Connecting Career Development and Mental Health for Youth in Schools

Module 2 (Fundamentals) Section 2.3: Conceptions of "Career" for Modern Times

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Review

1. The content and form of work is changing.
2. The rate of change in the occupational landscape is accelerating.
3. There are four critical change concepts: personal agency, passion, global competencies and adaptability.
4. The world has changed – and so has the way we think about “careers”.

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In this section …

1. How Outdated Career Thinking is Failing Our Kids
    1. Old-school myths and practices
2. Developing a Common Career Language
3. A Brief History of Career Theories
4. Eight Key Career Messages for Teaching Practice

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How Outdated Career Thinking is Failing Our Kids

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4 Career Development Myths Transformed

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Career Development Is …

… a problem

… Normal!

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Career Development Is ...

... about choosing occupations

... about finding directions

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Career Development Is ...

... planning for the future

... living intentionally in the present to make a preferred future possible

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Career Development Is ...

... the purview of guidance

... everyone's responsibility

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What is a "Career"?

Developing a Common Language

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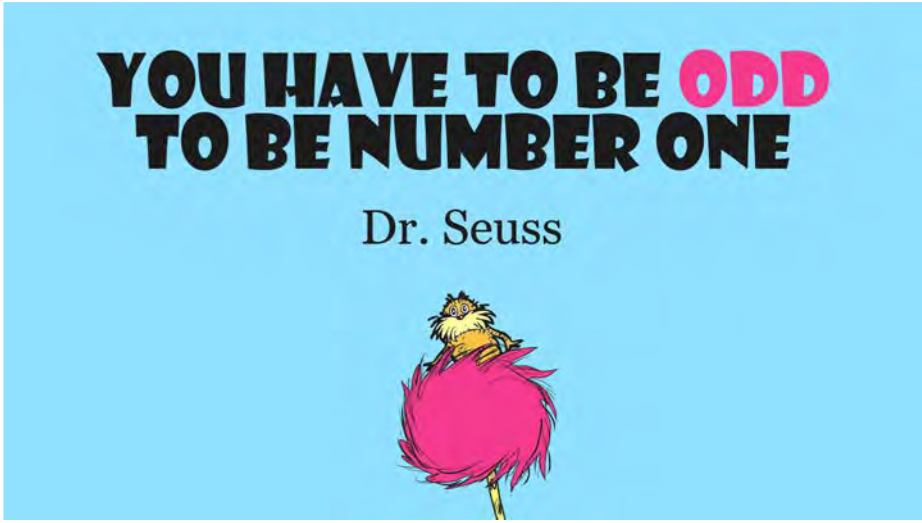
Isn’t it odd that …

The word “career” holds multiple meanings for people, and almost nobody uses it the way career professionals do?



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Work:

- Any activity that involves effort (mental, physical, emotional) in order to achieve a goal or desired result
- In school, we use terms like deskwork, groupwork and homework
- We have already seen how the nature of work is changing rapidly (in content, form and rate of change)

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Job:

- A specific task or set of duties, in a specific place.
- Most commonly used to describe paid employment (as in, “Get a job!”) but could also describe unpaid activities
- Some of my jobs have included store clerk at McLeod’s Hardware, teacher at Kelvington High School, counsellor at Keyano College, Professor at the University of Calgary, Dean of Education at Simon Fraser University

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Occupation:

- The title given to a cluster of jobs
- From my previous list of jobs, store clerk, teacher, counsellor, professor and dean would have been some of my occupational titles
- **The focus of most early forms of career planning was on occupational choice**

