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ABSTRACT

A project was conducted to create modules designed to assist students in their career planning and decision making by providing an overview of the potential rewards and typical problems of small business ownership and of the personal qualities needed for success. Thirty-five businesses were selected to form the basis for developing the business-specific modules. All modules followed a standard format and contained a student guide and a teacher guide. The entrepreneurship modules were aimed at secondary vocational students. A quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest, treatment group/control group design tested the effectiveness of the modules. The modules were field-tested at various sites and were taught by regularly employed vocational instructors. Use of the modules showed significant gains in students' knowledge of the skill areas necessary to start and operate a small business successfully. Dissemination of materials was accomplished through a series of vocational educator workshops at locations across the country. (This series also contains a handbook for module use, a final technical report, a resource guide, and the thirty-six modules and companion teacher guides.) (CT)

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Development of Entrepreneurship Training Components for Vocational Education

SUMMARY REPORT

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Staff at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) have written a series of Entrepreneurship Training Components to help secondary-level vocational students acquire entrepreneurial knowledge and skills and to inform them that owning a small business is a viable career option. The entrepreneurship materials include one core module, and 35 business-specific modules, which represent all seven vocational service areas. Each module is composed of a student guide, which contains the bulk of the course content, and a teacher guide. The modules can be infused into existing vocational classes. The effectiveness of the modules was demonstrated in a field test conducted at 24 sites across the country.

Module Development and Description

The U.S. Department of Education has recognized the major role that small businesses play in generating new employment opportunities in our economy, despite the present high rate of small business failure. In its search for entrepreneurship training materials suitable for use in high schools, the Department found other resources that treat the general topic of entrepreneurship and other business-specific materials, too. But it discovered that these materials are not instructionally oriented and typically are targeted for adults who have already made the decision to start a business. As a result of its findings, the Department contracted with AIR to develop and field test instructional modules to fill the need for entrepreneurship training for secondary-level vocational students. The AIR modules are the only entrepreneurship materials available that permit high school students to learn about small business ownership on both a general and business-specific basis. In addition, the AIR entrepreneurship modules are specifically intended to encourage women and individuals from minority groups--people who are significantly underrepresented in the ranks of small business owners--to consider entrepreneurship as a career.

The modules were designed to assist students in their career planning and decision-making by providing an overview of the potential rewards and typical problems of small business ownership and of the personal qualities needed for success. Equally important, the materials explain the basic knowledge and skills necessary to start and operate a small business and provide opportunities to apply this learning to specific businesses that relate to the vocational programs in which students are enrolled.

Module Content

A comprehensive survey of existing entrepreneurship training materials was conducted prior to the selection of module content. From this survey, AIR staff distilled a list of skills considered essential for entrepreneurial success. In determining module content, staff also considered the ease with which skills could be mastered by vocational students in the course of an introductory program. The skills list was reviewed by members of the project's panel of experts and was revised on the basis of their review. This list of basic business management skills appropriate to owning any small business was to become the focus of a "core" module.

Next, 35 businesses were selected to form the basis for developing the business-specific modules. These businesses related to occupational programs with large secondary student enrollments and represented promising entrepreneurial

opportunities based on data from the U.S. Department of Labor and other sources. Seventy-eight occupations with the largest number of employees (an indicator of demand for the occupation's product or service) were analyzed prior to the selection of the 35 most appropriate businesses. In the analysis, criteria that were applied included anticipated growth rates, number of job opportunities, and lifestyle trends. In addition, a task analysis was done to determine which occupations were amenable to entrepreneurship. The analysis was submitted for review to the U.S. Department of Education's program specialists for the seven vocational service areas, and the final 35 businesses were identified.

Student goals and objectives were developed on the basis of the skills list described above, and the module format was outlined. Module authors reviewed resource materials collected by project staff during the materials survey, and interviewed business owners to obtain information regarding initial planning; capitalization, personnel management, etc. Draft modules were reviewed by the business owners who had been interviewed, by the project's panel of experts, by Small Business Administration staff, and by OVAE program specialists.

The titles of the 36 entrepreneurship modules by vocational discipline appear in Table 1. Module 1, the core module, contains 15 instructional units and requires a minimum of 16 hours to complete. The 15 units in the core module cover the following areas: initial planning; personnel management; daily operations; purchasing and inventory management; pricing; advertising and selling; financial recordkeeping; and business maintenance and growth.

Each of the business-specific modules contains nine instructional units and requires a minimum of 10 hours of study. These units parallel topics in the core module. Each of the modules is focused on a particular business, and specific examples of the use of entrepreneurial skills in the type of business under discussion are emphasized.

