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A High School Curriculum that will Help Prepare Students for a Life outside of Academics

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A HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM THAT WILL HELP PREPARE STUDENTS FOR A LIFE
OUTSIDE OF ACADEMICS

KAITLYN WITT

HONORS PROJECT

Submitted to the Honors College

At Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for graduation with

UNIVERSITY HONORS May 2020

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Abstract

Current high school curriculums are detailed to push students towards a college education. However, the curriculum does not prepare students for a life outside of academics. After creating a survey, the results showed that individuals that have completed their high school education do not feel prepared to enter the adult world. The individuals that took the survey responded that they did not feel comfortable managing their finances or cooking a meal on their own. In order to help prepare students for a life outside of the education, individuals in charge of creating a curriculum need to make revisions. After conducting research about high school curriculums and analyzing the data of the survey, there were some common suggestions on how to improve a high school curriculum. Some of the suggestions that high school administrators should keep in mind are that students should be required to take a financial literacy class and students should have the option of taking more electives that teach life skills. Potential classes that teach life skills are home economics, shop class, and classes that bring awareness about mental health. Administrators need to listen to the feedback of their students and take their suggestions seriously in order to create a high school curriculum that will prepare students for a life outside of academics.

Introduction

In high school, the curriculum of most schools is detailed to pushing the students to go to college after graduation. However, there are barely any classes that help students prepare for a life outside of academia. A lot of people that graduated high school do not know basic cooking skills, proper nutrition, and proper financial skills. A lot of high schools have college prep classes, but no classes that will help develop the necessary skills once they have completed their education. Current research shows that high school curriculum

“places inadequate focus on important topics like nutrition, even though research on the eating habits of teens indicates that they drink one or more cans of soda per day, do not eat breakfast, and eat a minimal amount of fruits/vegetables. Similarly, HS curricula don't typically require that students be educated in critical health interventions even though most people lack formal training in basic first-aid and 70% of Americans feel helpless to act during a cardiac emergency because they don't know how to administer CPR.” (Adesman & Kahan).

In order to help high school students to prepare for a life outside of academics, their curriculum needs to be revised. In order to complete this, the question “what aspects of a high school curriculum need to be revised?” needs to be answered.

Current research shows that a lot of school's curriculum “have had limited effect on health literacy: students' abilities to access, understand, communicate and evaluate health information.” (Begoray et al.) This shows that high school curriculum needs to incorporate more classes on health literacy in some to have a greater effect on the students' understanding of the topic. There are also studies about the importance of featuring mandated personal finance and mathematics courses. According to Cole, Paulson, and Gauri, “we find additional mathematics training leads

to greater financial market participation, investment income, and better credit management, including fewer foreclosures.” This shows that in my proposed suggestions for an improved curriculum I should include a mathematics class that incorporates financial skills in order to help students understand the financial world better. Also, there is a study in which Cunningham-Sabo and Lohse found that, “experiential nutrition education improved cognitive behaviors that may mediate healthful food choices preferences.” This study shows that nutrition should be a requirement in high school in order to improve cognitive skills and help students make healthier food choices, showing that the current curriculum needs to be revised in order to incorporate a variety of skills.

The goal of this project is to interact with the students at Bowling Green State University in order to get a deeper understanding of what students think about the topic of revising a high school curriculum and providing suggestions for ways a high school can revise their curriculum. In order to revise the curriculum, I would like to send out a survey to the students of Bowling Green State University. In this survey, I will be listing questions about people’s high school experience. These questions will include things such as, “What classes do you wish your high school curriculum offered?”, “In your high school education, was there any classes you thought unnecessary to take?”, and “Do you think high school students should be required to take a financial literacy class?” I will also add a section to the survey, where the respondents are allowed to write any information about what they would like to see added to a high school curriculum. After collecting the responses to the survey, I will do an analysis of the data to determine how high school curriculum needs to be revised. The data analysis will consist of percentages that show how many people feel confident about cooking, financial skills, etc. I plan to report the number of responses, then do a percentage of each class the respondents wish to be

added to the curriculum. For example, how many of the people that responded reported that cooking classes should be added in a schedule. After collecting the data, I will create suggestions for a new curriculum based off the results of the survey that helps students prepare for a life outside of academics, that incorporates a variety of skills to help students succeed. This new suggestions for the curriculum will include the feedback from the surveys, and also include aspects from a current high school curriculum. I will research different current high school curriculums in order to include their requirements for my final project. Then after this research, I will be able to create suggestions for a curriculum.