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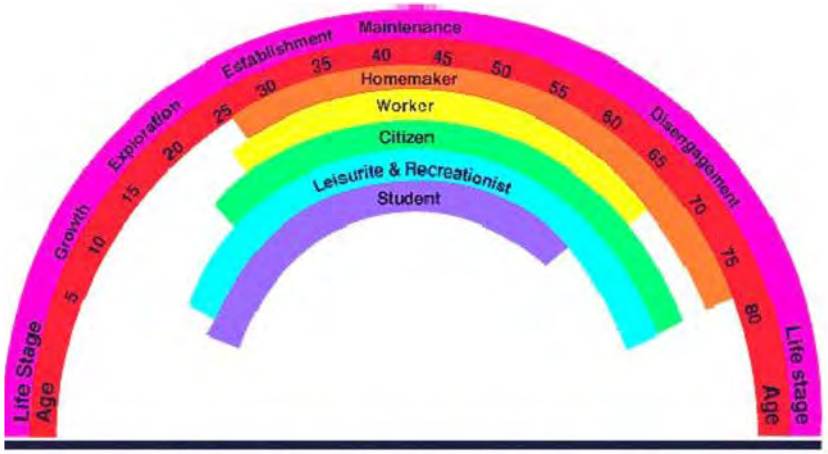
Career:

The constellation of life-roles an individual plays over his or her lifetime.



The Life - Career Rainbow

Source: Super, D. E. & Minor, F. J., (1987) **Career Development Planning in Organizations**. In B. Bass & P. Drenth (Eds.) Advances in Organizational Psychology, International Review (pp., 83-98) Sage Press, Beverly Hills, CA
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It is one's "life story".

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Career (CSGCDP):

"… a lifestyle concept that involves the sequence of work, learning and leisure activities in which one engages throughout a lifetime. Careers are unique to each person and are dynamic; unfolding throughout life. Careers include how persons balance their paid and unpaid work and personal life roles.

Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (2012). Glossary of terms. Retrieved from https://career-dev-guidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Glossary.pdf

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Career Development:

"… the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move towards a personally determined and evolving preferred future." (CSGCDP, 2012, p. 2).

Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (2012). Glossary of terms. Retrieved from https://career-dev-guidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Glossary.pdf

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Career Exploration:

"… the process of investigating and reflecting on self, personal contexts, learning and work opportunities, and training and educational requirements, as a basis for making career-life choices over the lifespan."

Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (2012). Glossary of terms. Retrieved from https://career-dev-guidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Glossary.pdf

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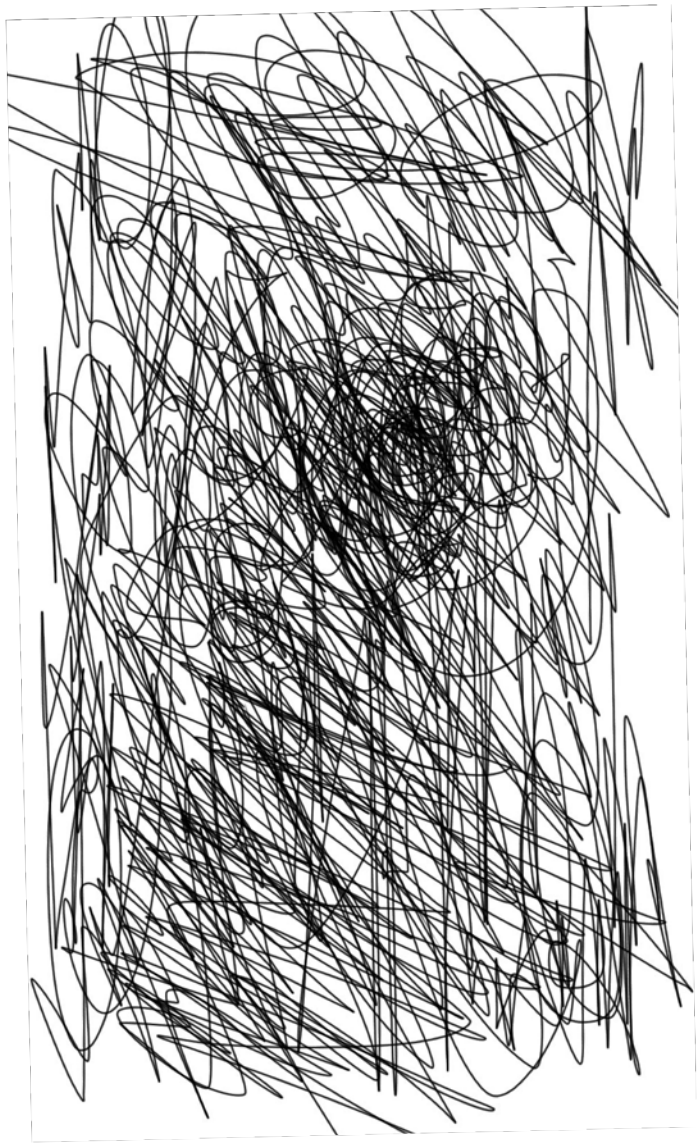
How we have messed up 50 years of career curriculum?

