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ABSTRACT

Young workers should know what employers' standards are for hiring and job performance and behave accordingly in order to obtain and keep a job. This finding is based on a study that examined the perceptions of high school graduates and their employers' reports of hiring and job performance standards and employment outcomes. High school students completed questionnaires at the beginning and end of their senior year and one year after graduation. Their employers were surveyed at the one-year follow-up. Employers were influenced to hire youths who had these characteristics: (1) looked clean and neat at the interview, (2) filled out the job application neatly and correctly and attached a resume, (3) showed interest by asking questions about the job, and (4) called the employer after the interview to indicate interest in the job. Employers tended to reject youths who had these characteristics: (1) falsified the job application, (2) could not read well, (3) had a poor absentee record and showed low effort on the previous job, and (4) had high job turnover. Employers were inclined to fire workers who did not follow company rules and policies or who were not making enough of an effort to be productive--more so than workers who did not perform well because of inadequate basic skills and attitudes. Young workers who believed that employers have tough hiring and job performance standards had better employment records and received better job performance evaluations. The study indicated that schools should teach the importance of these findings in order to help their students find and keep jobs. (KC)

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Education & Employment

Research for the Practitioner

Youth's Perceptions of Employer Standards

Research Findings

Young workers should know what employers' standards are for hiring and job performance and behave accordingly in order to obtain and keep a job. This finding is based on a study that examined the perceptions of high school graduates and their employers' reports of hiring and job performance standards and employment outcomes. High school students completed questionnaires at the beginning and end of their senior year and 1 year after graduation. Their employers were surveyed at the 1-year follow-up. Employers were influenced to hire youth who had these characteristics:

- Looked clean and neat at the interview
- Filled out the job application neatly and correctly and attached a resume
- Showed interest by asking questions about the job
- Called the employer after the interview to indicate interest in the job

Employers tended to reject youth who had these characteristics:

- Falsified the job application
- Could not read well
- Were absent a lot and showed low effort on the previous job
- Had high job turnover

Employers were inclined to fire workers who did not follow company rules and policies or who were not making enough of an effort to be productive—more so than workers who did not perform well because of inadequate basic skills and attitudes.

Young workers who believe that employers have tough hiring and job performance standards have better employment records and receive better job performance evaluations.

Implications

School administrators, teachers, and counselors should incorporate into instructional programs strategies to help youth understand the following:

- Positive job search strategies (e.g., dressing neatly for interview) do not compensate for very negative information on any hiring factor.
- Employers expect young employees to be functionally literate—to be competent in the fundamentals of math, reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- Youth who have taken vocational education or have had the training needed for the job have an advantage over others who lack these experiences.
- Employers place a high priority on strict adherence to company rules and policies, even in the early months of employment.

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- Persistent displays of poor attitudes are likely to result in dismissal.
- Productivity and effort need more serious attention by youth who consistently underestimated employer standards in this area.
- Youth who had taken vocational education courses (both cooperative and in-school programs) and youth who had taken college preparatory courses were better off than youth in general education in terms of their employability.

Teachers should also integrate career planning units into the regular curriculum. For example, the *Employability Skills Perceptions Inventory and Guidebook* developed by this study can be adapted for classroom use as an employability awareness teaching strategy. The data collection instrument has been converted into a work-skills and attitudes-perception inventory with student and instructor handbooks. For information on the availability of this product contact the National Center's Program Information Office.

Additional Information

The executive summary and final report are available from ERIC as ED247442 and ED247443, respectively. Both are titled "Youth's Perceptions of Employer Standards, Effects on Employment Outcomes and Employer Evaluations." The authors are Richard J. Miguel and Robert C. Foulk.

A brochure giving the results of the study (Research You Can Use, No. 3) is available at no charge. A 5-page summary was published in the fall 1984 (vol. 2, no. 13) issue of *Facts & Findings*, a calendar subscription research series. To request the brochure or ordering information for *Facts & Findings*, contact the National Center's Program Information Office toll free at 800-848-4815 or 614-486-3655 (in Ohio and outside the continental U.S.). Cable: CTVOCEDOSU/Columbus, Ohio. Telex: 8104821894.

This is the first of a series of eight "research briefs" highlighting findings of studies on education and employment conducted by the National Center and sponsored by the National Institute of Education. The summary was prepared by Ruth Gordon of the Resource and Referral Service.

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Classroom materials based on this research will be available in 1986. Contact the National Center's Program Information Office for availability of unique new materials in THE EMPLOYER'S CHOICE series, a package for teaching students successful techniques for getting and keeping jobs.