Module Format

All modules follow a standard format and are composed of two basic parts: the student guide and the teacher guide. Student guides contain a list of behavioral goals and objectives, small business case studies, text, learning activities, and a module quiz. Learning activities include short-answer items summarizing the text, worksheets and business forms, brief research problems, class discussions, interviews of business owners, group projects, and simulated business problems. Teacher guides provide an overview of the program, suggest general teaching strategies, and give responses to learning activities and the module quiz. The teacher and student guides are sufficiently detailed to permit teachers without previous entrepreneurial experience to utilize the modules in their classes.

The modules are self-contained, requiring no additional educational resources. They can be infused into existing vocational classrooms and curricula and are adaptable to a variety of instructional methods--for example, teacher-directed sessions, class discussions, activity-oriented small groups, and independent study.

Target Audience

The entrepreneurship modules are appropriate for secondary vocational students having a wide range of abilities and interests. The modules are written at approximately a sixth-grade reading level to facilitate student comprehension. At the same time, they present a large amount of practical information about businesses related to each of the seven vocational disciplines.

Table 1
Entrepreneurship Training Components

Vocational Discipline	Module Number and Title
General (Core Module)	Module 1: Getting Down to Business: What's It All About?
Agriculture	Module 2: Farm Equipment Repair
	Module 3: Tree Service
	Module 4: Garden Center
	Module 5: Fertilizer and Pesticide Service
	Module 6: Dairy Farming
Marketing and Distribution	Module 7: Apparel Store
	Module 8: Specialty Food Store
	Module 9: Travel Agency
	Module 10: Bicycle Store
	Module 11: Flower and Plant Store
	Module 12: Business and Personal Service
	Module 13: Innkeeping
Health	Module 14: Nursing Service
	Module 15: Wheelchair Transportation Service
	Module 16: Health Spa
Business and Office	Module 17: Answering Service
	Module 18: Secretarial Service
	Module 19: Bookkeeping Service
	Module 20: Software Design Company
	Module 21: Word Processing Service
Occupational Home Economics	Module 22: Restaurant Business
	Module 23: Day Care Center
	Module 24: Housecleaning Service
	Module 25: Sewing Service
	Module 26: Home Attendant Service
Technical	Module 27: Guard Service
	Module 28: Pest Control Service
	Module 29: Energy Specialist Service
Trades and Industry	Module 30: Hair Styling Shop
	Module 31: Auto Repair Shop
	Module 32: Welding Business
	Module 33: Construction Electrician Business
	Module 34: Carpentry Business
	Module 35: Plumbing Business
	Module 36: Air Conditioning and Heating Service

Field Test Design and Participants

A quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest, treatment group/control group design was used to test the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship modules. The field test design featured multiple replications at sites across the country. Participating students were enrolled in various types of secondary vocational schools and programs, and experienced various instructional arrangements and methods of teaching. The field test was conducted under a variety of conditions representing those in which the modules will actually be used.

Several criteria were used in selecting sites at which to field test the entrepreneurship modules. These criteria included: (1) the site's interest in implementing the entrepreneurship modules; (2) sufficient enrollment so that a number of business-specific modules could be tested at each site; (3) willingness to meet evaluation design specifications; and (4) geographical location.

Nominations of potential sites were solicited from all 57 State Liaison Representatives of the National Network for Curriculum Coordination in Vocational-Technical Education. A total of 88 nominations was received. The nominated sites were contacted to inform them of their nomination and to discuss AIR's guidelines for participation in the field test. Requirements for participation were the following: (1) a coordinator be assigned responsibility for field test duties; (2) two modules (the core module and one business-specific module) be taught to approximately 18 students in a number of vocational classes; (3) a control group of about 18 students similar to the treatment students be selected; (4) the pre-test/posttest be administered to treatment students before and after they studied the modules and to the control group at about the same times; and (5) teachers who used the modules would complete an End-of-Module Questionnaire for each module they taught.

Twenty-four sites were selected to participate in the field test. These sites demonstrated their agreement and commitment to participate by completing a form indicating demographic characteristics of the site, a date for conducting on-site training regarding field test requirements, and which business-specific modules could be taught at the site.

A local coordinator at each site identified instructors and students to serve in the treatment and control groups. A project staff member conducted a half-day orientation session at each site prior to the start of the field test. The orientation covered the value of entrepreneurship training for secondary vocational students, how the entrepreneurship skills list was developed, how the 35 businesses were selected, the module format, and the evaluation design. Instructions were given regarding pretest/posttest administration and the role of the local field test coordinator.

