that attempts to help "bridge the gap" between school and the workplace. The intent is to help individual students by giving them more real-world experiences while in school to show the relevancy of the subject matter and make them more employable upon graduation from either high school or college. It is also a mechanism for helping build a more qualified workforce for business and industry. Finally, it is an attempt to help strengthen our nation's economy and help the U. S. remain competitive in the ever-intensifying global economy.

School-to-Work Dissension

For many politicians, business leaders, and educators, School-to-Work provided an avenue for breaking down barriers that previously existed between

education and business/industry (Doty, 1994; Thiers, 1995). These two institutions have historically operated as separate entities and, consequently, education has not been responsive to the needs of business/industry in providing students with skills needed in the changing technological workplace (Gerstner, 1994; Smith, 1995).

Establishing business, education, and community partnerships and providing workplace experiences for students while they are in school seemed like a logical and effective way to improve public education for both the individual students and for business/industry. Supporters believe the integration of academic and occupational curricula would provide students with the theoretical information *and* the applied hands-on activities that would demonstrate the relevancy of subject matter in the real world of work (Doty, 1994; Thiers, 1995).

School-to-Work in Conflict with Classical Education

However, School-to-Work has sparked a heated debate concerning the direction of public education in this country. School-to-Work, according to some opponents, violates every principle that our founding fathers set as the course for American education. Specifically, it moves public education further away from the classical curriculum that was the foundation of American education and it supports yet further federal government intervention in public education. Despite the fact that our country has a history of federal involvement in funding and guiding educational policy in public schools, opponents to School-to-Work are critical about the continued attempts on behalf of the federal government to take over control of public education.

In essence, School-to-Work resolves by Big Brotherly fiat a long-standing debate between the liberal arts and applied education. Workplace 'competencies' replace Cardinal Newman's idea of knowledge as a valuable end in itself. Somehow the objective of producing workers for a high-performance technological workplace has supplanted the ideal of preparing Americans to think for themselves by drawing on a solid base of knowledge as opposed to sheer emotion (Holland, 1995, p. 9-8).

Once again the conflict between academic and applied education surfaces. To traditional, classical (liberal arts) education supporters, the only legitimate educational approach for intellectual development is through a classical (liberal arts) education. "Competencies" does not mean "knowledge/intelligence" and by replacing "education" with "training" only serves to diminish the quality of American education/ make "worker bees" for the benefit of the state.

Opponents to School-to-Work are also concerned with the "collectivism" and "global spirituality" that permeates American education in lieu of the traditional Western thought that supports "individualism" (Kjos, 1995). As schools and government guide children through career assessment and workplace competencies, students are stripped of the opportunity to develop their own individual interests and talents. Critics of School-to-Work are particularly alarmed at the prospect of losing parental rights to develop Christian values in their children while schools develop children's "personal qualities" needed by business/industry (Bond, 1996; Hearne, 1995).

School-to-Work, then, is viewed by many as undemocratic and unAmerican. Much School-to-Work research focuses on analyzing the well-known German apprenticeship program which is highly regarded by some as an extensive training program and is credited for much of Germany's economic growth and the shaping of a skilled workforce (U. S. Department of Education, 1994). Others fear that Americans are

buying into a socialist program. "For the first time in American history, government and business have joined together to educate our children. Why is this unusual? Government and business operate together in countries such as China, Germany, Russia, Japan, and in third-world countries, not the U. S. A." (Espito, 1996, p. 33).

Viewed by many as a socialist agenda, School-to-Work has been traced to Marxist-Lenin theory. Quotes from Turchenko's The Scientific and Technological Revolution and the Revolution in Education published in 1976 in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U. S. S. R.) have appeared in anti-School-to-Work literature.

The Marxist-Leninist principle of combining education with productive labour and polytechnisation of the school provides for a high level of general education and theoretical training. At the same time, realising this principle to the full extent demands a profound revolution in the entire system of public education (Hearne, 1995, p. 5).

Obviously, Americans are skeptical of socialist programs and policies. To a country founded on the principles of capitalism, free enterprise, and competition, few Americans would welcome the introduction of socialist values in our society. Many opponents to School-to-Work feel this legislation is intentionally deceptive and, therefore, many businessmen, parents, and teachers are not even aware of the ramifications this federal bill will have on the lives of our children and our free market society. Through School-to-Work, federal government will eventually dictate skills standards, job qualifications, and job training for our children in public schools as an extension of federal control of the labor market (Hearne, 1995). The opposition contends that School-to-Work is taking public education down the wrong path, further away from the original principles that our founding fathers had in mind for our country.

Despite the opposition toward School-to-Work as a comprehensive educational reform movement by certain factions, many states have continued with School-to-Work implementation in varying degrees. Examples of successful School-to-Work programs around the nation in such states as Texas, California, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and North Carolina have been published and praised for their efforts (Thiers, 1995). Many schools in these states have incorporated business and education partnerships, established career models, and integrated academic and vocational teaching which have proven effective. Because of the way School-to-Work legislation is constructed, each state must apply to the federal government for School-to-Work funds, then each state decides how the money will be dispersed to school districts. Therefore, each state's School-to-Work plan is different and even schools within the same state have different programs depending on their needs.

The Effect in Oklahoma

In Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Department of Vocational Technical Education was appointed the "fiscal agent" to administer the School-to-Work federal funds. Through the establishment of regional councils and local partnerships, the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education facilitates the development of School-to-Work programs across the state in compliance with the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. According to implementation modules produced by the Oklahoma Department of Vocational Technical Education, there are a sequence of events to follow in implementing School-to-Work:

- 1) Establishing regional councils

- 2) Creating local partnerships
- 3) Providing in-service training for teachers
- 4) Developing business and industry contacts
- 5) Integrating applied and academic courses in education
- 6) Establishing work-based learning activities (shadowing, mentoring, apprenticeship)
- 7) Developing connecting activities
- 8) Marketing School-to-Work system to the community
- 9) Evaluating School-to-Work system (Oklahoma Department of Vo-Tech, 1996)

While many states have embraced School-to-Work as a viable education reform movement since 1994, Oklahoma has encountered significant opposition. The effect of this controversy has affected the progress of School-to-Work implementation in Oklahoma. Some schools and communities in Oklahoma have aggressively proceeded with School-to-Work initiatives in an effort to improve their educational programs.

Through participation in regional councils and building local partnerships, they have received funds to implement comprehensive School-to-Work programs in their schools. Many schools have found it helpful in integrating academic and occupational education for their students and in providing work experiences for students while in school.

However, other communities in the state have remained somewhat resistant to educational reform as outlined in School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. Citizens in these communities have been quite vocal in expressing their opposition to this educational reform bill as they attempt to alert others to the pitfalls of School-to-Work.

Summary

Throughout history there is evidence of the controversial nature of the educational arena. A look at early colonial life in the U. S. reveals the religious influence of the Pilgrims and Puritans who helped settle this country and have provided much of the moral and value system of the dominant American culture. The classical education philosophy, which had merged with the religious teachings of medieval Europe, can also be traced to the early colonists who brought their European traditions to the New World. Vocational education also has roots in the colonial period as European apprenticeships were transplanted to the colonies, and it played a part of the progressive education movement in the early 1900's. And, finally, the federal control of education was a highly debated issue as our founding father grappled with the idea of a national education system during the national period following the Revolutionary War. However, due to the political climate at the time of the writing of the Constitution, a national education system was rejected. Because the Constitution was silent on the issue of education, the responsibility of public education fell to the individual states. All of these issues continue to be central to the dilemmas facing public education today, and, specifically, play out around the School-to-Work controversy.

Because School-to-Work reflects many of the themes and ideologies of John Dewey's progressive education theory, namely the integration of academic and occupational curriculum, it is important to note the positive and negative aspects of progressive philosophy as it is viewed today. Because Dewey embraced progressive thought in all areas of American society (politics, economics, social reform, and

education), it becomes apparent how each of these dimensions of society are interrelated. Consequently, the current liberal political, social and economic views are congruent with progressive education philosophy which is reflected in the School-to-Work. Likewise, the conservative political, social, and economic views are congruent with traditional, classical education philosophy (Elias & Merriam, 1995) which are at odds with the progressive philosophy underlying School-to-Work. Hence, these four stands of literature topics -- religion, classicism, vocational education, and federal government influence -- comprise the complex web of interrelationships that exists in our society and become an integral part of the controversy surrounding School-to-Work.

Clearly, the literature indicates that there is much concern about our American educational system and the impact it has on our nation's businesses and ultimately our nation's economy. It is not a new concern. As early as the 1960's there is some evidence that schools were not teaching the skills that American business/industry needed and federal programs were implemented to fill this need. However, there is also concern that the federal government should not be controlling our nation's education system. School-to-Work raises red flags because it suggests "federal control" which is against the principles of American democracy and the states' rights for local control of education. There is also the question about the purpose of American education - is it teach broad academic content or to teach applicable job skills? School-to-Work proponents argue that there is room for both academics and application in our American education system. Opponents argue that public education should be concerned with intellectual development through rigorous academic content, and we run the risk of "dumbing down" our curriculum if we integrate hands-on vocational experiences. Undoubtedly, as the debates

rage on, the future of American education and, in particular, the School-to-Work educational reform movement is an uncertain one.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology of the research study consists of the research design, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis techniques, and strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness. The following section describes the specific methods and procedures used in conducting this research study on the controversy surrounding School-to-Work.

Rationale for a Descriptive Case Study Research Design

A qualitative descriptive case study was used in order to address the research questions and satisfy the purpose of this study. Merriam (1988) defines a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 21). Also, according to Merriam (1988), “Case study research, and in particular qualitative case study, is an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena” (p. 2). Furthermore, case study lends itself to examining complex issues as Yin (1989) explains “. . . the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (p. 14). Finally, one of the basic premises of qualitative research is that there is no single “reality” but

many “realities” based on people's perceptions (Merriam, 1988). As in the case of School-to-Work, there is no “right” perception of School-to-Work but there are, instead, many perspectives that are worthy of understanding, discussion, and research. Because of the complex nature of the educational arena, and the multiple perspectives and levels of concerns surrounding School-to-Work, a qualitative case study was an appropriate research design for this study.

Several other attributes of the qualitative case study design make it a particularly effective research design for this study. Merriam (1988) cites Olson (in Hoaglin and others, 1982, pp. 138-139) who explains that case study relies on the opinions of participants, how those opinions differ, and how viewpoints from different groups of people can influence an issue. Also, the *heuristic* quality of a case study was well-suited for this study. “*Heuristic* means that case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. They can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known” (Merriam, 1988, p. 13) As stated in the purpose, this research study will enhance the reader's understanding of this complex educational reform movement. Specifically, Merriam (1988) cites Olson (in Hoaglin and other, 1982, pp. 138-139) who explains the heuristic quality of case study research:

- It can explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened, and why.
- It can explain why an innovation worked or failed to work.
- It can discuss and evaluate alternatives not chosen.
- It can evaluate, summarize, and conclude, thus increasing its potential applicability.

These heuristic qualities explain much of the content of this research study as it attempts to describe the background to School-to-Work, explain the reasons for the controversy, and evaluate and summarize the arguments for and against this educational reform movement.

There are two distinguishing characteristics about a descriptive case study that are important to this study. First, a descriptive case study is characterized by “thick, rich description” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) that give a detailed and complete description of the topic under investigation. Secondly, a descriptive case study is not necessarily bound by a theoretical framework. Merriam (1988) cites Lijphart (1971, p. 691) who describes descriptive case studies “atheoretical” and which “move in a theoretical vacuum”. There was no attempt to use a theory to guide the study nor was there necessarily an effort to establish or develop a theory in a descriptive case study. Therefore, based on the above definitions of a qualitative descriptive case study, this research design was chosen as a means to capture, examine, analyze, describe, and understand the multiple perspectives and levels of concerns surrounding School-to-Work.

Context of the Study

After the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 was signed into legislation by President Clinton, our school district applied to the School-to-Work fiscal agent in our state to receive federal School-to-Work funds. This meant writing a grant proposal that outlined the School-to-Work program that our school district would initiate and submitting it for approval to the state fiscal agent. After our school district's grant was approved, our district (in conjunction with the local vocational-technical school)

organized a "kick-off" for the School-to-Work program in our community. Shawntel Smith (Miss America 1996 who had chosen School-to-Work as her platform during her reign), and Willard Daggett (an international educational consultant who supports School-to-Work), were invited to our community to speak on behalf of School-to-Work. Mr. Daggett was also the featured speaker at our district's teacher in-service program prior to the evening community presentation.

The purpose of inviting these two speakers to our community was to raise the community awareness about the need for School-to-Work initiatives in our public schools, and to educate the community on the intent of School-To-Work programs. Their message was that our nation's schools should do a better job of preparing students for the high demands of the modern workplace and the global economy.

In the midst of all the flourish of School-to-Work enthusiasm on behalf of our local vocational-technical school and our school district's administration, there was growing criticism about School-to-Work building in our community. Despite the heavy publicity on the community presentation with Miss America and Willard Daggett, there was only moderate turnout. On the same evening that Willard Daggett and Shawntel Smith spoke at the Community Center, concerned citizens who opposed School-to-work were distributing anti-School-to-Work literature in the parking lot. A heated debate was surfacing as guest speakers who opposed School-to-Work were later also invited to public meetings and civic organizations to speak out against School-to-Work.

This community's local newspaper became a verbal battleground as editorials, letters-to-the-editor, and call-in opinions about the pros and cons of School-to-Work were published almost daily. One opponent of School-to-Work wrote "It [School-to-Work]

will deliver control over education and future jobs of all American children to a bureaucratic apparatus that will decide what children are taught and what jobs they may take after they leave school". Another critic wrote "We want teachers to educate our children. . . not find them careers". Words such as "Marxism", "socialism", "fascist", and "communist plot" appeared in some of the letters and the anti-School-to-Work fliers. Supporters of School-to-Work wrote editorials that tried to refute what they termed the spread of "misinformation", "misinterpretation", and "misunderstanding" about School-to-Work legislation. One supporter explained, "It's [School-to-Work] about teaching today's students academics and skills so that they can be successful, productive citizens tomorrow". Another supporter wrote, "School-to-Work provides worksite learning and mentoring opportunities". The arguments volleyed back and forth as the positive and negative aspects of School-to-Work were debated on the editorial page.

School-to-Work supporters publicized the positive contributions that School-to-Work could offer by helping our schools prepare students for jobs in the 21st century. School-to-Work, they explained, offered guidelines on how to build business and community partnerships and how to help students develop workplace competencies.

However, the opposition adamantly disagreed. Since School-to-Work was a federal government school reform bill, the federal government would then control the purse-strings and ultimately the content of the local program. Skeptics were concerned that accepting School-to-Work funds from the federal government would subject our school district to even more federal intervention. School-to-Work is, in the opposition's eyes, the federal government's attempt to further control public education. They

reminded our community that the U. S. constitution intentionally had left public education in the hands of the states and local communities, not the federal government.

Despite the controversy, promoters of School-to-Work continued educating the public on the benefits of School-to-Work. They saw the strength of School-to-Work as the integration of academic and occupational curriculum in our schools. Instead of offering only a traditional college preparatory curriculum, schools would also emphasize application or “hands-on” activities. They presented national statistics that showed that the majority of students do not graduate from college with a four-year baccalaureate degree. They explained that most students are plunged into the workforce without a college degree or skills needed for meaningful employment. The “general track” of high school led nowhere.

Opponents to School-to-Work quickly retaliated. Another argument surfaced that the intent of public education was never workforce preparation. School-to-Work reduces public education to vocational education, and the applied curriculum results in a “dumbing-down” of curriculum to meet workplace competencies and job training. School-to-Work centers around the idea of “tracking” students as either college-bound or non-college bound and locking them into careers too early in their education. According to School-to-Work opponents, a general, well-rounded education is the foundation required for acquiring new knowledge and skills after high school graduation. This perception was voiced in another letter-to-the-editor in a local newspaper written by a strong opponent to School-to-Work:

Though School-to-Work promoters correctly identify the problem, they fail to see the reason for the problem, namely we've strayed from an emphasis on traditional cognitive learning. So instead of calling for a return to the traditional educational

methods that produced James Madison, the electric light, space travel and the laptop computer, the progressives who gave us the problem in the first place propose another utopian solution, School-to-Work.

The role of the local community became more apparent throughout this debate.

The notion of local control historically has been a cornerstone of American public education. Local school boards are made up of members of our community who are elected by the people to represent their views on the management of our public schools within the confines of state and federal laws. If the community as a whole rejected School-to-Work, then our school district should follow accordingly. But the community has remained clearly divided on the issue of School-to-Work. (Although supporters and opponents continue to voice the merits and pitfalls of School-to-Work, there is a large section of the community who remain neutral on the topic or are uninformed about the issues.)

The controversy surrounding School-to-Work in my community sparked my interest and curiosity. I decided to research this topic further to find out why there is such resistance to educational reform as outlined in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. Because my community was clearly divided on the issue of School-to-Work, it provided rich data that represented the full spectrum of views and opinions regarding this educational reform movement.

Setting of the Study

The setting for this descriptive case study is a conservative, affluent, highly-educated, white-collar community. Consequently, the citizens have always placed a high emphasis on education. With a population of approximately 35,000, the community has

characteristics that enable it to maintain a small town flavor, yet is large enough to afford some of the amenities of a small city. It is situated 50 miles from a larger metropolitan area which offers additional shopping, restaurants, and cultural entertainment. Our community is also the home of a large corporation which attracts a significant number of highly educated professionals into the community. According to 1996 statistics, the percentage of adults in our community with a college degree was 30% while the state average was 17%. The population of our community is made up of 88% white, 3% black, 6% Native American, 1% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% other, according to 1990 Census information. Our community is an aging community with 22% over age 60. In 1998, there was a 3% unemployment rate. Our community's 1990 average per capita income was \$19,963 which is a higher average per capita income than the state (\$15,444) and the nation (\$18,699). In 1998, the political party affiliation in our community was approximately 51% Republican, 40% Democrat, and 9% Independent according to our county election board office. Over 90 churches are active in the area, representing more than two dozen denominations.

Our school district is a medium-sized district with an enrollment of 6,439 in 1996 and a teaching staff of 353. Over the years, our school system has earned a high-standing in the state in terms of academic achievement. For instance, the 1997 average ACT score in our high school was 22.1 which ranked in the top ten of all schools in the state. (The state average ACT score was 20.5 and the national average ACT score was 20.9). In 1997, six high school students were selected as National Merit Semi-finalists, and five students were 1998 National Merit Semi-finalists. (Since 1968, our high school has produced 180 National Merit Semi-finalists.) In 1997, seven students were named

“Commended Students” in the 1997 National Merit Scholarship program. Since the Academic All-State program began in 1986, our high school has had 29 students selected.

Of the 420 high school graduates in 1997, approximately 67% were continuing their educations at colleges or technical schools (compared to the national average of 50%). The 67% of students going on to further education included 36% to four-year university, 15% to out-of-state university, 15% to junior college, and 1% to technical schools. Approximately 33% were planning to enter the workforce upon high school graduation. According to 1996 data, the number of gifted/talented programs in our school district stood at 19% compared to 12% of districts of similar size. The number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered in our school districts was 11 compared to 3.7 in districts of similar size. The 1996 graduation rate was 80% compared to 76% in other districts while the dropout rate in our school districts was 5.2% compared to 4.5% in districts of similar size. In 1996, our school district had 31% students on free/reduced lunches compared to 31.1% in similar size districts. There was an increase of students on free and reduced lunches in 1998 when 34% qualified for the program. Also, in 1998 four elementary schools received Chapter I federal funds because of the high percentage of students in economic need. One elementary school was on the state “At-Risk” list due to low academic achievement. A new program was implemented in 1998 in the at-risk elementary school which will aggressively target the improvement of reading skills for these students. (See Appendix A for community and school profile charts).

This community is quite proud of the academic elite in our community who receive state and national recognition on a regular basis. Parents, students, administrators, teachers, and business leaders of the community are pleased with the high

levels of academic success as seen in the number of national merit scholars and academic award winners. While our schools do stand out in terms of academic achievers compared to schools of similar size, it is interesting to note that our school district's dropout rate is slightly higher than districts of comparable size (5.2% vs. 4.5%). Also, the lower socio-economic portion of our community is similar to schools districts of similar size (31% vs. 31%). Furthermore, with 33% of high school graduates planning to enter the workforce upon high school graduation and a drop-out rate of 5.2%, it is apparent that over one-third (38%) of our students are non-college bound.

Participants

A purposive sample of community participants was used to capture the many perspectives involved in the issue of School-to-Work. As Merriam (1988) explains, "Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (p. 48). Some of the participants were chosen based on either their vocal opposition to School-to-Work or their open support for School-to-Work as evidenced in their letters-to-the-editor which appeared in the community's local newspaper. Other participants in this study were selected based on their involvement in the administration of School-to-Work, whether they actively supported School-to-Work, whether they actively opposed School-to-Work, whether they were actively involved in public education in some capacity, or whether they were actively involved in business/industry. The participants were chosen to represent a diverse range of opinions and perspectives about School-to-Work in our community. As "key informants" (Yin, 1989, p. 89; Merriam, 1988, p. 75), these

interviewees offered valuable insights to the many perspectives that surrounded the issues regarding School-to-Work.

A total of 31 participants were interviewed in this study. The participants in this study included: 3 public school administrators, 3 vocational-technical school administrators, 5 public school teachers, 3 school board members, 4 vocal or known opponents to School-to-Work, 4 business leaders, 7 parents, and 2 students (over 18 years of age). It should be noted that these participants were intentionally chosen to represent both pro and con positions on School-to-Work. Within this purposive sample, there were community members who represented both liberal and conservative political viewpoints.

There was an overlap of groups to a certain extent. For example, some of the teachers and administrators were also parents so some of their responses captured their viewpoint as a parent as well as a school administrator or teacher. Also, some of the school board members were also businessmen whose responses to some questions were indicative of a business perspective as well as that of a school board member. Also, it is interesting to note that when asked to participate in a group interview, certain participants who opposed School-to-Work felt they would be better interviewed individually than in a group because their reasons for opposing School-to-Work may not necessarily be the same reasons as the rest of the group. Additionally, when several teachers and parents were asked to participate in a group interview, they declined because they did not feel they knew enough about School-to-Work to offer any information.

Data Collection Methods

This study included multiple data collection methods: a) long interview (McCracken, 1988); b) group interviews (Morgan, 1997); c) telephone interview for key informants who were not able to attend a face-to-face interview; d) participant observation (Yin, 1989); and e) document analysis (Yin, 1989). These methods provided rich data from which valuable insights were gleaned concerning the multiple viewpoints of School-to-Work. I also had numerous conversations and discussions with various other community members who were not formally interviewed but offered their perspectives and opinions on School-to-Work.

Interviews

Interview data were collected through semi-structured, open-ended interviews with both individuals and small groups. Most of the interviews lasted approximately one hour each with the longest interviews lasting two hours and fifteen minutes. Interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed verbatim for further analysis. A protocol of open-ended questions (checked by two qualitative research professors for content) was used in each interview. The questions attempted to capture the concerns surrounding School-to-Work as well as beliefs, values, and opinions of the interviewees regarding education in general that would address the research questions.

The protocol was designed to represent a “funnel” technique (Morgan, 1997, p. 41) where general questions concerning the purpose of education opened the interview and gradually narrowed to specific questions about School-to-Work. The general “grand

tour” questions (Spradley, 1979, p. 81) allowed participants to begin articulating their philosophical viewpoints toward education in general and then gradually discuss specific positive or negative aspects of School-to-Work. A different protocol was used for the four main groups of participants (i.e. administrators, teachers, parents, business leaders, students) The protocols contained similar questions but were tailored to capture data that were relevant to these different groups of participants. (See Appendix B for questionnaires and participation solicitation letter.)

Long Interviews - Five long interviews were conducted with individuals consisting of three public school administrators, one vocational school administrator, and one concerned patron who opposed School-to-Work. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The individuals were selected based on their involvement with School-to-Work implementation and/or their knowledge of the opposition to School-to-Work in our community. The concerned patron who opposed School-to-Work had written several letters-to-the-editor in the local newspaper and had been instrumental in arranging guest speakers to visit with local civic organizations about the pitfalls of School-to-Work. These five individuals represented the full spectrum of opinions concerning School-to-Work in our community including those who fully supported School-to-Work as a comprehensive educational reform movement, those who supported School-to-Work with some reservations about maintaining local control without federal intervention, and those who vehemently opposed to School-to-Work at any level. The venue for four of these individual interviews was in the participants' offices, and the venue for one of the individual interviews was in a conference room in the public library.

Group Interviews - Seven group interviews were conducted consisting of parents, public school teachers, vocational administrators, business leaders, public school board members, and active members of the Republican party who opposed School-to-Work. The groups were small ranging from two to five people in a group. Most of these interviews lasted approximately one hour with one interview lasting approximately two hours. The majority of these participants were hand-selected because they represented diverse opinions about the topic of School-to-Work. It should be noted that two separate groups of parents were interviewed because the first attempt at soliciting a "focus group" was fairly unsuccessful. An open invitation was extended to the Parent Support Group at the school where I teach to attend a parent focus group interview to discuss School-to-Work. Most of the parents were somewhat skeptical to participate because they did not feel they knew anything about School-to-Work. Four parents eventually agreed to the interview even though they admittedly knew very little about School-to-Work. Unfortunately, only two of the four parents were able to attend the interview because of conflicts that arose at the last minute. One of the parents who did arrive at the interview brought two anti-School-to-work fliers with her that another parent had given her when she learned that she was to interview about School-to-Work. Interestingly, although the parent originally did not have prior knowledge about School-to-Work, the information she had first access to expressed the negative aspects of School-to-Work. In a second attempt at arranging a parent group interview, I invited specific parents whom I knew represented a broad range of views on the topic. The group consisted of five parents of high school students, middle school students, and elementary students as well as parents of students who were college-bound students and vocational students, and a parent whose

children attend a private Christian school in our community. Once again, a broad range of political views, both liberal and conservative, were represented in this parent group. The full spectrum of opinions concerning School-to-Work were also represented in this parent group interview as well as interesting dialogue about the differences between public school education and private Christian school education.

The venue for the first parent group interview was a school conference room, and the second parent group interview was in my home. The public school teachers were interviewed in a school conference room, the vocational administrators were interviewed in their offices, the business leaders were interviewed at the Chamber of Commerce conference room, the school board members were interviewed in the school board office conference room, and three active opponents to School-to-Work were interviewed in the public library conference room.

Telephone Interviews - Two telephone interviews were conducted because the participants were unable to attend a face-to-face interview due to scheduling conflicts. One business leader and one college student were interviewed on the telephone while I took notes of their comments and typed up their responses immediately after the interview. The protocol of questions was used in order to capture consistent data in accordance with the rest of the interviews. Although the telephone interviews were much shorter than the face-to-face interviews (fifteen to twenty minutes in length), they were still a valuable source of information.

Participant Observation

As the investigator in this descriptive case study, I was a participant-observer. As opposed to a passive observer, I was actively involved in the early implementation stages of School-to-Work in our community. In participant observation, “the investigator may take a variety of roles within a case study situation and may actually participate in the events being studied” (Yin, 1989, p. 92). I participated in School-to-Work in my community by serving on the local School-to-Work steering committee that our local vocational-technical school had organized, and I served on the local partnership committee that formulated the School-to-Work grant application. This involved many hours of information meetings to learn about School-to-Work legislation and funding guidelines, as well as many hours of committee and partnership meetings to establish guidelines that met the needs of individual schools and businesses in our local partnership. I observed several intense discussions about the merits and pitfalls of School-to-Work as local citizens who opposed School-to-Work attended some of the meetings to voice their concerns.

One of the advantages of being a participant-observer for two years was being “inside” the case study and having an intimate understanding of the phenomena being studied. According to Yin (1989) “. . . such a [participant-observer] perspective is invaluable in producing an ‘accurate’ portrayal of a case study phenomenon” (p. 93). However, one of the disadvantages of participant observation is that “the participant observer may not have sufficient time to take notes or to raise questions about events from different perspectives, as a good observer might” (Yin, 1989, p. 93-94).

In this research study, I kept a journal of meeting notes and an agenda file for most of the meetings I attended. If I was unable to attend a meeting, I received minutes in the mail from the coordinator and I inquired with other committee members to find out the main points of discussion. Because I was a participant in the early implementation of School-to-Work in our community, I attended meetings, took notes, and received minutes of the meetings as a normal part of participating on School-to-Work committees, even before deciding to conduct this study and prior to obtaining (Institutional Review Board) IRB approval. Subsequent to beginning this research study, I have reviewed my notes and reconstructed in more detail some of the discussions that ensued at the meetings particularly regarding the opposition to School-to-Work. I have also visited with other committee members and have supplemented my field notes with comments and notes from other participants.

As an active participant, I also attended a "Train-the-Trainer" summer workshop in our state that enabled teachers from various schools to gain ideas on how to train other teachers in our respective districts on the implementation of School-to-Work activities. As a teacher, I applied to our School-to-Work local partnership to receive funds for a School-to-Work activity in my classroom. I also attended a career workshop for teachers in our local School-to-Work partnership which was sponsored by our local vocational-technical school. As a participant-observer, I understood the philosophy behind School-to-Work, the guidelines of the School-to-Work legislation, the purpose and make-up of the local partnership, and how individual teachers could access School-to-Work funds to implement School-to-Work initiatives.

