

---

---

# Teaching Junior-High Students About Careers

## Ideas, Projects, Applications

By Dale Johnson



**F**ar too many students leaving Seventh-day Adventist schools are shocked and confused when they have to apply for a job or make a decision concerning their lifework. Traditionally, our educational system's attempt to avoid such unpleasantness and assist students in career development has followed the practices of the larger society.

In North America prior to the 1950s, vocational decision-making was primarily treated as a one-time event. Preparation for this decision emphasized the collecting of data on

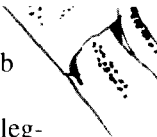
various occupations, assessing individual interests, and trying to match a person's talents with a somewhat congruent job spot.

During the 1950s developmental theorists such as Eli Ginzberg, Anne Roe, Donald Super, J. H. Holland, as well as others, stressed psychological variables affecting career decision-making. Instead of a one-time decision, career choice became part of a lifelong process of human development. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, career development was influenced by the United States' attempt to win the space race; passage of federal manpower development legislation; government aid for students in higher education, mental health, and occupational training; and the civil-rights move-

ment, which stressed equal opportunity and elimination of job discrimination.

During the 1970s federal legislation provided guidelines and requirements dealing with career-development programs in the public schools. Significant increases in the number of college graduates and women in the job market influenced vocational development. Currently, the "Excellence in Education" movement, foreign competition in major manufacturing industries, and advanced technology have influenced all areas of work, vocational decision-making, and career development.

How has the educational system addressed these significant developments? Most career specialists see



---

Dr. Dale Johnson is Professor of Education and Psychology at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington, and has recent experience as an elementary principal.

little integration of career education in grades 7 through 12, with such programs usually separated not only from the subject areas, but also from real-life situations. Most junior-high career programs do not relate to the psychological, cognitive, attitudinal, moral, or vocational development of early adolescents.

According to Ginzberg, the child goes through a fantasy period until the age of 10 or 12. During this time, arbitrary choices lack a rational or realistic base but often reflect idealized concepts drawn from the child's environment. Young children often change their minds from wanting to be a fireman, to a professional baseball player, a carpenter, or a doctor—all within five or ten minutes!

During the tentative period of 12 through 16 or 17, the adolescent begins to recognize and explore personal interests, abilities, and values. Super believes that during the first 14 or 15 years of life, children develop attitudes and behaviors that

---

*Most junior-high career programs do not relate to the psychological, cognitive, attitudinal, moral, or vocational development of early adolescents.*

---

are integrated into their self-concept. Super's theory stresses that experiences gained during this growth stage provide a background of knowledge about one's self, as well as the world of work, both of which ultimately contribute to career decisions. However, if they have only a narrow range of experiences, adolescents may lack an adequate understanding of self or

the world of work and therefore will remain in a fantasy stage.

What type of junior-high career education programs will help solve this problem?

Baker and Popowicz analyzed career education intervention programs from 1972 to 1981, using stringent criteria.<sup>1</sup> They found considerable differences between groups that received career education and those that did not.

Educational programs can help develop career awareness. Useful strategies include vocational exploration, group interaction, the teaching of decision-making skills, interest centers, classroom visitors, field trips, individual counseling, videotaping analysis of television, small group interaction, self-assessment programs, occupational modeling, role clarification workshops, and field exposure. The best way to teach about careers is to ask students themselves to explore and develop questions—and answers—relating to career awareness. This technique will be more likely to stimulate thought and interest than the traditional lecture method

#### **What Questions Do Students Need to Address?**

The questions that should be explored, and some of the activities that can be used are listed below:

##### **1. Who am I?**

The answer to this question comes over a long period of time, but it is necessary to career awareness. Students need to explore many relationships, attempt numerous roles, make many decisions, ask a variety of questions, and find many answers before they begin to narrow their occupational choice. Although during these years young people are continually in the process of change, the questions listed below can help them understand themselves and their relation to the world.

How is my family different from other families? How am I both alike and different from other young people? How am I both alike and different from my parents? What makes me happy or sad? How do I like to spend my time? What do I value most in life? What characteristics do I

---

*The best way to teach about careers is to ask students themselves to explore and develop questions—and answers—relating to career awareness.*

---

admire in significant people? How do I approach problem solving or decision making? What specific skills or capabilities do I have? What kind of life do I want to live? What kind of person do I want to be? What type of people do I like to associate with? What influence do God and my church have on me?

