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ABSTRACT

The Data-based Course Assessment Method (DCAM) assists curriculum managers in making appropriate program-related decisions. To set the context for DCAM in the Cleveland (Ohio) Public Schools, a study was made of Cleveland's employer/business community attitudes. Five characteristics of Cleveland in the context of the 21st century were examined: population, vocational and career education, school enrollment, economy, and demographic trends. Opinions of 12 business community leaders were obtained through personal interviews. The interview schedule assessed Cleveland community leaders' opinions about the employment picture, community economy, and knowledge of Cleveland jobs. The leaders recognized their own and the community's need for a viable and trained work force. They were doubtful whether vocational and career education is fulfilling its mission. Leaders expected changes to be made by schools; they believed that vocational and career education is central to Cleveland's future. Three directions for the progress of the vocational and career education system were proposed: curriculum changes, a public application of DCAM, and better public information and community access provided to stakeholder groups. (Ten references, the interview schedule for Cleveland leaders, and a list of original nominees for the leadership survey are included.) (NLA)

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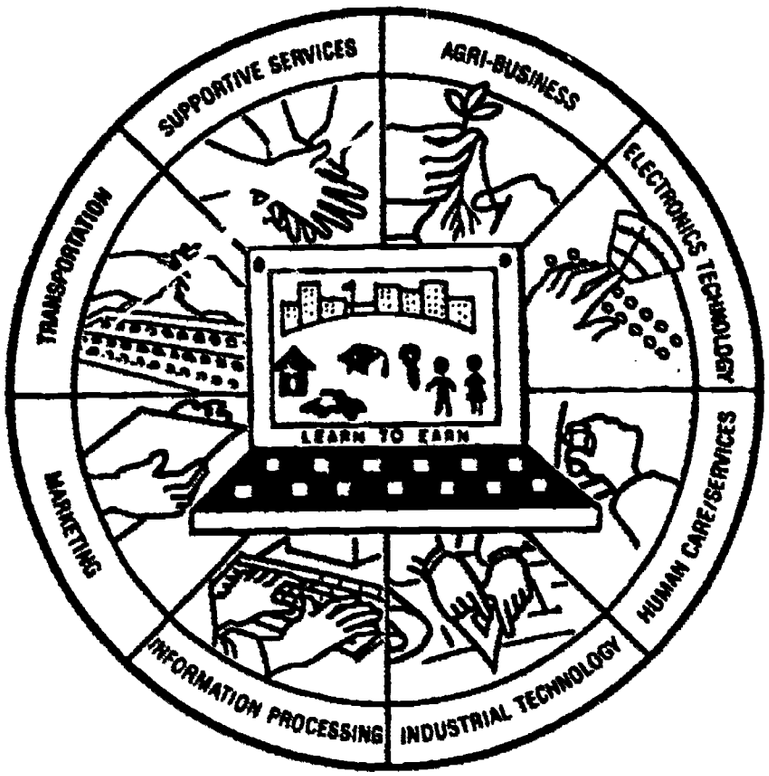
VOCATIONAL AND CAREER EDUCATION



Toward A New Vocational and Career Education in the Cleveland City Schools: A Context Statement for Use with the Data-based Course Assessment Method

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PREFACE

It is an inescapable part of the execution of any project that things do not always go as planned. For the most part, this project was an exception. Through the facilities and support of the Division of Vocational Education, Cleveland City Schools, this project largely did proceed as originally conceived. It was realities external to this effort, some of a personal nature, that delayed the progress of the plan. While these matters had nothing to do with the project itself, they did make an impact regarding the production schedule. Therefore, I would first like to acknowledge and thank Mrs. Casmira DiScipio, Director of the Vocational and Career Education Division for her guidance and support throughout the project and particularly her patience with us at the end. In addition, her staff, led by Mr. Stephen Maiorca, was unfailingly helpful and provided us material and information whenever it was needed.

On the Ohio State University campus, I want to acknowledge Dr. Harold Starr, the guiding light of this overall project, and Ms. Nancy F. Puleo, both of the Center for Education and Training for Employment, for their insights, expertise, and many contributions, not to mention their hard work. As well, the logistics and secretarial responsibilities were ably handled by Ms. Monyeene Elliott during the early portion of the project and by Ms. Anne Miller toward its latter iterations.

The project team also wishes to thank the City of Cleveland and Superintendent Frank Huml for their direction and the opportunity they provided us to freely consider and evaluate the circumstances in the schools. More than any single factor, this openness is the best indicator for the success of any mission. On behalf of The Ohio State University, we have been pleased to participate once again in the growth and support of vocational and career education in Cleveland and look forward to continuing to do so in the future.

Gary M. Grossman
Project Director

INTRODUCTION

The Data-based Course Assessment Method (DCAM) has as one of its principal advantages the ability to include a number of relevant factors and a variety of considerations in assisting curriculum managers to make appropriate program-related decisions. To be sure, many of the factors involved in th DCAM are traditional and predictable in most processes. Questions such as curriculum, enrollment, service accessibility, and equity issues are properly among those items considered.

