



# **What Works!**

**Colorado High School Senior Survey  
1999**

**Initial Results - May 1999  
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## ✦ Acknowledgements

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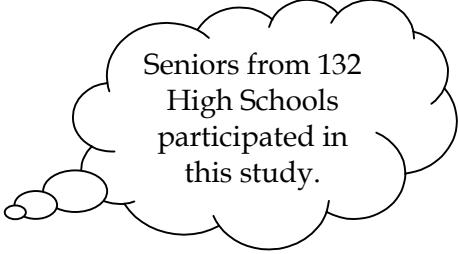
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## ✦ Purpose of the Colorado High School Senior Survey

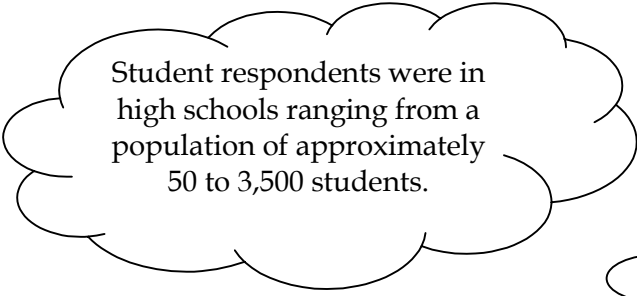
Improving **student achievement** and providing experiences to young adults so they can make important college, career and life decisions are important aspects of today's education. Based on the requests from local school districts and communities the *1999 What Works? Colorado High School Senior Survey* was developed.



Seniors from 132 High Schools participated in this study.

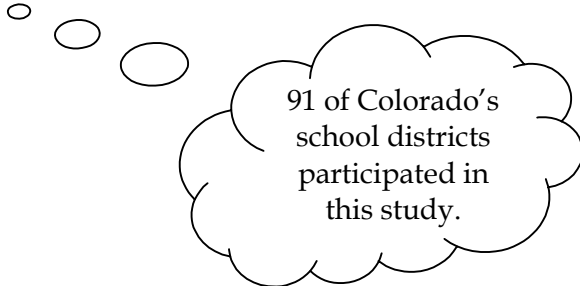
Two important questions were posed in this study.

- What **motivates** today's students in school?
- How **prepared** are these students for their future?



Student respondents were in high schools ranging from a population of approximately 50 to 3,500 students.

The following report provides the first reflections from **8,663** high school seniors regarding their school experiences and plans for the future.



91 of Colorado's school districts participated in this study.

## ✦ Student Motivation

Educators have long struggled to find the “formula” or best model to maximize student abilities and potential. From research during the seventies and eighties, it is now generally accepted that student motivation is one factor that has a positive impact on achievement.

### High school seniors are motivated by classroom instruction that includes . . .

A chance to apply active, hands-on lessons (74%).

Solving real world problems (61%).

“ . . .there weren’t a lot of boring lectures, but rather hands-on activities and lessons that actually apply.”

### High school students are motivated by teachers who . . .

Are knowledgeable (78%) and enthusiastic (80%) about the subject.

Use humor related to the subject (88%).

### Students are motivated to learn when they . . .

Are interested in the subject (96%).

Like the teacher (79%).

See how the class relates to their career interests (62%).

“I liked US History. The teacher was awesome and it was very relevant to my career plans.”

### However . . .

65% of the students are bored in school half or more of the time.

Few consider dropping out.

Only 20% find lectures motivational.

“I thought about dropping out but decided I would rather be bored than stupid.”

## ✦ Career Development and Plans for the Future

Through the implementation of School-to-Career across Colorado, more students have the opportunity to access a broad array of career development experiences. Therefore, it is now possible to study the impact of these on motivation and future plans.

### Students with More Extensive Career Experiences

Comparisons were made between students who did and did not have one or more of the following experiences:

- job shadowing,
- a job connected to a class or school,
- a written academic/career plan,
- participation in a mentorship program,
- working towards certification,
- participation in an internship or apprenticeship program.

"I found I liked Physics because it applied to the career I want to pursue, becoming a pilot."