Document Collection

Throughout this study, a host of newspaper articles, editorials, letters-to-the-editor, fliers, brochures, booklets, calendars, video-tapes, and implementation modules were collected that reflected both the pro and con positions on School-to-Work. "For case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (Yin, 1989, p. 86). These documents became a vital part of the case study record because they often were a major influence on the participants' opinions about School-to-Work. In fact, one concerned patron of the community who opposes School-to-Work was unable to interview but loaned me many books, videos, newsletters, and other documents that she felt best reflected her views regarding School-to-Work. Several other participants also loaned me their own collection of documents and notes from meetings. Participants often referenced some of these materials in our discussions and interviews to help explain their position on School-to-Work. These documents were a major source of information about School-to-Work in our community as they were freely distributed at meetings, civic organizations, schools, and appeared in the newspapers. A total of 130 documents were examined, analyzed, and categorized according to the arguments that were presented.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique used in this study was the Development Research Sequence (Spradley, 1980). This is a twelve-step process of collecting, coding and categorizing qualitative data. While based on an ethnographic approach to qualitative

research in anthropology, the sequence is applicable to any qualitative research. The steps in this sequence are:

1. Ethnography and Culture
2. Doing Participant Observation
3. Making an Ethnographic Record
4. Making Descriptive Observations
5. Making a Domain Analysis
6. Making Focused Observations
7. Making a Taxonomic Analysis
8. Making Selected Observations
9. Making a Componential Analysis
10. Discovering Cultural Themes
11. Taking a Cultural Inventory
12. Writing an Ethnography

This sequence is particularly transferrable to a descriptive case study because an ethnography is not bound by a theoretical framework and it is highly descriptive in nature.

As a participant observer, I was already immersed in the culture of the community so I began the sequence with step 2, Doing Participant Observation. The Developmental Research Sequence is an on-going process of data collection, data analysis, more focused data collection, more data analysis, etc. The organized material that came from the analysis became the case study data base (Yin, 1989; Merriam, 1988).

I began the process of data analysis by reviewing the transcripts of the interviews and highlighting key words and phrases called "included terms" (Spradley, 1988). I then

transferred key words and phrases to 3x5 note cards which I then sorted into stacks based on similar terms or like ideas. Using Spradley's "semantic relationship" (Spradley, 1988, p. 93), these stacks were then labeled with a "cover term" (Spradley, 1988, p. 91) or heading that generally described the terms on the note cards. These cover terms were placed on colored note cards to separate each stack of cards. Next, I typed a list of these cover terms with the included terms listed underneath them. This became the domain analysis. As transcripts continued to be analyzed, additional included terms were added to the domains. Each domain expanded to include emerging subcategories and subpoints which I formatted into an outline that showed the relationship between domains. This became the taxonomic analysis. (See Appendix C for domain and taxonomic outline).

On occasion, a "hole" in the data was detected, meaning that there seemed to be a critical piece of data missing or clarification of information was needed to complete the taxonomy. When this occurred, the interviewee was contacted again to have him/her clarify an answer or elaborate on original responses. Also, I interviewed additional participants when it seemed that a particular piece of information was missing that would help complete the taxonomy. A total of 154 domains were categorized which were collapsed into 37 taxonomies.

While domain analysis and taxonomic analysis phases are concerned with determining similarities between related terms and groups of terms, the componential analysis is more concerned with finding differences. "A componential analysis includes the entire process of searching for contrasts, sorting them out, grouping some together as dimensions of contrast, and entering all this information onto a paradigm [worksheet]" (Spradley, 1980, p. 133). The process involves making selected observations in order to

find contrasts between domains. This step became helpful in determining why some people with a similar educational background, political affiliation, and socio-economic level can have opposing views concerning the topic of School-to-Work.

Issues of Rigor

Qualitative research, like quantitative research, is concerned with trustworthiness. Issues of truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality are equally important to qualitative studies as Krefting (1991) points out in Guba's (1981) model for assessing qualitative research. However, as Krefting (1991) explains, there is different set of criteria to use for judging the merit of qualitative research. The qualitative paradigm consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Krefting, 1991). There are also specific strategies to employ in qualitative research which help establish trustworthiness. The following section will explain the strategies used in this case study to address issues of rigor.

Credibility

Three strategies were employed to provide for credibility in this study which included a) triangulation, b) member checks, and c) long-term observation.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a means to ensure credibility by using multiple methods and sources to collect data (Merriam, 1988; Krefting, 1991). Through triangulation, the researcher can compare data from a variety of sources to verify emerging findings. In this

study, the methods used were individual interviews, group interviews, participant observation, and document analysis which all contributed in capturing the “realities” of the School-to-Work situation. These methods provided rich data which provided valuable insights to the School-to-Work controversy and helped build consistency in the findings. Using multiple methods to collect data allows the researcher to eliminate a one-dimensional analysis and interpretation of the research and preserve the validity of the findings.

Triangulation of data sources also was used in this research study. There were many parties involved in the implementation of School-to-Work and I attempted to include a cross-section of participants that would represent the different views about this topic. Data sources in this study included public school administrators, vocational education administrators, school board members, parents, teachers, business leaders, and students (over 18 years of age).

The most valuable data method in my research was the individual and focus group interviews I conducted as citizens within my community explained to me in-depth their position concerning School-to-work and the purpose of public education in our society. My strength as a researcher lies in the interview technique to establish rapport with interviewees, asking broad but relevant questions, and using appropriate body language that will encourage participants to “open up” in expressing their viewpoints. As a human resource analyst in a major corporation, my main job duty was a corporate recruiter who interviewed applicants for jobs. I received specialized training in interviewing as a recruiter and I also taught workshops to managers on interviewing techniques. Therefore,

the previous training and experience I received in interviewing strengthens the credibility of the data I collected in my research.

Member Checks

Several of the participants were recontacted to confirm that my interpretation of their responses captured their intent, and to ask for additional clarification of their original responses. In most instances, the participants confirmed my interpretation of their responses, and in a few instances, participants added some comments to clarify their position. These member checks (Merriam, 1988; Krefting, 1991) served to verify the legitimacy of my data interpretation and validate the findings.

Long-term Observation

Since I was in the field for approximately two years as a participant in the formation of our community's School-to-Work partnerships, I was able to witness firsthand the unfolding developments of the School-to-Work controversy. During these two years, I attended School-to-Work meetings, took notes, collected artifacts which helped me establish the initial phases of School-to-Work implementation in our community, and I observed how the growing dissension toward School-to-Work gained momentum. I also observed how the criticism of School-to-Work affected the implementation of School-to-Work initiatives within our schools and community. My interview collection phase lasted approximately twelve months which allowed for the on-going process of data collection, data analysis, data collection, data analysis which is indicative of a qualitative research study.

Transferability

The key to transferability in qualitative research is in the “rich, thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the setting and the phenomenon under investigation. As Krefting (1991) points out, it is not the researcher’s responsibility to assess how transferrable the findings are, but it is the reader’s responsibility to make that judgment. Through the dense description provided by the researcher, the reader can determine if the context of the research is applicable to another setting or situation. Case study research does allow for “reader or user generalizability” (Merriam, 1988, p. 176-177; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transferability of the study lies in the reader’s ability to “make sense” of the data and findings based largely on the amount of description and detail offered in the research study. If the reader can “believe” the investigator’s results and can find application of the conclusions of the study, then the study is deemed “transferrable”. Transferability in this research study on School-to-Work can be found in the detailed description of the setting and situation under investigation.

Dependability

Dependability in a qualitative study relates to the consistency of the findings. One strategy used in this case study to maintain dependability is the rich, dense description of data collection methods (Krefting, 1991). Providing a detailed step-by-step decision process the researcher used to collect data, analyze data and interpret the findings helps ensure dependability. Also, establishing an audit trail of data collection, analysis, and interpretation is a way to determine if the study is repeatable. This involves “describing

in detail how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived from the data” (Merriam, 1988, p. 183). The researcher attempts to verify that the results of the study are logical, believable, and dependable. Merriam (1988) explains an audit trail:

Just as an auditor authenticates the accounts of a business, independent judges can authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). In order for an audit to take place, the investigator must describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry (p. 173).

Throughout my research on School-to-Work, I have attempted to keep accurate records of interviews, meetings, documents, and observations in order to have sufficient evidence to correlate the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The interview transcripts and documents, in particular, have become a valuable part of the audit trail.

Obviously, the researcher's lens impacts how one approaches a research study. This lens could have an adverse impact on the results of this study by distorting the arguments either for or against School-to-Work. This was particularly important to guard against in the document collection aspect of this research project. The newspaper articles, brochures, fliers, editorials, letters-to the editor, booklets all became a vital part of the case study record because they were a major source of information to the general public concerning the pros and cons of School-to-Work. These documents were freely circulated in an effort by both supporters and critics to influence people's views of School-to-Work by telling “their side” from their perspective. By collecting documents that reflected the both the pro and con positions of School-to-Work, I was able to achieve a balanced view of the arguments.

As I continued to analyze and collect data, I verified my interpretation of findings with participants. As additional School-to-Work events occurred in my community, I was

in contact with participants and revisited with them about these events. I received phone calls from participants who informed me of School-to-Work events occurring in my community and they continued to send me materials they received on this topic. Through this open dialogue with informants, I was able to glean additional insights and witness first-hand the continuing developments of the School-to-Work controversy.

Confirmability

In qualitative research, confirmability can be achieved through an external auditor, triangulation, and reflexive analysis (Krefting, 1991). I have been able to use all three of these strategies in my research study on School-to-Work controversies.

As part of my graduate course work, I took Qualitative Data Analysis where the professor led the students through Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence. This professor served as an auditor in the initial stages of my qualitative analysis by reviewing my interview transcripts, my domain and taxonomic categories, and my interpretation of the data into patterns and themes. By confirming that the findings did, indeed, derive from the data, this qualitative research professor served as an external auditor in my research study.

Since I was able to triangulate data from three different methods (interview, documents, and participant observation), I was able to confirm that at least two sources supported the analysis and findings of the study. In the case of School-to-Work, these three data methods were extremely consistent in explaining the controversies surrounding School-to-Work. Likewise, by triangulating data from different sources (administrators,

teachers, business leaders, parents, students, and other patrons) I was able to confirm the findings of the data.

Also, another strategy that is important to qualitative research is “reflexive analysis”. A researcher must guard against overinvolvement or becoming too close to the topic and events under study (Krefting, 1991). As I was an active participant in School-to-Work in my community and I openly supported School-to-Work efforts, it was important that I disassociate myself from the immediate situation and reflect on the merits and pitfalls of this educational reform legislation. As I listened to arguments both for and against School-to-Work and tried to understand both perspectives, I found myself challenging my own assumptions about the purpose and direction of education. This research study has significantly increased my own awareness of the multiple philosophies that surround educational issues. The greatest benefit in this “reflexive analysis” has been writing about some of the School-to-Work criticism and opposing viewpoints in other papers I have written in graduate courses during this research study. One of the advantages of having conducted this research over a fairly long period of time, is being able to have time to reflect on emerging findings, to articulate the arguments logically in other papers, and to receive feedback from professors and fellow graduate students.

Reflexivity also refers to the impact of the researcher’s own background, perceptions, and interests on the study (Krefting, 1991). Perhaps I offer a unique perspective on the topic of School-to-Work as I have experience in both education and business/industry. I realize this unusual combination allows me to view the School-to-work controversies from many perspectives. I have tried to use my diverse background to

evaluate the merits of opposing viewpoints in presenting a balanced critique of School-to-Work.

Ethics

This research proposal was approved by the Institution Review Board at Oklahoma State University, and the Human Subjects Research exemption was obtained (IRB #ED-97-031). (See Appendix D for IRB approval form.) The participants in this study were given a Solicitation of Participation letter that explained the full intent of this research study in capturing the controversial issues surrounding School-to-Work in our community. (See Appendix B for Solicitation of Participation letter). Also, every attempt has been made to maintain the anonymity of participants and the community by obscuring their identities in this research study. Only general terms (i.e. a parent, an administrator, a business leader) were used when referring to a participant in the study.

Summary

Overall, a research study must be methodical, logical, and thorough. The researcher is obligated to use ethical means and present an honest and accurate portrayal of the data collected in the study. Through this detailed description of the methods and procedures used in this qualitative study, I have attempted to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the findings in this research study concerning the School-to-Work controversy.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

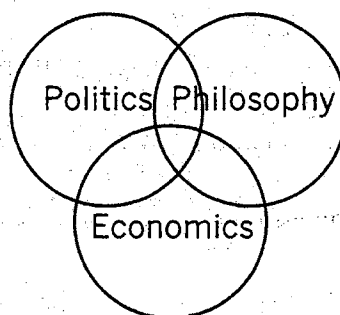
The research I have conducted on School-to-Work in my community has been much like peeling an onion as layers and layers of issues and concerns have surfaced with the gathering of each piece of data. Each conversation, each interview, and each document piece revealed a different perspective of educational reform that shed new light on the topic of School-to-Work. It is a complex, controversial subject that encompasses many dimensions including government influence on public education, the function of schools in our democratic society, and the role of the local community in public education.

The data analysis phase of this research study resulted in the development of 154 domains that were collapsed into 37 taxonomies. While the data analysis revealed a myriad of issues and concerns regarding public education, these taxonomies categorized the information needed to answer the three Research Questions:

1. What are the socio-political factors that have impacted the implementation of School-to-Work initiatives?
2. What are the academic factors that have impacted the implementation of School-to-Work initiatives?

3. What is the impact of business/industry involvement in School-to-Work?

Three prominent themes emerged from the data during the analysis phase of this research study: a) political concerns, b) educational philosophy, and c) economic considerations. These themes are best represented in a Venn diagram to show how they interrelate as shown below:



While there are specific political, philosophical, and economic issues that play out around School-to-Work, there is also a significant overlap in these areas. Many times educational philosophy impacts political factors (and vice-versa), and both philosophy and politics can impact economics. At times the three are so intertwined that it is difficult to separate the issues. The findings presented here will attempt to identify specific political, philosophical, and economic issues as well as areas of overlap that are embedded in the controversy surrounding School-to-Work.

The critical issues involved in these major themes answer the three Research Questions that guided this study.

Question #1. What are the Socio-Political Factors that
Impact School-to-Work Initiatives?

One of the significant controversies surrounding School-to-Work is the issue of the role of federal government in public education. Because School-to-Work is federal legislation that allocates federal funds to states and schools, a major concern is that the federal government is attempting to usurp the local control of public education. The literature review in Chapter II points out that our founding fathers (after much discussion and debate) rejected a national education system. Ultimately, the U. S. Constitution left public education in the hands of the state governments which then disseminates a certain amount of control to local communities. Many people feel that over the years, the federal government has slowly but surely tried to take more and more power away from states and local communities. (See Appendix E Table 1 for Summary of Findings)

The analysis of the interviews and documents used in this study revealed various levels of political concerns regarding educational issues that are best represented in a continuum:



The extreme conservative viewpoint believes in the “no government intervention” end of the spectrum while the extreme liberal viewpoint believes in “substantial government intervention”. The more “left” of center a person believes, the more supportive are his/her viewpoints about government intervention in public education. The more “right” of center a person believes, the more strongly opposed he/she is to government intervention in public education. Clustered around the middle are people who have become known as “moderate Republicans” or “conservative Democrats” whose views fall somewhere in the middle of the two extremes.

A closer examination of some of the political values and beliefs on both sides of the continuum helps one understand the controversy surrounding School-to-Work. There obviously are multiple perspectives on the role of federal government in our society. The interviews and documents revealed that there are both positive and negative aspects of federal intervention in public education and these conflicting viewpoints play out around School-to-Work in this community.

Positive Aspects of Federal Government Intervention

A. Federal Government is Needed to Serve Society's Common Needs. One of the major roles of a federal government is to “serve society's common needs” (Bailyn, 1990, p. 255). Through our federal taxation system, the federal government attempts to provide services equally to all areas of the nation to satisfy the common need for roads, postal service, national defense, and social programs. Without a national government, richer areas of the country would have access to modern conveniences and services while poorer areas would be less developed and have access to fewer services.

Likewise, in education, the objective is to satisfy the common need for education that will allow all students an equal access to quality education. This notion of providing equal educational opportunities for all citizens is a factor in the philosophy behind School-to-Work. As The Neglected Majority (1985) and The Forgotten Half (1988) point out, there are significant numbers of students who are “falling through the cracks” of public education. Because public education is geared mainly for preparing students for college, there are many students not being adequately served by public education. Statistics indicate that approximately 75% of students do not finish college and, therefore, those students enter the workforce without a college degree or marketable skills to find jobs. The intent of School-to-Work is to provide federal funds to help schools provide better educational opportunities for all students (both college-bound and non-college bound students) by providing work experiences and career exposure through public education. School-to-Work has federal guidelines that specify the kinds of occupational curriculum schools should incorporate. Occupational curriculum should include applied academics, shadowing opportunities, mentoring experiences, and youth apprenticeships throughout secondary school as well as other career exploration activities in elementary and middle school years.

To some, School-to-Work funds have a specific purpose in integrating occupational curriculum in public education for all students and, therefore, it is logical that some federal requirements must be met in order to receive this money. To others, these federal guidelines are “mandates” that are an encroachment on the states’ rights and local communities’ rights to set policy and curriculum for their schools. These guidelines constitute the “federal strings” attached to the funds and by accepting these funds, schools

will be subjected to additional federal compliance which will lead to further federal mandates, standards, and testing requirements.

A particularly intense discussion on the role federal intervention in education occurred at one of our local School-to-Work partnership meetings in March 1996. The local School-to-Work coordinator extended a general invitation to citizens of the community because one of the main premises of School-to-Work is community involvement. One interested citizen had attended several School-to-Work meetings, and at one meeting this citizen pointed out a particular concern about this federal legislation. Being fairly well-versed on the legislation, this citizen pointed out that there were federal strings attached to the School-to-Work money. By accepting School-to-Work funds, the federal government could then dictate how that money would be spent. Consequently, our school district would then have to comply with the federal government mandates concerning the School-to-Work money. This citizen (a parent and a conservative) felt that our community did not need to accept federal dollars and then be subjected to federal mandates. The best use of our tax dollars, according to this citizen, was to ideally spend our tax dollars locally as the community deemed necessary, not send our tax dollars to Washington, D. C. and have it redistributed as the federal government saw fit.

This invoked a fairly emotional response by a teacher who was on the local partnership committee and held a more liberal view on the role of the federal government. This teacher adamantly argued that all children should receive an equal chance for education whether they happen to live in an affluent community with access to money for educational purposes, or whether they live in a poor rural community. The teacher said, "That's why we have government."

Obviously, these opposing views concerning the federal government's role in public education creates some controversy. Some people question the "fairness" of the federal government taking local tax money from the community and then redistributing it to communities and designating how it should be spent. As another opponent to School-to-Work commented, "...Whenever [School-to-Work supporters] say, 'the federal government is going to give us money', I say, 'Wait a minute, they took it from us to begin with. They've taken it out of my paycheck, sent it to Washington, and sent it back down here to help me educate my child.'" To others, the federal government redistributing funds for educational purposes serves the common need of providing education for our society. It provides an avenue for ensuring that all students in our country receive an equal opportunity for a quality education, regardless where they live or their socio-economic background.

B. The Federal Government has a Responsibility to Monitor National Trends that Local Communities or even States may not Detect or have Access to. Much of the School-to-Work literature cites statistics that depict national labor market trends which are intended to show that economic and employment trends happening in business/industry is not reflected in the public education system. Local School-to-Work fliers quote Bureau of Labor statistics in 1992 making projections from 1992-2005 that indicate: 16% of careers need a high school degree, 75% of careers need one or two years of high-tech training, and 9% of careers need a college degree. Also, federal reports indicate the kinds of skills and competencies needed in today's workforce (Carnevale, 1990; SCANS, 1991).

According to one school administrator:

I think that it is a legitimate role of the federal government to case out and make plans for shifting employment patterns, for shifting economies. I think that is a legitimate role that the government should play. And I think that the School-to-Work initiative does derive directly from shifts in employment patterns and economic patterns that are occurring...and I would hope that our federal government knew that and was able to develop a response to that situation. Thank God someone's doing that. I'd be more concerned if it wasn't because I do think that most parents and most middle-class people don't see that.

This viewpoint was reiterated by a vocational education administrator who was explaining the School-to-Work legislation and commented:

...And the overall goals of School-to-Work are very pure, in my opinion. They are in response to a national crisis, what could be a national crisis. The fact that our labor market isn't going to match the type of people we have prepared to do those jobs. And that could be a real national crisis.

However, others are skeptical of the statistics put forth by federal bureaucrats.

One opponent to School-to-Work and an active member of the Republican party explained that many times the government operates on data that is three or four years old because of the length of time it takes to gather the information, analyze it, and publish it. To make decisions made based on old information can have negative results. Furthermore, opponents do not believe the government can accurately make long-term predictions about the kinds of jobs that will be needed. As one opponent said:

...That's like the nice man [guest speaker] from [a nearby community] who showed us his list of how the feds have come out with all this list of jobs, you know they've catalogued and given a number to every job, ditch digger, etc. and they've predicted these are the jobs we will need. Who could've predicted the telecommunications industry? ...And we want the federal government to tell us these are the kinds of jobs we'll need in the next century? Nobody knows that.

Certainly, current employment information in the area newspapers in February and April 1998 seem to support the need for going to college as the headlines read,

“College Degree Still the Best Bet” (Adwan, 1998) and “College Grads Rejoice: Employers Begging for Workers” (Egan, 1998). The information states that employers are currently having difficulty finding enough college recruits to fill their jobs, particularly in computing and business.

The hot area is, of course, computer science. But national reports show the market is yearning for accountants, business school graduates and engineers. Even liberal arts majors are looking at better job prospects. One national survey shows job postings at college campuses are up by nearly 35 percent compared with last year. That means more money for the most marketable students (Egan, 1998).

While some would argue that this is evidence which suggests that more and more college graduates are needed in the workforce, others contend this evidence implies that employers are seeking college graduates because those are the only potential workers with “marketable skills”. Currently, students without a college degree have little to no job skills with which to obtain high skill, high wage jobs. Employers would be able to hire non-college graduates for the many demanding jobs in today’s economy if students could obtain those “marketable skills” through a combination of high school education and 2-year post-secondary certification as proposed in School-to-Work. This would allow non-college degree students to compete for those high skill, high wage jobs which would provide more equal opportunities for students to compete in the labor market. In a conversation with one vocational education administrator, School-to-Work is a means of “smarting up” the non-college students, not “dumbing down” college-bound students.

C. The Federal Government is a Means to Counter the “Dark Side” of Local Control. Local control is a cornerstone of the American public education system. As mentioned earlier, the U. S. Constitution left public education to the individual states and

local communities, not the federal government. While viewed as a strength of American public education, local control can also have a negative impact. If a certain community has social prejudices then those prejudices are reflected in the community's schools. As one school administrator pointed out, if we didn't have some state and federal mandates, then "you may have districts in this nation that still wouldn't let black children in their school". Another school administrator pointed out:

... Local control really does play a big factor in what schools become or don't become. And there is both a good side to that and a really dark side to that because, of course, the good side is that when it works, it's wonderful when you see high community support and high community involvement in your school... But when you have a class-divided community with one group having total power and another group have no power, those same characteristics are reflected in your school and that's really kind of sad.

In fact, some teachers and administrators feel that perhaps public education is governed too much by local control. One administrator felt that, overall, "Americans have a preoccupation with local control" and in this community, "community pressure is the top factor in influencing what we do or what we don't do, and that has not always been the case in every community that I've worked in." Also, some teachers feel that parents have too much influence on what they can do in the classroom and that administrators are too easily influenced by parents. As one teacher commented, "principals are influenced by the patrons," and another teacher explained, "the parents, the members of the community, and the groups in the community can cause changes in the education system."

A public school administrator explained how the issue of local control is especially pertinent in our community because the wealthiest group of citizens have the most power in public education:

This community has such a high concentration of not just college educated people, but Ph. D. persons, and we have an incredible concentration of wealth. We have not only a concentration of wealth, but we have a class-divided community. In this community, it's very clear who exercises that power and who has the voice. And it has an incredible, it plays an incredible role in influencing what our administration will do or not do, the kinds of programs they will support or not support. It influences the kinds of things that we see emphasis on [in our schools] and the kinds of things that don't receive emphasis.

A local businessman voiced some frustration that the problem is that too many different groups of people influence education in our community which results in a breakdown of an academic emphasis. He stated:

... And the [teacher union] is an active voice, and the band parents, and the sports parents -- all of these entities have a voice [in public education]. People [administrators] are more concerned about criticism than in doing the right thing. But you have to decide -- what is the most important?

Although the interviewees did not actually agree on how much local control is "good" for public education, there was concern that there can be negative aspects to local control. Through federal legislation, then, there is some avenue for ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens by preventing particular community prejudices or local power groups from wielding too much influence on public schools. Therefore, the role of the federal government is to ensure some degree of educational equality for all people by providing funding for education programs that reach all states and all communities, by monitoring national trends and developing responses to those trends, and by countering the "dark side" of local control to ensure community prejudices do not discriminate

against certain groups of people. One of the strengths of the American public education system that was mentioned repeatedly by several interviewees was that our schools educate all segments of American society. One administrator explained that a major strength of the public school system is that:

Schools are the last remaining public institution that I can think of that exist and really do welcome a broad spectrum of children. They serve the entire community. All races and political persuasions, handicapped, non-handicapped, everybody comes together in the public school system. . . .I think it does serve that public function better than most other institutions.

Another administrator passionately expressed, "I'm quite proud that we, as Americans, take all segments of our society and we, truly, try to take all the masses and move them forward educationally."

Negative Aspect of Federal Government Intervention

A. Federal Government takes away Local Control from the Community. Every community make-up is different and each has different needs. What works in a large metropolitan area may not work in a small rural community. Inner-city schools have different problems and concerns than suburban or rural schools. Therefore, trying to superimpose a national educational system on individual communities is not an effective way to manage public education. This concern was voiced by several interviewees who were wary of losing local control of schools. As one parent voiced her concern about losing local control:

But I think the problem with the federal government is what is good for Washington, D.C. is not necessarily good for [our community]. They have an entirely different kind of people who live there. . . . Because every community is different, and I hate to see control of local education given away from the locality,

because if [our community] gives it away to the state we're going to have lots more kids put into a vo-tech where those kids are probably college-bound students, just because of their intellect.

Another concerned parent who totally supports local control of schools said:

Public education is a state, or even better, local program. Leave a community to be responsive to its own needs. If [a community down the road] needs lots of School-to-Work type work with their kids then they can do that, but if [our community] doesn't, they don't need to do that. If [one elementary school] needs a lot, but [another elementary school] doesn't, then they can do it that way. . . . But with School-to-Work you're going to have to do what they tell you and one size fits all.

Several interviewees responded that one of the major factors that presently influences American public education is the local control of schools in the community.

One vocational administrator explained, "Of course, I think that the citizens of the community certainly have a large influence [on schools] through the school board and other organizations like the PTA and others that may be involved. That certainly has a large influence."

However, those who oppose School-to-Work feel that education only gives "lip-service" to local control because public schools are already controlled too much by federal and state legislation, and they see this Act as one more piece of federal intervention in public education that will take away yet additional local control.

A public school administrator (who supports School-to-Work but is sensitive to local control issues) explained:

Well, first of all, it's the local control aspect of public education that really drives the educational system. Now, I have to say this, it's not as much as it used to be because of the increased federal dollars that are being put into programs and the increased state dollars. There are more mandates that are coming with the federal dollars and the state dollars. Politicians and policy makers at the state and federal level have become more directive and have taken more and more local control

away, but traditionally local control has been the center of the public education system. So I am still a strong advocate for keeping local control and I really am concerned any time that there are federal dollars that come down the pipe and there are little cubby holes that we have got to go into with the state mandates that have come down. But local control is what drives [public education]. So as long as we can have local control and as long as we can decide our policies and our curriculum and the way that we are going to evaluate our curriculum and those kinds of things. . . that is what drives this [public education].

Another public school administrator explained that realistically it is a “balancing act” in complying with federal laws, state mandates, and local community influence.

Sometimes these three influences are in conflict and the key to a successful school district is finding a “balance”. As this administrator expounded:

Your community has a major say-so in your school. . . I honestly believe that is a major function and a foundation of public education that the community, the public, the people should have a major voice in their school district. . . Your school should reflect your community. I don’t want another community in Oklahoma trying to reflect their goals and wishes in our community, but on the same token, you’ve got to have a standard. . . . And then the state has to come in, the government has to come in and set standards that have to be implemented. And there’s where the conflict comes. . . but you have to find a balance.

Overall, this community maintains high regard for local control of public education, and community members willingly exercise their right for local control by voicing their concerns and desires about educational programs and policies.