While these and other factors are certainly important to the delivery of vocational and career education services, there are additional issues which are at **least** as important, but are often not considered in standard planning processes. Assuming educational leaders are aware of those factors, their exclusion may be merely because no technology exists to provide for their efficient consideration. Clearly, DCAM provides one means of doing so. Yet, more is involved in effective planning than simply school-related data and measures. Insofar as DCAM is now available, providing unprecedented power to examine and include a variety of factors, the opportunity exists to consider questions about the environment or context, in which school programs exist.

This report, then, proposes to first establish the community context in which vocational and career programs exist and to argue that it is a decisive factor in program quality and should, therefore, be a key factor in program determination. Secondly, this report outlines some of the critical issues involved in defining and assessing the community context in Cleveland. Finally, the project team makes a number of recommendations for enhancing the receptivity of the local community in order to better secure support for vocational and career programs, a matter which should be of significant concern as program changes are contemplated.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT IN PLANNING FOR CAREER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

This report in no way challenges the importance of "classic" variables in vocational program development. Indeed, concerns about service delivery itself has to be considered as the ultimate goal of the planning process. However, no matter how valuable a curriculum, no matter how well balanced a classroom is in terms of relevant population subgroups, and irrespective of the relative availability of funds, **it is inescapable that the community, broadly considered, will become the ultimate arbiter of a program's quality and acceptability.** By this, the project team means not only the "public" immediately served within a school's or district's direct service area, but also those "publics" served for years to come that may reside well beyond the geographic borders of a service population. Indeed, it is this larger "public" or community in which the value or merit of any educational program will be judged, whether or not this judgement is perceived by educators to be "factually"- based or not, and independent of whether the school or district leaders approve of this judgement. It is the one factor (i.e. set of factors) which cannot be directly controlled through the routine organizational decision-making process, yet ultimately controls the process itself. To fail to include this factor into the calculus of program determination is a huge risk, the price for which has been levied by school districts across the nation in recent years.

This case can be made, of course, for any portion or level of the educational enterprise, whether we are speaking of Head Start or post-secondary education. It becomes most crucially the case, however, in vocational and career education, where its "products" are viewed in their most economically relevant sense. In fact, workers are delivered to its "customers", i.e. employers in the geographic region, who necessarily "evaluate" their adequacy on a constant basis. They are either accepted and used by these consumers, through employment, or are rejected. Once employed, they are perceived to be a reflection of the quality of the training they receive. Over time," consumer" (employer) experience with these products form into attitudes toward the vocational and career programs that developed them. These attitudes ultimately

coalesce to establish and define the nature of external support for vocational education. These "consumer" attitudes, therefore, become matters of high salience for the planning process if only from a purely market-oriented perspective.

The economics of planning in vocational and career education is, naturally, of importance. Yet there is another feature worthy of consideration as well, beyond a purely materialistic interpretation of the marketplace. All of education is, in some sense, a promise to students. Once again, this is perhaps most true regarding vocational and career education. Its promise is that students, upon program completion, will be individuals skilled in at least one area of job competence, most preferably that those skills will be transferable to a number of other emerging occupational areas. Thus, students will be able to respond to changes of the marketplace, and to fashion a career out of the training received in school.

Further, as change is inevitable, and the marketplace extremely volatile, we have in effect made a commitment to the workers of the future as well as those of the present. Though all learning is indeed lifelong, occupational training particularly in need of constant renewal and that training available from a number of entities, the foundation for effective adaptation to the workplace of the future must be provided by vocational education in the schools if it is to be of any value. That vocational education exists, therefore, is a serious commitment on the part of a school district to the community. If kept, this promise is a message of hope, particularly for many of the urban, inner city youth who compose much of the enrollment in vocational and career education, both in Cleveland and across the nation. This much more humanistic interpretation is certainly part of the educational mosaic, or context, that vocational and career education must factor into its planning process. It is also a principal consideration to the community as it is the basis for its investments, financial and otherwise, from both employers and the balance of the public.

Clearly, the "humanistic" and the "materialistic" interpretations differ greatly in their point-of-view and, arguably, ethical foundations and expected curricular outcomes. However,

they share a key similarity: they both depend for their viability on a supportive community. Thus, while unemployment rates, demographic trends, national and state education policy, and other factors are worthy of note, the success or failure of a vocational program is ultimately a function of community support, particularly the support (i.e. enthusiasm) of the employers. The centerpiece of any context statement, then, regarding the environment in which vocational and career education exists is an accurate determination of those levels of relevant community support.

Based on these considerations, this report will emphasize an examination of the attitudes of the employer/business community. Indeed, while other data will be incorporated into its foundation, we recognize that the most important issue here is support of employers for vocational and career education in Cleveland. Therefore, other information will be utilized to as a backdrop to clarify or underscore the points made by employers.

Prior to a thorough review of the results of this project's original survey of the employer sector, a deeper understanding of the Cleveland community may be helpful. The following section presents this discussion in brief.

CLEVELAND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 21st CENTURY

Cleveland is one of the great American cities. Rich in a highly diverse cultural milieu, historically noted for the incorporation of many people into the American society and workforce, and home of a number of individuals who have redefined and transformed the quality of life of all Americans, few can question the productivity of the people of Cleveland or their ability to meet a challenge when appropriate resources exist to do so.