By asking the wrong question (**What are you going to choose to do?**) and acting as if **all that was needed was more and better information**.



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Conceptions of “Career”

Our History May be a Problem …

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Five Tenets of Career Practice in the 20th Century

(Geysbers, 1998)

- Individualism and Autonomy
- Affluence
- Structure of Opportunity open to all who strive for it
- The Centrality of work
- Linearity, progressiveness and rationality as hallmarks of career development

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The Age of Reason

Square Pegs

Square Holes

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Frank Parsons (1909)

Know yourself (traits)
- Assessment

Know the world of work (factors)
- Occupational Information

Use "true reasoning" (matching)
- Vocational decision-making models

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Holland: People/Environment Fit

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Sometimes Works If …

You are upper middle class or above;

You are male;

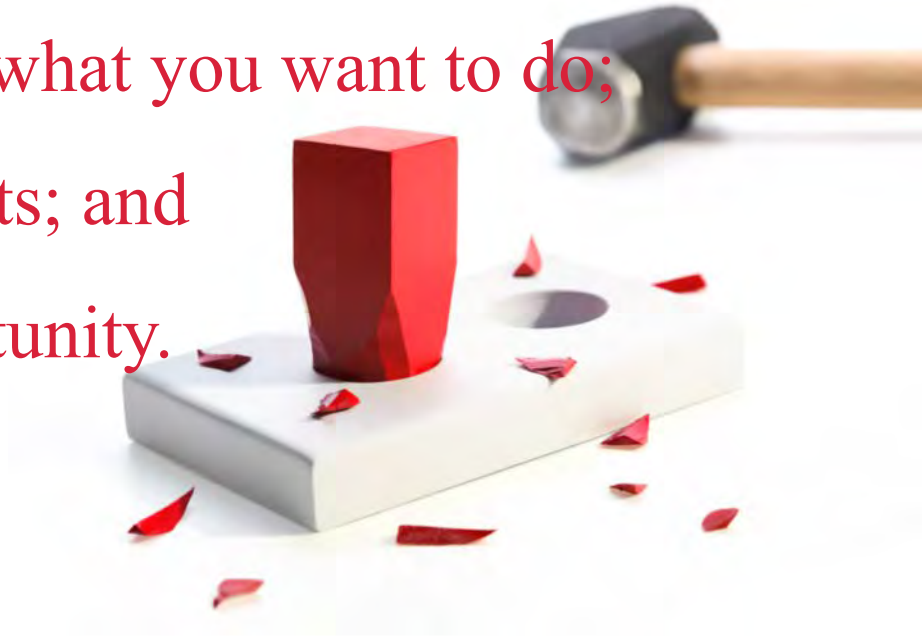
You hold traditional Euro-centric values;

You are from a large urban American center;

You already pretty much know what you want to do;

You have few or no role conflicts; and

You have equal access to opportunity.