B. Federal Control Centralizes too much Power. The idea of “control” equates to “power” and the issue for many who are opposed to School-to-Work is a “power” issue. Federal control centralizes too much power in the federal government and takes power away from individual communities and citizens. Because School-to-Work is federal legislation and provides federal funds to states and schools who apply for the funds, many opponents to School-to-Work are concerned that the federal government will then dictate

curriculum and policies to those states and schools who accept funds. One concerned patron of the community stated in an interview:

Under the present government, the Democratic President, we've got an agenda that I think from Washington is not good in that it takes power from the local people, and School-to-Work is a huge, huge piece of that. It puts the power of the Secretaries of Education and Labor, in this case, directly into the classroom at the local level. There is really nothing standing in between, unless the governor turns it [the money] down and even now if the governors turn it down they [the federal government officials] can still do it. They can still go directly from -- I mean the state can turn it down and yet the local district can still accept School-to-Work funds -- so those safe-guards of representation at all levels, including the district level with the Board of Education, are gone. . . . You have the power going directly from the federal government to the individual school district and into the classroom.

This citizen was particularly concerned about the issue of centralized power. In discussing the America 2000 and Goals 2000 which were originally initiated by the Republican administration of President Bush, the interviewee explained:

. . . I have sympathy for those original goals because I do think that it is nice to have these things held up and then have the choice of whether or not to vote for them, but as it stands, it is another issue of power. If you have too much power in too few hands, power can corrupt and does corrupt. There is no guarantee that the people who put those things together are going to have the best interest of our community in mind. They may have ulterior motives. . .

Those who oppose School-to-Work are not only concerned with losing local control of public education but are also concerned about concentrating too much power in the hands of the federal government.

C. The Federal Government takes away Individual Freedoms. The strength of the individual is another cornerstone of American democracy. Protection of individual rights has been guaranteed in the Constitution, and as the federal government assumes more and more power, there is a fear of "Big Brother" dominating many aspects of individual lives.

School-to-Work is seen as another way for the federal government to control labor markets and develop a workforce for the national “state”, (a concept which many people associate with socialism) rather than allowing individuals to pursue their own interests and talents in their own career choices.

One parent voiced concern that government will continue to invade our lives and strip Americans of individual choices. Some conservative religious views begin to surface in the conservative political views as evidenced in this comment:

Government stepping in is a real scary thing and I guess, as a Christian, I’m not surprised, because I expect them to continue and continue and continue, until it gets to the point that we have no choices. So I just think this is a part of what’s going to happen anyway and that’s unfortunate, but when you can’t get a community to do what it takes, then you have to start reaching to other sources and unfortunately that means being involved with the government.

Many opponents of School-to-work feel it would actually discourage students from going to college and pursuing advanced degrees which would limit their opportunity for personal growth and developing individual potential. Education would then become more concerned with making “worker bees” for business/industry than in encouraging the “individual” to develop higher levels of thinking and understanding. The notion of “individualism” has played a large part in American history and many believe that only through development of the individual potential will society make great strides. As one parent explained:

... You know, government never produced all the great ideas, all the technology, all of our standard of living, etc. did not come from government. It came from individual people. And they didn’t do it at the hands of government. They did it because God gave them a talent and they produced.

Other opponents to School-to-Work contend that the program incorporates the teaching of personal qualities such as self-esteem, interpersonal skills, sociability, and integrity-honesty, as found in the SCANS report (1991). A member of the Constitutional Coalition in Oklahoma wrote “‘The Workplace Competencies’ of SCANS should raise our eyebrows if we value individual responsibility and decision making, the right to live in a free market economy where we direct our own futures without government control” (Bond, 1996, p. 9). Concerns are also raised that School-to-Work mandates that students are issued a ‘Career Passport’ which is the highest level of government certification of student skills. It is believed that this “certification” will dictate the level of education students can receive, if they can go to college, and where they are employed (Bond, 1996, p. 9).

Government interference is contrary with developing individual potential based on human motivation and individual knowledge. Therefore, opponents to School-to-Work fear a student’s personal, social, and emotional development will be dictated by federal programs (Bernardo, 1996; Bond, 1996; Hearne, 1995;).

D. The Federal Government adds Layers of Bureaucracy. In the educational arena, much of the bureaucracy of public education is blamed on too much legislation that requires additional levels of management and paperwork. School-to-Work is seen as another government program with built-in bureaucratic levels and administrative overhead costs. The majority of tax dollars that are reallocated as School-to-Work funds will never find its way into our children's classrooms but only will pay for additional administrative salaries and additional administrative paperwork.

Some of the interviewees cited the current bureaucracy in public schools as a major weakness of the system. One business leader expressed concern by saying, "The problem is that our administration is 'trapped' in the bureaucracy of the public schools."

Also, a parent explained:

... I'd like to add that the system is too costly. And I am not talking in terms of salaries of teachers. That is the one place where the money is skimmed off the top for other things, and then trickles down to the teachers, it boggles this [the system] up... and drives a wedge between the teachers and parents because any parent who wants to save money in the system must be against teachers wanting more money and that's just so untrue, so untrue. We want the teachers to have more money, we want less money spent on the administrative end of bureaucracy so that the teachers can have it. And we assume that they would then be inspired to do an even better job.

Another parent expressed her concern that since School-to-Work involves the federal government, it will add more "red tape" to the education system:

Probably my biggest concern is what I've already said which is I don't want the government to come in and control our schools. I think everything that I've seen with government control, I have not been happy with the red tape... I'm just not happy with what the government does -- they're too big and I don't think they really care about the students. I think, you know, they may have a goal in mind and they'll do whatever they have to do to reach their goal. I just don't like government involvement.

The bureaucracy in public schools is also blamed for much parent apathy towards education. Many parents do not get involved in education because the system is so big and so bureaucratic that it does them no good to voice an opinion or try to change something. As one parent expressed:

There is a kind of apathy here that you don't see in the community's excitement and concern about education. And this is the apathy of parents who either have been so poorly educated themselves that they don't even know how to approach the bureaucracy so they give up, or some parents are apathetic because they really don't care about raising their kids, there are some of those. And then there are parents I will bet that become apathetic and cynical because no matter what they

do, nothing happens. They are so overwhelmed by 'the system'... What the public [education] system has done, is they have lumped all these three kinds of apathy into one generic group - parents aren't doing their job - ergo, we [the schools] must do the job for them, ergo, we [the schools] need more money. So, yes, there are those who truly don't care, but there are those two other groups, the frustrated ones who have tried and feel the system is against them, or the ones who don't have the resources. . . parents who just don't even know where to begin so they don't ask. And yet we all get lumped in together. Some of us research the purposes of programs like School-to-Work and find they lump all parents together and say 'they're not raising their children so we need to do it'.

It is apparent that those outside the system, namely parents and business, are critical of the bureaucracy of public education. For some, School-to-Work will only add to the bureaucracy through additional paperwork (grant applications and approvals), additional administrative costs, and additional reporting mandates.

The vocational administrators who coordinate the School-to-Work program in this community admitted that one concern is the way that the area vo-tech school has become the "coordinator" of the program mainly by default.

It wasn't designed to be run by a coordinator, it was designed to be run by the three participating bodies, which are our social agencies, our education agencies, both secondary and post-secondary, and then our employers. And what's come down is that by the time you have to meet the state grant, you don't have any of these entities who can do it because of the broadness of the program and because they don't have time to do it. So, basically, it [the administration of School-to-Work] has to be hired out and I think that's a big philosophy change from the first information we were given. . .

As a participant observer in the early implementation stages of School-to-Work in my community, I noticed some of the administrative bureaucracy in the number of meetings and the amount of time it took to establish our local partnership, write and submit the grant to the state, and get the program underway. Since I served on both an advisory board and the local partnership, I attended 2-3 meetings per month from

November 1995 to June 1996. Initially, the meetings were held at the local vocational school but the venue eventually alternated between a financial institution in a neighboring community and a school in a nearby community so as not give the impression that this was a vo-tech controlled program. The local vo-tech made a conscientious effort to involve area communities and business organizations in the local partnership and wanted all communities to be equally represented and feel ownership of the program.

The negative aspect of this arrangement is that some of the representatives were on both the advisory board and the local partnership and there was some duplication of information at the meetings. Some businessmen became somewhat frustrated because the formulation, organization, and implementation of the local School-to-Work plan became too time intensive. Some of the business representatives eventually said that they supported the program, but they could no longer attend all of the meetings. They wanted the coordinator of the partnership to send them the minutes of the meetings, and let them know specifically what they could do in terms of arranging shadowing, mentoring, and apprenticeship activities. When it came time to write our grant application to meet the state deadline, none of the other partners on the local partnership wanted to write the grant. Therefore, the local vo-tech offered to write it. Also, the original fiscal agent for our local partnership was a school in a neighboring community, but eventually they asked to be relieved of their responsibility of approving school grant applications and dispersing funds because it was too time consuming and labor intensive. None of the other partners on the local partnership wanted to assume the role of fiscal

agent. Therefore, by default, the local vo-tech assumed responsibility for the administration, coordination, and education of School-to-Work because the other members of the local partnership (business/industry, schools, and social agencies) had neither the time, personnel, nor the resources to do it. If it had not been for the support provided by the local vocational school, it is doubtful that our local partnership would have made the state grant deadline to receive School-to-Work funds.

E. There is a Growing Mistrust of Federal Government. Americans have grown “gun-shy” of federal government because “stupid things are funded”, explained an administrator. Some people feel tax dollars are wasted on programs that are redundant or ineffective. Also, “the misuse of welfare” is an example that was cited as a federal program that is ineffective and an abuse of American tax dollars.

A parent expounded on the waste of tax dollars by explaining how current School-to-Work money was being spent in the community:

For example, [the School-to-Work coordinator] told me the other day the School-to-Work grant money here had allowed an elementary school to buy fireman costumes and doctor costumes for the kindergartners so that when they did career day they could all dress up like the doctor who came to visit. And I went home and told my husband, ‘Your federal tax dollars just bought Halloween costumes for the kids at the elementary school’. But at least it’s not damaging them. [An area high school nearby] sent high school kids to [an outdoor dinner theater] and did some deal with the people, watched them put on the make-up and do the critique after the show, and I thought, ‘great field trip’, but why in God’s name did it require federal money for that? Or for somebody to go through a grant and have them go through [the School-to-Work coordinator], who’s getting paid with federal tax dollars, and her secretary . . . and how many people have been paid with our tax dollars before it ever got down to buying the Halloween costumes at the elementary school? It’s a waste, a total waste. But I hope it doesn’t get any worse than that. If that’s all we’re doing in our community, well, okay. It’s a waste of money, but it’s the other [serious] stuff you’ve got to know about.

Of course, this was just one example of the kinds of School-to-Work activities that teachers have implemented in their classrooms in this community. A vocational administrator mentioned that one of the elementary schools in the community was starting an entire reading program focusing around careers, however, the School-to-Work involvement in the school district varied greatly from school to school with some schools having very little involvement with School-to-Work. Nevertheless, opponents questioned the need for federal funds and government legislation to implement career activities in the classroom.

Another parent voiced her dissatisfaction with government intervention in the nursing home business which makes her cynical toward other government programs:

. . .I'm in the house industries and in the nursing home business and there have been many benefits to the government and state coming in over the years because it really has improved care, it really has, and that's great for our people, but these people [government employees] don't even understand their own programs. If you call and ask a question, they don't know the answer because they still haven't figured it out yet and so, to me, when the government tries to handle something, they are the most unorganized, inefficient people. It takes them years to understand what they implemented the year before and I hate to be mixed up with people like that. . . and they usually have ulterior motives in the end, I feel like.

Overall, there is a growing skepticism about the competency of the federal government. Many citizens see the federal government establishing unnecessary programs, wasting tax dollars, and ineffectively managing the programs that are established.

Partisan Issues

Because of these conflicts that surface concerning the role of the federal government in public education, the School-to-Work controversy, to a large extent, is a partisan issue between the Democrats and Republicans. The Democrat "agenda" is seen as establishing more federal programs and spending more federal money to solve the social, economic, and educational problems plaguing our country and, thus, moving our country toward a more socialistic society. The Republican "agenda" is seen as an attempt to stop this ever-increasing government encroachment on individual and states' rights by retaliating against any form of government intervention. School-to-Work is caught up in this partisan conflict because it is federal legislation which provides federal funds to schools who apply through a federal grant and meet the School-to-Work guidelines. Since the Act was signed by President Clinton (a Democrat), this is only further evidence, according to the conservative viewpoint, that Democrats are continuing their objective in centralizing power in the federal government. When one interviewee was asked what events led up to School-to-Work, this citizen's response was "Because of the Clintons. They wanted to control education."

This partisan conflict was especially evident in the early stages of School-to-Work implementation in the state. Because many citizens in our community are active politically, the information that was dispersed at the state level had a direct impact on the criticism that surfaced in our community. Early in 1995, Oklahoma's Governor (a Republican) established a twenty-three member executive council to oversee the School-to-Work program in Oklahoma. The council consisted of eleven members from state

agencies, such as the Department of Labor, and thirteen members appointed from business, industry and labor “to ensure a broad based representation of partners” (Murphy, 1996, p. 2). After months of discussion, much criticism emerged from the council as some of the conservative members disagreed with the legislation. Particularly, the Oklahoma State Department of Labor Commissioner and the deputy commissioner felt that School-to-Work legislation was, indeed, a ploy by the Democrat administration in Washington, D.C. in exerting too much control over public education and attempting to engage children as “pawns” in labor market development. Also, there was skepticism in degrading public education into vocational training instead of aspiring to strong academic excellence. A report issued, “Review and Analysis of the Oklahoma School-to-Work Plan” (1996), states the following:

The Vo-Tech written Oklahoma plan is based on a major philosophical shift in the mission of public education from that of focusing on providing a strong academic foundation for all students in grades K-12 to providing integrated academic and vocational training for all students for 14 years. This new system centers on a myriad of new services and products provided by Vo-Tech, who will function as the central agent for the system. The framework that will be established by this current plan positions our state for easy alignment with controversial workforce/economic development plans proposed by the Clinton administration (Murphy, 1996, p. 3).

This report emphasizes that since the Oklahoma State Vo-Tech Department is administering the School-to-Work program that the Vo-Tech Department has too much control over the entire education system (Murphy, 1996, p. 2). It also references the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California-Berkley, which produced research in 1990 promoting polytechnical education which is the

“integration of education and vocational training modeled after the Soviet system based on Marxist-Leninist theory” (Murphy 1996, p. 2).

The impact of this information which appeared in the major newspapers across the state was significant in our community. In a letter-to-the editor in our local newspaper, a citizen expressed similar concerns about government intrusion in individual lives and thereby limiting personal freedom and choices. This individual stated, “When I read the analysis of Oklahoma School-to-Work Plan prepared by Oklahoma Department of Labor I found many items disturbing.” This citizen was particularly concerned about the Oklahoma Vo-Tech Department writing curriculum and instructional materials for grades K-12, that 8th grade students must decide a 6-year plan of study, and that students will receive a Certificate of Initial Mastery according to performance standards determined by the Vo-Tech which are in alignment with standards set by national or international organizations. This individual stated in her letter-to-the editor:

... All of these examples raise a red flag to me that our personal freedom and choices for our children's education and career opportunities are going to be removed and replaced with a managed partnership between the Department of Education and Department of Labor. More intrusive government is not the answer. All schools must teach our children to read and write correctly. Schools should teach history correctly. Schools should get back to the basic task of teaching and reject socially and ‘politically correct’ agendas and fads as stated in ‘Our Hopes, Our Dreams’ by Gary L. Bauer.

As the School-to-Work debate began heating up in my community, the deputy labor commissioner of Oklahoma was then invited by local citizens to come to our community in the spring 1996 to speak to a civic organization about the pitfalls of School-to-Work. There was a mixed response to the deputy labor commissioner’s presentation. One administrator (a supporter of School-to-Work) who attended the

meeting was somewhat disturbed that many parents and patrons were at the meeting nodding their heads in full agreement to the criticisms of School-to-Work. However, one of the opponents to School-to-Work who attended the meeting was somewhat disappointed in the response to the presentation because the deputy labor commissioner did not give much background to the legislation. The opponent's response was:

I was a little disappointed because I thought it was confusing. [The deputy labor commissioner] had just got back from Washington, D.C. on School-to-Work stuff, but she brought that with her. Instead of starting at the beginning, because some of the people did not know anything about School-to-Work, I think a lot of people were confused because she did not give us a background, she just launched right into it. For that reason, I don't know how it was perceived.

The culmination of the debate over School-to-Work in Oklahoma occurred when the labor commissioner wrote a letter to the governor urging him to turn down the nearly \$10 million in federal School-to-Work funds. As reported in an area newspaper, the letter stated:

Governor, I urge you to reject this agenda, send back the federal School-to-Work grant, and send the message to Washington, D.C. that Oklahoma declines our children's participation in meeting national performance goals as human resources for a global labor market....[School-to-Work] places the education of Oklahoma's students in the hands of President Clinton, Education Secretary Richard Riley and Labor Secretary Robert Reich (Ervin, 1996, p. 1).

Some citizens in the area applauded the labor commissioner's efforts to reject School-to-Work funds for the state. As one letter-to-the editor in an area newspaper stated:

I want to offer the state Labor Commissioner support and encouragement in her effort to convince the Governor to reject the School-to-Work funds. I just received my MA in history from OSU and one of the alarming things I learned during my studies was how far we have strayed from the original guidelines of this country. The federal government has taken control of areas that were intended as state rights -- and education is one of those concerns. It takes courage

for a politician to turn down any program promising generous funds. However, nothing is ever free. Just as Washington dictated highway speeds by threatening to withhold funds, they can assume the role of authorities in the education arena through the same means. It is time for the states to stand up against the encroachments made by the national government. Let's make Oklahoma a leader in that reformation! (Bennett, 1996).

Other guest speakers were invited to the community to speak out against School-to-Work. One guest speaker from a nearby town had served on the governor's executive council and came to speak to various organizations in our community twice to explain the pitfalls of School-to-Work. He most recently spoke to a local private Christian school in January, 1998 which had just recently agreed to join the local School-to-Work partnership. When a number of parents and citizens associated with this private Christian school learned of this agreement to participate in School-to-Work, they joined forces to convince the school board members that this was not advisable. The guest speaker who was invited to the school board meeting was particularly persuasive in convincing the board they should not participate in School-to-Work partnership or receive School-to-Work funds. And, in fact, the school board of this private Christian school revoked their decision and withdrew from the partnership agreement. A parent who attended this school board meeting and heard the guest speaker present his criticisms of School-to-Work explained her opposition to legislation:

My son goes to [private Christian school] and they had considered becoming part of School-to-Work last year until the other side was presented. . . The other side of School-to-Work is this is not a local program, it's not even a state program. It's tied in with the federal government and Goals 2000. The original School-to-Work was written by one of my favorite people, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and I don't think much of her so that right there would say something. And her friends who tried to put our health care system together are involved with it so that immediately makes me leery when I see some of these names of these people who

I consider who, well, they're trying to take over a lot of things and that's where I've heard a lot about this School-to-Work. . .

However, those who support School-to-Work are frustrated that many programs, bills, and pieces of legislation are evaluated only on the basis of partisanship. It seems that many otherwise 'good' programs or legislation are defeated only because of the political party that supports it. As another parent in the interview quickly retaliated in favor of the Clinton's:

That's my whole problem with this, if you'll forgive me, I hope we don't get into anything, but when I hear you say, 'Hillary Rodham Clinton wrote it and I don't like Hillary Rodham Clinton, therefore I don't like it', that bothers me. I have a problem with that, I mean, I happen to like her, but that's neither here nor there. I mean I wouldn't care if Ronald Reagan wrote it, you know, the point is why don't we just take things at face value? Why do we have to be so partisan and say well this person wrote it and he's a Democrat or she's a Republican, or this is a federal thing. Why can't we just look at things for what they are, and just really, you know, not be so partisan all the time. I think that's one of the reasons that we have a problem on School-to-Work, in my opinion. I think it's become a partisan issue and it shouldn't be. I just really feel that if we could come together and try to figure out [a solution], personally I don't understand for example, why when people say well it's not a state, not even a state program, it's a federal program, 'red flag, red flag' it's a federal program so it must be bad. I mean, what is so bad about a country saying we want to elevate our, you know, the standards in our schools so that our students will become productive members of society? That's not a bad goal for a national government to have. Why does it have to be if it's not local, it's terrible?

The first parent responded to this question, "Because normally if it's the federal government that's doing it, they screw it up."

Another parent in the interview later added to this discussion by explaining why people are skeptical of the federal government:

The government doesn't necessarily screw it up, but they do have a tendency to keep most of the decision making at the top of the ranks and fail to ask or allow the 'little people' at the local level for their opinions or ideas. The decisions just

never seem to dwindle down that far and then we, those who actually live by these mandates or decisions, are sort of stuck with whatever they decide.

Once again, a major issue that surfaces is the concern of the involvement of the federal government in School-to-Work legislation. Why are many people opposed to federal involvement? There are several answers to that question as discussed earlier. To many citizens, the federal government: takes away local control of the community, takes away individual freedoms, adds layers of "red tape" and bureaucracy, is inefficient and unorganized, funds "stupid things", mismanages other programs such as welfare, abuses tax dollars, and has attempted to socialize the U. S. health care system. This has led to a "mistrust" of federal government by many citizens.

As far as many conservatives are concerned, they have to be as resistant as they are in order to ward off the liberals continual infiltration of federal intervention. They take away freedoms little by little. "It's a gradual, incremental encroachment, that's how they [the government] operate", said one active Republican, so that the general public isn't really aware of the consequences until its too late. According to conservatives, the liberal agenda is to introduce a new government program to solve all of society's problems. This active Republican commented:

All of this happens very subtly, very incrementally because if say in 1995, we're going to propose something so drastic, people say 'no, we're not going to do that'. But if you propose step 96, 97, 98, 99, etc. it's like the old frog in the boiling pot, you just keep turning the heat up until he knows he's fried, and that's how, that's how the government works. They do it incrementally. . .

This particular citizen voiced further frustration with gradual encroachment of the federal government in public education:

That's part of my main opposition to School-to-Work, is that there is nothing on the federal level that says anything about the federal government being responsible for education. . . If you want to get right down to the nuts of it, the federal government has no role whatsoever in education, but like so many other things, we started it at the federal level, and it's continued on the federal level, and so now everybody just assumes that it is the responsibility of the federal government.

Therefore, much of the partisan conflict stems from the idea that many conservatives are retaliating against the general notion of federal control and not specifically School-to-Work. As the political philosophy differences were explained by another conservative:

. . . It is in the interest of liberals for us to always seek government programs in isolation. To look at School-to-Work by itself as this nice little program, whereby you're going to get money from the government and you're going to use it on career exploration. I can't think of it like that. I have to think of it in terms of a whole. And if you take each and every one of these little government programs, you have a Pandora's box. And it's already open. What we're trying to do is just slowly try and close the lid to not let anymore of it escape. . . so it's part of a bigger picture for me. I cannot look at it [School-to-Work] in isolation and it goes back to the argument of limited government. . . You see I can't look at School-to-Work in isolation from House Bill 1017, Goals 2000 and SCANS. They are all tied together. And as I plow through all of this [pointing to a stack of reports and papers] you can see, you can see the vocabulary, the terms and phrases, they are all tied together. The most exciting things I've got here is this letter to Hillary Clinton, right after they were elected. A huge long letter about how they are going to restructure education. . . At first when people said this to me, I thought 'Oh, you're off the wall, you know, I'm over here and you're too far to the right of me. But as I read it, my goodness, it's scary. They do so, it is so clearly there.

This opponent who attended several School-to-Work meetings and read much of the literature and legislation stated that she honestly tried to keep an open mind about School-to-Work when it was first announced in the community. She admitted that she felt "some people were against School-to-Work because they see a Communist behind

every tree.” However, after listening to the opponents’ arguments and reading much of the literature, she too became convinced that School-to-Work contributes to the increasing federal government intervention which “marches us a little bit more towards a socialist society.”

Overlap of Partisan and Philosophical Issues

This partisan issue was evidenced in the local county Republican Party platform that was passed in 1997 which specifically stated their opposition to School-to-Work.

According to the newspaper article which reported this news:

Also, [Republican Party] resolutions were passed showing opposition to the School-to-Work program and support of the Right-to-Work program. The platform stated that the opposition of School-to-Work is based on the fact that the party believes a college education is the cornerstone on which a full and meaningful life is built. It also states that ‘depriving some children of a [liberal arts] education in the name of vocational training will render them little more than another brick in the wall (and a fairly uneducated brick, at that).’

We see how the lines begin to blur between the political, partisan issues that surround School-to-Work and the philosophical perspectives that surround the educational philosophies of classicism and progressivism as discussed in Chapter II. Because the conservative political view places emphasis on the “individual”, the primary goal of education is to develop the maximum potential of the individual through a traditional, classical education which stresses intellectual development of the individual, not to produce a “workforce” to serve business/industry.

The liberal political perspective, however, is more aligned with the progressive philosophy because it takes into account that many students are not served well by the traditional, classical educational approach. Particularly those students from lower-socio

economic positions, disadvantaged youth, and minority students need exposure to more than just textbooks and lectures and academic material they may not understand, have the background for, nor see any relevancy to. Through a more progressive approach including applied courses, occupational curriculum, and workplace experiences, students may be able to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to pursue a meaningful career and earn a livable wage. This, in turn, will allow for more socio-economic mobility for the lower, working class of our society.

Question #2: What are the Academic Concerns that have Impacted
the Implementation of School-to-Work Initiatives?

Many of the academic concerns surrounding School-to-Work center around two opposing educational philosophies: Progressivism vs. Classicism. As discussed in Chapter II, one needs a general understanding of these two educational philosophies and their implications for educational practice in order to fully understand the debate about School-to-Work. (See Appendix E Table II for Summary of Findings)

Progressive Philosophy is Supported in School-to-Work

The main premise of School-to-Work is to provide students with career information and workplace experiences throughout grades K-12. By providing students with exposure to careers and relevant work experiences, students can make better career choices and acquire marketable job skills so they can move into high wage, high skill jobs upon graduation. The three components of School-to-Work are school-based learning,

work-based learning, and connecting activities. The emphasis of this approach is to integrate academic learning with occupational learning (School-to-Work Act, 1994).

This idea of integrating academic learning and occupational learning is certainly not a new one. John Dewey, the father of the progressive movement in the early 1900's, advocated integrating occupational learning and academic learning in education. Dewey felt that to truly understand subject matter it must be taught in the context of real life experience. According to Dewey's progressive philosophy, learning has more meaning when applied to a life situation (Gregson, 1994). Because Dewey advocated the integration of vocational and academic learning in education, he has been associated with the increased vocational education movement in the U. S. over the last several decades which emphasizes occupational skills and real life "hands-on" experiences. Dewey felt that making education relevant and meaningful to the learner's experience is important to understanding both occupational and academic material. A major principle in progressive thought is to place the learner at the center of the educational experience - not the subject matter or the teacher as evidenced in traditional, classical education (Elias and Merriam, 1995). Progressives also have a much broader view of education than found in the traditional, classical education. Progressives believe it is not just academic subjects that educate people. Incidental and intentional activities educate people in many forums including the family, workplace, school, churches, and the community. Business, school, and community partnerships that comprise School-to-Work initiatives and the integration of occupational and academic curriculum are grounded in the progressive philosophy.

Classical (Liberal Arts) Education Philosophy in

Conflict with School-to-Work

While the progressive philosophy sounds logical to a large segment of our society, especially to School-to-Work supporters, opponents to School-to-Work argue that this legislation is an attempt to further shift the emphasis of public education to workforce preparation and away from the traditional classical education. This is a major paradigm shift for American public education. The original intent of American public education was never job preparation. Historically, the emphasis of public education has been to provide students with a general education foundation that will allow students to function successfully as citizens in a democratic society (Swanson, 1992). According to the classical (liberal arts) philosophical perspective, once a student has acquired a basic “education” foundation, then he/she is equipped to either proceed to college or to a vocational-technical school for further “training” to prepare them for specific careers or jobs. A student must first have the broad educational foundation. As one classical (liberal arts) supporter stated, “This [classical] education foundation provides a level playing field on which students of all abilities can develop individual cognitive resources while gaining an appreciation of our country’s roots in Western civilization and culture.”

As discussed in Chapter II, the true definition of a classical education is the total development of the human person and a broad understanding of the human condition. This is accomplished by teaching the “Great Works” of literature, history, and philosophy. Classical (liberal arts) education is deeply rooted in Greek classicism with emphasis on rigorous intellectual development. This educational philosophy believes that

a classical education provides the basic foundation for intellectual development as well as moral development as students study, ponder, and debate the concepts of Reality, Truth, and Quality. As students grapple with difficult and perplexing intellectual and philosophical issues, they learn to read, write, analyze, synthesize, discuss, debate, and think critically about significant human dilemmas (Elias and Merriam, 1995). Ironically, many of these are the same skills that employers say are needed in the workplace (SCANS, 1991). Therefore, classical supporters advocate a return to the traditional classical (liberal arts) curriculum which will provide students with both a well-rounded academic background and the skills needed in the workplace.

Strengths of the Progressive Approach in School-to-Work

A. School-to-Work Advocates the Integration of Occupational and Academic Curriculum. Many of the participants interviewed in this study voiced a need for adding career exploration and career information to the academic curriculum. Many administrators, teachers, and students felt that although the schools in our community offered a very solid academic curriculum, the schools could provide more career guidance for students. However, the degree of the career guidance that schools should offer varied significantly. Some voiced a need for implementing a sequential, organized career program from K-12 while others felt a need to offer more career guidance to high school students starting in 11th grade. Some interviewees felt that career exploration should begin in elementary school with specific work experiences offered in high school. Others, however, felt elementary and even middle school were too early to introduce career guidance because the students are too young to make use of that information.