And the city faces many challenges today, as do other American cities. In this regard, the factors defining the life of the City of Cleveland and its surrounding metropolitan area are neither new nor unusual. To be sure, almost anything that can be said about Cleveland in the 1990's is applicable to virtually any major city in the north central region, if not the entire United States. These topics will be covered in order.

Population

Cleveland is experiencing a reasonably dramatic population decline, losing about 1/8 of its population between 1970 and 1990 (Bureau of the Census 1991). Recent projections by the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Council (1988) indicate a generally faster rate of decline within the city limits themselves, anticipating a further loss of 90,000 people between 1990 and 2005. However, Cleveland's percentage of minority residents is generally increasing, with Black and Hispanic persons exceeding 20% in the Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA), and a much greater percentage in the urban center. Indeed, the Hispanic population is the fastest growing single population group in the area (Dentler, et al 1987; Stephens and Weinberg 1985; Bureau of the Census 1991).

Birth rates, an important factor in educational planning, shows mixed results. Single parent homes and teenage parenthood in the central city are increasingly normative, particularly in comparison to other Ohio cities (Bureau of the Census 1991). Yet, the trend of live births as a whole is generally downward. Likewise, Clevelanders are a population that is aging somewhat more rapidly than is the norm in other Ohio cities.

In sum, Cleveland is losing population and those that are remaining are a higher percentage minority than in the past. Yet, while raw numbers of people are declining, the numbers of potentially at-risk youth is becoming one of the fastest growing elements in the city population.

Vocational and Career Education in the Cleveland Schools

The presence of the school district in a major American city necessarily suggests that there will be a certain demand upon it for assisting the population gain access to a broad range of prospective employment opportunities. Indeed, employment opportunity is obviously a function of conditions of the local economy. However, a certain level of employment is necessary in order to keep the city and its businesses functioning. This establishes a base-line of employment over time. Thus, the continued presence of vocational and career education services is entirely appropriate given the existence of a core labor demand in the community. Its requirements for sustenance and support are, therefore, entirely reasonable.

To the extent possible, the vocational and career programs have directed their emphases toward growth sectors in the local economy, such as medical and business-supporting industries. Services are delivered through 127 schools and are designed to, in the words of the school district, "prepare all students, beginning in the elementary years, with in-depth career awareness, career orientation in the intermediate grades, and (occupational) exploration experiences in high school." Students who are age sixteen or older by their entry year can apply for vocational job preparation courses, including applied academics, preparing them for either employment or continuing education upon graduation. Job preparation courses are organized into seven career clusters, including:

- Agri-business
- Electronics Technology
- Human Care/Services
- Industrial technology

- Information Processing
- Marketing
- Transportation

These courses are offered in both the twelve comprehensive high schools as well as in four magnet schools around the city.

School Enrollment

School enrollment is declining at a rate one might expect given the general population trends. In the Cleveland area as a whole, area schools in the past served about 314,000 in 1980 (Bureau of the Census 1991). By 1987, schools in the Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) enrolled about 16% (50,000) fewer students. Cleveland City Schools represent 25-30% of this enrollment (Ohio Department of Education 1989), and it is logical to assume that the rate of enrollment decline within the city was at least as high as within the PMSA. Approximately 44% of the graduates in the city schools went on to college, the fourth fewest number among all Cuyahoga County school districts and well under the statewide average for high school graduates (Ohio Department of Education 1989). These data clearly support the notion that a strong vocational and career program is of vital concern to the future of the city and the area, as a very high percentage of students (not to mention school-leavers) must be prepared to work upon graduation.

Economy

The overall employment data show relative stability over recent years. As a general rule, unemployment within the PMSA has tended to run higher than in the United States as a whole, but lower than the general tendency in the state of Ohio (Ohio Bureau of Employment Statistics 1990). Recent estimates, while holding true to the same general trends, show unemployment within the area to be on the increase (The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Cleveland 1991; Ohio Bureau of Employment Statistics July 1991). (NOTE: Cuyahoga County, while a large

portion of the PMSA, does not represent the entire area. Unemployment tends to run about 1.0% higher in the county as compared to the rest of the region.)

The economic base of the area has a growing service sector, service employment exceeding the traditional manufacturing base by approximately 10% in 1988, a margin that has increased each year (The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Cleveland 1988). While this has helped to maintain overall employment levels stable within the region, it has also had a generally depressive effect upon wages in real dollar terms (The Chamber of Commerce 1991; Bureau of Labor Statistics 1992).

While the employment levels themselves provide some encouragement, it should be a matter of concern that at least a significant portion of the occupational structure appears headed for the "low skill/low wages" outcomes many fear. Obviously, a vital vocational and career education program in the city schools can be a partial remedy to this tendency.

Discussion of Demographic Trends

Clearly, the Cleveland area's economic base is in transition, from one emphasizing manufacturing to an environment which can be loosely termed "post-industrial". Job growth and job elimination are in a rough balance, albeit the geographic location of the former tends toward the edges of the urban area while the latter is concentrated in the urban core. Thus, pockets of economic and social development are surrounded by areas of urban disintegration. The Cleveland City Schools, a principal institutional expression of the urban center, is obviously affected by these social and economic processes, but just as clearly, contributes to them. In short, the realities of life in Cleveland and in the Cleveland City Schools are not on their face different than the processes occurring elsewhere. If one knows the processes and development of urban America, one largely understands Cleveland.