The following classroom activities can help students become aware of how family, school, church, community, work, values, and attitudes influence self-awareness and self-concept, which theorist Super indicates are most important in career development.<sup>2</sup>

- Encourage students to think about the careers of their parents, family, friends, community people, and school personnel. You could ask them to write a report on "If I were \_\_\_\_\_ for a day, these are the things I would do."

- Ask the young people to write or discuss their attitudes toward work within their religious framework. What occupations are acceptable when evaluated within their value system? Specific topics for discussion might include: If one has to work on Sabbath, what should be done with the money earned? What are the responsibilities of husbands and children in a two-career family?

Is it all right to join a union? What religious and moral dilemmas might one face if he or she joined the military to train for a career?

Have students debate the following issues: Should the government require high-school graduates to have a salable skill? Should every able-bodied person in the country be required to work? Who should be required to retrain laborers whose jobs are eliminated by automation? Should stricter or more lenient regulations be applied to social security or unemployment recipients? Such reports can be posted, read to the class, or published in school newspapers.

- Students can write a brief paper summarizing the similarities and differences between themselves and their parents concerning work values. This could also be organized as a debate or panel discussion.

These types of activities will help students develop a better concept of who they are and what they like. In initiating this type of interaction, both teachers and students may need to be reminded to respect different points of view and others' need for privacy.

## 2. How Will I Change?

Junior-high students must learn that life consists of continuous change, which offers the possibility of growth. Adolescents, while deeply involved in their everyday worlds, still realize to some extent that change exists. But teachers and counselors need to stress the "when-I-grow-up" world of the future. Many times junior-high students see the future as a single unit of time that is reached at adulthood when people no longer change. They need to explore the relationship between the here-and-now and the world of the future so that they understand that life consists of both *being* and *becoming*.

A related concept is the dimen-

sion of time, especially in its linear and cyclical aspects. Linear time measures from one point to another and deals with a one-time-only opportunity. Individuals are born only once, die an earthly death once, and are 13 only once, for which most of us are thankful. Cyclical time stresses the recurrence of actions such as starting a new school year, sowing and harvesting, and fishing each year during certain fish migrations. Since all occupations involve both linear and cyclical time, students should understand how such time defines a person's vocational life. To illustrate this concept, you

---

*Students need to explore many relationships, attempt numerous roles, make many decisions, ask a variety of questions, and find many answers before they begin to narrow their occupational choice.*

---

might invite an elderly farmer who has planted crops year after year (cyclical time) but has gradually increased the yield (linear time). The farmer might illustrate the progression by talking about the early years when he tilled with a horse and the ground yielded only about 30 bushels per acre of corn, to the present, when he uses a \$200,000 tractor and harvests 125 bushels per acre.

To help young people relate to change in their own lives, the following procedures can be used:

- Invite a senior citizen to describe the changes that have occurred in local neighborhoods, schools, businesses, and recreational facilities. Old maps and pictures can

help students imagine what the past was like. Identify patterns and have students make specific predictions about changes 5 or 10 years from now.

- Ask students to develop a personal time line on large sheets of paper, recording major events in their lives. Drawings, short descriptive paragraphs, and pictures can offer insights into the change of each individual. Ask students to answer questions such as: What have been or will be the three most important occurrences in my life? How did they or will they change or shape my life? What are the linear and cyclical elements in the time chart? How is my chart similar to—and different from—those of my friends?

- Have pupils give oral or written reports about ways certain occupations have changed in the past 10 years. How will these occupations be different 10 years from now? How has automation affected local, state, and national industries? In what ways might computers change local occupations? What are the implications of the four-day work week, longer school year, employee participation in management decisions, the influx of women into the workforce, and more or less government regulation?

## 3. How Will Society Change?

Individuals are not the only ones who change, grow, and develop; communities and societies do likewise. Current and future occupational trends will shape the world in which the student will live and work. Sometimes these trends are slow and gradual; at other times they are dramatic, requiring quicker and more drastic adaptation.

Planning for the future can help minimize the effects of unpredictable events on our lives. The following activities will help students learn about changes in the world of work.

(To page 37)

and to keep a journal of their activities. All activity takes place after school hours and students provide their own transportation.

### All-School Projects

One or two days each semester can be set aside for student body and faculty participation in a community service-oriented project. These projects may include: a clean-up day when volunteers go out and pick up litter along public roads in their area; a work bee to help a family that has been burned out of their home; a Christmas dinner and party for needy children in the area; or collecting food and then distributing Thanksgiving baskets.

