

Curriculum Ideas for "Thinking About the Future: Job Opportunities in the Milwaukee Labor Market"



Introduction

This booklet is designed to help students use local labor market information and resources in their career planning. The economy is constantly changing because of new technology, shifting consumer demands, international developments and changing demographic trends. This "snapshot" of the labor market is presented to help students "learn how to keep learning" about their community. We hope that students will think about "making" as well as "taking" jobs and work to develop career pathways that offer expanding opportunities for challenging jobs throughout their lifetimes.

Competency: Recognize the payoff for education and training in the labor market.

1. Use the typical starting wages for full-time job openings on page 3 to calculate annual wages for each level of education and experience required. *Most jobs are for 40 hours a week for 52 weeks. When jobs have high turnover, e.g. door-to-door sales workers and food counter workers, persons may be employed for fewer weeks during the year.*

2. Encourage students to interview adult workers about why they chose their present job and what factors they think are important in choosing a job. Rate how important job satisfaction, social factors, recognition, creativity and money were in the person's career choice. Ask the students what they think of the adults' choices.

Use the student findings to develop a class list of important factors besides pay to consider when choosing a career. Does having more education and training help with these factors?

3. Discuss why the jobs on page 7 usually require technical training or on-the-job work experience. Use a program catalog from the Milwaukee Area Technical College or the Occupational Outlook Handbook to determine what kind of technical training would be required for several of the jobs.
4. Ask students to consider the advantages and disadvantages of jobs that require very little experience or training.

Advantages may include that these jobs are easier to obtain, often offer good pay for young people just starting out, and are easy to learn. Disadvantages include the higher turnover of workers, pay rates that may not increase over time because of the number of inexperienced workers competing for these jobs, less interesting work, and more frequent layoffs.

One out of every 8 high school dropouts in the Milwaukee labor force is working in food preparation and service. By contrast, only one out of every 28 workers with a high school degree or better is working in food preparation and service. (1990 U.S. Census)

5. Visit the local library or a school counselor's office to review booklets detailing educational programs available in the area. Discuss the advantages of various programs, including college, vocational training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship programs. Help the students write a letter or phone for information about educational or training programs that interest them.
6. Discuss reasons why employers might prefer to hire workers part-time (that is, less than 35 hours a week or for a limited number of weeks) rather than full-time. Use the chalk board to list the advantages and disadvantages of part-time work.

Reading Review Questions

"Thinking About the Future: Job Opportunities in the Milwaukee Labor Market"

1. Why would a company prefer to hire high school graduates rather than high school dropouts for jobs that do not require special training? Which of the jobs listed on page 9 do you think could lead to better paying, more interesting work if you were willing to work hard and learn new skills? Which jobs do you think are "dead-end"?
2. What are factors companies consider in setting the wage and salary rates for new workers they hire? Why do you think companies are willing to pay more for workers with college education?
3. Which job openings for college graduates on page 5 require knowledge of technology? What high school courses do you think are important for these careers?
4. What are advantages of attending a technical college to gain training for jobs in high demand? Identify jobs on page 7 that you think would require both classroom education and on-the-job training.
5. List reasons why new jobs might be available in your community. For each reason, give an example of a job that might be available. Why are some occupations in less demand?
6. Why do workers need access to a car or carpool to reach many job openings in the Milwaukee area? What are the advantages of riding the bus or using a carpool when one is available?
7. Name methods you can use to find out about job openings in your community. What do you think are the strengths and limitations of one of the methods you have named?
8. What are the advantages and disadvantages of part-time jobs? Why do you think some people want to work part-time?
9. Give examples of jobs that young people may not have until they reach a certain age? Do you think this fair? Why or why not? Why do you think the state requires teens to obtain a work permit before starting a job?
10. Find several workplace skills on pages 19-21 that you already do well. What projects or activities have you done that might convince an employer that you have this skill?

Competency: Describe where and how to get labor market information.

