

# The School's Role in Career Development

*Sidney P. Marland, Jr.*

**I**F CAREER education is an accurate barometer, and I think it is, educators and others who make decisions about education are finally beginning to narrow that traditional 30-year gap between the development of sound new ideas in the research environment and their widespread use in classrooms.

Just two years ago, in my first major address as U.S. Commissioner of Education, I discussed with the nation's secondary school principals the urgent need for certain reforms. Such reforms would, I believe, without undercutting essential academic programs, prepare many more young people to face the realities—and career options—of the working world they will enter as adults.

I was concerned then, as I still am, about the 2.5 million young people who leave school and college each year without a real career goal, much less the preparation to reach it. I was also disturbed about those adults, earlier products of the shortcomings in our education system, who spend all or at least part of their working life in an occupation that engages neither their heart nor their talents.

The concept I voiced two years ago has since become known as "career development"

or "career education." I prefer the latter term, since it implies a structured orientation and preparation program for every student as an integral part of his academic course work throughout the school and college years. Whatever terminology we use, inherent in the concept is the principle that our schools and colleges are accountable to students not only for developing their problem-solving skills, self-awareness, and social consciousness, but for equipping them as well to earn a living in a personally satisfying career field.

The idea that American education has such an obligation did not begin with me or my stewardship of the U.S. Office of Education. It is a proposition that has been around a long time. As early as 1759, Benjamin Franklin called for a "Public Academy" in Philadelphia that would combine academic and occupational training to give youngsters from low income families the chance to move up the economic ladder and become part of the middle class, then small but growing. Such eminent educators as Dewey and Conant have since advocated much the same approach.

What is truly remarkable about the past two years is the ground swell of enthusiasm and support for career education that has

come from nearly every segment of our national life. In my conversations and correspondence with state and federal legislators, with business, industry, labor and civic leaders, with ethnic and women's groups, with college presidents and professors, with teachers and administrators, and with students themselves, I have noted a genuine, almost urgent, sense of commitment. It is as though everyone had arrived independently but simultaneously at the same conclusion. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to give that concern and commitment a national focus and, in financial terms, a federal thrust that now runs to considerably more than \$100 million a year.

Most heartening of all has been the response of people most directly concerned with making career education a reality—the dedicated men and women who run our schools and colleges, develop curriculum materials, train teachers, and, most important, work with children and young adults.

While I have statistics only on activities involving the Office of Education, I know that thousands of administrators, teachers, counselors, and other school people have given unstintingly of their time and talent to workshops and planning sessions over the past year in an effort to develop and launch effective career education programs at the earliest possible moment. The fruits of their labors will be clearly evident during the 1972-73 school year, as nearly three quarters of a million young people participate in career education demonstrations and models under USOE-supported programs.

Other young people are benefiting from similar efforts under state and local initiatives. The legislatures of Arizona, Florida, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Minnesota, for example, have approved funds to launch career education in local schools on a pilot basis. Dallas, on the other hand, is an outstanding example of a local school system using its own resources to restructure its schools completely around the career education concept.

So I think it is fair to say that the country regards career education as one answer, among many answers, to some of

our more serious social and economic problems, including high unemployment and the attendant problems of disaffection and drug excess among the young. I think it is equally clear that our schools are already moving to put career education into action.

## Toward Career Awareness

What more can the schools do? It seems to me there are a number of ways in which every school principal, teacher, counselor, and other professional staff member can make a significant contribution to the career awareness and preparation of students.

● *Heighten your awareness of career opportunities.* Teaching, perhaps more than most fields, tends to be somewhat insular, in that education students by and large complete work for one or more college degrees only to return immediately as professionals to the schools. Firsthand knowledge of what it takes to be a successful X-ray technician, sales manager, flutist, or forester is necessarily limited. Yet it need not be as limited as it has been. There are people in many different career fields who touch your lives daily, whether you are having the family car repaired, attending a civic meeting, or camping in a national forest. Talking to others about what they do, what they like and dislike about what they do, can provide much practical information you can share with students. Such people are increasingly interested in making themselves available as living resources for the classroom, either on a systematic basis or on call.

● *Strengthen school ties with industry, labor, and other job information sources.* Our secondary schools have an obligation to provide job placement services for those students who do not go on to college. This service is no more and no less than the assistance provided students entering college. It requires close ties with industry, business, and labor to develop a thorough knowledge of present employment opportunities in your community, as well as those foreseen nationally in coming years. Industry and labor are

increasingly interested in sponsoring career fairs in conjunction with schools. State and local employment services will normally do their part. In fact, every state now, with the encouragement of the U.S. Office of Education, has an industry-education-labor coordinator on whom schools can call for help and technical assistance. What is most often needed is school initiative and enthusiasm to put it all together.

● *Acquaint your community leadership with the dollars-and-cents practicality of career education.* At a time when local tax revenues are strained to the breaking point in many communities, the initial per-pupil costs to install career education programs—we estimate about 20 percent more than normal operating costs for the first year or two—may elicit a resolute “We can’t afford it” from your community unless it understands the long-term advantages.

Ideally, career education should help every student find and prepare for a rewarding occupation, whether he leaves high school without a diploma or graduates from college. Even falling short of the ideal, which most human enterprises tend to do, career education by the very nature of its emphasis should help many more young people find their way into productive and satisfying employment than is now the case. Of equal importance to the job itself is the very likely improvement

of teaching effectiveness and student motivation in all classrooms and all subjects.

The resulting decline in unemployment, crime, and welfare cost, coupled with the rise in taxable income, should more than offset the installation costs of career education. A recent study conducted by Henry M. Levin of the Stanford University School of Education for the U.S. Senate’s Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity estimates that inadequate education is responsible for \$3 billion in annual welfare expenditures and another \$3 billion in the cost of crime. Conversely, Dr. Levin says, every \$4 invested in helping a student finish high school will generate \$7 in additional tax revenues.

If you are convinced, as I am, that career education is an important new element in education, that it does point the way to more relevant job preparation for young people and adults, that it does bring improved motivation to all subject areas, then I think you will find yourself in the vanguard of educational change. The leadership which every teacher, administrator, and supervisor brings to this task will bear upon the new shape of education in this decade and beyond.

—SIDNEY P. MARLAND, JR., *U.S. Assistant Secretary for Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C. (as of November 1, 1972); formerly U.S. Commissioner of Education.*

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