Certain field test sites that used the entrepreneurship modules were unable to return all required field test instruments and thus were eliminated from the data analysis. (Reasons for elimination included scheduling problems, a teachers' strike, a school fire, and loss of completed field test materials in the mail.) The 14 entrepreneurship field test sites determined to have fully implemented the field test procedures included high schools, regional vocational centers, and a secondary correctional school (see Table 2). Five sites were located in the east, three in the south, and six in the west. There were four urban sites, six suburban sites, and four rural sites. The type of institution (e.g., comprehensive high school) was the same for both treatment and control groups at each site.

Table 2 also shows the number of treatment group and control group students who participated in the field test at each site and the types of vocational courses in which they were enrolled. Since only one vocational class was identified as the control group for each site, students of one teacher at one school served as the control group for a particular site.

The modules were used in two types of vocational classes. They were used in regular vocational instruction in which students were learning technical skills. For example, students in auto mechanics worked on cars in the garage and worked on the entrepreneurship modules in the classroom. The materials were also used in cooperative education (coop) classes. Coop students studied the entrepreneurship modules as part of their on-campus curriculum and worked in paid employment in the afternoon. Class size varied, depending on the type of vocational class. Class sizes ranged from under 10 to over 30 students.

Both treatment and control groups had approximately equal proportions of males and females. Students' ages ranged from 14 to 19 years. The means of the ages of treatment group and control group students were 16.8 years and 16.7 years, respectively.

Treatment

At all sites, the modules were taught by regularly-employed vocational instructors. Students who participated in the field test were not paid but completed the entrepreneurship modules as part of their regular coursework. Generally, modules were taught by teachers during class time, although some students used the modules on an independent-study basis. In most cases, the core module and one particular business-specific module were studied by the whole class, but but in some classes students selected different business-specific modules for study after completion of the core module. (This was the case particularly in coop classes, in which students selected a module related to their job placement.)

Table 2

FIELD TEST SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

Name and Location of School District	Setting	Type of Institution(s)	# of Schools (Treatment Group)	# of Teachers (Treatment Group)	Related Vocational Discipline (Treatment Group)	Related Vocational Discipline (Control Group)	Number of students (T group)	(C group)
EAST								
1. State of Rhode Island	Urban	Regional Vocational Centers	2	6	Ag, DE, Home Ec, T&I	T&I	62	14
2. Gloucester County Area Vocational-Technical School, Sewell, NJ	Suburban	Regional Vocational Center	1	6	Ag, Health, Home Ec, T&I	T&I	106	18
3. Central Westmoreland County Area Vocational-Technical School, New Stanton, PA	Suburban	Regional Vocational Center	1	9	Ag, DE, Health, Home Ec, T&I	T&I	151	14
4. Baltimore County Public Schools, Towson, MD	Suburban	Comprehensive High Schools	10	12	Diversified Occupations	Diversified Occupations	282	15
5. Newaygo County Area Vocational Center, Fremont, MI	Rural	Regional Vocational Center	1	11	Ag, Bus & Off, Home Ec, T&I	Bus & Office	157	35
SOUTH								
6. Central High School, Little Rock, AR	Urban	Comprehensive High School	1	12	DE, Health, Bus & Off, Home Ec, Industrial Coop. Training (ICT)	DE	147	14
7. Kirbyville Consolidated Independent School District, Kirbyville, TX	Rural	Comprehensive High School	1	5	DE, Home Ec, T&I	Bus & Office	79	12
8. Austin Independent School District, Austin, TX	Urban	Comprehensive High Schools	7	11	DE, T&I, ICT	ICT	164	20
WEST								
9. North Dakota Industrial School, Mandan, ND	Rural	Juvenile Correctional Facility	1	5	Ag, Bus & Off, Home Ec, T&I	Bus & Off	19	18
10. Granite School District, Salt Lake City, UT	Urban	Comprehensive High Schools	5	8	DE, Bus & Off, Home Ec	DE	103	7
11. Weber County School District, Ogden, UT	Suburban	Comprehensive High School	1	2	DE	Bus & Off	23	16
12. Highline School District, Seattle, WA	Suburban	Comprehensive High Schools	2	2	DE	DE	33	16
13. Issaquah School District, Issaquah, WA	Rural	Comprehensive High School	1	1	Diversified Occupations	Home Ec	34	15
14. Sequoia High School District, Redwood City, CA	Suburban	Comprehensive High School	1	2	Bus & Off	Bus & Off	9	17
						TOTAL	1369	231 = 1600

Since methods for infusing the modules into coursework and for teaching their content were not prescribed during the orientation sessons, instructors taught the modules in a variety of ways. Some teachers used a lecture method, basing class presentations on the case study and text sections. Other teachers displayed portions of the student guide on an overhead projector for total-class or small-group discussions. Instructors selected the learning activities most appropriate for their students and relevant to their local settings. Some instructors developed intermediate quizzes to supplement the final quiz contained in the module.