A caveat is in order here. While the foregoing analysis is accurate, simply noting these trends is not, by itself, helpful unless what one proposes to do is to simply become reconciled to having few opportunities available for an ever larger segment of the Cleveland population and

settling for fewer and fewer students to instruct in the schools. If that is the reality we choose, this analysis itself is sufficient. Left to itself and without intervention, the city will cease as a viable economic and social entity, taking the schools with it as the tax base erodes. Trends being what they are, a near certainty exists that, given business as usual, the fabric of community life and relationships is doomed. As population and jobs leave the city proper, opportunities for youth (i.e. graduates of vocational programs) decline as well. This is, of course, already taking place. It takes no great visionary to predict an acceleration of these trends if no further attempt is made to address them. And even if a stable unemployment rate exists, it is of little value in planning if one's students cannot even get to the jobs themselves due to a lack of transportation. And even this fails to mention the decline of real wages.

What then, can the city schools do? The following section presents the case for vocational and career education as a community asset. This is followed by an examination of the current level of employer support as an indicator of the prospective willingness of the business community to invest further.

VOCATIONAL AND CAREER EDUCATION AS A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT SURVEY OF CLEVELAND AREA LEADERS

As previously discussed, a central consideration in the development of any curriculum in vocational education is the attitudes of the business community, which, one presumes, hire or would hire program completers. Indeed, the extent to which the business community view the program as useful, appropriate to local conditions, and worthy of their continued investment is crucial to its support. Further, as the changes would be needed in the vocational curriculum, these leaders could be utilized as resource persons, ensuring that those changes could gain support in key constituencies. Accordingly, the project team sought the opinions of leaders in the business community concerning specific issues involving the delivery of vocational education services in the Cleveland City Schools and the direction it should proceed in order to serve their interests, which, from this point of view, would be the best interests of the entire community.

The survey list was generated by the staff of the Division of Career and Vocational Education of the city school district. From an original list of fourteen persons, the project staff was able to successfully complete 12 personal interviews, the remaining two either having time conflicts on those days or refusing for other reasons. No replacements for these individuals were provided. The interviews were conducted September 24-26, 1991.

It might be useful at this point to comment on potential biases contained within the sample. For surveys to be conducted from a sampling list generated by the sponsor is always a high risk proposition in terms of bias. It would be a common objection that any organization would tend to nominate its "friends" to provide data on its performance. However, for the purposes of this study, it was an absolute requirement of the project that respondents from the business community have a relatively high degree of knowledge about and experience with the vocational programs of the city schools. Otherwise, of course, they would hardly be in a position to comment usefully about the program. The study, therefore, had to risk some bias in order to accurately reflect the population sought. Proximity to programs itself does not and did not

necessarily indicate a favorable bias. Indeed, strong opinions were expressed and emerged at both ends of the attitudinal spectrum.

Likewise, these individuals, most of whom (80%) had hired graduates of the program, were those that would likely have a significant role in any process of change. Further, those who refused to participate showed no systematic tendency to decline as a direct consequence of their attitudes toward the program; indeed, in only one case did any person contacted refuse for a program related reasons. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the data hardly show any unanimity of opinion, much less universal approval or support for the vocational education program in Cleveland Schools. This point will be shown rather dramatically in the data themselves.

Thus, while the project team cannot rule out tendencies toward systematic bias in the data, i.e. we cannot establish the positions of those to whom we had no access, the overall patterns of response do not suggest this as a substantial limitation of the usefulness of the data. Indeed, those who state concerns about the program may have to be taken much more seriously, insofar as they have significant knowledge and/or experience about the programs about which they are commenting.

The Leadership Survey

The twelve respondents composed a fairly representative cross section of business leaders in the Cleveland area. They represent both large and small business and roughly reflect the ethnic and gender composition of the community leadership. As previously indicated, these respondents were drawn from a list of fourteen individuals having established relationships with the Cleveland City Schools' Vocational and Career Education Division. A presentation of a version of interview schedule and relevant responses are presented in the following. A discussion of key findings will be presented subsequent to the data.

TABLE
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CLEVELAND LEADERS

Your name has been suggested to us by the Cleveland Public Schools as someone who knows a great deal about your community and about vocational education in the schools. Please consider each question we ask carefully and give us your frank assessment of the employment and training conditions as they exist today and as you believe they will exist in the future.

We assure you that all of the information you provide will be held in the strictest confidence. Your name will not be used in any way in the final report, except that you were one of a number of people who spoke with us. As we are interested only in the collective responses of a group of individuals, none of your answers will be in any way associated with your name.

This interview should take 20-30 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

First, we would like your opinions about the employment picture and economy in the community as a whole.

