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In this Corner: Career Education

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“IN THIS CORNER: CAREER EDUCATION.”

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Often science educators feel that career education belongs in the Industrial Arts or Vocational Agriculture or Home Economics classroom but not in the Science classroom. Since Sputnik, science educators have been selling their course offerings by talking about the vast technological society in which we live and how the job market needs scientifically literate workers. Too often, however, these same educators view career education only as the production of pre-professional scientists. They seem not to include nurses, laboratory technicians and other applied fields in science vocations.

This is understandable, since every father takes pride in his child's decision to follow his footsteps; similarly the teacher views the student scientist in a similar light. My ego soars when I think about my former students who have become professional scientists and teachers. But I submit that the secondary science teacher's role is more than training professional scientists. Science teachers should also serve the vast majority of their students who will choose careers in applied science-oriented occupations.



Fig. 1.

The first step in making a soil profile is to measure the amount of sand, loam and clay present, as David Bellegante of Colo High School is doing. This activity is done during a soil conservation career exploration.

For the past two years, I have been working with high school students in career exploration (Fig. 1) in Area XI schools. Career exploration is just a part of the total career education picture which also includes career awareness, career information and career experience. A description of our program appears in the October 1975 issue of the *Iowa Science Teachers Journal*.

Science teachers visiting our program are amazed that they do many of these same activities in their classrooms. Most biology classes do blood typing, blood counts, urinalysis and blood pressure measurements (Fig. 2). Many chemistry classes measure the amount of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere or dissolved gases in water. Sound level measurements are common in physics laboratories. These activities are also performed by many non-scientists in the course of their daily lives.

Fig. 2.

Joy Pierce (left) takes Sherri Sorenson's blood pressure as part of their health careers exploration. Both are students at Guthrie Center High School.



Another eye-opener for visitors is the teaching methods used in the career exploration program. Some teachers are upset that little effort is made to teach the theory behind the techniques being studied. However, in many technical jobs, far more concern is expressed that the technician performs the test accurately rather than upon the validity of his or her interpretation. It is always a plus if a technicians knows "why", but first level employment demands "how". Thus, many students in high school laboratories who have poor academic skills, but excellent laboratory technique, can play an essential role in a technical society and should be encouraged to do so.

Both students and teachers are often surprised by the skill level required in many applied areas of science. The skill needed to type blood in a high school biology class is the same as that required in a laboratory in a hospital. The hospital's medical laboratory technician would be expected to have a large repertoire of such skills to pursue his or her vocation.

So where does this all lead us and what can the science teacher do to include career education in the classroom? The answer is really quite simple. Teachers should become aware of the skills required in science related occupations and pass this knowledge on to students as various topics and laboratory techniques are covered in the classroom. A student may really like science related fields and yet have no desire to become a research scientist.

Someone has to tell students how the techniques and knowledge they are learning can be used to pursue a vocation. It might as well be you, since you are right there.