One public school administrator explained how he believed career information could be integrated (although he was skeptical of government intervention):

... What I know of the [School-to-Work] concept, I support completely. There is no question, it's nothing new, they haven't reinvented the wheel. It's just another angle to come at it, to get kids focused, kids being male and female, focused on not only their academics which need to be strong, but also to blend in, slide into the curriculum, integrate in our curriculum career orientation. For example, there could be no harm whatsoever teaching a math unit and then also putting in a flavor of 'this is the kind of math you would need to be civil engineer, this kind of math is what you would need to be a construction engineer'. I could go on and on. In the sciences -- 'this is the kind of science you would need to do to become a veterinarian. This is what you would need to do to be a medical doctor, or a lab technician'. How can that be wrong? ... So I support that 100%. What I don't support about School-to-Work and basically is my only drawback... is a frustration of mine across the board with our government. I do not like for programs to be implemented or passed and implemented from Washington, D.C. and then Big Brother, meaning Washington, D.C., holds all the strings.

One vocational education administrator felt that an organized career curriculum would benefit students K-12 so that by the time students are in high school they have a focus or goal as a basis for selecting course work and obtaining work experiences in a career field. As this vocational administrator explained:

Well, I think that you need to do a lot of at least thinking about and offering an introduction about jobs even in the elementary school. Just talk about what your parents do, that type of thing. And I think when they get into the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade levels then they need to start doing some exploratory things. Really taking a look at what people are actually doing, and what skills they have to possess to do these things. And then when they get into high school they need to begin to have that plan developed and start taking the courses that are going to help them achieve what they want to achieve. And I know that a lot of students don't know of a particular occupation, but many of them have at least some ideas of whether they want to work outside or inside, whether they want to go into the medical field or engineering. They've got some idea, and at least start working towards something, rather than saying 'Well, I don't know what I want to do, so I don't think I want to do anything'.

While some people feel our schools definitely need to integrate occupational curriculum and offer career guidance to students, they are skeptical about introducing

career information too early in the students schooling. Is it a realistic expectation for an 8th grader to know what career path he/she wants to take? One parent felt that kids do a lot of maturing and changing during this time of their lives and what they may think they want to do in 8th grade may not be what they want to do in 10th grade. A college student who definitely felt there should be more career guidance in high school also believed that middle school students and elementary students might be too young to think about careers. This college student commented:

I think grade school kids are too young to really benefit from career stuff --maybe 8th grade at the earliest. Kids that age have too much school in front of them to see the real world. Probably a junior in high school is about the time when kids start getting serious about what they want to do.

A parent (who opposes School-to-Work) said of her middle school student:

I don't even want mine thinking about it [careers]. I want my child in school to acquire pure knowledge. I want him to think, I want him to reason, I want him to read and write. [Careers] will come later, he's a child for Godsake, let him be a child.

While not everyone agrees just how early to integrate occupational and academic curriculum, the interviews revealed that one of the major occupational tools needed in the school curriculum was more technology. Nearly all the interviewees agreed that the "basics" of reading, writing, and arithmetic still should be emphasized in the school curriculum, but many felt that additional subjects were necessary as well in order for students to be prepared for the "real world". That "real world" involves using a lot of technology and having computer skills. As one college student commented:

There needs to be more Computer Technology courses in high school. I mean, I took Computer Science in high school, but that didn't help me learn Windows. They definitely need to teach high school kids Windows and specific software packages like word processing and learn to use the Internet. I didn't know

anything about e-mail and the Internet when I left high school and I've had to learn all of that my freshman year in college, and that's been hard.

The business community, in particular, realizes the need for strong computing skills in order to succeed in the workplace. One businessman commented, "I think today they [students] need a pretty good working knowledge of computers and their application out in the market place. That's where it appears much of business is headed. . ." Another business leader explained:

The old tradition - reading, writing, math and current events is not enough. A lot more is needed today. They [students] need team-building experiences, societal expectations, and computing is a MUST. This is not just for the college-bound but for the non-college students. In fact, the non-college students need it more because they are going to be entering the workforce immediately and they need these skills and information in the workplace.

One of the college students interviewed discussed the kinds of occupational information that would have been helpful to him during high school. This student admitted having difficulty in math and thought it might have been helpful to have some work experiences using some of the math principles in a work situation. He said:

. . . any kind of experience like outside of school or even inside [school] if somebody came in from a business and told you 'this is my job', you know, like in a math field. 'This is where you have to use math a lot', like accounting or whatever it is. If somebody would have come in and said, 'If this is something you enjoy doing, this is the kind of job you can have, this is what I do during the day, this is my career, this is what I like to do', and they show you what they do, you can think, you know, this is what I need to work toward."

The progressive approach of incorporating occupational and academic skills as outlined in School-to-Work is intended to help the students understand difficult abstract concepts and provide the students with the background and skills needed to function successfully in an economically competitive and highly-technological society.

B. The Progressive Approach in School-to-Work Supports Hands-on Learning and Applied Academics. As explained earlier, a major principle of progressive education is “learning by doing”. For many students, reading about it and writing about it are not sufficient in learning material, but if they have an opportunity to actually “do” then they have a better understanding of subject matter. As mentioned in Chapter II, Daggett (1994) explained in his analysis of American education curriculum, there should be emphasis on application of subject matter. This is a major component of the School-to-Work philosophy. Even those who may not support the federal intervention aspect of School-to-Work can see merit in hands-on experiences. For example, one patron who adamantly opposes School-to-Work admitted that one of the good aspects of School-to-Work is that it emphasizes hands-on experiences for students:

Now the good pieces of School-to-Work, the good thing is that in some areas I think we’ve gone too far away from some hands-on, and we have gotten too much into theory. . . . I know when I went to school, we had a teacher who would take us outside to learn all the names of the wildflowers, we did our geometry outside with the telephone in the shadow, and we had to get a wild animal and stuff it -- all kinds of hands-on things. It was an incredible feature, and several of those kids out of that tiny class are doctors today. So, I think we have gotten too far away from hands-on for some kids.

A math teacher who taught a new applied math course to 9th and 10th graders in our school district made a presentation at one of our School-to-Work committee meetings and explained some of the material used in the applied math classes. The teacher used overheads to show the kinds of assignments used in the applied math class and how students were still covering the same theoretical concepts as covered in the traditional math courses. By using hands-on techniques such as measuring the square footage of the classroom floor to determine how much carpet one would have to order if you were

building a house, the students learned how to apply measurements and use algebraic equations. This particular teacher felt that Applied Math offered as much academic content as traditional math courses and could/should satisfy the required math credits for high school graduation and college entrance. The course description read:

...The emphasis in this course is hands-on laboratory applications of mathematics. Practical application problems will help students understand numbers, decimals, fractions and percents, shapes and sizes; how to handle equations and formulas; how to work with angles and triangles; how to estimate answers and solve problems, and how to describe the behavior of large populations of things. Note: The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education have approved the two-year sequence Applied Mathematics I and II as being the equivalent of Algebra I and Geometry.

For many students who struggle in a traditional classical curriculum which emphasizes theoretical concepts, the hands-on approach and applied courses help them understand difficult abstract concepts and see the practical application of the material that is taught. It should be noted, however, that in a recent conversation two years after the introduction of Applied Math, I learned that it is no longer being taught. Due to faculty changes, the course was dropped. In a subsequent conversation, the math teacher offered some concern about the academic rigor of the course and questioned if it actually is equivalent to Algebra and Geometry. But more importantly, she commented how time-consuming the course was to plan, organize, and set up for the students. It appears that some people believe that while applied curriculum can help students through hands-on experiences, additional planning time and limited resources make progressive curriculum more difficult to teach.

C. The Progressive Approach in School-to-Work Demonstrates the Relevancy of

Subject Matter to Real-world Situations. One of the principles of progressivism is that subject matter should be relevant to the students experiences or real life situations.

Through the integration of academic and occupational curriculum, students will be able to see how subject matter is relevant to the real world, especially the world of work. As a public school administrator explained in support of School-to-Work as a means of improving our community's schools:

I don't think that there has been a real strong effort in this school district to talk about [career] opportunities. Why are kids going to school? Why are they learning to read, write, and do these kinds of things? In my experience with middle school kids it's no longer to just do it because you do it, you have to give them a goal, you have to give them a reason for why they are learning these kinds of things. We have not done this, it's not in our curriculum. You can apply any of our curriculum to how it's going to benefit you in the long run, but there has to be something that will tie that. We do a little bit of that in the high school in that we bring kids in at the freshman level with their parents and develop a four-year plan and try to say 'if you want to go into college you need to do this. If you want to go to a technical school, you need to do this' . . . But there is not an emphasis in this district on career development. And we are very traditional in that everybody needs to go to college. . . . We know that that's not the case. We know that the need for college graduates is going to be less and less. So we don't do -- we have not done a good job of talking about options outside the college degree.

A parent who admits to being skeptical about government intervention in public schools, did support having schools teach more "real life" skills. This parent commented:

. . . I don't know how high schools work, but what I'm hoping for in the high schools is what I think they're trying to accomplish with the School-to-Work initiative -- my son [in high school], we've had to sit him down and teach him how to write checks, what it consists of to have a place of your own, paying rent, utilities, phone, you know everything. What percentage [of your income] you want to use when you go out looking for a place. . . . I think those types of things need to be targeted more, because they [the students] have no idea what the real world is about and I think the schools could be a big help. It should be a combination of parents and schools. . .

In an interview with teachers, some teachers recognized the need to teach life skills or “survival” skills to those students who were not academically oriented students.

In a dialogue between three teachers, one said:

... Do we teach certain bits of information, or do we worry more about how to learn? And you're right, they need an education regardless of what they're going to do. Another fact to go along with what this gentleman just said, some of the students have more to work with than others. And you can say, 'How can someone get all the way through school [and can't read]?' Should they receive just a certificate of attendance? There might be someone who will never be able to go beyond fourth grade level. I don't think we're honest enough about [students'] handicaps. I think we try to band-aid it, and say, 'Well, we can bring little Johnny or little Susie along.' Some we can't, some are limited, and there might be someone who may never be able to go beyond fourth or fifth grade. So then do we try to educate them for what they can do at the fourth grade reading level or do we keep holding out a utopia dream? ...

Another teacher responded:

No, you're right, because those that cannot go above that level, and there are some, you have to work on daily living skills and survival skills because they're still, even though they read on a fourth grade level, chances are they can still get an apartment and pay their bills and do all that. Those are the things they need to know about. Because teaching them how to write a six-page essay or something, they're not going to get it, you know, so you're right. We need to focus on what they need.

Overall, School-to-Work advocates who support the progressive education philosophy believe by putting students at the center of the learning process, education can help satisfy the needs of individual students. Also, by integrating both theory and application, students will gain a better understanding of theory, will understand how subjects are interrelated, and will recognize how subject matter is relevant to the real-world. Consequently, students will be more motivated to learn. Also, specific skills can be learned through hands-on experiences which will equip students with marketable skills when entering the workforce as well as learning to function in the “real world”.

Weaknesses of Progressive Approach in School-to-Work

A. Teaching Time will be taken away from Rigorous Academic Subjects and Spent on Job Skills. Many citizens are concerned that School-to-Work will reduce our education system to nothing more than vocational training instead of providing a broad-based academic foundation for individual lifelong learning and intellectual development. Because School-to-Work emphasizes occupational education and the integration of applied and academic content, many classical supporters “fear it will undercut the time spent and content of traditional cognitive subjects”, as one opponent explained.

An additional example of this paradigm conflict was evident in a conversation I had with a retired engineer who had worked in a large oil company. One problem is that employers presently complain that students graduate without adequate writing skills to perform in the workplace, and specifically, that graduates cannot write reports, memos, or other business correspondence. School-to-Work proponents argue that English classes should help students see the relevancy of learning writing skills by providing exposure to the kind of technical writing skills needed in the workplace. Classical (liberal arts) supporters who oppose School-to-Work argue that students lack writing skills because public schools have strayed too far from the classical, traditional curriculum. This retired engineer who opposed School-to-Work commented that “the last thing students need to do is spend even more time out of the classroom on field trips to workplaces when they really need to be spending more time on task concentrating or rigorous reading and writing skills.”

Another concerned parent also felt School-to-Work activities would lessen teaching time in the classroom:

Well, basically, they're taking time out of the classroom. The teachers are screaming because they don't have enough time in the classroom to teach the things they need to teach, and so out comes time to teach job skills to a kindergartner.

Two other parents of high school age students had several questions about how the School-to-Work program would actually be implemented:

...The question I have... is do they take these kids out of the core classes or what suffers so they can go for this 'School-to-Work'? I mean, how much of their education are they -- what are they losing, what are they losing in their education?

A second parent agreed and added:

How long does it last, too? Because are we talking about a week or two or are we talking about an entire school year? ...Because I mean they're in high school to learn and -- I mean, we want them to be prepared and stuff, but do we want to take them out of high school to put them in these [School-to-Work] programs? I don't know.

Many critics of School-to-Work feel that burdening the education system with workforce development by teaching "workplace competencies" and "job skills" will take away teaching time from the more broad-based foundation courses, i.e. less time will be spent on teaching the "basics" of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

B. The Integration of Occupational Curriculum in School-to-Work will Result in a "Watered-down" or "Dumbed-down" Curriculum. The academic debate surrounding School-to-Work focuses on traditional academic subjects vs. applied curriculum. Applied curriculum has traditionally meant "intellectually inferior" in American schools (Paris, 1994, p. 29). In the past, schools have offered watered-down versions of courses and called them "applied" courses. One member of the opposition who actually

supported some hands-on learning experiences did criticize that schools can go too far with hands-on activities and, as a result, water-down the curriculum and lose academic content. She explained that she was on an education committee in a nearby city where they discussed the eight different learning styles of children. Other members of this committee felt that all children should receive exposure to all eight different learning styles when subject matter was presented, but this patron disagreed:

... I said no, that's a huge waste of time - the majority of kids learn best from hearing it or reading it and to slow them down by putting on a play for 3 or 4 or 5 weeks is absolutely ludicrous. You are going to water-down the information content. So I got them to change that.

Another concerned parent felt that many times programs and funds are aimed at the bottom group of kids with very little attention given to the middle group of kids.

The help is aimed at the lowest common denominator, and School-to-Work is aimed at the lowest common denominator. You know, my child needs no help figuring out what he wants to do when he grows up. [Pointing to others in the interview] Yours doesn't either, and I bet yours doesn't.

Classical supporters see public schools as already diluted by the progressive movement of John Dewey of the 1930's. The progressives, they argue, are the ones who advocated the introduction of shop, home economics, vocational agriculture and other vocational courses into the public school curriculum. This, of course, takes teaching time away from the "Great Works" which require intense study and contemplation. Since that time, public schools have "watered down" the curriculum to the point that students cannot read, cannot write, and cannot critically think about issues of significance. To implement School-to-Work initiatives will only further destroy public education.

Strengths of Classical (Liberal Arts) Education Philosophy

A. Classical (Liberal arts) Education Advocates Intellectual Cognitive

Development and Moral Absolutes. One opponent's frustration with our current public school system is that schools no longer demand or respect pure knowledge and intellectual development because we have strayed so far from a traditional classical education. This parent explained:

... There is very little respect for pure knowledge and common capability, and pure knowledge is still, in my personal opinion, the basis of good citizenship. People who understand and would want to protect their freedoms, can have free and open discussion, intelligent discussion. And pure knowledge and common capability are the keys to success in whatever profession or job you may end up in. This is one of my big, big objections to School-to-Work is that you will lose [an emphasis] on pure knowledge.

A teacher who admittedly was not well-versed on School-to-Work specifically but knew about the program and the philosophy, voiced a similar concern that public education should be for a strong academic foundation to promote lifelong learning.

This teacher commented:

... One of the things that worries me is I think the emphasis is now going to be [with School-to-Work] to try get someone to make money and get a job, instead of having a well-rounded education. ... [Education] is not only to train to be productive citizens, but I think ... we are trying to create or help to create an independence of thought and learning and the more you can go about to create that, then the more successful these people are going to be in life as well as in their career. They need to learn to be lifelong learners, and to be lifelong learners they have to have certain things taught and certain things learned in their early education and you know, that's what I think we're [public education] is for. We're not an end all.

B. Classical Education Allows for Development of Individual Interests and Maximizes Human Potential, not Specifically for Workforce Development. Classical (liberal arts) supporters are adamantly opposed to “workforce development” which, they say, is only a deceptive term for “training”. From the classical perspective, “education” and “training” are vastly different. Education is “education of the mind”. It is the foundation for all learning and is how civilization and mankind develops, prospers, and grows. “Training” refers to specific job skills that one can learn after the foundation has been laid. Without the proper foundation, a person has no basis from which to further learn and explore the world. Opponents of School-to-Work contend that a classical (liberal arts) education is the answer to preparing students for any job or profession. It provides the skills and knowledge needed for acquiring new knowledge and skills - i.e. lifelong learning. A basic discrepancy between these two philosophies was particularly well-stated by one School-to-Work opponent who said, “School-to-Work supporters believe your life is your job, while classical supporters believe your job is a part of your life”.

As one opponent to School-to-Work stated:

I think School-to-Work, it's what we call in the broadcast business, it's 'narrow cast'. One of the statistics I've seen is that you will change careers, not just jobs, careers like six times in life, and I'm getting there, okay? But because I know how to read, because I know how to write well, and because I know how to speak, I can make those changes. You need the fundamentals. . . You need the basics, because if you're going to switch jobs, if you know how to do those things, you can be trained on the job, and a lot of training comes on the job. But, to do a specific task, to run a computer or to do something, you need to learn how to be trained, but if you don't know how to read, write and think, and do multiplication or your math, you know, you're sunk.

Another opponent, who is also a parent with children in the public school system, fully supported this idea in the interview and added:

And you should be able to do [the basics] at the highest level possible, not with applied this and applied that. This is where School-to-Work is duping businesses, because children are being produced who cannot read and write, businesses are spending more money on basic training. That's what they don't want to do. But School-to-Work is tied into this and has them thinking that School-to-Work will solve, will produce some perfect employee, when training at businesses is always going to take place.

To classical education supporters, the classical (liberal arts) curriculum is the key to being an educated citizen, a lifelong learner, as well as a productive employee.

Through rigorous academic subjects, students learn to read, write, and reason (think critically) which are the same attributes employers want in employees. Furthermore, by fostering intellectual development, the traditional classical curriculum ensures a citizenry that is knowledgeable of Western civilization traditions and culture, has a strong foundation in the principles of American democracy, and has a richer understanding of the human condition.

Weaknesses of Classical (Liberal Arts) Education Philosophy

A. Too Much of Our Public Education is Spent Studying Abstract Theory with no Accommodation for Application. Many students fail to see the relevance of the subjects that are taught. Because the focus of a traditional classical education is knowledge for knowledge sake, many students fail to see what they are learning in school has any relevance to real life. As one teacher who supports School-to-Work explained about the students she deals with daily:

You know, students at our age level, I'm talking about middle school students, I honestly believe this, they think. . .there's education and then there's school. Now education is something they're going to take seriously and be involved in later when the future becomes important. School is to visit with my friends, go to the basketball game and all that.. I believe that they really sincerely believe that school is kind of a phase and they think, 'I'm going to get my education later on down the road'. And I think that they really need to see that real world and sometimes I have my students stand up and look out the window at the skyline and I say, 'See that folks? That's the real world, and you're not as far from it as you think you are'. And I don't think really that we do a good job of connecting that school is preparation for the real world. Now. . .they [the students] will have different 'real worlds'. But I think we have got to connect them to that real world, and if that's a career world, well, after all, all of them will have to work. . .so it's not just an academic world.. .So I think we ought to do a much better job of letting them know that school is preparation for your real life and your real life is a career. If you look at the amount of time we spend in a career, in our education, and in our retirement, a career is where most of us spend our lives and I think we've got to do a better job so they don't spend their lives aimlessly searching for 'what I want to do with my life'.

A business representative echoed this same concern about the lack of application and relevancy of subject matter in our current curriculum and, specifically, lack of career guidance for students. He commented, "They [the students] either find it [a career path] on their own, struggle for years before they finally, they may bump into it, or they may never bump into it at all."

For many students, having a career goal and seeing how academics are applied to the real world helps give meaning to education. The application of subject matter can help students understand difficult abstract concepts, heighten interest in subject matter, and can help provide an incentive for students to stay in education in order to reach a career goal. However, the current traditional classical curriculum emphasizes knowledge for knowledge sake and does not emphasize application or relevancy of subject matter.

B. Classical (Liberal arts) Education is Geared only for College Preparation and Ignores Non-college Bound Students. The emphasis in public education has been primarily college preparation, however, there is a large number of students who do not enter college or do not graduate from college. Some students are admittedly not academically suited for college, yet other students fail to see the relevancy of classical education [school] to their lives, to the world of work, and specifically, to earning a paycheck in order to support themselves and their families. A classical education does not address the needs of non-college bound students.

As a vocational education administrator explained how the current public education system emphasizes only a college-bound curriculum:

Well, I think we have by and large an excellent public school system. I think that we provide an excellent opportunity for students who want to continue their education, higher education, after they graduate. That's evidenced by the national merit scholars and the number of kids who actually enroll in college. I think that the school does not provide much opportunity for students who do not continue their education. . . .and the way I look at it, if we let kids come out of high school neither prepared to go to college nor to go to work, then we've missed the mark as far as public education is concerned. I think that although we [the vo-tech school] are an extension of the curriculum at the high school, we only offer a limited number of training programs. There are a lot of things that we don't offer, so it's got to be more than just saying, 'Well, there's the vo-tech out there that takes care of the kids that don't go to college'. I think that if the schools would follow up with the [high school] graduates. . . .and find out just how many students actually get either a two-year or a four-year degree who enroll in college after high school . . . I think they'd be surprised at the results. . . .We spend 80% of our money on 20% of the kids [in public education] or 20% of the money on 80% of the kids, and we need somehow to broaden that, so that we give everybody an equal opportunity to do something when they get out of high school, whether that's going to college or going to work. They need to do one or the other.

In an interview with business/industry representatives, one of the business leaders felt that 75% of the students were not adequately being served by the traditional school curriculum. As this business representative stated, "Where I think that School-to-Work

really is an advantage is that 25% of the kids, people in a society, will have a four-year college degree. What's happening with the other 75% and that's nothing, nothing, nothing."

A public school administrator, who felt that too much emphasis was placed on the college-bound students while the non-college bound students received little attention, commented:

... If you judge your schools quality on the number of kids who are national merit scholars and the number of kids who go to college, then we do a really, really good job [in our community]. If you expect schools to be something different than that, then you tend to be disappointed, and so schools can be good or bad depending on what you expect of them. Our community doesn't look at the number of kids that we lose. Those kids are expendable in this community. . . We continue to have a lot of kids at the top, we have very few kids in the middle, and we've got a lot of kids at the bottom based on the way that we currently run the schools.

Numerous documents distributed by the school district are evidence of the emphasis placed on the academic elite in the public schools. Community newsletters and newspaper articles often publicize the achievements of the high school students who achieve national merit scholarships, score highly on ACT and SAT tests, and receive academic awards. While the public schools often take credit for producing such highly gifted students, the interviews revealed some interesting insights. A few parents feel that the schools take undue credit for these talented students because the parents of these students are highly educated and, therefore, stress the importance of education in their children. It really would not matter where these students went to school because they would still achieve high academic standing due to their parental influence. Even a local businessman pointed out the schools take students who are "already talented" and provide them with a good education. Two parents who were interviewed commented that this

community has a superior gene pool (due to highly intelligent parents) and that is the reason for highly academic student body. In any case, whether through parent involvement with their child's education or through genetic proliferation, parents (rather than the schools or classical curriculum) are responsible for the success of the student population.

Other Academic Concerns of School-to-Work: Tracking

Another academic concern of School-to-Work involves the notion of "tracking" students into either a college-bound career path or a non-college bound career path. Many opponents to School-to-Work fear that this reform movement will result in tracking students into either college-bound curriculum path or a vocational career path. This notion stems from the School-to-Work legislation which proposes that all eighth grade students meet with their counselor and parents to devise a 6-year plan of study that will help them choose course work and explore possible career options throughout high school and at least a 2-year program post-high school. Many people are skeptical that this will result in taking eighth graders and deciding if they are "college material" and enrolling them in a sequence of academic courses that will meet college admission requirements. If the eighth grade student is not college material then he/she will be enrolled in applied courses and vocational training that will help them get a job upon graduation. Many opponents, especially parents, are concerned that eighth grade is too early to "force" students into a "track" that will determine the fate of the rest of their lives. As one parent voiced, "How many eighth graders know what they want to do when they get out of school?" Some opponents offer that many students do not mature until well into high

school or even after high school. They may find a subject that really interests them as a senior in high school and then decide they want to go to college and major in that field. But if they have already been placed into a non-college track then they will not have the adequate background and course work to enter college and perform successfully.

Although School-to-Work supporters argue that they can change their plan of study easily throughout high school, opponents strongly believe that students will not have the prerequisites necessary to enroll in the advanced courses, and the academic substance in the applied courses they will have taken will not be sufficient to carry them through rigorous academic subjects in college.

One concerned patron felt that schools can go too far in setting students on a particular course that they cannot reverse if students change their minds down the road because of the kinds of courses they took previously. As this patron explained:

I think you can go too far with career paths in high school. For some kids, I think it could be okay, but don't lock them in and I'm afraid that even though the school says it doesn't, it's real hard to change once you get on that track in your first year of high school. They might have to go to school a year longer so to even get back on the other track and I think that is a huge mistake.

One parent, in particular, felt counselors put too much emphasis on career tests and interest inventories that kids may not take seriously when answering the questions or the result may not be an accurate reflection of their abilities and aptitudes. As this parent explained:

But then they give this information to the counselors, and the counselor puts them on that track. I wouldn't put that much weight on it, the [career] test, and most parents don't know that they use it. Most parents don't know to go and check or to stand up to them, and here again, they don't know they can do that. So then your child is stuck on this track. In fact, I have a friend who teaches school in a nearby community, that did the same thing and the kid came up with a result and they are putting this child on that track. I mean this kid is on a vocational track with two

college educated parents, and I know the kid and he's a smart kid but they're going to put him on that track because that's what this test says.

A parent of a vocational education student who graduated from high school three years ago, admitted that her son was put into a vocational track and basically was told this is the path for you. Even though this parent supports School-to-Work, she warns that students like her son can be "tagged" and placed in a track. She explained:

He started in the eighth grade, took a test, all kids did. It basically told them whether they were an academic student or vocational student. In the eighth grade they gave him his entire schedule for his four years of high school. The last two years included 2 ½ hours in the afternoon at the vocational-technical school. . . . He had already been geared towards a vocational kind of studies, and so that's the path they took him down. . . . He had a written schedule that said he would take and math and English in the morning and in the afternoon he was going to auto mechanics. I mean it said 'auto mechanics', and that's where he was going. . . . And it's okay because I'm sure his aptitude tests showed that he is that kind of person. He's not a book kid. He's going to learn by doing and he is wonderful with his hands, but he cannot sit down and read a book and learn something from it, you know. I mean he learns, but he just does so much better by working and doing.

Other parents, however, have no problem with eighth grade students taking a career test that will give them some ideas of their aptitudes and interests. They felt that the test results were to be only a guide to give students an idea of the kinds of careers they might want to consider. One parent specifically said:

[My son's class] did take this test, and to be very honest with you, I haven't really poured over the results or anything because it was something he brought home and it was for your information. You looked at it and they had this pie chart and it said 'Oh, his aptitude falls into these areas', and it was consistent with what I know about my son and his interests and where he excels. . . . So it was pretty consistent with what I already know about him and it just said that if you are going to go on to honors [classes] and be a college-bound person, you know -- I welcomed it because it said this is how many classes you need in these subjects, and so on. It was kind of a guide, it was more of a guide.

The problem for opponents is that by not providing all students with the same curriculum for college-bound paths, students' choices are limited in the future. If they later decide to go to college, they will not be adequately prepared which limits their potential and their opportunities.

Overlap of Educational Philosophy and Political Issues

The overlap between political concerns and educational philosophy are evident as the federal government takes away "individual" choices and incentives, and opponents feel School-to-Work actually discourages students from going to college. However, a vocational administrator believes that is one of the big misunderstandings about School-to-Work is that "we're only trying to prepare everybody only for work, and not further education. But look at the tech prep model, which is a model School-to-Work program -- the #1 goal is to make students motivated to get at least two years of education past high school -- year 13- and 14-major focuses."

A recent survey, the Third International Mathematics and Sciences Study, has been referenced in several articles which, once again, reflects the poor state of public education. This assessment of U. S. and foreign students, like Boyer's (1983) and "Nation at Risk" (1983) tell us how weak American students are compared to students in other countries, particularly in the areas of math and science. This article states:

It found that U. S. fourth graders did fairly well on math and science and that eighth graders were mediocre or poor - they ranked in the middle of the pack on science and below average in math. . . . The most popular rationalization of low scores - - that they are solely a reflection of the democratization of our educational system -- doesn't work here because even our best students did poorly by world standards. American advanced students in math came in 15th among 16 nations, and American advanced science students came in 16th. Yes, poverty, weak family

structure, and the language problems of some new immigrants can retard school performance. But when the favored, self-selected few come in last or next to last in subjects critical to the nation's future, it is time to point the finger directly at America's schools and their methods. . . . Schools are flooded with progressive experiments and social agendas that either go down in flames or crowd out actual learning -- cooperative learning, the politics of identity, outcome-based education, history as group therapy. . . . Some teachers now refer to themselves as 'facilitators' because they believe 'teaching' is an expression of dominance (Leo, 1998).