Treatment group students were exposed to the following: the pretest, the core module, one business-specific module, and the posttest. Control students took a pretest and a posttest. During the interim, control students received their regular vocational instruction--i.e., technical skills training or the cooperative education curriculum, depending on the type of class in which they were enrolled. Pretests and posttests were administered to the treatment and control groups at any one site at approximately the same times. Across sites, the pretest was given during the fall and winter of 1980, while the posttest was administered during the winter and spring of 1981.

Measurement of Effect

Since no standardized test existed to adequately estimate the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship modules, a test with 30 multiple-choice items was constructed specifically for use in the field test. The test provides information on the overall effect of studying the core module and one business-specific module. It assesses knowledge of the skills that were identified by project staff as essential for success as a beginning entrepreneur and that served as the basis for developing the module goals and objectives. The same instrument was administered as a pretest and a posttest to both treatment and control groups.

The pretest/posttest was prepared according to a careful, step-by-step development process and was approved by the Federal Education Data Acquisition Council (FEDAC), the group charged with ensuring that data are collected by the most efficient and effective means. Forty-three four-option, multiple-choice items were written to test knowledge of skills presented in each unit of the core module. The module's author identified areas to be tested, and the items were written and reviewed for content validity by project staff. The project's evaluation director also reviewed the items for technical adequacy. Then the items were revised as many times as were necessary.

A total of 18 secondary vocational students who were participating in one of two training programs (construction and word processing) at a regional occupational center comprised the group that pilot tested the test items. Items were divided into two sets, and four or five students from each course answered each set. Pilot test students were also given an opportunity to critique the items. No comments indicating necessary revisions were received.

Using pilot test results, discrimination indices (point-biserial correlations) and difficulty levels were calculated for each item. Items with low discrimination indices or very high or low difficulty levels were removed from the item set to be included in the pretest/posttest until the final version contained two items directly related to content in each of the 15 units of the core module (for a total of 30 items).

Validity

Because of the direct correspondence of test items to module content, the entrepreneurship pretest/posttest was judged to be a valid indicator of the effectiveness of the modules.

Reliability

A Spearman-Brown split-half estimate of the reliability of the entrepreneurship pretest/posttest was calculated using the pretest data of 85 treatment group students and 15 control group students chosen randomly from all those who participated in the field test. An estimated reliability coefficient of .69 was obtained, which is relatively high for a 30-item test and certainly sufficient for making comparisons between groups, as was done in the entrepreneurship field test.

An attempt was made to ensure that scoring and analysis was done objectively and reliably. While the pretests and posttests were administered by the teachers of treatment and control students in their classrooms, the completed tests were sent directly to AIR for scoring. Tests were scored, and data were coded and keytaped by clerical staff who had little stake in the outcome of the field test. Considerable effort was spent on checking coding and keytaping to eliminate clerical errors. Computer services staff of AIR, rather than project staff, analyzed the data using standard statistical packages.

Evidence of Impact

Study of the entrepreneurship core module and one appropriate business-specific module produces significant gains in students' knowledge of the skill areas necessary to start and operate a small business successfully. The effect claimed for the entrepreneurship modules is based on the results obtained from administering the pretest/posttest comprised of multiple-choice items. The assertion of the effectiveness of the modules is based on the comparison of the pretest and posttest results of students who studied the modules and the comparison of these data with results obtained from an equivalent control group who did not study the modules. The test results of only those students who took both a pretest and a posttest (and for the treatment group, students who studied the two-module sequence) were included in the analyses.

T-tests for independent samples were used to compare pretest and posttest results of treatment and control group students. T-tests for correlated samples compared pretest with posttest results for both groups. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 3. While the mean test scores of both groups increased significantly from the pretest to the posttest, the treatment group's gain in mean score from the pretest to the posttest was greater than the gain of the control group. The difference between the mean scores of the treatment group and the control group on the pretest was not significant, while the difference between their posttest scores was significant at the .01 level.

To provide another perspective on the T-test results, an analysis of covariance (general linear models procedure) was run with the pretest score as the covariate and the posttest score as the dependent variable. The difference in mean posttest scores was significant at the .0001 level.

