

# Holistic Approaches to Career Development of Gifted Students: Embracing Collaboration

Carol Smith<sup>1\*</sup> and  
Susannah M Wood<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Developmentally most individuals will experience the transition from k-12 education into the world of work. This transition may be challenging for most, for gifted and talented students, additional pressures add to the complexity. This brief will examine a holistic approach with all educators assisting with meeting the needs of gifted students.

**Keywords:** Career development; Gifted students; Career interventions

**Received:** September 03, 2021; **Accepted:** September 17, 2021; **Published:** September 24, 2021

## Introduction

Gifted education in the US has centered upon the identification, possible acceleration, and teaching of gifted students all in order to provide the educational services necessary for the academic growth and development of the gifted and talented student. While this information is vital for the gifted students, it is important to fully understand the end goal; to prepare gifted students to fully embrace their talents and determine the direction for their vocation. The career decision making process involve a complex set of variables that one may wish to consider [1].

It is often assumed that cognitively advanced individuals with their many talents and skills are able to navigate this complex process on their own [2]. In actuality, being gifted may have unique considerations that further complicate the career decision making process when compared to their age-related peers. Many unique considerations have been identified, such as: the early emergence of career exploration/interest, mulitpotentiality, outside pressure to pursue a high status career regardless of interest, perfectionistic tendencies, and a myriad of unique contextual factors such as socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. [3-5]. Given the impact that this life choice involves, our gifted and talented students need schools to not only focus on providing adequate academic development, but a deliberate approach to career development that involves the whole child [6].

## Approaches to Career Development

Career development for gifted students needs differentiation in order for students to fully discuss the choices that they face and to sort through all of the unique complexities of the choices ahead for them [7]. For many adolescents this may be the first big

<sup>1</sup>Department of Health and Human Behavior, Viterbo University, La Crosse, Wisconsin

<sup>2</sup>Department of Rehabilitation and Counselor Education, University of Iowa, Iowa

\*Corresponding author: Smith C,

Department of Health and Human Behavior, Viterbo University, La Crosse, Wisconsin,

✉ cmsmith@viterbo.edu

**Citation:** Smith C, Wood SM (2021) Holistic Approaches to Career Development of Gifted Students: Embracing Collaboration. Clin Psychiatry Vol.7 No. S5: 006.

decisions that they make. This process may seem overwhelming to gifted students especially when their choices up to this point have been what classes to take from a defined academic curriculum.

Career counseling is provided to all students with the schools. Each school often develops their own career development curriculum. This curriculum is generally provided in large classroom formats which are not always conducive to the types of individualized discussions gifted students need to sort through their choices. Unsurprisingly, systematic differentiated career counseling for gifted learners is often neglected within our schools. This happens due to a wide variety of reasons. School counselors who have traditionally been tasked with formulating and delivering comprehensive career development in the schools are often overworked and overburdened with many tasks [8] and many school counselors are not aware of the unique career development considerations necessary to assist this population. Often this means that students and their families are left to their own devices or struggle with indecision. For first-generation college students and/or socio-economically disadvantaged students this presents a barrier [9].

What is clear that for gifted students, career counseling is more

that then sum of its parts. For many individuals within school's it is a selection of components that are provided to students, understanding one's abilities/strengths, interest surveys, value exploration and exposure to the work of work through mentoring and/or internships. Differentiating career development for gifted student entails beginning career conversations as early as elementary school. Questions about future careers often occur at younger ages [10] and often develop simultaneously with their recognition of their academic strengths. This creates a process in which gifted students are ready earlier to discuss career possibilities than the districts comprehensive career development plan.

## Conclusion

In addition, providing opportunities for in-depth discussion personalizing career assessments is important. The simple provision of career assessments within a large group setting is often a time efficient way to deliver career development but it is not very effective for gifted students. What gifted students need is an opportunity to sort through all of the information provided and discuss the meaning all of this has for them and their future.

And lastly, school counselors are not the only professionals who can discuss these topics with our gifted students. Teachers and gifted educators can also play a big role. In fact, they are often cited by gifted students as being a source of career information. Encouraging teachers and gifted educators to discuss which careers that are related to their subject areas enables these discussions to flourish. An acknowledgement that this decision while challenging is not an end point but a beginning of a journey. A journey that requires perspectives from many sources, such as parents, teachers, school psychologists, gifted educators and others. It also requires the understanding that it is a series of decisions that is a beginning, not an end point. One that is at times unpredictable and one that can be redirected if the first choice proves not to be ideal.

## References

1. Jung JY (2014) Modeling the occupational/career decision-making processes of intellectually gifted adolescents: A competing models strategy. *J Education Gifted* 37: 128–152.
2. Greene M (2006) Helping build lives: Career and life development of gifted and talented students. *Professional School Counsel* 10:34–42.
3. Muratori MC, Smith CK (2015) Guiding the talent and career development of the gifted individual. *J Counseling Develop* 93: 173-182.
4. Ozcan D (2017) Career decision-making of the gifted and talented. *South African J Education* 37: 1-8.
5. Wood SM, Smith CK, Duys DK (2018) Career counseling and the gifted individual: Applying social-cognitive career theory to the career decision making of gifted individuals. In S. I. Pfeiffer, E. Shaunessy-Dedrick, & M. Foley-Nicpon (Eds.), *APA Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. pp. 629-644.
6. Seward K, Gaesser AH (2018) Career decision making with gifted rural students: Considerations for school counselors and teachers. *Gifted Child Today* 41: 217-225.
7. Smith CK, Wood SM (2020) Supporting the career development of gifted students: New role and function for school psychologists. *Psychol Schools*: 1-11.
8. Anctil T, Smith CK, Schenck PM, Dahir C (2012) Professional school counselors' career development practices and professional development needs. *Career Develop Quart* 60: 109-121.
9. Wood SM, Smith CK (2020) Effective strategies for career counseling of low income gifted learners. In Stambaugh T & Olszewski-Kubilius P (Eds.). *Unlocking potential: Identifying and serving gifted students with low income backgrounds*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press. pp. 211-240.
10. Watters JJ (2010) Career decision making among gifted students: The mediation of teachers. *Gifted Child Quarterly* 54: 222-238.