The root of this problem, according to this author, is that teachers' colleges are educating the teaching profession in these "fads" and unproven teaching methodologies and the result is a disgraceful educational system that compares unfavorably to other countries.

The notion of educational "fads" was mentioned in two separate interviews which implied that School-to-Work is kind of a passing fad that will come and go just like many other programs of the past. One of the reasons that teachers may have remained somewhat uninterested in School-to-Work is that they view this like so many previous programs that administrators have supported. One teacher commented:

. . . for many of them [administrators], they fall prey to the sale glitzyness of the latest educational fad or the latest educational computer program or whatever, and don't have the expertise to really look at these things in depth like the classroom teacher does, and then it filters down that 'Ah, we're going to do this new thing and we're going to do it throughout the schools' and good or bad or indifferent, we're going to do it.' And I've seen that happen so many times through so many of the years I've been teaching and it's really usually, I would say, 90 percent of the time, not been successful.

Some teachers, at least, view School-to-Work as another short-term educational movement that will eventually fade away if they just wait it out. To classical education supporters, School-to-Work is another progressive experiment that will further dilute academic rigor in the public schools. The answer to many classical supporters is to throw out all curriculum that is not centered on the "basics" of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

However, the answer to progressive supporters is to expand the curriculum to include career exploration, workplace competencies, “applied” courses, and technology courses in order to help prepare students for the highly technological world of work awaiting them.

The overlap between the academic concerns of tracking and offering a traditional classical (liberal arts) education goes back to the conservative idea of “individualism”. It is the notion of allowing individuals to make choices at any time during their schooling and not limiting students too early in developing their potential. Without knowing it, students could be closing doors to future opportunities if they decide too early to choose a vocational path instead of an intensive academic path that leads to college. Opponents fear that schools (and ultimately government) will be making the decision of who goes to college and who does not. Even though some students may not finish a college degree, they still benefit from this educational experience. Therefore, students should never be discouraged from going to college. As one parent who opposes School-to-Work offered:

This is one of the arguments used that too many children are going to college and not finishing, and yet if the child is intellectually capable of going to college, they will gain from that education, regardless of whether or not they walk out with a degree.

Also, the idea of individual choice in education overlaps with the political issues of the federal government and organized labor deciding the kinds of jobs needed in the national economy and the notion of using education as workforce development. Once again, we see where some of these issues become so intertwined it is difficult to separate where one thread stops and another thread begins.

Of course, School-to-Work supporters claim that these opponents totally miss the point of the School-to-Work philosophy and even the mechanics of School-to-Work

initiatives. The idea is not to “track” students but to help all students focus on possible career paths early in their education so they don’t just aimlessly take a host of elective courses and end up in the “general” track of getting a high school education with no plans for college and no skills to get a job. School-to-Work supporters contend that School-to-Work is for both college-bound and non-college students and that both can benefit from applied academics and career exploration. Demonstrating to college-bound students how to apply the knowledge they acquire in traditional academic courses can only strengthen their understanding of academic material and demonstrate the relevancy of their course work to the work world. Also, providing career exploration to college-bound high school students can help them in declaring majors in college and selecting courses to take. Many students graduate from high school and enter college with no idea what they want to do. In fact, in several interviews, the respondents indicated that they knew students going to college (some even their own children) and did not know what they wanted to major in or career they wanted to pursue. One administrator admitted that his son had just graduated from high school with excellent grades and was heading off to college but “he has absolutely no idea what he wants to do”. One vocational administrator offered this comment, “College is awfully expensive career exploration.”

The consensus in the interviews is that our present public schools do very little to provide career information, career exploration, or career guidance. When asked how much career information was currently provided in our schools, many parents, administrators, and students alike commented, “very little”, “not much”, and “minimal”.

A college student who had just completed her freshman year in college was frustrated that she did not have more career exposure in high school to help her declare a major in college and help her decide on a career path. She explained:

Well, I've changed my major three times and I've only been in college one year. They tell you in high school that you don't really need to make a decision on a major the first two years because everyone just takes general classes to begin with. But that's not really true. Colleges want you to declare a major your freshman year. You need to start taking classes in your major right away. In fact, I'm taking extra classes right now trying to decide on a field to major in and I feel like I'm wasting my time.

Another college student expressed a similar frustration in a separate interview that he did not have more career guidance or information in high school. He commented:

If, there were some classes that were offered about management positions, about business, you know, I think that would've helped a lot. Because now whenever you get into college, it's kind of confusing, there so many people that don't know which major to declare. That's the way I was my whole freshman year, I was undecided. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew what I liked to do but I was, you know, thinking about a business degree and then I was thinking about this and that. If there were some classes in management or business, where you can see what it's like, what you have to do to become a manager, become this or that, that would've helped a lot.

This college student later elaborated on other kinds of career information that would have helped him and other students in high school. He said:

I think it would have been good to have an assembly, and have somebody come in and talk about careers. I think that would have been really good, I mean there may have been a lot of kids that wouldn't listen, but then again the majority of kids would listen. And I think that would have been really helpful, you know, in figuring out what you have to do to actually, you know, to have a good job and hold a good job, and get through college and what college is like. You can ask about anybody who's gone to college to find out about what college is like, but to actually hear somebody talk about their career [would be helpful]. And in an assembly I'm not saying just one person, but people in different careers, you know, somebody that is in business, somebody that is in a management field of this and that, you know, it could be a different variety of people.

In an effort to provide career information in public schools, School-to-Work supporters argue that students are not “tracked” under this program only “encouraged” to find a career focus that they may want to pursue after high school and provide them with the background, work experiences, course work, and skills they will need to pursue that goal. In most instances, that career will require at least a 2-year certificate in a vocational-technical school or a 4-year college degree.

Obviously, the conflicting educational philosophies surrounding the School-to-Work controversy have significant implications for reforming the school curriculum in public education. The academic concerns involve *what* is taught, *how* it is taught, and whether workforce preparation belongs in public education.

Question #3: What is the Impact of Business/Industry

Involvement on School-to-Work?

Historically, business and education have operated as separate entities in our society. Typically, public education has not been concerned with business trends or employment patterns because the purpose of education was to provide a “foundation” through a classical, liberal arts education. The student then could choose to go to college, go to vocational school to learn a “trade”, or obtain an entry-level laborer job in a blue-collar plant or factory. As was discussed in Chapter II, however, the manufacturing and transportation jobs that were once plentiful in our industrial economy, are disappearing (Commission, 1988). The Information Age has replaced the Industrial Age and with it some new workplaces have emerged that require higher level skills (Howard, 1995).

Because business/industry cannot find qualified workers for the workplace, there are significant economic ramifications to our nation (Smith, 1995; Gerstner, 1996).

A unique aspect and major component of School-to-Work legislation is the involvement of business/industry in helping public schools prepare students for the demanding jobs in the workplace. Specifically, activities such as shadowing, mentoring, and apprenticeships will allow students to observe employees and gain work experiences that will supplement their academic course work. Through this “partnership” between business and education, students will gain insights to the real world of work, develop workplace competencies to perform successfully at work, and obtain job skills that will help them enter the job market upon graduation. The business community will benefit by having a more qualified pool of workers to fill the many demanding jobs available in the workplace, and this in turn, will boost American productivity, improve the national economy, and allow America to compete in the global arena. Obviously, there are benefits to this collaboration that affect the individual student, the business/industry community, and the national economy. However, as we have seen in both issues of federal intervention and academic concerns, the data analysis indicates there are both positive aspects and negative aspects to business involvement in education. (See Appendix E Table III for Summary of Findings)

Positive Aspects of Business Involvement in Education

A. School-to-Work will Help Individual Businesses by Developing Qualified Workers. It is generally agreed that School-to-Work legislation was a response to the

business community criticizing public education for turning out students who were poorly prepared for the workplace. As one public school administrator explained:

I think we have School-to-Work legislation because of the politicians listening to the business community saying that the kids are coming out of school are not prepared to do their job. The business leaders are saying we are spending so many dollars a year on a budget to retrain, to take our kids and retrain them. I think that's why it's out there. I think it's probably the wrong reason, but that's how I think it was initiated and then an educator got involved and started talking about it and said 'Well, really our kids need an understanding of what their opportunities are' and then it kind of started to take a change. But the initial thing in my opinion was that the complaining of business leaders who were saying 'we're taking kids and having to retrain them'. Well, I think that's just a normal natural process of doing business. But where I'm coming from, an educator's standpoint, is that these kids need to be able to communicate and to compete. But the other thing is if they had a better understanding of what's available to them then when they go to apply for those jobs, their aptitudes would more closely fit, instead of somebody who has no idea. They don't know whether they are going to like that job or have the aptitude for that job. They [the students] go in there [the workplace] and the company spends a year training them and then they walk out because they are not happy. And so this is where I think it [School-to-Work] is a win/win for both sides. I think there will still be training in business, that's just part of doing business, that's part of promoting the company. But I think there will probably be less turnover and employees are happier because they have a better understanding of what they are getting into before they apply for those jobs.

There are multiple benefits that affect both the individual student and the business community. Giving students career exposure and work experiences during school will help them make better career decisions and will make them more employable in the job market. Additionally, School-to-Work will help business find more qualified workers, and will enable business to cut costs in training and turnover.

The Oklahoma State Chamber of Commerce which represents a cross-section of business and industry throughout the state, aggressively supports School-to-Work as a viable educational reform program. The state Chamber of Commerce openly rejected the deputy commissioner's early plea to the governor to turn down federal School-to-Work

funds early in the state's implementation state. In a statement by Chamber education director, "We would be absolutely insane to turn away that money that has very, very few strings attached" (English, 1996, p. 11). The Chamber president said in response, "Many have perceived this [School-to-Work] as a very extreme and paranoid plot, which is absolutely ludicrous in terms of the results that we've seen from School-to-Work in other areas and other states" (English, 1996, p. 11).

Overall, business/industry support School-to-Work and are willing to participate in the implementation of School-to-Work initiatives across the state. Many business and industry representatives view School-to-Work as a win-win proposition for both students and business as students gain marketable skills for the workplace and business/industry obtain qualified workers.

B. School-to-Work will Help Strengthen the National Economy by Providing a More Qualified Workforce. As the literature discussion in Chapter II indicated, there is a national concern in the business/industry sector that there is a shortage of qualified workers in today's workplace. Because of the highly-technological nature of business/industry, some workers need a higher level of skills than was needed in the Industrial Era of the early twentieth century.

The changing workplace has been substantiated in much of the literature discussed in Chapter II as well as numerous journal and newspaper articles. For instance, the headlines in a major area newspaper recently read, "Computing Industry Suffering Nationwide Labor Shortage" (Glynn, 1997). The article explained that many jobs go unfilled because there are not enough qualified workers to fill them, and this has huge

economic ramifications for the entire nation. The article supported the need for government, schools, colleges, and business/industry to work together to solve the problem. It stated:

Jobs for software designers, computer programmers and other information technology workers are exploding across the country.

Trouble is, there's a severe shortage of skilled workers to fill them, leaving one in every 10 of those job vacant, said Harris N. Miller, whose trade groups studied the IT work force.

Miller warned the shortage could slow businesses' growth rates and prompt them to ship more work to countries such as India. The companies pointed to a lack of skilled workers as their No. 1 obstacle to growth.

... While there are 2 million people in the IT work force nationwide, he said, there are another 200,000 jobs that employers can't fill.

Plus, 82 percent of the companies plan to seek even more workers this year, he said. IBM told him that it expects nationwide demand for software developers to go up 24 percent this year alone.

... Miller said governments at all levels, schools and colleges, and the IT industry itself must take much greater steps to solve the problem (Glynn, 1997, p. F-16).

Another recent article in an area newspaper quoted statistics from the U. S. Labor Department that said in 1996, the American high-tech industry increased to 4.3 million employees, with almost 300,000 added since 1990. In the next decade, an additional 1.3 million workers will be needed to fill jobs in this rapidly growing industry.

Unfortunately, despite the good news of more jobs, today more than 436,000 information technology jobs go unfilled (Tiernan, 1998).

One reason that business/industry support School-to-Work efforts is that it does call for a partnership between government, business/industry, and education to come together and help solve the national need for qualified workers for business/industry. As more and more jobs go unfilled, the national economy is weakened. School-to-Work, then, is a step toward helping business/industry find qualified workers which in turn

means a stronger economy. This was explained in the interview with business representatives in the community as one businessman who supports School-to-Work said:

. . . I think we could have a society of much more productive, better qualified workers, and when you have that, you have a better, I believe, you have a better product. . . you have a better economy, you have all those kinds of things. . .

Therefore, one way to improve our national economy is for education to help produce qualified workers for the workplace.

C. School-to-Work will Allow American Business/Industry to Compete in the Global Economy. As discussed in the literature in Chapter II, the U. S. now must also compete in global economy where the competition is fierce and the stakes are high. The fact that the U. S. cannot find qualified workers in this country often means they must look else where to find qualified workers to fill their jobs. While high-tech jobs are flourishing in the U. S., many jobs go vacant because there are not enough qualified workers to fill those jobs. Interestingly, while the demand in these high-tech jobs is increasing, American college students graduating with degrees in high-tech fields continue to decline. Figures cited from the American Electronics Association indicate that engineering graduates declined 16% from 1985 to 1997 and computer science and math degrees dropped 29% from 1985 to 1995 (Tiernan, 1998). According to this article, students are shunning these high paying, high-tech careers because they have weak math skills. A career counselor is quoted in the article saying, "Students aren't prepared for these careers because they have limited skills in mathematics." And once again, the Third Annual Mathematics and Science study is referenced verifying that U. S. students suffer from poor math skills. The study shows that U. S. students ranked below the

international average and below students of 11 other countries. These low math scores indicate that students are falling behind in the international competition. As the career counselor in this article said, "If this country is going to compete effectively in an international business climate, it's going to have to beef up educational requirements in the area of mathematics" (Tiernan, 1998, p. E-8).

In addition to the onset of the Information Age and a shift from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy as discussed in Chapter II, employers are no longer competing with other U. S. companies. American businesses compete in a global economy and that means that U. S. students are competing with foreign students for jobs. A local businessman indicated in an interview:

People just don't understand that our students are not competing for jobs with students in our community or neighboring communities. They are competing with students in Japan, Singapore, and around the world. We have plants around the world and if American workers can't do the job, then we will hire the ones who can. It's a global economy and we need to recognize that.

A vocational school administrator echoed this concern about American students losing out in the global competition as the U. S. workforce competes in an international market:

Well, one thing, our society is changing. The economics are changing, and by that I'm talking about, we are entering into a high-tech information age society and we are moving out of the industrial age very quickly. And in doing that we are competing in a global market and not just within our [U. S.] boundaries. The jobs are getting more technical and the students coming out are not prepared for this at all. Not even, in many cases, not even close. And, of course, I think we do a much better job of it here in the Midwest and the so-called smaller towns than in the bigger cities. . . . But it's a fact that students are not prepared to do math and calculations, they can't read on the level they used to, nor to do technical writing. They don't know what that they are suppose to come to work every day and show up on time. . . . They don't accept that responsibility. And there has got to be -- if we're going to be able to compete in a global society, we have to prepare all of

our citizens to contribute to our economy and be a contributor rather than a receiver or taker.

Because of the expanding global economy, American businesses are sensitive to the competition presented by foreign companies, foreign workers, and foreign students. If American students continue to lag behind foreign students in their ability to perform in academics such as math and science which are the basis for many highly technical and demanding jobs, then American businesses will lose out. American workers lose out because American companies will hire foreign workers if required, and the American economy will suffer because of lost productivity and lost jobs.

Not everyone agrees that American education is as bad as international test scores indicate, however. Certain informants indicated that our society has been too critical of American education based solely on test scores comparing our students with other countries. As one school board member commented:

I think that common education is. . . well, you see all these statistics that compare us with other countries, and I really think that common education has really gotten a bad rap. I don't think we're making the proper comparisons because we have the freedom and allow all opportunities, everybody has the opportunity to go on to higher education, which if you look at the U. K., Japan, and some of the other countries, that is not the case. I don't think there's a proper comparison there; so I think public education has gotten a bad rap. I know there are things that need to be corrected, but overall, I think, we're doing a good job.

A fellow school board member agreed by adding:

There's no doubt that we're doing a good job. . . I don't want us ever to stop trying to serve all of the kids, and other countries stopped doing that many, many years ago and as a result their scores, understandably, can be better than ours, and that's fine with me.

A parent felt that our “race” with the international students was actually hurting American students because teachers felt pressured to pack too much into the curriculum and hurry kids along. This parent commented:

I guess one of the disadvantages that I’ve seen and, all I can do is relate it to my own child, is when something new is taught, for instance, in math, they teach it and they immediately move on to something else before this has a chance to sink in. I think they move things along too quickly, because they are in competition with the rest of the universe. I think they’ve gotten a little overboard on that. . .

Although not everyone agrees to the extent that American students must compete with foreign students on international tests, no one in the interviews disputed the fact that the global economy is expanding and global competition is increasing.

D. School-to Work will Help Improve the Socio-Economic Mobility of Students.

A recurring theme in some of the documents is that there is a growing disparity between the “have” and “have-nots” in this country as the gap between the rich and poor widens. This was pointed in Chapter II in the literature review (Commission, 1988; Wirth, 1992) and is found in many of the School-to-Work documents as well as other articles. This issue was specifically elaborated on in a recent article in a major area newspaper entitled, “The air down there: Economically, most of us are in the cheap seats” (Longworth, 1998). This author used the analogy of the airline business where the privileged elite are treated to the “good life” of large first-class seats designed for comfort and room and are given mixed drinks and fine meals, compared to the bulk of Americans who squeeze into cramped economy seats and are treated to a tiny sack of pretzels and a soft drink. Using this analogy, this author compares the jetliners to our class structure in the U. S. “We

have devised a social structure that looks more like the class-conscious ordering of airline passengers than the ideal of American equality" (Longworth, 1998, p. G3).

The changes in our economy are blamed for the "rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer" and the erosion of the middle-class. As this article points out:

Global money markets, in their increasing and unsentimental search for maximum return and lowest costs, have wiped out millions of well-paid manufacturing and service jobs here and eroded the wages paid for the jobs that are left. At the same time, these markets have brought unprecedented riches to the global elite -- the chief executive officers, traders, lawyers and others -- who command the global economy.

... The result of this turmoil is more rich people, more poor people, and fewer people in between, where the middle class used to be.

In the 1950's the United States was the most egalitarian of the major industrial nations. Gaps between rich and poor were smaller than in other nations, and much smaller than in places such as Britain, with its class system and upstairs-downstairs inequalities.

That situation is reversed now. The U. S. is the most unequal, with greater gaps between rich and poor than any other nation, including Britain. Not only are the rich richer -- the top 1 percent here control 35 percent of all wealth, compared with 20 percent in England -- but the poor are poorer: The average U. S. standard of living is the world's highest, but the poorest Americans live worse than the poorest Finn, Dutchman, or Italian (Longworth, 1998, p. G3).

Some people may ask, "What does this have to do with School-to-Work?"

The answer is a fairly simple sociology equation: Your social position is determined by your income, your income is determined by your job, and your job is determined by your education. Education, then, becomes the source of a person's socio-economic status in our society. Therefore, many supporters contend that School-to-Work provides at least an avenue for helping the lower, working class to improve their socio-economic mobility by providing them an educational opportunity to acquire "high skills for high wages". Since it has been documented that the most rapidly growing field is information technology and many businesses are unable to fill those highly-technological positions, it seems logical

that those persons who possess technological skills would be able to obtain those lucrative jobs. Therefore, through School-to-Work initiatives our education system can help both students and businesses alike by providing students with the knowledge and skills needed in the high-tech industry.

The economic issues surrounding School-to-Work, then, include the socio-economic mobility of disadvantaged youth and the growing lower class, the health of the American economy and the ability to find qualified workers to fill many high-tech jobs, and the ability of America to compete in the global economy.

Geographic Considerations Impact Economics

An interesting finding that surfaced in the parent focus group interview is that many of the technical jobs that may not require a four-year degree are not as prevalent in our state as they are in the Northeast. Two of the parents (one from Ohio and one from Michigan) commented that in their native areas there were lots of jobs available that did not require a four-year degree. The car manufacturing plants, construction, transportation, and other manufacturing jobs available in those states may be one reason that School-to-Work is supported in other parts of the U. S., but not in Oklahoma. The petroleum industry, medical facilities, and financial institutions in our community often require college degrees in engineering, geology, geophysics, accounting, computer science, business administration, medicine, or law, and, therefore, there is not an obvious need for non-degreed employees. As one parent explained:

I think the opposition has grown much more vocal, you know. Of course, that depends on what part of the country you're in because I'm from Michigan

originally, from the Detroit area, and I know a lot more people that are for it there than I do here. I mean it's a different area.

Another parent added:

Different, completely different. . . I'm from Ohio and up East there are jobs you can get that are not college jobs that pay good money. So it's more of an option there. . . Here, there's not the union, there not the construction work, there's not the Jeep plants, there's not the Ford plants. . . the options available for the technical, for the vocational area are there. Here. . . everyone thinks their children should go to college, and I would lean my daughter towards it [college], just because of the area if nothing else.

The parent from Michigan added, however, that a college degree is not a guarantee that you can find a good job. She explained:

A lot of people who say their children graduate from college and people who live in this town, and I've heard this several different times, they've been looking for a job and they've been looking for a job and they can't find a job in their field and they had these great grades and this [degree], but it's very difficult. You know, just getting a college education is no guarantee either.

Another parent added:

I think it's kind of sad that we actually have to have some sort of legislation to do this [School-to-Work]. I mean that's what you teach your kids, you teach them that there's all kinds of things out there, and we shouldn't have to try to get that into the schools, it should already be there. And just because you don't go to college, doesn't mean you have to be a second class citizen all your life.

Obviously, people's own education and work experiences influence how they feel about School-to-Work. In areas where non-degreed technical employment is available, there is more support for School-to-Work.

Negative Aspects of Business/Industry Involvement

A. School-to-Work will Look only to the Business Community for Career

Options and will Limit Students' Exposure to other Fields or Careers. While many

people recognize that there are lucrative job opportunities in high-tech fields in business and industry, they also realize that there are other meaningful and fulfilling occupations for students to consider. As a school board member commented in an interview, perhaps a weakness of School-to-Work is that it limits education by looking at only business/industry needs:

From the weaknesses standpoint, I really think that when we say the words 'school to work' that we tend to avoid those kinds of occupations that may not be businesses and by that, I mean, maybe the historian at a museum, maybe a teacher, maybe other kinds of, you know, a violin player, a poet, a writer. We may tend to not provide that broad bush that looks beyond just the business community.

A similar concern was voiced by the parent associated with the private Christian school in our community. The guest speaker who presented the perils of School-to-Work to their school board explained:

One of the things he [the guest speaker] focused on is that they [the federal government] have this manual of jobs and they're trying to get kids into these jobs. But the jobs they don't encourage kids to enter in are anything to do with religion. Forget that, they're not going to put anything in there. And they don't encourage, if a young lady wishes to be a stay-at-home mother, she's not encouraged to do that. You must go get training. And he felt like they're saying, these are the only jobs the government's recognizing versus what else might be out there that students might be interested in.

Part of the criticism surrounding School-to-Work is that business/industry will exert too much influence on the education system by emphasizing only occupations relevant to their own business/industry needs.

B. Business/Industry will Promote their own Self-Interest in Developing a National Workforce. Since School-to-Work emphasizes workplace competencies and skills that are cited from business/industry reports and federal statistics, many people are concerned that education is reducing individual students to "pawns" for the benefit of

labor and business. Because of the "partnership" of business and government in helping education, there is skepticism about the "hidden agenda" these two powerful entities will have over education in this country.

As a vocal opponent to School-to-Work wrote in a letter-to-the-editor:

We oppose converting schools into "workforce development" centers where school children will be trained to serve the needs of government and corporations instead of educated in the basics -- reading (phonics), writing, math, etc. -- to achieve their potential. . . . We oppose the creation of Workforce Development Boards that will decide what jobs are 'needed' and how many youth can be trained for them. . . . A 'planned economy' known as socialism, is a failure over the world.

In a separate letter-to-the-editor, this same opponent voiced similar concerns when a call-in question was made to the local newspaper asking "What is School-to-Work?" This opponent's explanation of School-to-Work was:

School-to-Work is cleverly disguised as an effort to improve our educational system and is described in undefined superlatives that sound reassuring, but in the words of Congressman Henry Hyde (R-IL) 'It is a concept for dumbing-down our schools and changing the character of the nation through behavior modification. It moves away from an academically intensive curriculum to one that is integrated with vocational training, producing skilled manpower for the labor market. The economy will be controlled by the federal government by controlling our workforce and our schools. The federal government and each state will establish Workforce Development Boards, unelected and therefore unaccountable to the people, which will decide how many electricians, plumbers, lawyers, or physicians our society will need'.

Many one-and-two-page fliers were distributed throughout the community at various forums describing the ulterior motives behind School-to-Work on behalf of business and government. One particularly critical flier entitled "God Government Has a Plan for Your Life", which was put together by the Constitutional Coalition, explained:

. . . The employer will be enticed to work with the school under the guise of getting badly needed 'educated' workers. The teachers will be retrained by the state to be coaches instead of teachers, whose goals are 'human resources' trained

(not educated) to perform an assessment (not test) that are scored on behaviors, attitudes, beliefs and values, not on a body of knowledge.

The document then concludes with the following remarks:

School-to-Work, for all practical purposes, sets the stage for a socialist/fascist command economy in the U. S. with the Secretaries of Labor and Education as the 'Czars'. It denies individual choice and centralizes government power. We urge you to first pray for discernment, then to write/call/fax the Oklahoma Governor requesting there be no Goals 2000, no School-to-work, no federal grant!

However, not everyone who read the School-to-Work Opportunity Act had the same interpretation that was found in the anti-School-to-Work literature. In fact, many supporters of School-to-Work were astonished that people could read this kind of "paranoia" into the School-to-Work legislation. They felt that opponents used propaganda techniques to "scare" the public into believing that government and business were joining forces to take over the national economy and develop a workforce for the "state". According to some School-to-Work supporters, the use of terms "socialist", "fascist", "communism", "Marxist-Lenin theories" was simply a ploy to strike fear in the hearts of Americans in order to denounce School-to-Work. In fact, a School-to-Work supporter distributed information about the use of propaganda at a local partnership meeting to help alleviate some of the concerns that had surfaced about School-to-Work in the community as a result of the anti-School-to-Work information that was distributed by the vocal opposition. This was done to help people determine what was "factual" information in the anti-School-to-Work literature and what was "propaganda".

Other supporters of School-to-Work felt that much of the opposition overreacted to the legislation because of the federal intervention aspect and that many people are

skeptical of any kind of partnership between government and business. As one businessman explained:

I am pretty familiar with School-to-Work. I have read the legislation. I know many people are opposed to it because of the federal intervention, but I think they have overreacted to it. They don't believe there should be a partnership of education and government on anything. This is pretty short-sighted though. They did the same things with Goals 2000. But there is nothing in School-to-Work that mandates anything or that is scary. . . . But in any kind of program, you need to be more aggressive. We have to fight the mindset that no partnership of business and government is healthy. Some of the opponents [of School-to-Work] are independently wealthy, may not have to worry about everyday work. We need to be concerned about the disadvantaged and the underemployed. There are many businesses and schools doing School-to-Work already in our community -- the federal funds and reporting are not an issue.

Likewise, the general tone of many of the school board members who had read the School-to-Work legislation felt that there was nothing "scary" about it. In fact, in an interview with three school board members who work for a large business in the community, one said:

Well, I think that for some segments of our community, they're afraid of the control of big government. There is a perception, a wrong perception out there, that this is a bill that was pushed by big government advocates. That those who want to control the economy and that anything big government, any controlled economy, smacks of socialism and is in the opposite value system of what a lot of our people in the community believe.

Another board member added:

Yeah, I've heard the term, you know, 'Marxism' and 'socialism' and 'communism' and I don't see how anybody, who has read the Act, can really come away with that impression. To me it [the Act] provides a lot of flexibility, is entirely flexible to the school district. Basically the school district can do what it wants [with School-to-Work].

As another school member explained:

We read quite a bit of legislation at our jobs at work and we both, I'm sure, are struck with the direct lack of guidance and the total voluntary nature, and total local control [in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act] which is totally opposite

what most legislation professes. I mean [most legislation] is very narrow, very specific, very controlled, and this legislation [School-to-Work] is exactly the opposite. Very striking, the way it's worded.

It is apparent there are multiple interpretations of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. Supporters view it as "flexible" federal legislation intentionally designed to provide as much flexibility to local school districts as possible in developing their own School-to-Work program based on the needs of the community. Likewise, supporters do not view School-to-Work being "forced" upon public education. Opponents, however, view it as a ploy of big government and business/industry dictating the employment needs of the socialist state, and rendering American students as "worker bees" for business/industry needs.