		Responses	Percentage
1.a	In the next 5 years, do you believe that the local economy will:		
	Improve	7	58.3%
	Get worse	0	0.0%
	Stay about the same	5	41.7%
	Don't know/not sure	0	
b.	Why?		
	Improve 1. Service sector growing	3	
	2. Corporate structure of city	1	
	3. The economy is already down so badly	1	
	4. Commercial sector growing	1	
	5. Hi-tech core will sustain growth		
	Stay the Same		
	1. Can't get worse	2	
	2. Positive but slow	1	
	3. Change but no net gain	1	
2.a	In the next 5 years, do you believe that the number of jobs available to people will:		
	Increase	7	58.3%
	Decline	2	16.7%
	Stay about the same	3	25.0%
	Don't know/not sure	0	
b.	Why?		
	Increase 1. Service jobs will grow	2	
	2. More jobs, less dollars	1	
	3. More construction	1	

		Responses	Percentage
Decline	1. Technology will eliminate jobs	1	
	2. Fewer business opportunities	1	
Same	1. Can't get lower	1	
	2. Adjustment problems–service vs. industry	1	
	3. Trade off–service job increase/ manufacturing job decline	1	

3.a Speaking about employment, a lot of people say that the type of jobs that will be available in the future will be different than they are today, no matter what else happens. With respect to this position, do you:

Disagree–Go to Question 4	2	16.7%
Agree	10	83.3%
Don't know/not sure	0	

(If "Agree" on 4a)

b. What kinds of changes will there be?

1. Education requirements increase/change	3
2. Service jobs	4
3. Jobs themselves will change	2

4.a Currently, a number of organizations and agencies are responsible for training workers for jobs. Given how you see the future, which of the following should be most responsible for training these workers (indicate all that apply:

Public schools	10	66.7%
Private schools	0	0.0%
Colleges/Universities	7	58.3%
Trade schools	4	33.3%
Employers	4	33.3%
Unions	3	25.0%
Government programs	1	8.3%
Other (specify: Family/home)	4	33.3%

b. Why is this (these) group(s) most responsible?

1. System already place
2. Different types of job training needed
3. Others too political
4. Reaches most people
5. Employers most important
6. Career awareness should start early
7. Public school system atrocious/defunct
8. Society doesn't want schools to do this

		Responses	Percentage
c.	In your opinion, does (do) this (these) group(s) need to change in any way to fulfill this responsibility?		
	Yes	10	83.3%
	No	2	16.7%
	Don't know/not sure	0	
d.	What does (do) it (they) need to do differently?		
	1. More time on skill development, e.g., employability	2	
	2. Schools terrible–need to improve	5	
	3. Political system corrupt	1	
	4. Partnership across groups	2	
	5. Employers need to "get it together"	1	
	6. Clarify relationship of programs to real demand	1	
5.a	Speaking of the nation's public schools, a great deal of attention has been given to vocational education. In general, would you say that the amount of attention given to vocational education is:		
	Too little	7	63.3%
	Too much	0	0.0%
	About right	4	36.4%
	Don't know/not sure	1	
b.	Why?		
	1. Good mix of attention (About Right)		
	2. Overemphasis on outdated skills (Too Little)		
	3. Public should change attitude (Too Little)		
	4. Must move toward specific skills (Too Little)		
	5. Individual student needs (Too Little)		
6.a	Regarding the public schools in **Cleveland**, would you say the amount of attention given to vocational education is:		
	Too much	0	0.0%
	About right	5	45.5%
	Too little	6	54.5%
	Don't know/not sure	1	
b.	Why		
	1. Syster has severe problems (Too Little)	4	
	2. Good ix of attention (About Right)	1	
7.	Which statement best represents your opinion about vocational education in the Cleveland schools?		
	- The school system is doing an excellent job of training Cleveland's future workers	0	0.0%
	- The school system is doing an adequate job of training Cleveland's future workers	4	33.3%

	Responses	Percentage
- The school system is doing neither a good nor a poor job of training Cleveland's future workers	3	25.0%
- The school system is doing a somewhat poor job of training Cleveland's future workers	0	0.0%
- The school system is doing a very poor job of training Cleveland's future workers	5	41.7%
- Don't know/not sure	0	
8. In your opinion, how appropriate is the vocational curriculum for the jobs you see being available in the future?		
Very appropriate	1	8.3%
Somewhat appropriate	2	16.7%
Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	2	16.7%
Somewhat inappropriate	3	25.0%
Very inappropriate	4	33.3%
Don't know/not sure	0	
9. In which vocational areas do you believe more support should be given in the Cleveland public schools?		
1. Machine trades	5	
2. Medical jobs	2	
3. Printing	1	
4. Music appreciation	1	
5. Computer/data processing	1	
6. Drafting	1	
7. Service jobs	1	
8. Electronics	2	
10. Which vocational areas should receive less support?		
1. Secretarial jobs	1	
2. Auto mechanics	2	
3. Aviation	2	
4. Landscaping	1	
11.a Have you ever hired a student who had completed a vocational program conducted by the Cleveland public schools?		
No–Go to Q. 12	2	20.0%
Yes	8	80.0%
Don't know/not sure	2	
b. How may students who completed vocational programs have you hired in the past two years?		
1	3	37.5%
2	1	12.5%
3	0	0.0%
4	2	25.0%
Don't know/not sure	2	

	Responses	Percentage

Regarding the student you most recently hired:

c. What vocational program did this student study when she/he was in high school?

Secretarial/office	3	
Carpentry	1	
Computer	1	
Auto	1	
Printing	1	

d. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very bad and 5 being very good, how well did this student's skills meet the job requirements?