Some of the challenges I expect to see from this project is not enough people responding to the survey, causing validity issues. If not, enough people respond to the survey, the results will be considered insignificant and cannot include external validity. I also face the challenge of people not responding honestly to the survey giving me results that are invalid. Another challenge is that I will have to create suggestions for curriculum, a thing I have never done before. This means I will have to spend a lot of time looking at different curriculum and deciding on a format for my final project.

I expect to find that most college students do not know how to cook a variety of meals, perform proper financial skills, and their high school curriculum did not cover enough materials about mental health. That the people responding to the survey will wish that they had been prepared for the adult world, such as learning how to do taxes in high school. This will allow me to develop suggestions for a curriculum that will enable students to advance their education and prepare for a life once they are done with their education. By having a new curriculum, high school students will develop a variety of skills, such as financial literacy, cooking skills, and a proper understanding of mental health. In addition to other skills, (once the survey is completed,

I'll know which things to include in the schedule) the students benefiting from this curriculum will feel like that they have been properly prepared to enter the adult world.

Participants

Participants in this study included 13 BGSU Undergraduate students.

Materials

Informed consent (see appendix) forms were used to collect information about the purpose of the study, the procedures, benefits, and risks of participating, voluntary participation, an explanation on how to obtain results of the study, information about counseling services, and the contact information of the researchers involved in the study. Additional materials included a questionnaire (see appendix) about high school curriculums and the participant's own life experiences. A recruitment letter (see appendix) was also involved in order to encourage students to sign up for the survey.

Design and Procedure

The research design of this study was a nonexperimental study involving the use of a questionnaire to find out information regarding undergraduate student's relationship with high school curriculums and preparedness for a life outside of academics. The independent variables are the questions in the survey regarding high school curriculms and life experiences, while the dependent variable is the the participants' responses. The subjects will read about the study through the campus updates or through the honors college newsletter. After they read they can choose to click a link that will take them to the study, which is completed online. The subjects will be asked to read and sign a consent form. Then they will be asked to complete the survey questions provided to them. After the completion of the survey questions, their participation in the study is over. The study should take no longer than 20 minutes. There is no compensation for

this study, debriefing, and no further re-contacting of the students. I will protect the confidentiality of the subjects by not sharing any information that associates the subject with a specific person. My honors advisors and I will be the only ones with access to the data. The data will be stored on my computer and be stored on there for a year.

Results

The results of the survey support the hypothesis that current high school curriculums need to incorporate real-life skills to help students prepare for a life outside of academics. The classes that the participants wished high school curriculum offered were a variety of AP classes, shop class, home economics, finances, specialized natural science classes, creative writing, business, life skills, mindfulness, and non-Spanish foreign languages. 39% of the participants wanted a finance class offered at their high school to teach them about taxes and balance a checkbook. Other students wanted classes that offered to teach life skills, instead of a traditional academic curriculum. 85% of the participants thought that were classes unnecessary during their high school education. Some of the classes thought to be unnecessary were physical education classes, art classes, theology, math classes, science classes, and some social studies classes. Participants responded that these were unnecessary because they had to take them again for BGPs and that they were already involved in a sport during high school. 100% of the participants think that students should be required to take a financial literacy class in high school. 75% of the participants were uncomfortable with managing their own finances, while 16% felt okay about managing finance, despite 92% of participants having support at home for learning financial literacy. 30% of the participants feel comfortable cooking a meal by their selves, while 62% felt okay about cooking meals, and 8% were uncomfortable cooking meals by their selves. 85% of the participants had support for learning to cook at home. These results show that students are

unsatisfied with their high school curriculum and changes need to make to prepare students for a life outside of academics.

Conclusion

High School students feel unprepared to enter a life outside of academics. A majority of students do not know how to manage their finances or cook a meal by themselves comfortably. Students wish to have more electives offered to them, electives that go outside of the traditional math, science, and history classes. In order to accomplish this task, high school needs to consider students suggestions for improving the curriculum. Some of the suggestions high schools should consider in creating their curriculum are:

- Students should be required to take a financial literacy course. Financial literacy classes will allow students to be in control of their own finances and prepare for their future.
- More electives that offer life skills should be made available to students. The electives should include options such as home economics, shop class, and classes that bring awareness about mental health.
- Physical education classes should be made optional to students who are already participating in a sport. Some high schools are already adopting this process, as they believe students meet the requirement when they are already participating in a sport.
- English classes such as creative writing and critical thinking should be options, for students that wish to learn outside of their traditional English classes.
- More AP classes and college credit courses should be offered, so that students that wish to enter college can be prepared.
- Offer foreign language classes outside of Spanish. Students may want to learn other languages other than Spanish, so a variety of options should be offered.