C. Business will Attempt to Superimpose Business Practices and Management on Education. Education serves a different purpose and function than business/industry in our society and, therefore, to manage education as one would manage a business is not necessarily the best approach for education. The goal of business is mainly concerned with products and profits that can be specifically identified and quantifiably measured. One such popular business practice is "accountability". As one business leader in the community stated in an interview:

Our current schools are good but they could be better. The business community wants accountability -- standards that are measurable. Our current school board is moving in that direction. We need to establish firm objectives. But that is hard to do because of the bureaucracy in public schools. There are so many rules and laws from state government. Also, the public schools budgeting process is outdated, it takes too long, it's archaic. Change is inherently difficult --there is concern about change -- people are nervous about change.

The need for accountability and measurements were mentioned by other interviewees as well. However, some would argue that the purposes and goals of education are much more intangible than in business/industry. For example, the majority of responses from the interviews conducted in this research project indicated that a primary goal of public education was “to produce a good citizen”. The citizenship function of public education was viewed as a premier purpose and goal. However, people’s definition of a ‘good citizen’ varied widely from being an active and informed voter to holding down a job and paying your bills. Other responses about the purpose of public education included:

- to contribute to the greater good of society
- to educate kids for a career, so that they can be self-sufficient
- to teach kids how to exist in society, how to function properly in the broader context of society, not just from a monetary, career standpoint, but also how we interact and deal with one another
- to prepare students for a productive, happy, and successful life
- to educate our masses, to make them well-rounded persons, to take responsibility
- to allow a community, a state or a nation to be competitive, economically competitive
- to teach students to be contributing members of society, to be a giver of taxes not a taker
- to prepare our leaders of the future

Obviously, there are multiple purposes and goals of public education in our society, many of which cannot be quantified and objectively measured. How does one measure a “good citizen”? How does one measure a “productive, happy, and successful life”? By whose standards? Who decides?

Some see the multiple purposes of public education as a weakness, that the mission of public schools is unclear and unfocused. As one administrator commented:

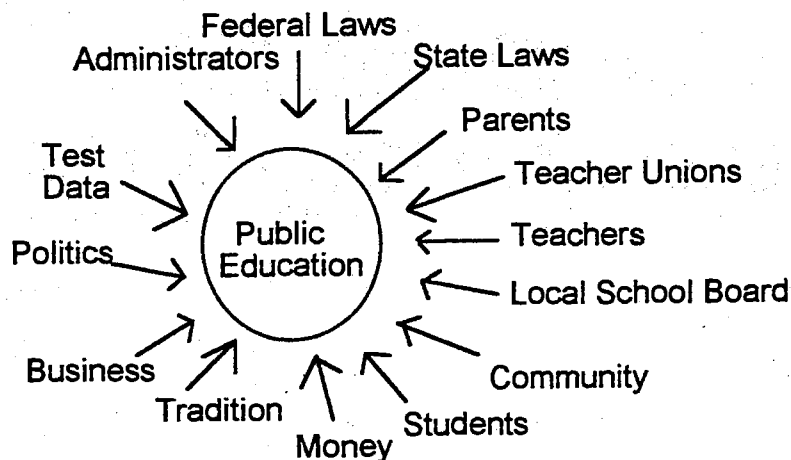
I didn’t think about the social issues as much as I do now. I think that’s being added and putting additional stress on the schools because we are getting

criticized for not teaching the core [subjects], but our society is saying we need to do more things to help our society and the social issues that are facing kids, because the family is not doing it. So we're spreading out our resources and my feeling, is . . . we need to redefine what our mission is. If our mission is just to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic then so be it, and let's let other agencies teach the social aspects. But if, in fact, we need to integrate social values and teach values and ethics and family traditions and those kinds of things, people need to understand that we are either going to have to increase the length of the day, the length of the teaching year, or have an outside agency [teach social aspects] as well as the education system is.

A teacher voiced a similar frustration in having a too many purposes in public education:

The problem I see is that we have a lot of different populations, and we are trying to be all things to all people. And that almost spreads us too thin. To the better students, we're trying to prepare them for jobs and a life and college, and some students we're trying to band-aid social problems, even though then we're criticized from some groups for dealing with social problems. So I think the question has to be that we don't have the same mission, it depends on what population we're talking about. If you're talking about a certain population, we have a certain mission. To a different population, we have an entirely different mission.

The interviews revealed that many entities presently are believed to influence public education. Some of the factors that influence public education are found in the diagram below:



Business/industry is only one entity that affects education, and, therefore, other entities are skeptical of allowing business/industry to exert more control over public education because it weakens the others' positions.

The Overlap of Economic Issues and Philosophic Issues

The overlap between the economic considerations and the educational philosophies surfaces when we look at what people propose to be the solution to what many consider an educational crisis which will result in an economic crisis in this country. For example, the answer to the problem of low math skills to some is a return to the "basics". To many traditional classical education supporters the solution is to eliminate everything in the curriculum except reading, writing, and arithmetic. (It is also interesting to note that the "basics" in many private Christian schools includes religion and many original classical subjects such as Latin, logic, and grammar which were part of the trivium in ancient Greece.) Traditional classical supporters argue that the only way to increase the skills in these critical areas is to "beef up" math classes by increasing the academic content of our math classes and requiring more math courses throughout high school.

Interestingly, that is exactly what has been proposed in Oklahoma in 1997 when the Governor proposed a four-by-four curriculum whereby all Oklahoma high schools must offer four years each of four core subjects - English, math, science, and social studies. The objective of a four-by-four curriculum is to improve students' foundation in the core subject areas. In an article in the local newspaper, "Governor's School Plan Nets Criticism", the four-by-four curriculum is explained (Quaid, 1997). However, the

proposal is "drawing protests from school officials worried about preserving fine arts and sports programs -- and money" (p. 2). Also, to many people, this proposal seems to contradict the Governor's earlier endorsement of the School-to-Work legislation. After all, how can schools implement both School-to-Work *and* a four-by-four curriculum?

However, a businessman who supports School-to-Work also stated in an interview that he supports a four-by-four curriculum. The purpose of education, according to this businessman is:

To educate. I believe in the core curriculum - the four-by-four concept. Concentrate on the four subjects in the core curriculum. Extra curricular activities should be outside of the school. . . . Improve the core curriculum -- math, science, English, social studies, and add computing -- without dumbing down. If kids have trouble with the courses, then do what it takes to get them up to speed. If that takes a tutor for every kid, then get tutors. Hire them. Reprioritize. Use the funds the schools have now and put the money to pay for tutors, if needed. If we eliminate all the extracurricular activities and use those funds for tutors, we could help students improve their education. . . .

Of course, eliminating sports programs and fine arts from the school curriculum may draw significant opposition from other members of the community. Even those who support stronger academics in the school curriculum may not fully support the idea of eliminating all other subjects and programs.

However, School-to-Work supporters, argue that "doing more of the same" is not going to address the problem of the majority of students who are not college-bound or learn better from hands-on methodologies. To add more math classes will certainly strengthen the skills of the upper 25% who do graduate from college and are academically oriented, but it appears this may not be the answer to helping students master difficult math concepts. School-to-Work supporters argue that offering applied math courses and showing relevancy of the math skills to the work world will improve students

understanding of math. Getting students out of the four walls of the classroom and letting them gain some work experiences in these high-tech fields so they can see how the math is used and why it is important in their future will go much farther in improving students math skills than simply adding more math credits to the graduation requirements. Once again, we see the traditional classical philosophy in conflict with the progressive philosophy in trying to improve the quality of critical skills for American students and, in turn, improve the quality of workers in our economy.

Both the traditional approach and the progressive approach share the same goal -- improve students' skills in critical areas. While the traditional, academic approach apparently works well for at least 25% of our student population, it is not necessarily the most effective approach for the other 75% of students. School-to-Work supporters contend we need to try a different approach to reach the "neglected majority" or the "forgotten half" of our students.

General Findings

The Positive Effects of the School-to-Work

Controversy in our Community

A. The Controversy has Forced the School-to-Work Program to "Tighten up".

The criticism surrounding School-to-Work has forced both opponents and supporters to reexamine the legislation, the philosophy behind the legislation, and the purpose of the legislation. (See Appendix E Table IV for Summary of Findings.) As with any new program, it is sometimes helpful to have the opposition point out the flaws so that the

supporters can address those concerns and add safeguards to the program. As a business leader in the community explained:

The criticism of School-to-Work has not slowed it down. Actually a little criticism helps tighten things up, and maybe School-to-Work has tightened its loose ends up. We have lots of School-to-Work activities going on, maybe they aren't calling it School-to-Work but that's what it is.

One concerned patron, however, felt that calling it something else besides School-to-Work is deceptive which promotes mistrust. But, ironically, while many opponents may not actually object to some of the School-to-Work activities which involve career exploration and career fairs and real-world experiences of job shadowing, they are adamantly opposed to activities that are specifically called "School-to-Work". The vocational administrators commented that they had not received any criticism about the specific School-to-Work activities that had been implemented, only criticism about the legislation and philosophy.

Overall, it appears that many who oppose School-to-Work legislation because of the federal government intervention may not be totally against incorporating some School-to-Work activities as long as it does not dominate the curriculum. Teaching some skills that will help students function in the real-world of work and/or daily living is an area that many parents felt schools should incorporate.

B. The School District is Proceeding Cautiously with School-to-Work Initiatives in Response to the Criticism Voiced in the Community. Most of the criticism of School-to-Work is from the conservative population in the community, and because local control is still highly regarded in this community, the school district has an obligation to respect and respond to those concerns. Because the community is split on the issue of School-

to-Work, it is not feasible to either completely implement it or completely dismiss it. As one administrator explained:

... You have to scale it down, and I have no problem with that if you scale it down. . . If you say, 'ok, let's take bits and pieces of it and educate the community and implement what's a balance, then absolutely you could do that. . . If the community is adamantly against the complete introduction of School-to-Work in our community in our schools, we have to address it. So if we have to do a scaled-down program, then I would say we would have to do that. . .

Because of the opposition expressed toward School-to-Work, education and business have been hesitant to openly support School-to-Work and the school district has proceeded cautiously with a few School-to-Work activities. Some of the School-to-Work activities implemented in various schools in the community include a Career Day at one of the elementary schools, sending 8th graders to a Career Fair, sending some middle school students to Technology Day at the vocational school for computer training, ordering a variety of career materials for both elementary and secondary classrooms, arranging a one-day shadowing experience for a few middle school and high school students, and implementing a couple of mentoring activities for high school students. At one of the latest local partnership meetings last year, an updated summary of the School-to-Work grant money indicated that more funds had been spent at the elementary level than the secondary level in our community.

The Negative Effects of the School-to-Work

Controversy in our community

A. The Controversy Surrounding School-to-Work has Impeded the Implementation of School-to-Work. Because of the vocal opposition, the school district

has not aggressively pursued School-to-Work as a comprehensive educational reform movement. The opposition has fragmented the effort as schools take only "bits and pieces" of the program. Consequently, the school district has not completely embraced the total program and the implementation has been very slow. As one administrator commented:

I don't feel real good about where we're at with the progress of it. But I tell you again from my standpoint, I think we'll get there. We'll get there because we'll be able to point to other communities that have endorsed this aggressively. And it's just like anything else, we've rejected technology [a technology bond issue] and now everybody says we need technology. We have had a segment of this community that says School-to-Work is not good. I submit to you that they will say that it is good. As we try to continue to lower our drop out rates, as we see the students getting into the School-to-Work program, they're going to see that it's working for those kids that are at-risk so why couldn't it work for the average kids. It will be a change in perception and there will be an endorsement by a broader base of the community. No, I feel bad that we have moved as slow as we have. But we can continue to make progress but maybe not in the stature that some of the other districts have.

A vocational administrator felt that the school district had made satisfactory progress especially considering the conservative nature of the community and the criticism that had been voiced about School-to-Work. The strategy has been to implement a few quality initiatives and let the success of those students influence the perception of the program throughout the community.

It's unbelievable in a conservative community like this, that we have been able to do as much as we've done. What has happened is people see the activities that these kids are involved in and they say, 'Hey, that is great'. They see the pictures on the front of the paper and they see it as a good experience for these kids. But if it was called school to work activities, they wouldn't be -- [the kids could be] doing the same thing but because it's called School-to-Work they'd be opposed to it. So you do what's good for the kids. You can call it what you want to get it done and go on down the road. Whatever will help the kids, that's what you do.

B. School-to-Work Activities have not been Heavily Publicized in Order to Avoid Negative Criticism. As result of the criticism concerning School-to-Work in this community, the few School-to-Work activities that have been implemented have not received much publicity. Consequently, there is some confusion as to whether or not our community has indeed adopted a School-to-Work program or not, and many parents and patrons remain uninformed or unaware of School-to-Work. This was evident when soliciting interviewees for this study. Many of the teachers and parents whom I asked to participate in a group interview declined because they did not feel they knew anything about School-to-Work. Some parents even asked, "What is it?" Some of the parents who were interviewed admitted that their perception of School-to-Work is that it was a vo-tech program for the vocational students and, therefore, did not pay much attention to it. (Admittedly, the fact that state vocational education department was appointed the coordinator of the School-to-Work program and the heavy involvement of the local vocational-technical school probably created the perception that it was a vocational program. However, the interviewees generally agreed that the state vocational education department was the logical agency to coordinate our state's School-to-Work because of its focused mission on occupational curriculum and its fine reputation for "getting the job done".)

Some of the teachers admitted that they had not heard much about School-to-Work lately and indicated some confusion as to the status of the program in our schools. In an interview with five teachers, this exchange took place as one teacher said:

. . .I was totally ignorant about [School-to-Work] until Shawntel Smith [Miss America] came to town. And then my kids got involved in projects. . .some of my kids entered the contests and a couple of them won. They had their picture

taken with Miss America. . . .And since then I've learned a little more about the program, but it was mainly that first media blitz that attracted my attention in the first place.

A second teacher asked, "I haven't heard anything here lately. Have we just forgotten it?"

Another teacher responded, "Well, except for the [local partnership] grant stuff that's going on that's about the only thing, and that was presented last year. We haven't had anything about it this year."

The second teacher replied, "See, it just kind of died out and I think it is important, but I don't seem to hear much about it."

Later in the interview, one of the teachers admitted that most people in the community aren't even aware of what School-to-Work is. This teacher explained:

. . . . I don't think the majority of people out there are even aware [of School-to-Work]. They hear the term 'School-to-Work' but I don't think they're even aware of what it is. You know, I've had several people ask me, 'Oh is this a new class that they can take at school called School-to-Work?' I mean, they don't know. I don't think it's been presented very well.

The local vocational school attempted to educate the public through meetings, newspaper articles, and organizing a high profile kick-off program when School-to-Work was first introduced in the community. However, because of the negative criticism that ensued, the public school district felt the best approach was to proceed with a few School-to-Work initiatives and keep a low profile. However, the lack of publicity meant that most of the community remained uninformed about School-to-Work. The lack of publicity was also confusing to the opposition. In an interview with three members of the opposition, the following dialogue took place as one opponent commented:

...I can't figure out whether we have it [School-to-Work] or not, most of the time. But because everybody says we need it, then they come up with examples of doing it.

Another opponent responded, 'Oh, we have it. It just has gone underground. We're just not hearing anything about it any more because it [caused conflict].'

Summary of Findings

The data analysis of this research study reveals the complexity of the School-to-Work controversy in our community. Three prominent themes emerged from the data that address the research questions: a) political concerns, b) educational philosophy, and c) economic considerations. These findings are indicative of much of the controversy surrounding public education in general. By identifying the specific issues and elaborating on the arguments, the intent is to gain a better understanding of the controversies that have affected School-to-Work and our education system in hopes of moving from heated debate to meaningful dialogue as all parties acknowledge the merits of opposing arguments.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

There is much literature that supports the need for educational reform that will help students succeed both academically and in the workplace (Commission, 1988; Daggett, 1994; SCANS, 1991). Therefore, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 was federal legislation passed to provide funds to schools to help them integrate academic and occupational curriculum. However, much controversy has surfaced about School-to-Work both on the national and state level (Bond, 1996; Hearne, 1995; Murphy, 1996). The purpose of this study was to develop a better understanding of the concerns and controversies surrounding School-to-Work in order to understand the public resistance to educational reform as outlined in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994.

The findings indicate there are three major themes that surround the controversy of School-to-Work: 1) political concerns, 2) educational philosophy, and 3) economic considerations.

Conclusions

General Conclusions

In this community, people's views on School-to-work fell into six major categories. Although some groups did overlap, there appeared to be at least a primary and secondary concern. These groups were as follows:

1. Supported School-to-Work for economic reasons. Some people totally embraced School-to-Work as a comprehensive educational reform movement for economic reasons. Many from the business/industry perspective supported the philosophy of using public education as a means to prepare qualified workers for the workplace which ultimately would improve the national economy and improve the U. S position in the global economy. This would also help business/industry reduce training costs and reduce turnover which will strengthen their own organization's productivity, profits, efficiency, and competitive position.

2. Supported School-to-Work for social reasons. Some people totally embraced School-to-Work as a comprehensive educational reform movement for social reasons. Many viewed School-to-Work as a means of helping individual students who are not effectively served by the traditional classical (liberal arts) curriculum and allowing non-college students an opportunity to compete for high-skill and high-wage jobs or continue to prepare for higher education of some kind. This would ultimately reduce the disparity between the "haves" and the "have-nots" as it would help provide the working class and underclass an opportunity to obtain good jobs, increase their wages, and increase their

standard of living. The purpose of School-to-Work, then, is to improve the socio-economic mobility of our society.

3. Partially supported School-to-Work but with some reservations. Some people recognized the need for career exposure and occupational curriculum in addition to the traditional classical curriculum to help students make better career choices and improve workplace competencies so they can perform successfully in the workplace. However, there was some reservation about the loss of local control. There was skepticism about the federal involvement in School-to-Work and the “federal strings” attached to the way the funds are distributed and the way the money is spent, the added bureaucracy that results from additional grant proposals, approvals and administrative costs, and the further mandates that would follow with additional testing requirements and evaluation criteria.

4. Opposed School-to-Work for political reasons. Some people totally opposed School-to-Work because of the federal government intervention and the increasing encroachment of “Big Brother” on individual and state rights. To conservatives, School-to-Work violates the principle of limited government. They were particularly concerned about the continued federal programs that are established that involve continued federal spending with little to show for their efforts. Many were concerned that these additional federal programs move the U. S. closer and closer to a socialist/Marxist state where the government “provides” for the individual because the government knows better how to spend individuals’ money. The government, then, can redistribute the wealth in an economy to “equalize” our society, thus, destroying individual incentive and initiative to improve and prosper.

5. Opposed School-to-Work for philosophic reasons. Some people totally opposed School-to-Work on the grounds that a traditional classical education is the only way to provide a solid academic foundation, provide intellectual development, and promote moral principles. Anything less than a classical (liberal arts) curriculum results in a “dumbed down” curriculum, “watered-down” subject matter, and takes teaching time away from the “Great Works” of literature and history. The traditional core curriculum of reading, writing, math, science, and history has been crowded out with “progressive experiments” of hands-on, applied courses and integrated thematic units that have diluted academic rigor. Therefore, we need a return to a strong classical (liberal arts) curriculum, not continued progressive curriculum integrating academic and occupational curriculum as advocated in School-to-Work.

6. Were neutral on School-to-Work due to lack of information. A large segment of people were either unaware, uninformed, or unconcerned about School-to-Work and the issues surrounding this educational reform movement. A significant portion of parents, teachers, students, and general citizens of the community were simply unaware of what School-to-Work is, how it affects them, or their children, or the schools, or the community at large. Many people had not heard or read about School-to-Work in the newspapers or the literature. Others chose not to be involved in controversial issues, were too busy with their own lives and problems, or remained uninterested in educational issues that may not directly affect them personally. Therefore, they had little knowledge about School-to-Work and had neither a pro or con position about the subject. Many citizens almost seemed to operate on a blind faith that the public education system will figure out what is best for the mass of students who attend public schools because, after

all, it has produced a well-educated populous in this country for two hundred years and will probably continue to do so.

Political Conclusions

1. The role of the federal government causes a political clash that plays out around School-to-Work. As the findings indicate, one of the major factors surrounding School-to-Work which created controversy was the role of the federal government in our public education system. The opposition to School-to-Work was, at least in part, a retaliation to other federal programs and legislation that are viewed as failures by much of the conservative population. It is an outcry, a cumulative effort, a banded-togetherness that is saying "Stop! We've had enough of federal programs and federal spending with very little to show for these efforts." Perhaps at another time, under another administration, or in a different political climate, School-to-Work may have been more well-received by the conservative population.

Even though some conservatives philosophically reject the notion of federal government intervention in our democratic society, we have, as a nation, historically accepted federal government intervention in education in many instances. The Smith-Hughes Act, the Morrill Land Grant, the G. I. Bill, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 are just a few examples where federal programs were established to improve the availability of education, to assure equal opportunity for education, and to help satisfy the common need for education in our society which will benefit the general citizenry. The controversy is: How much federal intervention is too much?

2. The issue of partisanship became a concern in the findings in that many opponents who tended to voice a government philosophy of “no government intervention” were against School-to-Work only because it was a liberal initiative signed by a Democrat President. The question was asked, “Why does everything have to be so partisan?” The answer to that question was alluded to in one of the interviews concerning the notion of “representation”. A basic democratic principle that our government was founded on was the idea of representation. That means that elected officials are obligated to “represent” the wishes and desires of their constituents. A conservative politician then is elected by a majority of conservative constituents to vote on the conservative side of issues. A basic “conservative” value is “limited government”. Once elected officials start “compromising” those basic values on which they were elected, they are no longer representing the constituents who elected them. Consequently, partisanship is inherent in politics. The establishment of political parties, elections, and the whole notion of “representation” provide the fundamentals for a “democracy”. Another dimension of the controversy is “How and why does education fit in the political arena?”

3. The document analysis phase of this research project revealed that much of the anti-School-to-Work literature and documents came from four major sources: The Constitutional Coalition, the Eagle Forum, the Oklahoma Family Policy Council (OFPC) and Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA). The OCPA describes itself as a “non-partisan research and education institute promoting free enterprise and limited government” (Maggio, 1996). One of the informants explained that these conservative “watch-dog” groups (a term used by the informant) are separate organizations but share a common concern -- protecting Constitutional freedoms. While the Constitutional

Coalition and the Eagle Forum are both national organizations, the Constitutional Coalition focuses more on educational research issues and the Eagle Forum is more broad-based in its scope. The OFPC and the OCPA are state organizations concerned with state government issues. As this particular informant explained, a common thread that these organizations share is a belief in “faith, family, and freedoms”. The notion of limited government is also a common value. I asked this informant if these organizations were part of the Christian Coalition since many of their beliefs and values seemed to reflect the viewpoints of the Christian Coalition organization. This informant explained, “No, they are not part of a larger umbrella organization, but the reason the ideas and viewpoints are similar is because they share a common conservative Christian viewpoint that we should derive our daily dependence from the Lord, not the federal government”. She explained that “conservative Christians believe in the *absolutes* that come from the Bible and among those are the unalienable rights God has given us. And these are provided for in our U. S. Constitution, if we would just go back to our basic Constitution”.

Hence, we begin to see how the conservative religious viewpoints are intertwined with the conservative political viewpoint of “limited government”. This also helped explain how a classical education philosophy is congruent with conservative religious and political viewpoints because of the emphasis on moral absolutes and the emphasis on individual intellectual potential (i.e. emphasis on pure knowledge).

This explanation also helped answer one of the perplexing questions that arose in the research study: Why do some conservatives (Republicans) in the community support School-to-Work and why do others oppose it? During the taxonomic and componential

analysis phase of the data analysis, the similarities and differences became apparent. The profile of a majority of the conservative population showed many similarities: they were highly-educated, affluent, white-collar professionals. The difference was that the opposition to School-to-Work was fueled by the conservative Christian viewpoint (the “religious right”) devoted to protecting Constitutional freedoms of society with particular attention given to faith and family. The conservative supporters of School-to-Work, on the other hand, were primarily part of the business/industry community interested in developing a qualified workforce for the nation's economy, or they were part of the education community interested in helping students obtain career goals and meaningful employment upon graduation. That is not to suggest that neither the business/industry nor the education communities were not religious, but it is the *degree* to which they may hold conservative viewpoints or the *motives* behind their support for School-to-Work.

4. There are many factors that influence public education which create conflict and controversy. As mentioned in the interviews, there are many factors that influence public education. These include: communities (local control), local school boards (policies), parents, state laws, federal laws, tradition, demographics of a community, State Board of Regents (through college entrance requirements/exams), school administrators, teacher unions, individual teachers, students, data used to evaluate schools, political affiliation, philosophical orientation, availability of money (school funding), and business/industry needs. Many times power struggles ensue between these different entities which creates pressure and stress on the public school system. This conflict becomes the source for the unfocused mission of public schools which results in frustration and criticism of public education from many factions of society. The

controversy is, however, which one of these entities should have the most “control” of public education? If one entity becomes the governing body over public education, the other entities will automatically be excluded. The involvement of business/industry as proposed in School-to-Work may shift the focus of education to satisfy business/industry needs and threaten the power of other groups who have traditionally had significant influence over education. If business/industry drive the purpose and goals of public education, the views of the other “stakeholders” in public education would not be represented.

5. The School-to-Work Act may offer the most positive effort in finding the “balance” that one administrator contends is the most effective and least offensive approach to manage public education. By promoting the “partnership” of business/industry, government, and community and parents, School-to-Work attempts to equally involve all major players in education in an effort to reach consensus and compromise that will most benefit students and our nation.

Philosophic Conclusions

1. The dualistic thinking of the progressive vs. classical educational philosophies creates conflict and stagnation in public education. Pitting one philosophy against the other is not a constructive way to resolve differences in people’s “world views”.

Education does not have to be an either/or situation. Both classical and progressive educational philosophies have merit. The strength of a classical (liberal arts) background is a strong academic and theoretical base which helps develop the student's intellect. A strong classical background where one reads and analyzes the “Great Works” is excellent

for developing an understanding the human condition and human values. Courses in literature, history, composition, and rhetoric develop the ability to analyze, synthesize, think critically, discuss, debate, and present information. These skills are transferable to *any* occupation in *any* field. A person cannot predict the knowledge that he/she may use in the future, and a strong classical (liberal arts) background can provide the necessary skills to be successful in the workplace and can provide a solid foundation for acquiring new skills. However, a solid classical education is only part of the education equation. Classical (liberal arts) educators need to do a better job of demonstrating the relevancy and application of subject matter to real-world situations. The fallacy of classical education is it stops short of practical application of academic content to the real-world.

The strength of progressivism is the real-world application where theory and academics are applied in a hands-on situation. The progressive philosophy proposes a practical and relevant educational approach to the way we structure and organize education. Application of knowledge is the focal point of progressivism where students demonstrate their understanding of theoretical principles in a hands-on experience. A major principle of progressive education is “learning by doing”. Perhaps dualistic thought has at times estranged these two schools of thought further than necessary. In theory, Dewey’s progressive ideas actually supported both academic *and* hands-on learning. Dewey promoted teaching the “Great Works” and academic rigor but felt they should be taught in the context of real-life situations and through occupational application. However, it is apparent that historically, many hands-on, applied courses have not contained rigorous academic content. Poor practice of the past has been blamed

on a “flawed” philosophy. The fallacy of progressivism is that academic content many times becomes secondary to the application of the experience.

2. There are strengths and weaknesses to both the classical and progressive philosophies. Both philosophies bring rich educational theories and practices to the field of education. Ironically, each philosophy’s strength is also the source of its weakness. The ideal, of course, is to apply the best qualities of both philosophies. Our educational system needs both the strong academic content provided by classical (liberal arts) education *and* the application of academics to the real world as advocated by the progressives. The classical supporters should acknowledge the value of occupational education and workplace experiences in addition to the classical curriculum. The progressives should acknowledge the value of rigorous academic subjects and the value of classical works in understanding human motivations, behavior, and attitudes. Additional attention should be given to the strengths of these two philosophies in our efforts to promote sound educational practices that will benefit all students, our nation's economy, and our society. Through a sincere, well-thought out integration of academic and occupational curriculum students can learn how to *apply* theoretical concepts without sacrificing academic rigor.

3. The success of School-to-Work efforts is still largely dependent upon the individual teacher's ability to effectively integrate occupational and academic curriculum in the classroom. My concern is the ability of most teachers to teach both theory and application in an effective way. The success of progressive education lies with the strengths and abilities of the individual teacher to organize appropriate learning experiences and also demonstrate the underlying theoretical principles of those

experiences. But how many classroom teachers have actual real-world experience themselves? Most teachers go to public school, go to college, and then go right back into the public school system. Where in our teacher preparation program is the workplace experiences of business/industry? Our present baccalaureate degree program for teacher education may not be sufficient in providing new teachers with the strong academic foundation and occupational background needed to successfully implement many School-to-Work initiatives.

