

**THE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM**

**at**

**BETHEL HIGH SCHOOL**

**AN ABSTRACT OF**

**A THESIS**

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**by**

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It is of great importance that, for the best interests of both our nation and for the individual, his potential abilities be developed to their fullest. New methods, curriculum and experiences must be considered and evaluated in order that the changes brought about by progress be made a part of today's educational process. Fortunately, in some school systems the changes of the times have resulted in new programs being put into operation to meet the needs of the student who is preparing to join the working force of the nation upon graduation.

Aware of this need, the Bethel, Connecticut, High School has developed a program termed work-experience. It is a program which allows the non-academic student to spend part of his school day at a job in business or industry learning skills which will better prepare him for employment after graduation. Regular school subject matter related to this job experience provides both knowledge and incentive to learn, resulting in a more practical and valuable learning experience as well. This study describes the planning and operation of this program and includes an evaluation of its accomplishments as seen through the eyes of its participants.

The original idea for this program came as a result of a chance observation made by two members of the Bethel High School faculty. They discussed this idea with the

Principal who recommended its presentation to the Superintendent of Schools. Having secured necessary approval, the State Department of Education was contacted and a meeting arranged from which came an understanding of state regulations governing such a program as well as information concerning similar programs already operating in Connecticut. These were researched to provide assistance in drawing up Bethel's original proposal. Commitments from local industry were obtained and a proposed plan was submitted for approval to the State Department of Education. Following acceptance by this group and by the Bethel Board of Education, a director was named. It became his responsibility to develop a plan of operation for the program.

Once made aware of the intended program, numerous students expressed a desire to participate. Student records were examined regarding past performances and abilities and interviews were held to select participants. Visits to participating agencies resulted in determining job responsibilities and were valuable in making appropriate assignments. Each student was made aware of his responsibilities to the program and the operation began as each reported to his assignment. The apparent success of the original program has resulted in the addition of two similar undertakings for business students and for those wishing home economics occupational training.

Classroom teachers set about to develop a course of study which took advantage of work-experience situations in

providing the student with practical learning related to job assignments and interests.

In order to determine the program's success, those involved in the program were asked to evaluate its operation. Students were interviewed and discussed their experiences. Most of them found it to be valuable for reasons related to both skill development and school accomplishments. Employers were agreed that student employees were comparable in many ways to regular employees and most would have offered permanent employment. Teachers found some need for improvement in school work but generally felt that the student accepted school with a better attitude. Suggestions were made for consideration which it was hoped would improve the operation and success of the program.

I have found that in preparing this thesis I have become more aware of the potential value of such a program and hope that it will provide helpful information for others who might consider such an endeavor.