About one fifth (1,654) of the sample did not have any of these experiences. The demographic information on ethnicity, gender, grades and participation in school activities did not differ between those with these career experiences and those without.

### Students with Career Experiences are More Likely to . . .

Go on to post-secondary education (54%) with three or more career experiences compared to 43% without these career experiences.

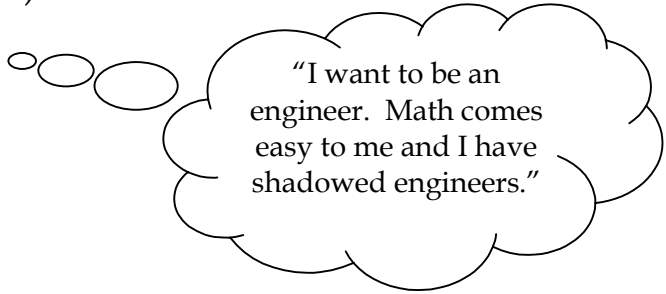
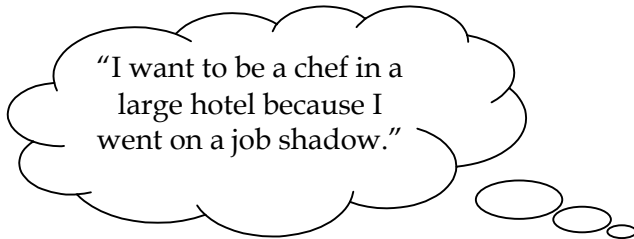
Select a college based on a career area of interest (40%) with two or more career experiences as compared to 28% without.

Select a college major – 38 % with two career experiences, 43% with 3 or more as compared to 28% without.

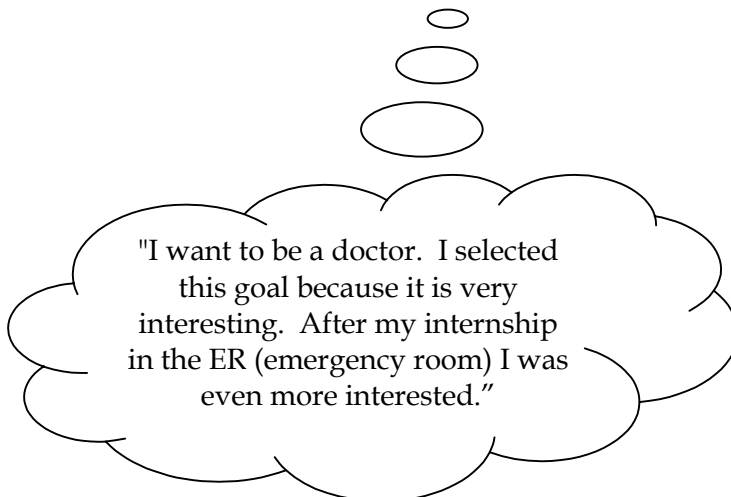
"After my internship at the Molly Brown House and a great history teacher, I am going to major in anthropology and history specializing in museum studies."

## Students with Career Experiences . . .

- Know their career interests and abilities when they have had two or more career experiences (51%) as compared to 36% without.
- Are excited about their future when they have had
  - more than three career experiences (Over 75%)
  - two or three experiences (50%)
  - no experience (43%).



- Students with three or more career experiences are 11% less likely to be bored in school than those without.
- Only 111 students reported that they were never bored in school.
- 42% of students with 2 or more career experiences reported they are never bored or only bored once in a while as compared to 29% without.



## Demographics

### Sample

Over half the school districts in Colorado (52%) participated in this study. Respondents included rural, urban and suburban high schools and districts from every region of the state. The size of the participating K-12 school districts had a student population that ranged from 100 to those with over 65,000. There were 132 high schools that responded. The 8,663 respondents came from high schools ranging from a population of approximately 50 to 3,500 students.

### Student Respondents

Ninety five percent of the sample was 17 and 18 years old with equal male and female representation. Seventy two percent were Caucasian. Sixty five percent reported B's or better with 21% having mostly A's.