4. In a school system that has a state-wide reputation for academic excellence, it may be difficult to justify the need for a systemic educational reform movement as outlined in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. Since this community had 67% of its high school graduates going on to college or a post-secondary institution (51% to either an in-state or out-of-state four-year university, 15% to junior college, and 1% to technical school) for further education or training, there did not appear to be a pressing need to change the status quo. There was no method in place in this school system for tracking the number of students who actually complete a four-year degree. (The national average is 50% of those begin a four-year degree actually graduate with a bachelors degree.) In any case, the words "educational reform" imply significant changes to the current system and, consequently, implementing educational reform may jeopardize the already well-established college-bound curriculum that appeared to be serving the majority of its students. However, classical education supporters need to recognize that many college-students can also benefit from School-to-Work initiatives by having career exploration activities, workplace experiences, and technology training which will help them in choosing career paths, declaring majors in college, choosing college course work, and

providing long-term goals that may help them succeed in college and complete their college degree.

5. The majority of this community possibly were not be aware of the significant minority of students (37%) who either drop-out of school or do not go on to post-secondary education. These “invisible” students were lost in the shadows of academic elite in the community. The academic achievements of the public schools were highly publicized and visible in the community as parents and educators celebrated the successes of these students. However, the community needs to acknowledge that almost 40% of the student population is not college-bound. Therefore, the traditional college-bound, classical curriculum alone may not adequately meet the needs of all students. A large percentage of students need further access to workforce preparation and career exposure in public education in addition to the traditional curriculum.

6. Educational reform implies significant changes to the current educational system which is a recommendation made by many education critics. While many people outside the education system criticize the public school system and quickly point out the flaws in the system, others would argue that public education is an American institution that has served the American public well for over 200 hundred years. To embrace School-to-Work as a “comprehensive educational reform” movement is risky business. It involves not only changing the “mechanics” of how the education system works in terms of funding, curriculum, and evaluating, but it means changing values and attitudes that guide the purpose and direction of education. Perhaps our society, as a whole, is unwilling to scrap our entire current educational system in hopes of adopting a “systemic reform” program that will allegedly solve all of our economic and social woes. Can we

learn lessons from the history of vocational education as discussed in Chapter II? It is unlikely that School-to-Work will be successful at meeting all of the social, economic, and business needs of society. The most viable option is to seek improvements and redefine goals through planned programs, integrated curriculum, and improved teaching methodologies without totally abandoning our present education system.

7. The education community could take a more pro-active role in responding to the needs of business/industry without a federal government sponsored program. As research and literature have been published indicating that business/industry are not able to find qualified workers for the workforce, the education community could take the initiative to ask business/industry about specific areas where students need additional development. In most instances, business/industry *want* to help education but are often at a loss as to what they can do. In this community, especially, there was a huge support on behalf of business/industry in assisting public education through monetary means, donating equipment, and sponsoring school programs. However, business/industry find it difficult to “break into” the education circle because they are “outside” the system and can only offer assistance where it is readily received. Business/industry and education could both benefit from a reciprocal arrangement if the two parties are willing to communicate, offer suggestions, and receive advice.

8. The purpose of public education in the U. S. is not clearly articulated. As indicated in numerous interviews, the purpose of public education is believed to be to “develop good citizens who can function in and contribute to a democratic society.” As an analytic philosopher would ask: “What does a ‘good’ citizen do? What does it mean to ‘function’ in a democratic society? What does it mean to ‘contribute’ to a democratic

society?" All of these terms are open to interpretation and have different meanings for different people. To some, a "good" citizen is one who votes in elections, who stays informed of current issues, and who obeys the laws of the society. To others, a "good" citizen is one who holds a steady job, who pays his/her taxes, and who financially supports himself/herself and a family. Yet, others feel a "good" citizen means one who has a broad understanding of our Western civilization, our culture, and the human condition. Public schools struggle to fill their many roles and attempt to be all things to all people. Obviously, clarification of the purpose of public education could help provide direction for the current school system. The controversy centers on: What is the purpose of public education? Who will define the purpose of public education? Does workforce preparation belong in public education?

9. Overall, the community under study was not well-informed about School-to-Work in general. Despite the efforts of the local vocational technical school to coordinate a high profile 'kick-off' program with well-known guest speakers (Miss America and Willard Daggett), the majority of the community still remained uninformed about School-to-Work and were unaware of the issues surrounding this educational reform legislation. The interviews indicated that even those parents and teachers who were somewhat familiar with School-to-Work voiced confusion and concern about the mechanics of School-to-Work and how the integration of academic and occupational curriculum was actually implemented. Also, because the vocational-technical school took a leadership role in the presentation and explanation of the School-to-Work initiative, there was a perception that School-to-Work was a vocational program and did not really apply to the majority of the students in the public schools. Two things may have helped the

perception of School-to-Work in the early implementation stages: 1) More visible support from business/industry in emphasizing the changes in the highly technological workplace as well as the national and global economy, and 2) More visible support from the public schools in addressing the needs of the non-academic elite of the community.

10. School-to-Work was viewed by some to be another educational “fad” that would eventually disappear like many other educational programs of the past. Perhaps a more pressing question is whether or not School-to-Work constitutes a true “paradigm shift” for public education whose mission will be redefined and efforts redirected to include an emphasis on workforce development. Perhaps this question will be answered as other communities and schools proceed with School-to-Work initiatives and whether or not those efforts are sustained as the clock runs out on federal School-to-Work funds in the next three years.

Economic Conclusions

1. The change in the post-industrial workplace has created a knowledge economy that is much different from the industrial economy of the past 100 years. This transformation is not fully recognized nor understood by the general community or the education field. While business and education have historically operated as separate institutions, there now needs to be more intensive dialogue between these two entities. There was some reservation on the part of businesses in this community to vocalize about their support for School-to-Work because of the controversial nature of the program. Taking an unpopular stance on an issue can have a negative impact on a business' customer base. However, business/industry could provide much needed information

about the changing nature of the modern workplace and the role public education can play in the employability of students and in the health of our nation's economy.

2. The lack of economic diversity in this community may have also negatively affected the perceived need for School-to-Work. Because the majority of jobs in the community are white-collar professions which require at least a bachelor degree or more, there was not a recognized need for promoting workplace competencies in public education. Since the background of many of the citizens in the community was the traditional college-bound experience, they have little exposure to the non-college bound path. As two of the parents pointed out in the interviews, other geographical areas in the U. S. which have more opportunities for "high skill, high wage" employment are more supportive of School-to-Work.

3. Education and political issues are intricately intertwined with socio-economic issues. A person's educational background does impact the kind of job a person obtains, the amount of money a person earns, and the social status a person acquires. The clash between classical (liberal arts) education supporters and progressive education supporters and the effects education has on the socio-economic mobility of students plays out around School-to-Work. For instance, classical (liberal arts) education supporters contend that reducing the classical curriculum in public schools will only result in a greater divide between the "haves" and "have-nots". Because fewer students will be acquiring a classical (liberal arts) education which elevates a person's intellectual capacity, there will be an even greater disparity between the upper and lower socio-economic levels. If classical education is *not* taught in public schools, most students will never achieve intellectual enlightenment. The majority of students who do not go on to college will

never receive exposure to the “Great Works” which teach a person about human ideals, values, and principles. In order for students to advance in life, they need the classical, liberal arts education background that prepares them for higher professions and a greater understanding of humanity.

As the literature continues to expound upon the greater gap between the rich and the poor in our society and the inequalities that exist, it is important to note that nothing in our Constitution guarantees “equal jobs” or “equal pay”, only “equal opportunities”. It is still left up to the individual to take advantage of the opportunities that are available. The philosophy behind School-to-Work is to improve the opportunities for students in gaining workplace competencies and job skills in order to improve their economic position. Progressive education supporters see merit in integrating occupational and academic curriculum so that all students (the disadvantaged youth and minorities, in particular) can acquire workplace competencies and job skills that will help them obtain high-skill, high wage jobs. Despite the arguments put forth by classical educators, progressives (who often view classical, liberal arts education as elitist) feel that classical supporters are only trying to perpetuate their own elitist view of education by *not* providing workforce preparation and, therefore, allowing the majority of non-college bound students to flounder in low-paying, low-skill jobs.

4. The ramifications of ignoring nearly 40% of the student population in public education may have a negative impact on the community, both economically and socially. The walled neighborhoods and gated communities that are a popular trend in many cities and suburbs is an attempt to provide safety and protection from crime and “undesirable influences”. We should not forget the lessons of “The Tale of Two Cities” by Charles

Dickens the classic historical novel of the French Revolution where the underclass gathers in force to revolt against the French aristocracy. The further perpetuation of the “haves” and “have-nots” and oppression of the poor in society can result in significant social problems and even anarchy. The literature indicates that the disparity between the rich and the poor in America continues to increase, and it is generally agreed that education is the means for improving economic prosperity. As a society, can we afford to stand by and watch the continued erosion of the American middle-class? Education can play a vital role in helping to reverse this trend.

Conclusions About the Effects of the School-to-Work

Controversy in this Community

1. The opposition successfully stifled the wide-spread implementation of School-to-Work in this community. While area schools in the local partnership proceeded somewhat aggressively with School-to-Work activities, this community and its schools were reluctant to actively implement School-to-Work initiatives. There were a few isolated activities among elementary, middle school, and secondary schools (with more emphasis at the elementary level than the high school level), but these activities were not highly publicized as School-to-Work initiatives due to the criticism that resulted from the opposition. While some teachers applied for School-to-Work funds through the local partnership for career exploration activities, the majority of teachers in the community remained uninterested, uninformed, or uninvolved in School-to-Work.

2. The school district had no choice but to proceed cautiously with School-to-Work activities given the vocal opposition. Taking “bits and pieces” of School-to-Work

and adding to the current educational system was a viable option for this community which still holds high regard for local control. In a community that was clearly divided on the issue of School-to-Work and considering the conservative nature of the community, School-to-Work was not compatible philosophically or politically with the attitudes, beliefs, and values of most of the community. Although the original intent of School-to-Work legislation was a “comprehensive educational reform”, the legislation is flexible enough to allow for individual communities to adapt School-to-Work initiatives to meet the needs of the community.

Recommendations

1. For a school district to implement School-to-Work, there first should be a survey of the community to assess what objections there might be in advance to understand the opposition and address concerns. As I can attest in our community, the supporters of School-to-Work (of which I was one) were totally surprised by the opposition to School-to-Work. Understanding opposing viewpoints is truly a critical part of moving from debate to dialogue (Tannen, 1998). As a School-to-Work supporter, I now have a much better understanding and appreciation of the concerns and criticisms of School-to-Work legislation. As such, I can see areas where school districts need to ensure local communities can customize School-to-Work to fit the needs of the community, individual schools, and even individual students. There must also be safeguards implemented to ensure academic rigor is maintained as occupational curriculum is integrated into the traditional curriculum, and policies should be

implemented to prevent "tracking" students into either a college-bound or vocational track.

2. Before implementing any public school reform, a thorough understanding of the political, social, philosophical, and economic profile of the community is necessary to ensure successful implementation. Perhaps publication of this information in advance might have helped this community to recognize the *need* for School-to-Work initiatives to address the education of nearly 40% of the student population in this community who are non-college bound. In addition, there should be a better education effort in the community to address the lower socio-economic population. Many citizens were unaware that four elementary schools in the community receive Chapter I federal funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. These schools qualify for Chapter I federal funds because of the high percentage of students who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program which is also a federal program. Administrators indicated that there has been a steady increase in the percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunches in the school district which seems to imply a change in the socio-economic make-up of the community. (Also, one of the elementary schools is on the state's at-risk list for low academic achievement.) Perhaps opponents who were against federal involvement in public education would have been less critical if they were aware of how our community benefits from some positive aspects of these federal programs.

3. A thorough and aggressive education effort should be initiated with the onset of a reform proposal in order to dispel misinformation, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation of the facts. For example, seminars, workshops, and training sessions

for educators parents, businessman, and community members alike could help promote a better understanding of the School-to-Work legislation, the intent of the legislation, and the mechanics of the legislation. In reality, School-to-Work is neither a federal mandate nor a state mandate. It is funding available to states who apply through a grant and to school districts who apply to the state and who comply with the School-to-Work guidelines. Ultimately, individual teachers are the ones who apply to the local partnership for School-to-Work funds. School districts and business together must educate their communities about the School-to-Work legislation and emphasize how the funds are allocated. A better job of education in the beginning can help prevent some of the misunderstanding of the legislation.

4. There also should be an emphasis placed on educating the administrators, teachers, and parents that career information and workplace experiences can benefit college-bound as well as non-college bound students. The interviews indicated that even college-bound students need career guidance and preparation in order to declare majors in college and choose relevant courses. Even though parental guidance is necessary, schools can help both parents and students investigate a host of career options and provide students with information and work experiences in a variety of career paths. The more information students have about available careers, the better decisions they can make about choosing colleges and declaring majors. Also, a survey of current students as well as recently graduated students (both college students and non-college students) can help public schools adapt curriculum that will be the most beneficial to the student population.

5. If a community is opposed to federal government educational programs, it should consider developing its own community educational support program that is

comprised of multiple factions of the community that will address the specific needs of that community. Through a community sponsored program where business/industry, education, parents, and community patrons come together in a concerted effort to develop an educational program, many of the same goals that are advocated under School-to-Work can be achieved without federal funds and “federal strings”. In this community, particularly, there is wealth of highly educated and talented people who could provide services and support to public education. Through this community support program, business/industry could take a leadership role in educating the community and educators about the changes in the global economy and the post-industrial workplace. Through a business/industry and education support network, planned programs of work experiences, and shadowing and mentoring activities for students could be arranged. Since many public school teachers may not have direct experience in business/industry, teachers can also benefit from industry experience. The Human Resource Development departments in many businesses have expertise on learning strategies and curriculum design that can benefit public education in terms of application of learning to job performance. Obviously, there are many areas where collaborative efforts between education and business/industry can benefit both parties.

6. Meaningful and constructive dialogue should take place between opposing parties that will help define a purpose and provide a direction for public education. Both parties want the best education possible for our students and our nation. The first step in trying to unify the strengths of classical and progressive philosophies and practices is to attempt to understand counter viewpoints. Opponents and supporters of School-to-Work can no longer “combat the mentality”, “fight the mindset”, and “attack the opposition”.

Both classical (liberal arts) supporters and progressives should acknowledge the merits of opposing philosophies in the hopes of developing sound educational practices that will benefit the entire community. Perhaps one of the most critical skills both classical educators and progressive educators should stress in their students is “learning how to learn”. Preparing students for the “real world” of today and of tomorrow require skills in acquiring new knowledge and learning new competencies. To this end, our schools must find effective ways to integrate abstract, theoretical content with hands-on application *without* sacrificing academic rigor. This will call for new pedagogical practices, new teacher preparation programs, and increased collaboration between business/industry and education.

7. The success of unifying classicism and progressivism is dependent upon teacher preparation and teacher training programs. Does a four-year degree program provide enough academic background, real-world application experiences, and practice teaching experiences to adequately prepare teachers for the demands of the classroom? Present teacher preparation programs usually offer a broad core curriculum, several hours in a major field, a few hours of education programs learning how to make lesson plans, and one semester of practice teaching. Teacher preparation programs could be strengthened by increasing the academic content in their major field (instead of a few hours for certification), adding educational philosophy courses helping teachers identify their own educational philosophy and understand the values and attitudes of opposing philosophies, helping teachers understand the political, economic, and social issues facing education, providing shadowing, internships, and mentoring experiences in business/industry, and allowing for additional practice teaching experiences. The

importance of our teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities cannot be underestimated as future educators strive to help students master difficult academic concepts, understand the relevancy of academic content to real-world situations, and bridge the gap between theory and application.

8. Educational reform promoting the integration of academic and occupational curriculum is a two-way street. While there is strong evidence to support why and how vocational curriculum is needed in the traditional, classical school curriculum, we must also consider improving the academic curriculum in vocational schools. Granted, it is intended that high school students receive academic content in traditional subjects at their high schools and concurrently receive hands-on training in vocational schools, but there should be a closer integration of this arrangement. Specific academic theories presented in academic courses should be directly applied to hands-on experiences in their vocational studies. This may require higher academic standards of vocational instructors to ensure they have enough academic background to explain theoretical concepts to vocational students in addition to demonstrating relevancy and application. Another possibility is adding academic teachers to vocational schools to allow for team-teaching to ensure a strong progressive curriculum that encompasses both “thinking” and “doing”. As vocational-technical schools attempt to shake the stigma surrounding vocational education of the early 20th century, greater efforts should be made to promote academic rigor within vocational studies.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. Further research is needed to determine the effectiveness of School-to-Work programs in other communities and states that have implemented these initiatives. Examination of test scores, job placement rates, and job performance data of students will determine if School-to-Work programs accomplish what they are intended to do. It may be too soon to measure the effectiveness of these programs as they may be only 2-3 years old. However, steps should be taken to begin evaluating School-to-Work programs to see if they do help students find “high-skill, high wage” jobs and do help employers find qualified workers. This evaluation should also include academic assessments to determine if academic standards suffer as a result of college-bound students’ involvement in School-to-Work. Traditional “paper and pencil” tests may not adequately assess progressive curriculum and, therefore, innovative testing criteria may be needed to measure students’ academic knowledge and their ability to *apply* academic knowledge.

2. Additional research of curriculum models that integrate academic and occupational curriculum is needed in order to evaluate the effectiveness of integration and provide options for integration. Perhaps pilot studies are needed to determine the most effective way to integrate occupational studies into the academic curriculum as well as how to evaluate different teaching methods. While many teachers may see the need to integrate curriculum, there are often questions about “how to” integrate without losing academic rigor. As our state and school district continue to examine the possibility of implementing a four-by-four curriculum *and* implementing School-to-Work initiatives,

schools must develop integrated curriculum models and establish alternative ways to satisfy academic requirements that will effectively serve all students in public education.

Closing Remarks

In an effort to examine and understand the School-to-Work controversy, it is important to recognize there are legitimate concerns on both sides of this debate. First, there are legitimate social and economic concerns which need to be addressed. However, there are also legitimate federal intervention and academic concerns that must be acknowledged. Both sides must recognize and accept the merits of opposing arguments for it is time to move from debate to dialogue (Tannen, 1998). Until the dialogue is underway, appropriate action cannot commence.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL PROFILE CHARTS

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Population:	35,000
Per Capita Income:	\$19,963
Unemployment Rate:	3%
Poverty Rate:	11%
Ethnic Makeup:	
White	88%
African American	3%
Asian	1%
Hispanic	1%
Native American	6%
Other	1%
Number of Churches	90
Major Employers:	
Oil and gas industry	62%
Educational institutions	14%
Health Care	11%
Other	13%

Figure 1. General community information

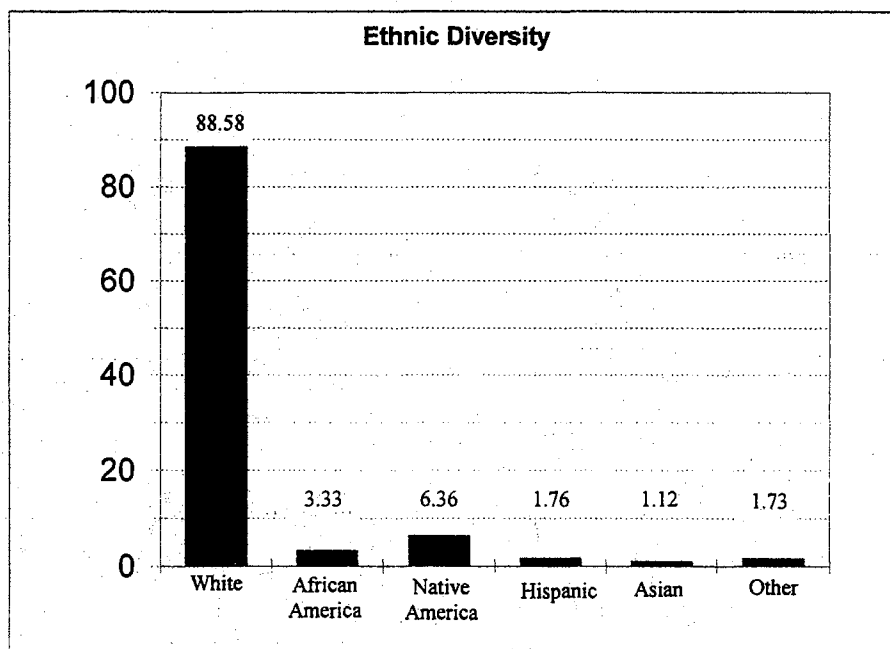


Figure 2. Ethnic Make-up of community

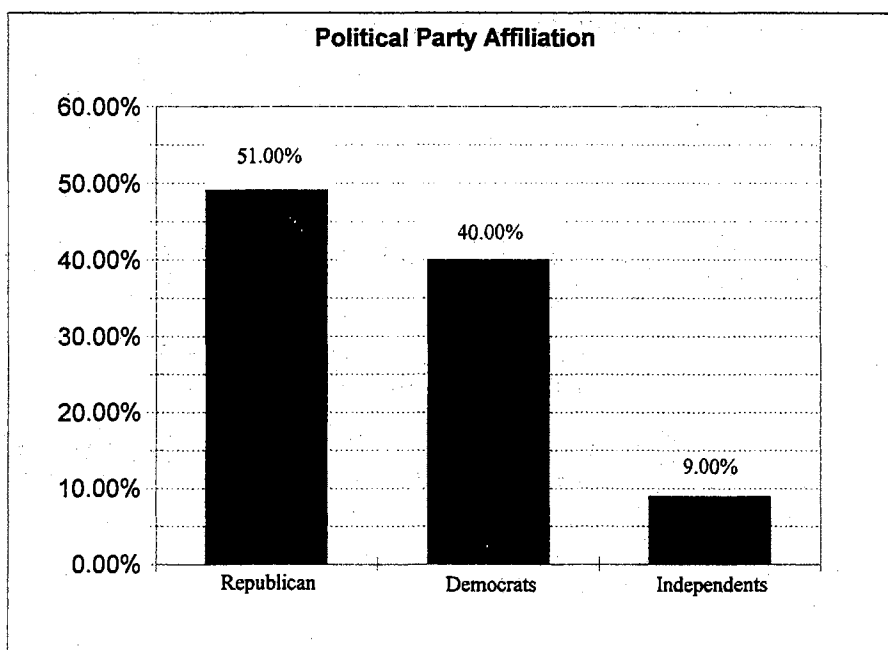


Figure 3. Political party affiliation in community

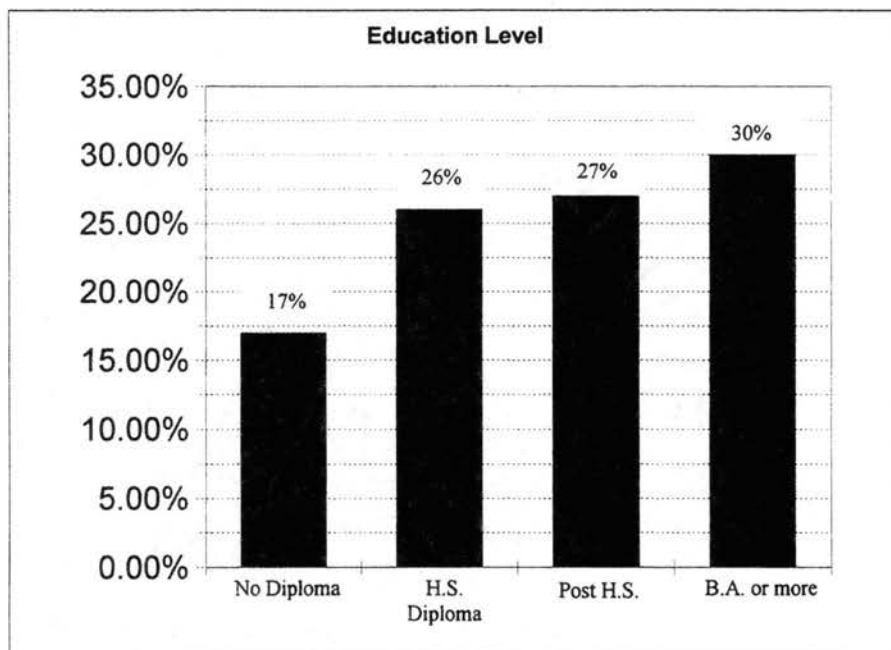


Figure 4. Educational attainment of adults in community

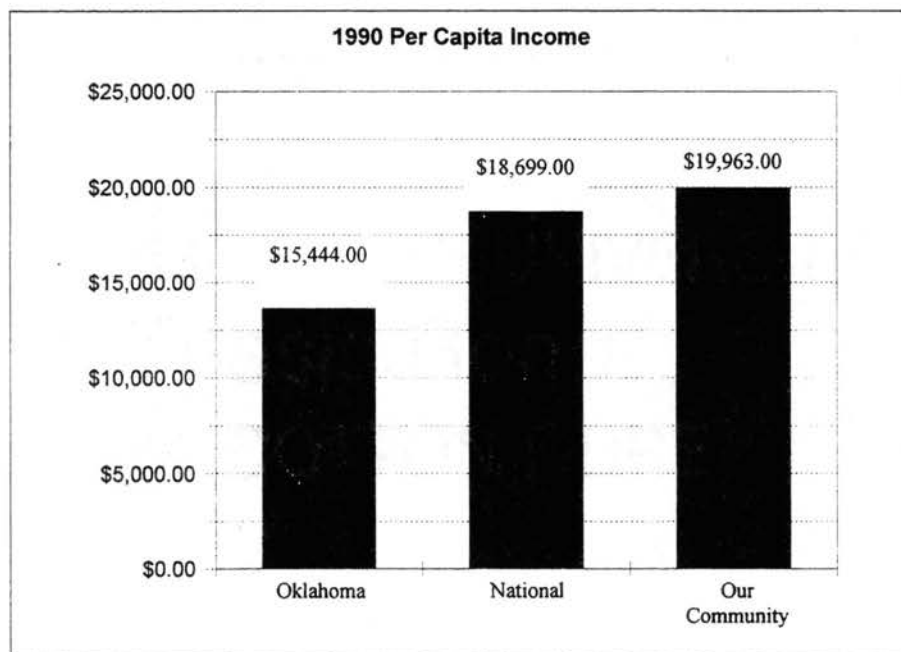


Figure 5. Per capita income of community (1990)

SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFILE

Total students:	6,439
School sites:	
High Schools	2
Middle Schools	2
Elementary Schools	7
Faculty:	
Teachers	353
Administrators	25
Teacher/Administrator Ratio	14/1
Student/Teacher Ratio	18/1
Graduation Rate:	80%
Dropout Rate:	5.2%

Figure 6. General school district information

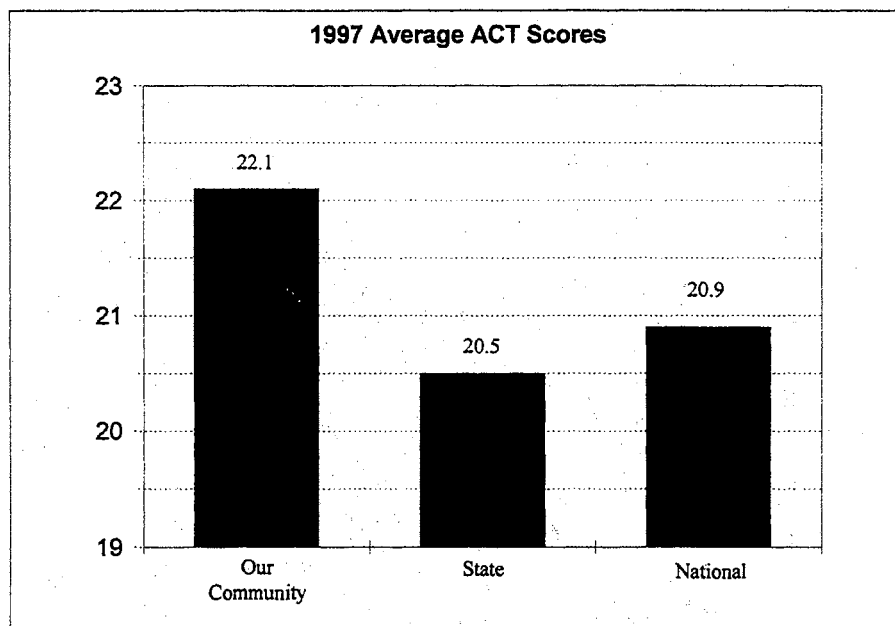


Figure 7. Average Student ACT scores in community (1997)