The preceding examples are only a few of the ways academies may incorporate interaction, service, and outreach into their curriculum. Each geographical setting has its unique problems and opportunities, so the possibilities are limited only by the imagination of the faculty and administration and their willingness to become involved.

The key to the success of this curriculum lies in total commitment and cooperation. This should not be difficult to obtain once everyone is convinced of the program's potential to keep young people interested and involved in the mission of the church.

This plan can serve as a valuable addition to existing curriculums, as well as a viable solution to the current problem of youthful disinterest in church activities. As faculty members see that classroom learning is not suffering as a result of time being spent away from school, they will be more likely to give their full support.

Seventh-day Adventist academies are entrusted with the task of training an "army of youth," preparing them to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every nation" (Matthew 24:14). By enlisting the

active involvement of a greater number of Seventh-day Adventist young people in interaction, service, and outreach, we can help preserve the church's most precious resource—our youth. □

---

## Careers

*(Continued from page 15)*

- Have students become acquainted with the development of certain occupations. Items for discussion could include a comparison of which industries or occupations were dominant 5 or 10 years ago, and which are important now. If there has been a change, why? How do community values affect occupations within a community? Conversely, do occupations affect community values? Do parental occupations enhance or diminish students' perceptions of themselves? Ask students to analyze labor management relations, job security, unemployment levels, and job satisfaction within their community. How have changed roles of minorities and women affected the church and community?

- Invite speakers to discuss their occupations with the class. Try to avoid stereotypes. For example, use a male nurse, a female minister, a black businessperson, a Hispanic woman lawyer, a male kindergarten teacher, or a petite woman truck driver.

- Ask older students to spend at least four hours a week for one month getting better acquainted with an occupation they know little about. At the end of the month, they can discuss their discoveries about the occupation—and about themselves.

- Have students discuss how the world of work has changed within the Adventist subculture in the past 20 years. Items to include would be the influence of working mothers on

the family, more affluence within the denomination, the drastic increase in the number of occupations that Adventists enter, the increase (or decrease) in the work opportunities in SDA institutions, implications of broadened participation by minorities and well-trained persons from Africa, Asia, and other countries outside North America in the administration of the church, and other topics. Such activities help dispel fantasies about the world of work and aid students in thinking more realistically about career development.

---

*Many career-related skills such as rational decision making, attitude development or change, and personal adjustment can be taught in school.*

---

A number of books and articles can stimulate discussion about the future. John Naisbitt's *Megatrends: Ten New Dimensions Transforming Our Lives* presents trends that likely will influence our occupational lives in the future.<sup>3</sup> Many of the concepts in his book would be useful topics for research and discussion in the classroom.

### 4. What Basic Background Do I Need?

Even if individuals know their interests and values, they still must have the ability and training to perform certain tasks. For example, a young person may be interested in engineering, but without a good background in mathematics in junior and senior high school, he or she will probably not become an engineer. Tragically, students with

average or above average capabilities sometimes limit themselves by inappropriate decision making or poor study habits. Schools must develop counseling and advising programs to eliminate such problems.

Here are some ways teachers can emphasize the need for adequate academic preparation.

- Have students list every course offered in high school and name five professional, managerial, skilled, and semiskilled occupations that require competence in that subject. For example: English—making reports; professional—writing a journal article; managerial—writing an annual report; skilled—writing a letter to a building inspector requesting a variance; semiskilled—filling out a complex order form.

- Make a chart listing every subject, and have students place newspaper employment advertisements under each heading that contribute skills or knowledge useful to fulfill the job description.

- Relate school activities to adult occupations. How is predicting in science class related to predicting tomorrow's weather or the winner of

---

*When junior-high students think about career information they should not be narrowing their interests or planning for a specific occupation.*

---

next week's basketball game? How is conducting a successful class meeting similar to holding a committee meeting? Have students list classroom activities that lead to adult occupational activities.

- Have students search the newspaper for any reference to jobs that demand a particular character

trait, ability, or motivation. Examples could include physical strength, facility with numbers, a pleasing personality, ability to endure tedious work, perseverance, and organizational skills.

- When students take ability tests in fifth and/or eighth grade, have them plan a course of study for the next two years.

- Ask pupils to review their standardized test scores. If they are not earning grades commensurate with their abilities, ask them to write an essay on potential consequences or to attend several counseling sessions with a teacher, counselor, advisor, or parent to examine possible causes and solutions.

#### 5. What Skills Do I Need?

In addition to academic preparation, many other career-related skills can be taught in school. Rational decision making, attitude development or change, and personal adjustment are a few examples.