	Count	Percent
Number of surveys Completed:	8663	100.0
<b>AGE</b>		
16	110	1.4
17	4249	52.9
18	3393	42.2
19	260	3.2
20	22	.3
21	3	.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8037</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	4069	49.3
Female	4184	50.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>8253</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>ETHNICITY</b>		
White	6059	71.6
Hispanic	1302	15.4
Black	392	4.6
Native American	83	1.0
Asian	242	2.9
Other	388	4.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>8466</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>GRADES</b>		
Mostly As	1789	21.0
Half As & Bs	2221	26.0
Mostly Bs	1530	17.9
Half Bs & Cs	1776	20.8
Mostly Cs	766	9.0
Half Cs & Ds	378	4.4
Mostly Ds or below	70	.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>8530</b>	<b>100.0</b>

STATE DEMOGRAPHICS FOR ALL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS		
<u>Gender</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Male	20,174	50.4%
Female	19,902	49.6%
<u>Ethnicity</u>		
American Indian	355	1%
Asian	1222	3%
Black	1846	4.6%
Hispanic	5534	13.8%
White	31,119	77.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,076</b>	<b>100%</b>



## ✦ High School Experiences

The respondents were asked what types of additional experiences they had participated in during high school. Results show that 98% of the respondents participated in one or more of the listed activities.

“I ended up liking theater class. I didn’t think I could act but I learned that acting is not all there is to a career in the theater.”

### During high school, have you . . .

	Count	% of Cases	% Responding
Taken advanced placement Classes	3923	45.3	46.3
Participated in varsity or intramural athletics	4726	54.6	55.8
Had a job connected to school or a class	1902	22.0	22.5
Had a job related to a career interest area	2467	28.5	29.1
Had a job not connected to School	6095	70.4	71.9
Been involved in student Government	1427	16.5	16.8
Participated in theatre or musical performances	3045	35.1	35.9
Worked as volunteer or in community service	5024	58.0	59.3
Participated in clubs	4371	50.5	51.6
Number responding	8472	97.8	100.0

“I want to be in law, government or politics because of my internship and involvement in student council.”

## ✦ More High School Experiences

The majority of the participating seniors were bored in class half or more of the time. However, students rarely skipped class. Over half responded that either never or only once in a while worked for a better grade.

“My desire to graduate overcame my boredom and distractions.”

### During High School, How Often Did You . . .

	Never	Once in Awhile	Half of the time	Most of the time	Total
Do extra work for a better grade?					
Count	376	4485	2049	1699	8609
%	4.4	52.1	23.8	19.7	100.0
Receive help when requested?					
Count	253	2175	2230	3936	8594
%	2.9	25.3	25.9	45.8	100.0
Feel bored in class?					
Count	111	2856	3332	2302	8601
%	1.3	33.2	38.7	26.8	100.0
Cut or skip classes?					
Count	2661	5004	631	298	8594
%	31.0	58.2	7.3	3.5	100.0
Think about dropping out?					
Count	7122	1097	211	161	8591
%	82.9	12.8	2.5	1.9	100.0

## ✦ Motivation

There are many things that help motivate students to learn. The Survey looked at motivation from three perspectives, personal influence, the role of the teacher and classroom instruction.

"I hated math but I ended liking algebra because my teacher applied it to real life."

### I am motivated to learn . . .

	Count	%
<b>When I . . .</b>		
Am interested in the subject	8215	95.9
Like teacher	6753	78.8
Can seek help	2654	31.0
See the relationship to real world	4766	55.6
See how the class relates to my career interests	5300	61.9
Understand the content's importance	4184	48.8

### When the Teacher . . .

Is knowledgeable about the subject	6598	77.6
Takes a personal interest in me	5265	61.9
Sets high achievement standards	3611	42.5
Shows concern about my education	5632	66.2
Shows enthusiasm about the subject	6802	80.0
Encourages everyone to participate	4816	56.6
Remembers the student's perspective	5122	60.2
Uses humor (related to the subject)	7492	88.1

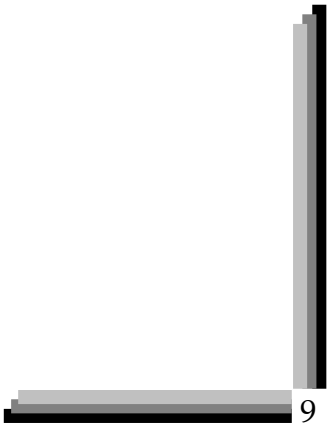
"I liked the class because the teacher was enthusiastic about the subject, joked around with the students and encouraged everyone to participate."