Very bad	0	0.0%
Somewhat bad	1	11.1%
Neither	4	44.4%
Somewhat good	3	33.3%
Very good	0	0.0%

Now, we would like to ask you some questions about jobs in Cleveland.

12. In your opinion, in which industry or industries will the greatest job growth take place in the next 5-10 years?

Service	9
Information/Computer	3
Electronics	1
Light manufacturing	1
Health	1

13. What specific skills do you see as being most needed by these jobs?

Basic skills	3
Employability	5
Communication	5
Computer	1
Problem-solving	1
Job specific	3
Don't know/not sure	0

14. In what geographic areas of metropolitan Cleveland will these jobs be located?

Suburbs	9
Downtown	6

	Responses	Percentage
15. Is there any other information about jobs or education in Cleveland of which you think we ought to be aware?		
Need regular evaluation of school programs	1	
Cleveland has terrible schools	1	
Teachers need support	1	
Kids/families are at fault	1	
Improve city-suburban transportation	1	

Observe and Note (Do not ask)

1.	Hiring authority	Yes - 7
		No - 4
2.	Size of Company [Small (100 employees or less); Medium (100-500); Large (500 +)]	Large - 5
		Medium - 2
		Small - 5
3.	Race/Gender/Ethnicity of respondent	w/m - 8
		w/f - 1
		b/m - 2
		b/f - 1
4.	Time of interview	

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS: CLEVELAND LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Analysis

The first set of issues addressed in the survey dealt with the condition of the local economy and the availability of jobs in near future. For the most part, Cleveland leaders reported more optimism than is generally believed to be in the nation as a whole, with roughly 60% of the sample anticipating improvement in the local economy, and about 40% expecting that things would stay about the same (Q 1.a). No one expected conditions to get worse, although three respondents suggested that things were so bad at present, either improvement or the status quo were the only available possibilities (Q 1.b.). Most of those who believed that conditions would improve identified some area of growth, principally in the service areas. Logically enough, the same seven respondents suggested that the number of available jobs would increase locally, for essentially the same reasons (Q 2). As such, it would be reasonable to conclude that the business leaders were at least guardedly optimistic about the future.

Regarding the type of jobs that would be available, 80% of the sample stated that the types of jobs would change, the nature of which involved their structure and the requirements needed to do them (Q 3). Indeed, these "new" jobs require changes in the training process, leading project staff to inquire as to the locus of responsibility for this training (Q 4). While there was some scattering of responses, this was due to the structure of the question which permitted multiple responses. Indeed, well over half the sample identified the public schools and colleges and universities as the principal means of training new workers in the future. Fully 2/3 of the sample saw identified public schools as being most responsible. Reasons for this varied, but seemed to emphasize the availability and presence of the public schools, and their historical role of their involvement. Others, such as proprietary schools, employers, and unions, gathered some support, their rates of identification did not come close to the representation of the public schools.

Having identified the responsible parties, the respondents were asked to assess the degree to which things would have to change (Q 4.c.) to meet the requirements of the future. 83.3% of the sample reported that things would indeed have to change, the school system most prominent among them. Over 1/3 of the sample reported that the public schools themselves had to improve, some of whom referred to it as "terrible". Surprisingly few identified the introduction of differential employment/employability skills or other curriculum-related responses. Clearly, respondents were seemingly referring to a rather more encompassing contextual change as opposed to changes in course content.

The project team then turned the attention of the respondents to vocational education specifically. By approximately the same margins, respondents reported that vocational education at both the national and local levels should receive more attention that they currently get (Q. 5-6). Leaders were concerned that the skills with which the curriculum dealt were outdated and lacked specificity. Significantly, most of those that identified problems with regard to the Cleveland schools (66.7%) identified some level of "severe problems" in the system. The project team then pursued this issue with a series of questions concerning the nature of the problem and what the respondents would propose to do about it.

Question 7 pursues the question by asking respondents to support one of five statements about vocational education in Cleveland. No one thought that an "excellent" job was being performed, and only 1/3 of the leaders believed that the performance of the division was "adequate". By contrast, the largest single response (41.7%) believed that the school system was doing a "very poor job" in this area, and another 25% were neutral. This position was more clearly established with subsequent questions concerning the linkage between the vocational curriculum and jobs (Q 8). Seven of the twelve respondents (58.3%) found the curriculum "very" or "somewhat" inappropriate. Only 25% believed the curriculum was relevant to today's employment needs.

Questions 9 and 10 pursue areas in which the curriculum needs to expand or, alternatively, reduce its involvement. Increased activity in machine trades area was the most often recommended, other areas receiving a scattered response. Alternatively, some of the more classic vocational areas–auto mechanics, secretarial, and, for Cleveland, aviation, were nominated for lesser investment.

The next series of questions dealt with the personal experience of the leader with the products of Cleveland's schools. Most (80%) had hired at least one vocational program completer, and several had hired others. The dominant area of employer interest was in the business/office area. Generally, these employees seemed to perform reasonably well, with leaders regarding the graduates somewhat positively. Thus, it appears that little of the negative response to the vocational program emerged as a consequence of direct experience with the "products" of the system.