Wilms recently reported that the majority of employers (63 percent) regarded good work habits and positive attitudes as crucial to an employee's success on the job.<sup>4</sup> Factors such as following the rules, working hard, and reliability were considered more important in occupational success than technical job skills or linguistic and computational abilities, especially in jobs with very low entry requirements.

Junior-high students often develop misconceived ideas about work; well-planned learning activities can help to change such attitudes. The following exercises can assist students in developing positive attitudes:

- Invite four local employers to present qualities they consider desirable in their employees.

- Have students review the ethics of work as outlined in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

- Since everyone has some inappropriate work attitudes, ask students to list some of their attitudes and then outline a program to eliminate negative and enhance positive ideas about work.

---

*Junior-high students must learn that life consists of continuous change, which offers the possibility of growth.*

---

- Have students interview a successful person from the community and then write an essay indicating what led to the person's success.

- Ask pupils to select one work activity that they dislike and over a two-week period try to develop a new attitude toward it.

Teachers can develop a comprehensive career curriculum by utilizing local resources, free materials, and inexpensive publications from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Department of Education, and the Social Security Administration. For example, recent publications from these federal agencies describe job trends and prospects through the 1980s for more than 250 different occupations; the relationship between future job prospects and education; women's job rights; career opportunities and assistance available to the handicapped; facts about minimum wage, overtime pay, and workmen's compensation; information about the social security system, such as application, eligibility, and benefits; and facts on retirement plans.

#### Conclusion

When junior-high students think about career information they should not be narrowing their inter-

ests or planning for a specific occupation. Rather they should expand their concepts, explore different work tasks, and ask many questions of themselves and others. Such activities can help students develop positive attitudes toward work and assure that they will have pleasant work experiences in later life. □

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Stanley B. Baker and Cynthia Lausberg Popowicz, "Meta-Analysis as a Strategy for Evaluating Effects on Career Education Interventions," *The Vocational Guidance Quarterly*, 31:3 (March, 1983), pp. 178-186.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the career education activities are modifications of ideas presented by Robert Sylvester and Esther Mathews, "Four Big Questions Children Need to Ask, and Ask, and Ask," from *Career Education: A Lifetime Process*, Jack W. Fuller and Terry O. Whealon, eds. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978), pp.109-122.

<sup>3</sup> John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* (New York: Warner Books, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Wellford Wilms, "Vocational Education and Job Success: The Employer's View," *Phi Delta Kappan* (January, 1984), pp. 347-350.

Byington. He was buried in Battle Creek in 1887, at the age of 89.

The home where Martha Byington taught school no longer exists, but her influence lives on. Martha, who outlived all of her students by reaching the age of 103, started what now constitutes the largest parochial school system in the world.<sup>10</sup>

On September 17, 1978, a dedicatory service was held to commemorate Seventh-day Adventist roots in Bucks Bridge. Many people—some with religious connections and others with historical interest—attended the ceremony. Of course, the highlight was the unveiling of the new granite monument placed on the site where the foundation stones of the old structure remain.

The Bucks Bridge monument stands for more than just a church

and a small home school. It signifies a tiny, unknown community making its mark on the world, and the influence of a man who stood by his convictions in spite of the opinions of others. □

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lillian Adams, "Behold, the Stone!" *The Quarterly*, St. Lawrence County (New York) Historical Association (October, 1970), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> John O. Waller, "John Byington of Bucks Bridge—The Pre-Adventist Years." Andrews University, 1978, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Adams.

<sup>4</sup> Waller, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> "The Church Is Organized," *The Story of Our Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1956), p. 216.

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Charles Darling, Bucks Bridge, New York, March 3, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Interview, Donald E. Wright, Superintendent of Education, New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Syracuse, New York, March 1, 1984.

## Behold, the Stone!

(Continued from page 19)

called the "House of Prayer" and was to be the first Seventh-day Adventist church building to be erected by the denomination.<sup>8</sup>

John preached to a congregation of 50 or more followers until 1858. At the request of his close friend, James White, he moved to Michigan with his family. For 15 years, he traveled throughout the state in a self-supporting ministry to boost the Adventist cause. In 1863, he became the first president of the newly formed Seventh-day Adventist Church's General Conference after James White declined to accept the position. John held the post for two years.

John Byington retired in Battle Creek, Michigan. In his later years, followers referred to him as Father

marking the 125th anniversary of the first SDA home school.