"I found that I liked calculus class. I can actually use the stuff I learned."

**When the class instruction includes . . .**

	Count	%
Completing worksheets	2366	27.8
Solving real life problems	5222	61.2
Setting the subject within the context of life	3966	46.5
Getting involved in community project(s)	2901	34.0
An atmosphere that encourages thinking	4838	56.7
Examples that make the content relevant	3913	45.9
Technology	3813	44.7
Homework	1274	14.9
Variety in how materials are presented	4978	58.4
Listening to lectures	1726	20.2
Active, hands-on chances to apply lesson	6306	74.0
Letting us have assignment choices	4257	49.9
Tests on reading assignments, lectures	1065	12.5
Field trips	6642	77.9
Watching videos	5797	68.0
Applying the lesson in the community or a business	3159	37.1
Number responding	8622	100

" I enjoyed the class because there were a lot of activities to keep me busy so I didn't just sit there and get bored."



**The Career Information or Experiences in High School Helped Me . . .**

	Count	%
Decide to continue education after graduation	4302	52.2
Select a school based on career goals	3267	39.7
Identify a college major	3187	38.7
Decide to go directly to work after graduation	883	10.7
Know my career interests and strengths	4166	50.6
Identify a job based on career interests	2748	33.4
<b>Or</b>		
Information or experience in high school was not available	938	11.4
Career information or experiences didn't help	1100	13.4
Total responding	8361	100.0

**+ Career Development**

"I plan to be a pharmaceutical sales representative because I went on a job shadow."

Ninety percent of the seniors who responded indicated that they had learned about jobs in a class and 85% had learned how subjects are used outside the classroom. About two-thirds had completed a project in which they learned about jobs and had done college planning with a counselor. Half indicated that they would like to do an internship or an apprenticeship.

"I am interested in art. My counselor told me about careers in commercial art."

**Have You Ever . . .**

		Not Done	Done	Would Like To Do	Total
Learned about jobs in class	Count	235	7751	626	8612
	%	2.7	90.0	7.3	100.0
Learned how subjects are used outside of class	Count	424	7291	897	8612
	%	4.9	84.7	10.4	100.0
Toured a workplace	Count	962	4923	2727	8612
	%	11.2	57.2	31.7	100.0
Job-shadowed	Count	1215	4122	3275	8612
	%	14.1	47.9	38.0	100.0
Taken a career interest inventory	Count	1714	4176	2722	8612
	%	19.9	48.5	31.6	100.0
Done a project in which you learned about jobs	Count	1332	5888	1392	8612
	%	15.5	68.4	16.2	100.0
Gone to career fair	Count	1452	4877	2283	8612
	%	16.9	56.6	26.5	100.0
Done college planning with a counselor	Count	1042	5959	1611	8612
	%	12.1	69.2	18.7	100.0
Done career planning with a counselor	Count	1979	3937	2696	8612
	%	23.0	45.7	31.3	100.0
Developed an academic or career plan	Count	2119	3633	2860	8612
	%	24.6	42.2	33.2	100.0
Met with a mentor	Count	2066	3600	2946	8612
	%	24.0	41.8	34.2	100.0
Worked toward certification	Count	2613	2614	3385	8612
	%	30.3	30.4	39.3	100.0
Done an internship or apprenticeship	Count	2343	1982	4287	8612
	%	27.2	23.0	49.8	100.0

## ✦ Differences Between Students with Career Experiences and Those without

Comparisons were made between students who did and did not have one or more of the following experiences: job shadowing; a job connected to a class or school, a written academic/career plan, participation in a mentorship program; working towards certification; participation in an internship or apprenticeship program.