- Students should be required to take math and science classes but should have a variety of choices. Various options be included so that students can pick the right option that will help them in their future careers. Options should include calculus, statistics, algebra, etc.

If the individuals in charge of creating high school curriculums were to consider these suggestions, then students would feel more prepared for a life outside of academics and be more satisfied with their high school education. Taking these suggestions seriously will allow students to succeed in their future and teach students valuable life skills. The suggestions are based off of current undergraduate students who wish their high school curriculum was different. Even though only 13 students responded to the survey, the data stills contain real life opinions about high school curriculums from individuals with different backgrounds. The suggestions and opinions of the undergraduate students should still be considered and considering the suggestions when creating a curriculum will prepare students for the future.

References

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Appendix

Consent Form



BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Psychology

High School Curriculum

Summary

You are invited to participate in a research study in which we are interested in asking you some questions about your perceptions and feelings about your high school curriculum. We anticipate that your participation will take approximately 10 minutes. The benefit of participating in this project is an increased awareness of your own views toward curriculums. Respondents will receive no compensation for their participation in this study. Risks of participating in this study will not exceed those experienced in daily life. If there are any questions in this study that you are not comfortable answering you may skip those items. Your responses will be recorded on a password protected computer. We will not be collecting any information from you that would enable us to connect you, personally, with your survey responses. Your responses will not be saved until you click the "Submit" button at the end of the survey. Because the Internet is not 100% secure in terms of privacy, please do not leave the partially completed survey open or unattended if completing it on a public computer. You should clear the browser page history and cache when finished with the survey. At the end of the study you will be given information about the purpose of this study.

INTRODUCTION OF THE RESEARCHER

The primary investigator for this research study is Kaitlyn Witt, psychology undergraduate student, with the co-investigator is Kristina Lavenia, Education Department Professor. The research topic is high school curriculums and how they prepare you for a life outside of academics. You are being asked to participate because you decided to click the link in the BGSU weekly updates. You are eligible to participate in this study if you are between 18 and 50 years old, are living in the United States, and speak English as your first language.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research study is to find out how high school curriculums need to be improved in order to prepare students for a life outside of academics. The benefits of participating in this project include helping us to understand people's views and perceptions on high school curriculums. You may also benefit, personally, from an increased awareness of your own views toward curriculums. Respondents will receive no compensation for their participation in this study.

PROCEDURE

In this research project, your responses will be collected through this survey. This survey is expected to be ten minutes long and will be taken online. After the responses of all participants are recorded, the data will be analyzed and compiled into potential suggestions for improving a high school curriculums.

VOLUNTARY NATURE

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. Your participation in this study or choice to not participate in this study will not impact any relationship you may have with Bowling Green State University. You may decide to skip questions or discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact the principal investigator or the co-investigator:

- Principal Investigator: Kaitlyn Witt, Psychology Department, Bowling Green State University, wittk@bgsu.edu
- Co-Investigator: Kristina Lavenia, Education Department, Bowling Green State University, klaveni@bgsu.edu
- The Institutional Review Board at Bowling Green State University (Institutional Review Board approval, XXXXXXXX) approved this research study.
- You may also contact the Chair, Institutional Review Board, Bowling Green State University, (419) 372-7716 (orc@bgsu.edu), if any problems or concerns arise during the course of the study.

PROVIDING YOUR INFORMED CONSENT:

Please click on the button below to indicate your informed decision regarding participating in this study. If you do not wish to participate, you may simply close the window and not continue.

_____ Yes, I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits associated with participating in this study, and I agree to participate in the research. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I certify that I meet the eligibility requirements for this study.

Participant Signature

Questionnaire

1. What classes do you wish your high school curriculum offered?
2. In your high school education, was there any classes you thought were unnecessary to take?
3. Do you think high school students should be required to take a financial literacy class?
4. How comfortable are you cooking your meals by yourself?
5. Did you have any support for learning how to cook at home?
6. How comfortable are you with managing finances, such as balancing a checkbook and doing your own taxes?
7. Did you have any support for learning how to manage finances?
8. Please write any additional thoughts and feedbacks about the survey below.

Recruitment Letter

Hello, my name is Kaitlyn Witt and I'm looking for participants for honors college project. I'm researching how high school curriculums are preparing students for a life outside of academics.

If you are interested in participating, all you have to do is complete a short survey. Click the link below and it will take you to the survey. If you have any questions, you can contact me at

wittk@bgsu.edu