Finally, respondents were asked about jobs and job growth in Cleveland. Nearly all expected service sector jobs to grow, reinforcing earlier finding developed through the open-ended questions (see Appendix I). The specific skills required to do these jobs focused on employability and communication skills primarily, with some, but substantially less, support for basic and job specific skills. Geographically, leaders expect present trends to continue, the majority of the job growth occurring in suburban "beltway" areas, with somewhat fewer predicting a continued development of the downtown area.

The next section will address the meaning of these data and their linkage to the discussion in earlier sections.

Interpretation

In order to clearly understand the importance of the data from the Leader survey, it must be recognized that the study team does not purport to define the responses of the leaders as "objective" in nature. That is, the case was made that the perceptions of the business community are an important fact, arguably **the** important factor to incorporate in the planning process. It is,

of course, not the only factor and theirs need not be considered the only reality to be taken into account. However, given the previous discussion it is only ignored at great risk to vocational and career education and, ultimately, to the futures of many young people. As such, the project team took these responses very seriously and suggests strongly that the Cleveland City Schools do the same.

The leaders in the survey had a variety of notable responses. First, they recognize their own need and that of the community as a whole for a viable and trained workforce for the 21st century. They recognize the problems of the city and relationship between employment opportunities and the quality of life. Moreover, it is clear that the public schools have a very clear, even dominant role in training Cleveland's workers of the future and that it should be an asset for the economic development of the community. Thus, that portion of the foundation is firmly established.

The rest is less clear. There appears to be considerable doubt as to whether vocational and career education in the Cleveland City Schools is presently fulfilling its mission and whether it could do so in the future. Somewhat surprisingly, this attitude emerges in at least some contrast to the personal experiences of the Cleveland leaders themselves with program completers. Nonetheless, however baseless the attitudes of the leaders may be, there is the belief that the city schools are failing in this critical responsibility.

It can further be stated that the leaders expect changes to be made by the schools. While their specific direction is unclear, more attention to communication, employability, and basic skill development seems apparent. Moreover, the leaders seem to insist that vocational and career education deserves much more attention than it receives, in proportion to its responsibilities. And its responsibilities, according to the leaders are difficult to overstate. Clearly, leaders of the Cleveland business community regard vocational and career education as being central to the future of the City of Cleveland.

TOWARD A NEW VOCATIONAL AND CAREER EDUCATION IN CLEVELAND

The problems of the American city are many. New economic, social, demographic, and political realities are changing the face of urban life. Caught in this maelstrom, and partially creating it, is American education. It is at once held responsible for the solution to these new and emerging problems, and it also is affected by their processes themselves. To be sure, the condition of the American system of education is not to be envied. As community expectations rise, the difficulty in meeting these demands creates an atmosphere of failure in the community, in the school system, and in students themselves.

At the very front lines of the battle stands vocational and career education. It is charged, more than any other element in the schools, to be the direct agent of transmission between the school and the community. Its "products" are consumed by the public far earlier than are those of the higher education system. In many cases, the special needs of poor and minority youth and their families are its responsibility. As such, it becomes the symbol and takes the blame for a disproportionate share of what is perceived to be "wrong" with American education.

These processes are at work across the country, sparing few areas of the nation but nowhere more prominently than in the urban areas of the north central region. Not surprisingly, then, the situation one finds in Cleveland is hardly unique. However, they are especially important to us because what is being discussed here are not the abstract processes of a distant society, but those of our own communities. The people affected are not strangers; they are our own children and indeed, our future. Thus, while the problems are general, their impacts are quite specific and close to home. The future we are discussing is, therefore, our own.

While it is certainly too much to ask any individual or organization to assume responsibility for the entirety of urban social problems, and certainly local education agencies are not likely candidates for the task, this study has provided certain directions for the progress of the vocational and career education system in Cleveland. They can, as such, be stated as three very specific but challenging recommendations.

1) **The project team recommends a thorough re-analysis of the curriculum in vocational and career education.** This would involve a very sophisticated look at the market conditions described in this report, new and emerging data, and extensive involvement of "stakeholders", i.e. community leaders, business persons, union representatives, parents, students, etc., with a goal toward redefining the content of the division.

2) **A central part of this re-analysis should be the very public application of the Data-Based Course Assessment Method (DCAM) described in the companion document.** The study team has provided ample evidence of the power and potential of the DCAM as an objective instrument to assist the Cleveland City Schools to establish the need and the merit of its programs. We not only encourage its use but further suggest that it be done in such a way that the "stakeholders" observe it in process and take their share of responsibility for the difficult decisions that an objective, non-political tool such as DCAM would indicate.

3) **The Division of Vocational and Career Education should expand its efforts to reach out to stakeholder groups to provide better public information and community access.** Any public image has, of course, some basis in reality. However, it is the opinion of the study team that vocational and career education in Cleveland is being perceived less favorably than perhaps it should be by the community leadership, especially given its scope of responsibility and declining share of resources. The schools' efforts have produced some successes, and these deserve public note. Moreover, the Division is making clear efforts to improve itself, such as in the development of the DCAM, and they are quite worthy of public endorsement. In short, the Division has an important story to tell and should invest in itself by telling it.