"I have worked on a farm for the last two years and enjoy it more than anything else."

About one fifth (1,654) of the sample did not have any of these experiences. The demographic information on ethnicity, gender, grades and participation in school activities did not differ between those with these career experiences and those without. Of those who had one or more of these career experiences, the students were less inclined to be bored in class. These students were more inclined to:

- pursue post-secondary education
- select a college/school based on their career goals
- select a college major
- know their career interests and strengths
- be less bored in school

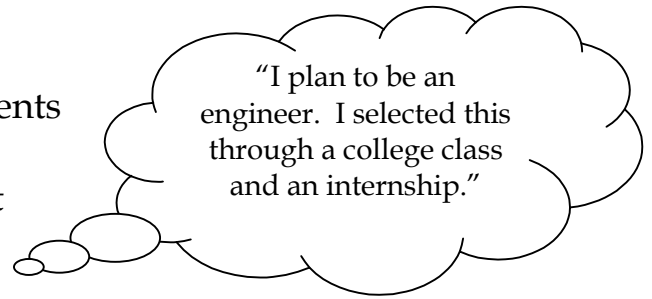
"I selected dentistry because I like science and math. After my internship I feel I made the right choice."

Additionally, students with these career experiences are more excited about their future and more comfortable with their career plan than their counterparts without these experiences.

"I have decided on a career with the airlines through my job shadowing and I also learned a lot from the career fair."

## ✦ Comparisons Between Students With Selected Career Experiences and Those Without

The following tables provide the data on students with one or more of the selected career experiences compared with those who did not have these experiences.



**Students with one or more career experiences are more likely to continue their education after high school.**

Number of career experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number going on to post secondary education	709	977	911	727	483	376	119
Percent	43%	48%	49%	54%	56%	54%	66%

**Students with one or more career experiences are more likely to select a college/school based on career goals.**

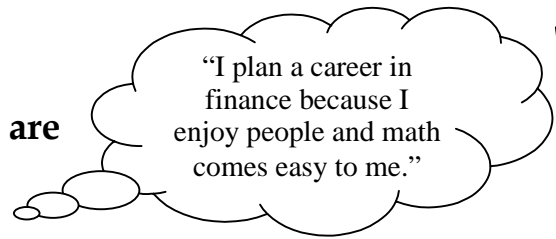
Number of career experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number selecting a school based on career	463	668	746	598	399	305	88
Percent	28%	33%	40%	44%	46%	44%	49%

**Students with one or more career experiences are more likely to identify a college major.**

Number of career experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number selecting a major	454	661	713	581	368	318	92
Percent	27%	32%	38%	43%	42%	46%	51%



**Students with one or more career experiences are more excited about the future.**



Number of career experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number excited about the future	713	1054	1093	857	597	472	136
Percent	43%	51%	59%	63%	69%	68%	76%

**Students with one or more career experiences are more likely to know their career interests and strengths.**

Number of career experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number who know strengths/interests	589	905	959	763	490	362	98
Percent	36%	44%	51%	57%	57%	52%	54%

**Students with one or more career experiences are more comfortable with a career plan.**

Number of career experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number comfortable with career plan	804	1137	1035	817	505	408	109
Percent	49%	56%	56%	61%	58%	59%	61%

"After my internship at Big Brothers Sisters, I decided I wanted to make this my career."

**Students with one or more career Experiences are less unclear about their future.**

Number of career experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number unclear about their future	393	380	336	190	108	83	18
Percent	24%	19%	18%	14%	13%	12%	10%

**Students with three or more career experiences are less likely to be bored in school.**

Number of career experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number <u>never</u> bored or only bored once in a while	478	697	652	506	320	239	75
Percent	29%	34%	42%	38%	37%	35%	42%

Number of career experiences	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number who feel bored in class half or most of the time	1162	1345	1200	837	541	445	104
Percent	72%	65%	65%	67%	63%	65%	58%

"I thought about dropping out because I was bored with school and wasn't really serious."