1. Encourage each student to identify a career ladder in an area of interest (e.g. health, computers, working with children, food service). For example, in manufacturing a student might consider jobs at entry-level (assembler), requiring technical training (tool and die maker), or a college degree or more (industrial engineer). Arrange for each student to "shadow" a worker in his/her career interest area.
2. Invite a panel of local employers to discuss career ladders available within their companies. (Videotape the discussion to share with other classes.)
3. Help students use the want-ads to find interesting job openings, skill requirements, wages offered, working hours, and how to contact the company or agency.
4. Use the computer to access job openings in the Milwaukee area through the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's listings (<http://www.adquest.com>) or the Wisconsin Job Service (<http://jobnet.dwd.state.wi.us/jobnet>).
5. Help students prepare a map of places to go for employment information. Sites could include the local public library, Milwaukee Central Library (for newspapers from other cities), Job Center-North, Job Center-South, a Wisconsin Job Service office (from the government pages of the phone book), and temporary employment agencies (from the Yellow Pages). Determine a way to get to these sites by car or bus.
6. Map a bus or street route from each student's home or school to at least six work sites in the metro area.
7. Ask students to list a career that interests them. Using local phone books, people they know, newspaper articles and resources in the library, find at least 5 area companies or agencies that might hire workers in this field.

Competency: Identify factors which influence access to jobs.

1. Arrange a one-day field trip of job sites throughout the metropolitan area. At each site ask employers why they are at that location and where other branches of the company are located. Ask what transportation issues are important to the company and its workers, e.g. securing raw materials, reaching markets, how workers commute to work, parking.
2. For one of the job listings tables in the booklet, compare wages for jobs usually held by women with those traditionally held by men. Have students prepare graphs which show wage differences for selected occupations. Discuss the advantages to companies in breaking down gender barriers.
3. Organize teams of students to explore strategies to increase employment opportunities for youth. For example, one team might prepare a report or videotape on appropriate and inappropriate behavior in a job interview. A second team might collect information comparing travel time and costs for car pools, vans and bus transportation to jobs. A third team could explore issues related to comparative housing costs in neighborhoods in the metropolitan area where jobs are in high demand. A fourth team could develop a plan to identify the "best" job opportunities for high school students at your school and how to access these jobs.
4. Discuss how housing and transportation factors in the Milwaukee area make it more difficult for some workers to find jobs and to learn about job openings in the metropolitan area. *According to the 1990 Census, over 80 percent of all African American youth under age 18 residing in the 1,400 square mile area of Milwaukee metro live in an a 25 square mile central city area.*
5. Help students organize a job fair or career awareness day to bring employers to your school to talk about job opportunities and future careers.

Competency: Use labor market information to help develop career goals.

1. The fastest growing occupations nationally are personal and home care aides, home health aides, systems analysts, computer engineers, and physical and corrective therapy aides. Occupations expected to show the greatest numerical declines include farmers, typists and word processors, bookkeeping and accounting clerks, bank tellers, and sewing machine garment workers. Brainstorm why. Then use the **Occupational Outlook Handbook** (paperback or CD-ROM) to find the reasons why the Department of Labor is predicting these occupational shifts.
2. Discuss why a person would choose a career area where there are few job openings. How might people increase opportunities in careers that interest them?
3. Discuss the concept of "labor market." Ask the students to suggest where they want to live after completing school (e.g. remain in Milwaukee area, another city, in a foreign country). Help students explore job opportunities in that locale by using want-ads from other cities, the Internet, and letters to professional organizations).

The U.S. Department of Labor defines a labor market area as "an economically integrated geographic area within which individuals can reside and find employment within a reasonable distance or can readily change employment without changing their place of residence." We use the four counties of Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha because they show the strongest commuting patterns. At the same time, some Milwaukee workers commute to Madison and even to Chicago, and many people from Sheboygan County work in Ozaukee County and vice versa.

4. Help students develop plans for a business they could create to meet a consumer or community need.

In May 1996 over a third (38 percent) of full- and part-time job openings were in Milwaukee area companies with fewer than 20 workers.

Competency: Identify resources available for student job seekers.

1. Ask students to share their experiences earning money in their neighborhood and through part-time jobs. What have they learned from these experiences?
2. Encourage students to build a "cumulative resume" which includes the SCANS skills they are improving through their school, volunteer and part-time work experience. Help students use the enclosed SCANS checklists to record activities and projects which are helping them improve their workplace skills. See *The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance. A SCANS Report for America 2000* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1992) from the federal bookstore, 297-1304.
3. Help students create a "Jobs Network" chart to add to their portfolios. Encourage each youth to identify 15-20 adults he/she could ask about possible job openings at their workplaces. (Include relatives, neighbors, teachers, mentors, coaches, club leaders, parents' friends, local businesspersons, people from their church, synagogue or mosque.) Help the youth begin to expand this "Jobs Network" by asking at least one of the adults on the list to identify 5-10 additional contacts that the student might call when looking for jobs.

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