The DCAM will certainly provide a means of developing a more rational, cost-effective, and market-sensitive program in vocational and career education. Beyond that, however, in order to actually realize its benefits, the Division of Vocational and Career Education needs to consider the context in which it is being applied. This report establishes a foundation for doing so. First and foremost, this means preparing itself and its constituencies for the difficult decisions ahead. It is the belief of the project team that this is best accomplished by first solidifying the support for vocational education in the community at large, most specifically the business community. This more than any other strategy will ensure the success of the curricular mission in which the division is engaged.

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APPENDIX I

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CLEVELAND LEADERS

Your name has been suggested to us by the Cleveland Public Schools as someone who knows a great deal about your community and about vocational education in the schools. Please consider each question we ask carefully and give us your frank assessment of the employment and training conditions as they exist today and as you believe they will exist in the future.

We assure you that all of the information you provide will be held in the strictest confidence. Your name will not be used in any way in the final report, except that you were one of a number of people who spoke with us. As we are interested only in the collective responses of a group of individuals, none of your answers will be in any way associated with your name.

This interview should take 20-30 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

First, we would like your opinions about the employment picture and economy in the community as a whole.

1.a. In the next 5 years, do you believe that the local economy will:

3 Improve
1 Get worse
2 Stay about the same
9 Don't know/not sure

___ 1

b. Why? _____

_____ 2 3

2.a. In the next 5 years, do you believe that the number of jobs available to people will:

3 Increase
1 Decline
2 Stay about the same
9 Don't know/not sure

___ 4

b. Why? _____

_____ 5 6

3.a Speaking about employment, a lot of people say that the type of jobs that will be available in the future will be different than they are today, no matter what else happens. With respect to this position, do you:
1 Disagree-Go to Q.4
2 Agree
9 Don't know/not sure-Go to Q.4

6

b What kinds of changes will there be? _____
_____
_____

7 8 9

4a. Currently, a number of organizations and agencies are responsible for training workers for jobs. Given how you see the future, which of the following should be <u>most</u> responsible for training these workers:
1 Public schools
2 Private schools
3 Colleges/Universities
4 Trade schools
5 Employers
6 Unions
7 Government programs
8 Other (specify:_____)
9 Don't know/not sure (Go to Q. 5)

10 11 12

b. Why is this (these) group(s) most responsible? _____
_____
_____

13 14 15

c. In your opinion, does (do) this (these) group(s) need to change in any way to fulfill this responsiblity?
2 Yes
1 No
9 Don't know/not sure (Go to Q. 5)

16

d. What does (do) it (they) need to do differently?
_____
_____

17 18

5a. Speaking of the nation's public schools, a great deal of attention has been given to vocational education. In general, would you say that the amount of attention given to vocational education is:

3 Too little
1 Too much
2 About right
9 Don't know/not sure

19

b. Why? _____

_____

20 21

6a. Regarding the public schools in Cleveland, would you say the amount of attention given to vocational education is:

1 Too much
2 About right
3 Too little
9 Don't know/not sure

22

b. Why? _____

_____

23 24

7. Which statement best represents your opinion about vocational education in the Cleveland schools?

5 The school system is doing an excellent job training Cleveland's future workers
4 The school system is doing an adequate job of training Cleveland's future workers
3 The school system is doing neither a good nor a poor job of training Cleveland's future workers
2 The school system is doing a somewhat poor job of training Cleveland's future workers
1 The school system is doing a very poor job of training Cleveland's future workers
9 Don't know/not sure

25

8. In your opinion, how appropriate is the vocational curriculum for the jobs you see being available in the future?

5 Very appropriate
4 Somewhat appropriate
3 Neither appropriate nor inappropriate
2 Somewhat inappropriate
1 Very inappropriate
9 Don't know/not sure

26

9. In which vocational areas do you believe more support should be given in the Cleveland public schools?

_____

_____

27 28

10. Which vocational areas should receive less support?

_____

_____

29 30

11a. Have you ever hired a student who had completed a vocational program conducted by the Cleveland public schools?

1 No- Go to Q. 12
2 Yes
9 Don't know/not sure-go to Q. 12

31

11b. How many students who completed vocational programs have you hired in the past two years? _____

32 33

Regarding the student you most recently hired:

11c. What vocational program did this student study when she/he was in high school? _____

34

11d. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very bad and 5 being very good, how well did this student's skills meet the job requirements? ___

35

Now, we would like to ask you some questions about jobs in Cleveland.

12. In your opinion, in which industry or industries will the greatest job growth take place in the next 5-10 years? _____

36 37

13. What specific skills do you see as being most needed by these jobs? _____

38 39

14. In what geographic areas of metropolitan Cleveland will these jobs be located? _____

40 41

15. Is there any other information about jobs or education in Cleveland of which you think we ought to be aware?

_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU.

OBSERVE AND NOTE (DO NOT ASK)

1. HIRING AUTHORITY
2. SIZE OF COMPANY [SMALL (100 employees or less); MEDIUM (100-500); LARGE (500+)
3. RACE/GENDER/ETHNICITY OF RESPONDENT
4. TIME OF INTERVIEW ____ minutes

APPENDIX II

APPENDIX II

List of Original Nominees for Leadership Survey

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Renata Gasiweski
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Astrup Awning Company
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Larry Jones
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