## ✦ Plans for the Future

Over half of the senior respondents are excited about their future and are comfortable with their career plans. Almost all of these youngsters are taking numerous steps to facilitate their future plans. Most students are about to and/or plan to finish high school, read about a career, take the ACT or SAT, learn about schools or colleges offering a major of interest and gain experience in a paid job.

### Optimism About the Future

"Learning about careers helped me see my strengths and weaknesses."

	Count	%
Am excited about future	4922	60.2
Am comfortable with career plan	4815	58.9
Am concerned, unclear about future direction	1508	18.4
Don't have enough information	709	8.7
Total responding	8374	100.0

The survey asked, *I would feel better if I knew more about . . .*

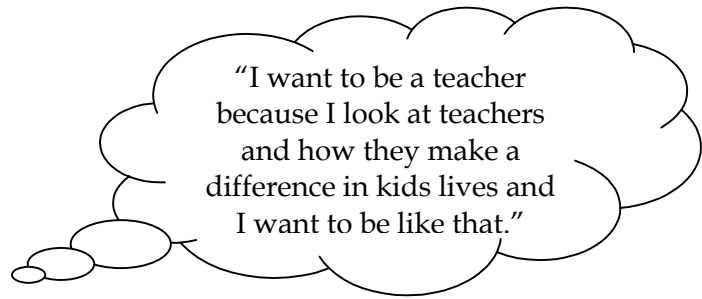
"Career opportunities and options."

"Life and the real world."

## Steps for the Future

	Done, Doing, Or Plan To Do	Not Necessary	Have Not Considered	Total
Finish school & graduate				
Count	8424	10	17	8451
%	99.7	.1	.2	100.0
Do an internship				
Count	4866	1154	1889	7909
%	61.5	14.6	23.9	100.0
Read about a career				
Count	6857	751	515	8123
%	84.4	9.2	6.3	100.0
Save money				
Count	8072	125	122	8319
%	97.0	1.5	1.5	100.0
Take classes				
Count	7401	340	383	8124
%	91.1	4.2	4.7	100.0
Take ACT or SAT				
Count	7446	419	359	8224
%	90.5	5.1	4.4	100.0
Learn about schools or colleges				
Count	7659	304	224	8187
%	93.6	3.7	2.7	100.0
Explore schools offering major of interest				
Count	7338	419	379	8136
%	90.2	5.1	4.7	100.0
Apply to specialized school				
Count	3310	2574	2000	7884
%	42.0	32.6	25.4	100.0
Apply to 2-yr college				
Count	2695	2687	2321	7703
%	35.0	34.9	30.1	100.0
Apply to 4-yr college				
Count	6489	786	772	8047
%	80.6	9.8	9.6	100.0
Apply for scholarships				
Count	6576	732	773	8081
%	81.4	9.1	9.6	100.0
Apply for apprenticeship				
Count	2730	2167	2750	7647
%	35.7	28.3	36.0	100.0
Enlist in military				
Count	941	3502	3358	7801
%	12.1	44.9	43.0	100.0
Set up job interviews				
Count	5296	1347	1295	7938
%	66.7	17.0	16.3	100.0
Gain experience in paid job				
Count	7235	359	456	8050
%	89.9	4.5	5.7	100.0
Get skill certification				
Count	4740	1109	1886	7735
%	61.3	14.3	24.4	100.0

## + Qualitative Results



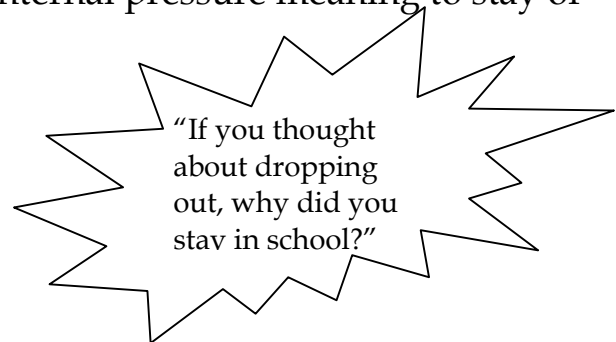
Several open-ended questions were asked in the What Works Survey. The following is an analysis of the Qualitative Results from these portions of the Survey. The information generated from the student responses provides considerable insight into the motivational issues for high school students.