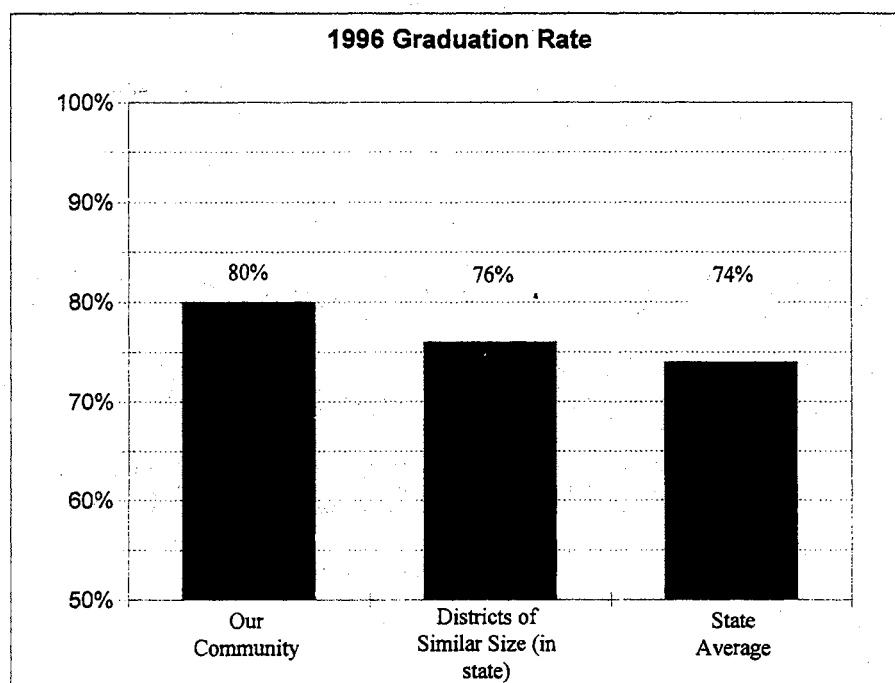


Figure 8. 1996 Student graduation rate in community

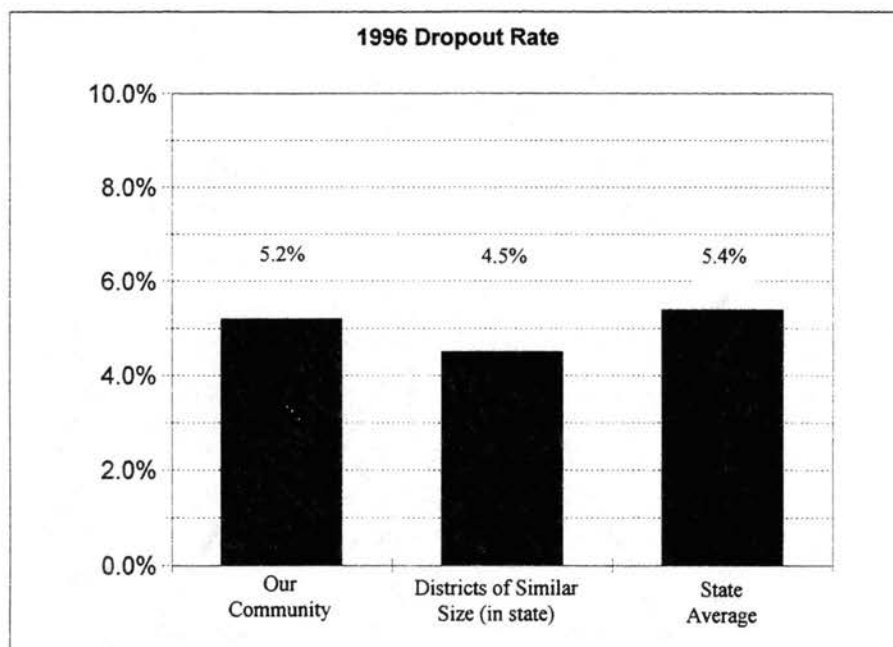


Figure 9. 1996 Student Drop Out in community school

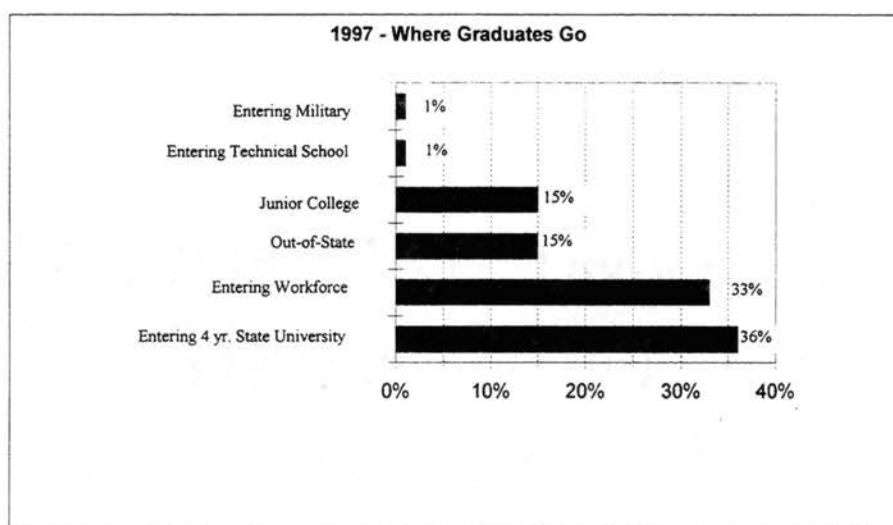


Figure 10. Breakdown of 1997 graduate plans

APPENDIX B

SOLICITATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

Solicitation for Participation in Study

I am currently collecting research data for my dissertation to complete requirements for my Doctorate in Education (Ed. D) at Oklahoma State University. I am asking a cross-section of business/industry leaders, parents, students, and teachers to contribute to this research project. Our community has always taken a great interest in our educational system and your contribution is important to this research study. My dissertation will be a qualitative case study examining some of the controversial issues surrounding School-to-Work initiatives in our community.

Your participation is totally anonymous and voluntary. No individual names or names of businesses will be referred to in the study. Only general descriptions (i. e. a parent of a high school student, or a financial institution) will be used when referring to your comments.

I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this research project. (If you have any questions, please contact Gay Clarkson, Institutional Review Board Secretary, Oklahoma State University, 305 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078): (405) 744-7500.

Sincerely,

Linda G. Northey

**Business/Industry Questionnaire
(For interviews)**

1. What are your thoughts about our current public schools?
(strengths and weaknesses)
2. What do you feel are the purposes of public school education?
3. What kinds of information /knowledge do you feel students should possess upon graduation from high school?
4. Based on your hiring experiences, what conclusion can you draw about finding qualified applicants to fill job vacancies in your organization?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses you find in most of your job applicants?
6. What areas would you like to see improved in school curriculum that is most relevant to workplace competencies?
7. How can education and business do a better job in preparing students for the workplace?
8. In your opinion, what kind of factors really influence what schools do with students?
9. How familiar are you with School-to-Work legislation and School-to-Work initiatives in our community?
10. How have you learned about School-to-Work, in general?
11. What concerns do you have about School-to-Work initiatives in our community?
12. What do you feel are the strengths and weaknesses about School-to-Work?

**Parent Questionnaire
(For interviews)**

1. What are your thoughts about our current public schools?
(strengths and weaknesses)
2. What do you feel are the purposes of public school education?
3. What kinds of information/knowledge do you think students should possess upon graduation from high school?
4. What kinds of things do schools do well and what kind of things should they do well?
5. In your opinion, what kind of factors really influence what schools do with students?
6. What kind of career guidance or information has your child received in school?
7. What kind and how much career guidance or information would you like for your child to receive in school?
8. How familiar are you with School-to-Work legislation and School-to-Work initiatives in our community?
9. How have you learned about School-to-Work, in general?
10. What concerns do you have about School-to-Work initiatives in our community?
11. What do you feel are some of the strengths and weaknesses about School-to-Work?

Student Questionnaire (Students 18 years and over)
(For interviews)

1. What are your thoughts about our current public schools?
(strengths and weaknesses)
2. What do you feel are the purposes of public school education?
3. What kinds of information/knowledge do you think students should possess upon high school graduation?
4. What do you consider to be your most valuable and least valuable school experiences?
5. What career do you wish to pursue after high school and how have you made that decision?
6. What kind of work experience (either paid or unpaid) have you had in this career area?
7. If you have had work experience, how has it helped in preparing you for future full-time jobs?
8. If you have not had any work experience, do you think you could have benefited from some work experience? Why or why not?
9. What is the earliest grade in school that you think most students could benefit from some work experience in any business/industry?
10. How do you think work experience may or may not help you understand academic subjects you study in school?
11. What kind of career guidance or information have you received in school?
12. What kind of career guidance or information would you have liked to have received in school?
13. How familiar are you with School-to-Work initiatives in our community? How have you learned about School-to-Work, in general?
14. What strengths and weaknesses do you perceive about School-to-Work?

**Administrators/Teachers Questionnaire
(For interviews)**

1. What are your thoughts about our current public schools?
(strengths and weaknesses)
2. What do you feel are the purpose(s) of public school education?
3. What kinds of information/knowledge do you think students should possess upon graduation from high school?
4. What kinds of things do our schools do well and what kind of things should they do well?
5. In your opinion, what kind of factors really influence what schools do with students?
6. What kind of career guidance or information do students presently receive in schools?
7. What kind of career guidance or information should students receive in schools?
8. How familiar are you with School-to-Work legislation and School-to-Work initiatives in our community?
9. How have you learned about School-to-Work, in general?
10. What concerns do you have about School-to-Work initiatives in our community?
11. What do you feel are some of the strengths and weaknesses about School-to-Work?

APPENDIX C

DOMAIN AND TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS

DOMAIN AND TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS
SCHOOL-TO-WORK DATA

- I. Processes used by government to influence schools
 - A. Legislation
 - 1. Giving money through grants
 - B. Supreme Court decisions
- II. Reasons for Government Intervention
 - A. Integration of schools
 - B. Inclusion of special education students
- III. Results of government assistance to schools
 - A. Positives
 - 1. can help kids
 - 2. establish athletic programs to keep kids off street
 - 3. expose kids to workforce
 - 4. distribute funds equally
 - 5. ensure equality in public education
 - 6. can ensure a "standard" is taught
 - B. Negatives
 - 1. Giving money with "strings" attached
 - 2. Schools must comply with federal mandates
 - 3. Loss of local control of schools
- IV. Reasons people are "gunshy" of government support
 - A. Misuse of welfare system
 - B. Stupid things are funded
 - C. Fear of "Big Brother"
 - D. Tries to usurp local control
 - E. Government is inefficient and unorganized
 - F. Government tried to socialize health care
 - G. Growing mistrust of federal government
- V. Ways administrators retain local control of schools
 - A. Give federal money back/refuse money
 - B. Listen to parents and patrons of community
 - C. Find a "balance" between local desires and state and federal laws
- VI. Ways the state influences schools
 - A. Help screen textbooks
 - B. Set curriculum standards
 - C. State laws/mandates
 - D. State Board of Education oversees schools
 - E. Testing requirements
- VII. Kinds of factors that influence schools
 - A. Citizens of community (local control)
 - B. Local school boards
 - C. PTA (Parent-Teacher Associations)
 - D. State laws
 - E. State Board of Education
 - F. Federal government (grants and legislation)
 - G. Tradition
 - H. Demographics of community
 - I. State Board of Regents (through college entrance requirements/exams)
 - J. School administrators (superintendents and principals)
 - K. Money
 - L. Data used to evaluate schools
 - M. Teacher union
 - N. Individual teachers
 - O. Students
- VIII. Ways community influences schools
 - A. Voice of the people
 - B. Meet needs of the community

- C. Community members are a part of Board of Education
- D. Policies of school board reflect wishes of citizens
- E. Through parent involvement (band parents, sports parents, PTA)
- F. A school should reflect its community

IX. Kinds of Beliefs that Support Local Control

A. Positive

- 1. Community control is foundation of public education
- 2. Teaching staff should adhere to community goals
- 3. Administrators should adhere to community desires
- 4. A conservative community should have a conservative school
- 5. One community should NOT inflict their goals and wishes on another community
- 6. Balance - must have balance between community, state, and federal government
- 7. High community support and involvement is good
- 8. Heterogeneous community then has many facets represented in schools

B. Negative (the dark side of local control)

- 1. Americans "preoccupied" with local control
- 2. Social prejudices/problems reflected in its schools
- 3. Class-divided community perpetuated in schools
- 4. Programs not judged on their merit, only if local initiative vs. federal or state initiative

X. Ways conservatives (Republicans) are different than Liberals (Democrats)

A. Republican views

- 1. believe in limited government
- 2. emphasis on the individual

B. Democrat views

- 1. support more government programs to solve social, economic, educational issues
- 2. emphasis on society as a whole

XI. Reasons to support School-to-Work

A. Business

- 1. Can find more qualified workers for their jobs
- 2. Can help develop a highly qualified workforce
- 3. Can help reduce training costs and turnover costs

B. Economic

- 1. Student can move into high-wage, high-skill jobs
- 2. Prepare workers for global economy so our nation can compete
- 3. Prepare workers for highly technical jobs so our businesses can compete
- 4. Strengthen national economy
- 5. Contribute to national tax base ("a giver of taxes, not a taker")

C. Benefit students

- 1. Find better jobs with higher salaries
- 2. Improve their quality of life through high salaries
- 3. Improve socio-economic mobility of students after graduation

XII. Reasons people oppose School-to-Work

A. Government intervention

- 1. Federal mandates and testing requirements
- 2. Government control purse strings
- 3. Lose local control of schools
- 4. Centralizes too much power in government
- 5. Loss of citizens' rights

B. Fear of "dumbing down" curriculum

- 1. Applied courses are inferior
- 2. Need more academic rigor in curriculum
- 3. Takes too much time out of academic curriculum
- 4. Most students learn by reading it and hearing it (do not have to do it)
- 5. Educational "fad", unproven methodology

C. Tracking students

- 1. Students must decide a college track or vo-tech track
- 2. Force students to decide career path too early in school
- 3. Hard to change track if decide later they want to go to college

- XIII. Ways to avoid S-T-W opposition
 - A. Scale it down
 - 1. If try to implement total program then opposition will rip it apart
 - B. Call it something else - i.e. Career Awareness or Career Exploration
 - C. Package it differently; modify it
 - D. Take bits and pieces
- XIV. Ways Opposition "Control" School-to-Work
 - A. Business
 - 1. Business hesitant to get involved with controversial issue
 - 2. Taking a controversial stance might affect customer base
 - B. Schools
 - 1. Fragment the program (take bits and pieces)
 - 2. Call it something else (Career Awareness not School-to-Work)
 - 3. Schools don't publicize activities as much (keep low profile)
- XV. Current School-to-Work activities
 - A. A few quality shadowing experiences going on
 - B. Looking at starting youth apprenticeship in medical community
 - C. A few mentoring programs going at the high school
 - D. Technology Day (computer training) for middle school students at vo-tech school
 - E. Career Fair for middle school students; Career Day for elementary school students
 - F. Reading program on careers at an elementary school
- XVI. Ways state Vo-Tech department affects School-to-Work
 - A. Positive
 - 1. Very efficient at "getting the job done"
 - 2. Good reputation in state and nation
 - 3. Focused in their mission/purpose
 - B. Negative
 - 1. Too much money spent on "shiny brochures"
 - 2. Overkill in sending printed material to schools
 - 3. Perceived to be a "vo-tech" program which did not apply to college-bound students
- XVII. Kinds of things needed upon high school graduation
 - A. Skills
 - 1. Technology (Computing)
 - 2. Spelling
 - 3. Reading
 - 4. Writing
 - 5. Communication (oral and written)
 - 6. Life skills
 - 7. Interpersonal skills
 - 8. Strong math and science skills
 - 9. Team building skills
 - B. Information
 - 1. Drug awareness/prevention
 - 2. Preparation for life
 - C. Awareness
 - 1. Different cultures
 - 2. Current events
 - 3. Career awareness
- XVIII. Kinds of things schools should teach
 - A. Accurate historical information (Civil War - can't teach the South won)
 - B. Acceptable standards a nation must know
 - C. History - "teach rich history of our nation"
 - (i. e. Civil War, Expansion Period, Westward Movement, Social Studies)
 - D. Career awareness integrated into an academic curriculum
 - E. Teach classics (Dickens and Shakespeare, etc.)
- XIX. Kinds of career curriculum
 - A. Current career programs
 - 1. No systematic system - schools just "touch on it"

2. Isolated civic organizations sponsor Career Day, Women in Engineering, etc. (reaches 60-70 juniors and seniors per year)
 3. Try to do 4-year plan of study freshman year
 4. We spend 80% of money on 20% of kids
 5. "Limited", "very little", "minimal" career information in schools
- B. Results of current career programs
1. Students do not know what careers are available
 2. Students do not know what careers they are interested in
 3. Students do not what they want to do after graduation
 4. College-bound students do not know what major to declare
 5. College-bound students "waste time" taking extra classes
 6. Family tradition - follow what others in family have done
- C. Career programs schools should have
1. Need to be more in-depth
 2. Elementary level
 - a. introduction to careers/ career awareness
 3. Middle School
 - a. structured
 - b. comprehensive
 - c. exploratory - explore careers that match their interests
 4. High School
 - a. develop a direction/focus for careers (career cluster - not specific job)
 - b. shadow/mentor workers in that field
 - c. get some work experience in that field
 5. Need to do 6-year plan of study at the end of 8th grade
- XX. Attributes of most teachers
- A. Brightest in the world
 - B. Work diligently
 - C. Help students improve their educational position
 - D. Help students improve their "lot in life"
 - E. Highly qualified
 - F. Highly trained
 - G. Enthusiastic
 - H. Motivated
 - I. Dedicated
- XXI. Ways teacher union influences public education
- A. Protects bad teachers as well good teachers
 - B. Protects masses (teachers) by providing safety in numbers
 - C. Hurts teacher accountability
 - D. Teachers hide under umbrella of NEA or OEA
- XXII. Ways people learn about S-T-W
- A. Newspapers (articles, letters-to-editor, editorials)
 - B. Literature (handouts, brochures)
 - C. Pieces of information people give out (pro and con)
 - D. Speaking with directors of program
 - E. In passing conversations with people ("word of mouth")
 - F. Speakers invited to community (both pro and con speakers)
- XXIII. Ways to improve public education
- A. Accountability
 - B. Measurements for accountability
 - C. Merit pay for teachers
 - D. Better system of funding
 - E. Raise teachers salaries to attract better teachers
 - F. Strengthen curriculum for non-college bound students
 - G. Emphasize academic teams as much as athletic teams
 - H. Reprioritize funds - eliminate extracurricular activities
 - I. Hire tutors
 - J. Concentrate on core curriculum (4x4 curriculum)
 - K. Emphasize technology to prepare students for high-tech world
- XXIV. Ways schools in U. S. differ from foreign countries
- A. United States

1. Educate all people
2. Educate from academic low to academic high
3. Finest educational system in the world
4. More progressive
5. Better than Japan, Germany, France

- B. Ways schools in foreign countries hold students back
1. Students hit a particular level and can go no further
 2. Only so many allowed to go to universities
 3. Track students (must go in this track or that track)

XXV. Perceptions of teaching profession

A. Other professions

1. Work 8am-5pm
2. Receive 2 or 3 weeks vacation
3. Receive much better salaries
4. Doctors and lawyers (some good and some bad) but still make "big bucks"

B. Teaching profession

1. Only work 9 months a year; get 3 months off
2. Work shorter days
3. View teaching profession as part-time job (not "real" professionals)
4. Some feel teachers should stay at present salary

XXVI. Public Education is Used For

- A. Prepare students for life responsibilities (job)
- B. Educate our masses at all levels; all segments of society
- C. Create a well-rounded person; give them well-rounded foundation
- D. Send students off into society
- E. Move masses forward in knowledge and improve educational position
- F. Meet the needs of the kids
- G. Educate our workforce
- H. Educate masses to protect democracy; public education cornerstone of democracy
- I. Prepare our leaders of the future
- J. Prepare students for a happy, productive life
- I. Citizenship (many responses include "citizenship" but definition of "good citizen" varies)
 1. Be able to vote intelligently
 2. Understand our democratic government
 3. Understand economics of our society
 4. Be a contributing member of society
 5. Be responsible
 6. Hold a job and support a family
 7. "A giver of taxes, not a taker of taxes"
 8. Understand Western civilization and culture
 9. Contribute to greater good of society

XXVII. Ways graduates of public schools influence society

- A. Improve technology
- B. Open up doors for medicine
- C. Make next generation better than previous generation
- D. To improve our society

XXVIII. Ways to Educate People on S-T-W

A. Workshops

1. for community (all patrons)
2. for parents and students
3. for teachers and administrators
4. for business/industry

B. Articles in newspaper

C. Community Awareness Programs

1. See exactly what S-T-W is
2. Read legislation themselves (not let others interpret it for them)

XXIX. Result of reform efforts or innovation in schools

- A. Opposition groups are formed
- B. Others stay away -- remain uninformed, uninterested, uninvolved

XXX. Reasons for Educating People on S-T-W

- A. People see for themselves exactly what S-T-W is
 - 1. read legislation
- B. Break down barriers

XXXI. Kinds of conflicts for school administrators

- A. Educating the community vs. following wishes of community
- B. Conflict in the community
- C. Federal and state laws vs. community desires
- D. Finding a "balance"

XXXII. Ways School-to-Work can be used

- A. Provide career awareness (integrate career awareness into current system)
- B. Total restructuring of schools
- C. Prepare students for the workplace

XXXIII. Reasons for rejecting School-to-Work

- A. Political Reasons
 - 1. Communist plot
 - 2. Socialist plot
 - 3. Marxism
 - 4. Secret Plan
 - 5. Conspiracy of federal government to take away local control of schools
 - 6. Conspiracy of organized labor (Dept. of Labor) to control public education
 - 7. Takes away individualism (federal government will control students' destinies)
 - 8. Will make "worker bees" of U. S. citizens for benefit of business/industry
 - 9. Constitution leaves education to states and local communities
- B. Education Philosophy
 - 1. Classical/Liberal Arts Philosophy
 - a. back to "basics"
 - b. liberal arts "education of the mind"; not job skills
 - c. rigorous academic approach (no real emphasis on application)
 - 2. Progressivism Philosophy (John Dewey approach)
 - a. application in addition to academic (lose academic focus)
 - b. put student at center of learning experience
 - c. emphasize hands-on experiences
- C. Economic
 - 1. Local tax dollars should stay locally
 - 2. Federal government gives money but holds the purse strings

XXXIV. What Schools Need to Do to Have School-to-Work

- A. Grant applications
 - 1. State applies to federal government for state funds
 - 2. Schools sign partnership agreement to be part of area consortium
 - 3. Local partnership applies to state for local funds (with grant of STW activities)
 - 4. Individual teachers apply to local partnership for funding of STW activities
- B. Partnerships
 - 1. Schools, businesses, community members agree to be in partnership
 - 2. Representatives attend partnership meetings to decide direction of STW activities

XXXV. Kinds of Citizen Groups in my community

- A. Characteristics of anti-STW Group
 - 1. Political affiliation
 - a. Republican
 - b. wealthy/upper middle class
 - c. conservative
 - 2. Visibility
 - a. power
 - b. voice
 - c. key individuals
 - d. not very broad-based
 - e. very vocal
 - 3. Educational orientation
 - a. highly educated population
 - b. has academic focus (college-bound)
 - 4. Religious affiliation

- a. protestant
- b. conservative

B. Characteristics of Neutral Group /No Power Group

- a. working class
- b. under-class
- c. many female or single-parent headed households
- d. low education levels
- f. Democrat
- g. no children in schools at present time

3. Anti-School-to-Work Group

- a. conservative Republican
- b. strong belief in limited government
- c. Strongly religious
- d. conservative Christian values
- e. strong belief in "faith, family, freedoms"
- f. strong belief in Individualism
- g. highly educated
- h. wealthy/upper middle class
- i. professional leaders
- j. mistrust of government

4. Pro School-to-Work Group

- a. moderate Republican
- b. Democrats
- b. businessman/women
- c. highly educated
- d. professional leaders
- e. wealthy/upper middle class
- f. educators/administrators

XXXVI. Ways groups try to influence decision-makers about School-to-Work

A. Speakers

1. Pro S-T-W Group

- a. bring in international education consultant as kick-off to S-T-W
- b. bring in Miss America who advocates S-T-W

2. Anti-S-T-W Group

- a. bring in area speaker who is anti-S-T-W prior to pro speaker
- b. bring in state official who is openly anti-S-T-W to speak to civic groups

B. Literature/Propaganda

1. Pro S-T-W

- a. literature to support need for workplace competencies (SCANS, ASTD)
- b. literature about changing workplace
- c. literature about changing economy (industrial vs. information age)
- d. literature about high-tech jobs going unfilled

2. Anti S-T-W

- a. literature about government controlling education
- b. literature about changing education to workforce development
- c. literature about taking away individual freedoms
- d. literature about dumbing down curriculum

C. Letters to Editors/ Editorials

1. Pro S-T-W

- a. letters supporting need for helping students get jobs
- b. letter supporting need for strengthening national economy

2. Anti-S-T-W

- a. letters opposing government intrusion in public schools
- b. letters opposing changing liberal education to progressive education

XXXVII. Characteristics of my community's public schools

A. Grade distribution

- 1. many students at the top
- 2. many students at the bottom
- 3. very few in the middle

B. Academic achievements

- 1. many national merit scholars
- 2. high number of students go to college

3. high ACT scores - 22.1 average (state average 20.5; national average 20.9)

C. Drop-out rate

1. 4.5% (compared to 4.8% in districts of similar size) 1994-95 data
2. 5.4% (compared to 4.5% in districts of similar size) 1996 data
3. state average 5.2% dropout

D. Socio-economic levels

1. 34% qualify for federal free and reduced lunch program
2. 4 elementary school receive Chapter I federal funds from Education Act 1965
3. 1 elementary school on state at-risk list for low academic achievement

E. After high school graduation (1997 graduates)

1. 51% entering 4-year university
2. 15% entering 2-year junior college
3. 1% entering technical school
4. 1% entering military
5. 33% entering workforce

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 11-13-96

IRB#: ED-97-031

Proposal Title: THE POLITICS, PROBLEMS, AND POSSIBILITIES OF
IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL-TO-WORK IN OKLAHOMA: A
DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

Principal Investigator(s): James Gregson, Linda G. Northey

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

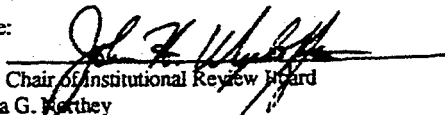
ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING
THE APPROVAL PERIOD.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR
PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE
SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR
APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:


Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Linda G. Northey

Date: January 28, 1997

APPENDIX E

TABLES OF FINDINGS SUMMARIES

TABLE I

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION
 “WHAT ARE THE SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS THAT
 IMPACT SCHOOL-TO-WORK INITIATIVES?”

Theme	Findings
Political Concerns (The role of the federal government in public education)	<u>Positive aspects of federal government intervention</u> a. The federal government is needed to serve society's common needs. b. The federal government has a responsibility to monitor national trends that local communities or states may not detect or have access to. c. The federal government is a means to counter the “dark side” of local control.
Liberal vs. Conservative political viewpoints	<u>Negative aspects of federal government intervention</u> a. The federal government takes away local control from the community. b. The federal government centralizes too much power. c. The federal government takes away individual freedoms. d. The federal government adds layers of bureaucracy. e. There is a growing mistrust of federal government.

TABLE II

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION
 “WHAT ARE THE ACADEMIC FACTORS THAT HAVE
 IMPACTED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
 SCHOOL-TO-WORK INITIATIVES?”

Theme	Findings
Educational Philosophy	<u>Strengths of progressive approach in school-to-work</u>
Progressive education vs Liberal education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Advocates the integration of occupational and academic curriculum. b. Supports hands-on learning and applied academics. c. Demonstrates the relevancy of subject matter to real world situations.
	<u>Weaknesses of progressive approach in school-to-work</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teaching time will be taken away from rigorous academic subjects and spent on job skills. b. The integration of occupational curriculum in school-to-work will result in “watered-down” or “dumbed-down” curriculum.
	<u>Strengths of liberal education philosophy</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Advocates intellectual cognitive development and moral absolutes. b. Allows for development of individual interests and maximizes human potential, not specifically for workforce development.
	<u>Weaknesses of liberal education philosophy</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Too much of public education is spent studying abstract theory with no accommodation for application. b. Is geared only for college preparation and ignores non-college bound students.

TABLE III

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION
 “WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF BUSINESS/INDUSTRY
 INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL-TO-WORK?”

Theme	Findings
Economic Issues	<p><u>Positive aspects of business involvement in education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. School-to-work will help individual businesses by developing qualified workers. b. School-to-work will help strengthen the national economy by providing a more qualified workforce. c. School-to-work will help American business/industry compete in the global economy. d. School-to-work will help improve the socio-economic mobility of students. <p><u>Negative aspects of business involvement in education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. School-to-work looks only to the business community for career options and will limit students' exposure to other fields or careers. b. Business/industry will promote their own self-interest in developing a national workforce. c. Business will attempt to superimpose business practices and management on education.

TABLE IV

A SUMMARY OF GENERAL FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY
IN RESPONSE TO SCHOOL-TO-WORK
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Theme	Findings
All	<u>Positive effects of the school-to-work controversy in our community</u>
	a. The controversy has forced the school-to-work program to "tighten up."
	b. The school district has proceeded cautiously with school-to-work initiatives in response to the criticism voice in the community.
	<u>Negative effects of the school-to-work controversy in our community</u>
	a. The controversy has impeded the implementation of school-to-work programs.
	b. School-to-work activities have not been heavily publicized to avoid negative criticism.

2
VITA

Linda Gadelman Northey

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE POLITICS, PROBLEMS, AND POSSIBILITIES OF IMPLEMENTING
A SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAM IN A COMMUNITY IN OKLAHOMA:
A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

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Education: Graduated from Garnett High School in Garnett, KS in May, 1975.
Received Bachelor of Science in Education in May, 1978 from Emporia
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for Doctor of Education at Oklahoma State University in December, 1998.

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Company in Human Resources. This included a two year assignment in the
United Kingdom. Returned to education in 1994. Currently teaching 7th
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