Table 3

ENTREPRENEURSHIP FIELD TEST PRETEST AND POSTTEST RESULTS

	Status	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pretest Scores	Treatment Group	1369	17.26	4.13
	Control Group	231	17.53	4.00
Posttest Scores	Treatment Group	1369	19.96	4.82
	Control Group	231	18.91	4.65

T-Test Analyses

Comparison	T	Probability
Treatment Group Pretest vs. Treatment Group Posttest	25.41	<.0001
Treatment Group Posttest vs. Control Group Posttest	-3.08	<.01
Control Group Pretest vs. Control Group Posttest	5.38	<.0001
Treatment Group Pretest vs. Control Group Pretest	0.91	>.36

Statistical Reliability and Generalizability of Results

Students selected to participate in the field test were broadly representative of the intended users of the entrepreneurship modules--secondary vocational students. The site selection process utilized by project staff resulted in a diverse sample that varied along the dimensions of geographical location, demographic setting, and institutional type. Field test data were collected at 14 sites across the country that represented the range of educational settings in which intended module users receive instruction. Modules were infused into vocational classes and curricula in a variety of ways at the discretion of the instructors. Treatment student gains were consistent across the 14 sites.

Since the modules were tested on such a representative group of individuals, the results of the field test should be generalizable to the entire target population. Because the field test was conducted under natural conditions representing the wide variety of conditions for which the modules were designed, it is likely that the results reported are not limited to the field test.

Evidence That Effects Are Attributable to the Invervention

Treatment and control group students who provided data for the comparisons reported earlier were quite similar.

Control groups were selected with the stipulation that they be made up of persons essentially similar to the treatment students. Following is the instruction given to local site coordinators: "Members of both the experimental group and the control group should be generally representative of the modules' intended audience (students enrolled in vocational courses), and the groups should be basically alike in age, background, ability, and education." Treatment and control students at each site attended the same type of institution. In 13 of the 14 sites, treatment and control students attended the same type of classes (technical skills training or cooperative education).

Data collected during the field test reinforce the assertion that the treatment and control groups were drawn from the same population. The means of the ages of individuals in the two groups differed by only about 1½ months. A difference of this size is unlikely to have had any effect on field test results. The percentages of representatives of the two sexes did not differ significantly between the two groups ($p = .2$ by chi square). And finally, the means of the pretest scores of students in the two groups did not differ significantly.

Practice effects, maturation, and intervening external influences are not likely to account for the statistically significant difference in the two groups' posttest scores, either. At each site, treatment and control groups were tested at about the same times. The effects, if any, of potentially biasing factors would be the same for each group of students. These factors could not bias field test results in favor of module effectiveness.

Dissemination of Materials

To introduce vocational educators to the entrepreneurship materials, AIR staff conducted a series of workshops at locations across the country. At the six one-day workshops, staff gave descriptions of the materials and recommendations on how to use them in various settings. Approximately 250 vocational educators from 53 states and territories attended the workshops, including state-level vocational education administrators, state liaison representatives of the NNCCVTE, college and university faculty, and administrators from large school districts. The participants left the workshops with plans for using and disseminating the materials throughout their states.

Technical Assistance Workshops

Three technical assistance workshops were held in August and September 1981. The purpose of the workshops was to meet with state and/or local vocational education administrators as a follow-up in implementing plans to carry out the dissemination workshops' goals and objectives within individual states.

Approximately 400 vocational educators attended the workshops, which were held in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Bismarck, North Dakota; and Phoenix, Arizona. In each case the request for technical assistance was a direct result of the dissemination workshops held in June and July 1981, since the state-level person who contacted the AIR project director had either attended a workshop or had discussed the project and its materials with someone who had attended one.

Overview of the workshop presentations. The project director typically began the session with a one-hour introductory presentation. If additional time was available, participants looked at the modules and asked questions stimulated by their materials review. The project director set a context for the relevance of entrepreneurship training by stressing that vocational students are already learning a technical skill that they could use to run a business. The importance of entrepreneurship as a career option for students in rural settings was discussed. The history and purpose of the project were briefly summarized. The project director described the eight key entrepreneurship skill areas that form the basis of the module content and the procedures by which the field test was conducted. The project director closed the session with information regarding how teachers could obtain copies of the modules for use in their classes.

Module Publication

An agreement was made with the Wisconsin Vocational Studies Center to print and distribute the entrepreneurship training components on a cost-recovery basis.

Conclusion

In summary, these entrepreneurship training components represent a unique effort at presenting small business ownership as a viable career option to secondary vocational students. By and large, this career option has not been presented in vocational programs. Materials for secondary students that focus on small business ownership are quite scarce, and those that are available teach only general business management skills. These entrepreneurship modules can be used easily by vocational teachers in a variety of instructional settings and arrangements. In addition, they apply essential principles of small business ownership to a large number of occupational areas in which students are enrolled for technical training.