**External** – The student was motivated by external pressure to stay or return to school

- Family, friends and teachers
- Peers
- Participation in sports
- Becoming a parent

**Internal** – The student was motivated by internal pressure meaning to stay or return

- Important to their future
- Achievement of a personal goal
- Taking care of self
- Not wanting to fail



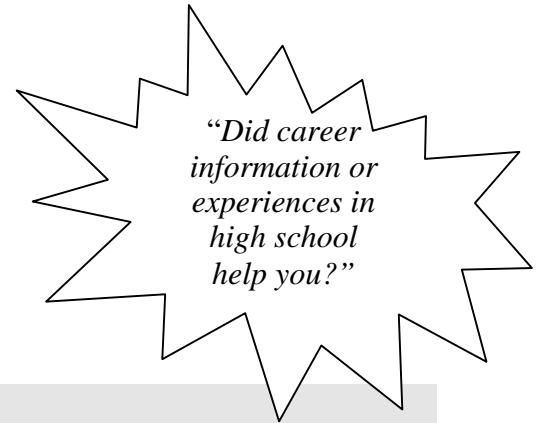
### Student respondents fell into two distinct groups...

1. **Directed:** Those students who know what they want and where they are going. The assistance these students are asking for is a specific road map to reach their goals.
2. **Non-Directed:** Those students that do not have a inkling about their future direction. These students need a process to determine strengths, interests and how it applies to the future.

**Directed:** High school seniors who are directed view college participation as a way to realize their goals. College is a means to an end.

**Non-Directed:** Students who view going to college as:

- A black hole (what is it really like?)
- An extension of high school
- A place to determine their strengths and interests
- A place to go because the student doesn't know what else to do



## ✚ More Thoughts on Motivation

### High school seniors say they are motivated when:

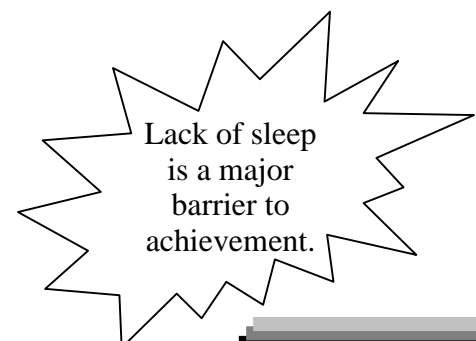
- They have a friend in class. This increases comfort level and = motivation.
- Teachers treat them as adults (almost like peers rather than children).
- The instruction is delivered through a variety of strategies and methods.
- The class is important for their future goals.
- They view the subject as important.
- They experience success and feel they can “do it”.
- When the classroom experience leads to self-knowledge and interest.

### Students find a class interesting when the activities are:

- Hands on
- Fun
- Relevant - applies to life outside of school

### Students are motivated when the teacher:

- Uses many techniques
- Allows time to think and reflect
- Is seen as a good person
- Interested/competent in the subject area



## Students are motivated and feel successful when the class:

- Clicks with their learning style
- Class seems “easy” because of the classroom atmosphere.
  - Everyone was allowed to learn at their own pace and understand the content.
  - Discipline was handled effectively.
  - Students did not feel discouraged.
  - Students were able to “do it.”



## ✦ Conclusion

The qualitative results confront our thinking regarding motivating and engaging students. Friends in class and treating high school seniors less like children and more like adult peers can increase motivation. The results also challenge our practices of preparing students for life after high school. Too many students enter college without direction or purpose. This study provides a wealth of information that can assist educators in re-evaluating their approach to instruction and career planning.

## ✦ Survey Design Process

This Survey was designed through a multi-level process. A design team was convened. Representatives included educators from the state, regional and local levels and educational and university researchers. The items included on the instrument were designed to answer two major questions: *What motivates students in school?* and *How prepared are students for their future?* After a review of the literature and much discussion, a panel of experts including, regional and local School-to-Career coordinators and the design team reviewed a draft form of the survey. Additionally, the instrument was piloted through two focus groups of high school seniors.