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The Age of Development

Career choice not a single, one-time event

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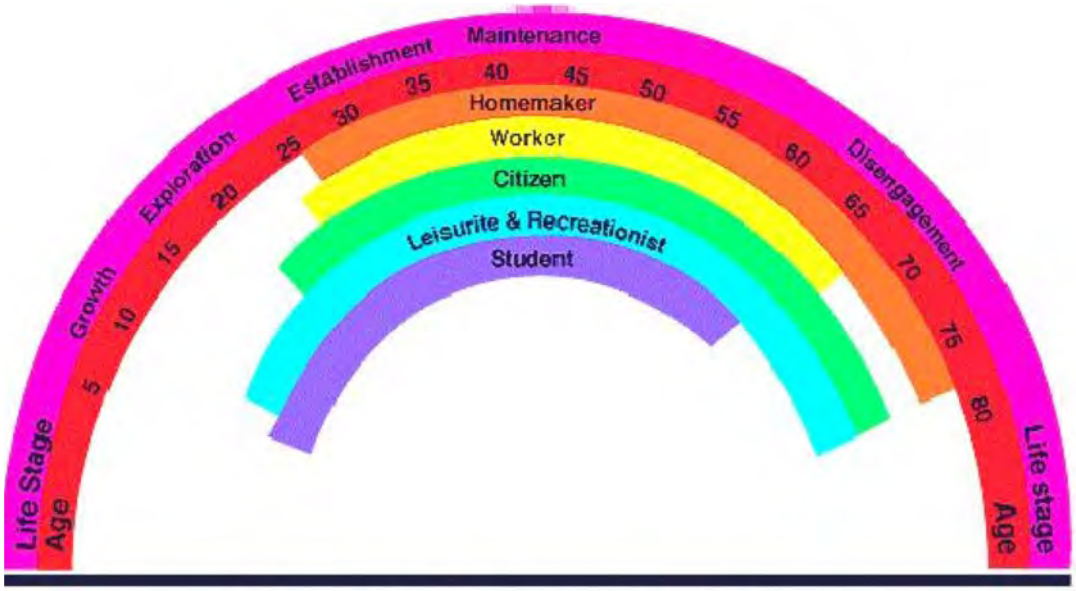
Super's Developmental Theory



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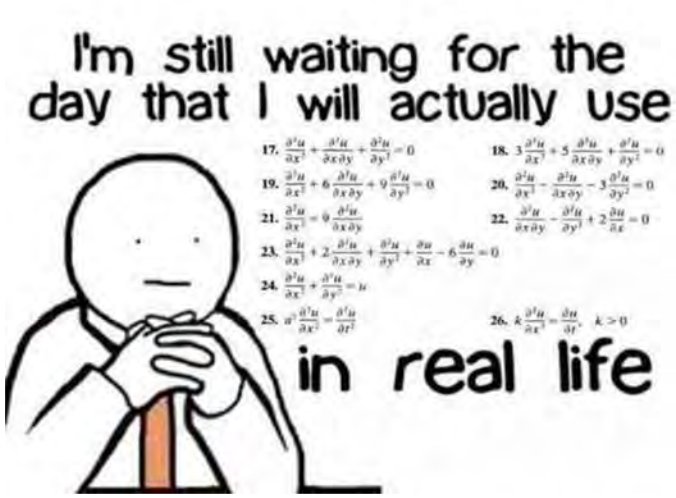
The Age of Relevance

Movement from broad categorizations of people to enable prediction to individual understandings of people to enable planning



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Planned Happenstance

(Krumboltz, 2009)

"Indecision is desirable and sensible, because it allows people to benefit from unplanned events."

Two concepts that further "individual understanding" :

- Self-Observation Generalizations
- World-View Generalizations

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Integrative Life Planning

(Hansen, 2011)

"Weaving our lives into a meaningful whole"

1. Finding work that needs doing
2. Maintaining health and wellbeing
3. Connecting family and work
4. Valuing pluralism and inclusivity
5. Exploring spirituality and life purpose
6. Managing personal transitions and organizational change

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Constructivism

(Savickas, 1993, 1995)

- Focus on meaning-making: How do people interpret their lives in pursuit of meaning?
- People "construct" themselves through how they interpret things and through the actions they take
- There is no single "objective" reality

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Other Modern Career Reading:

- The career psychology of women (Hackett and Betz);
- Action Theory (Young)
- Systems Theory (McMahon)
- Career Flow (Niles and Amundsen)
- Chaos Theory (Bright and Pryor)

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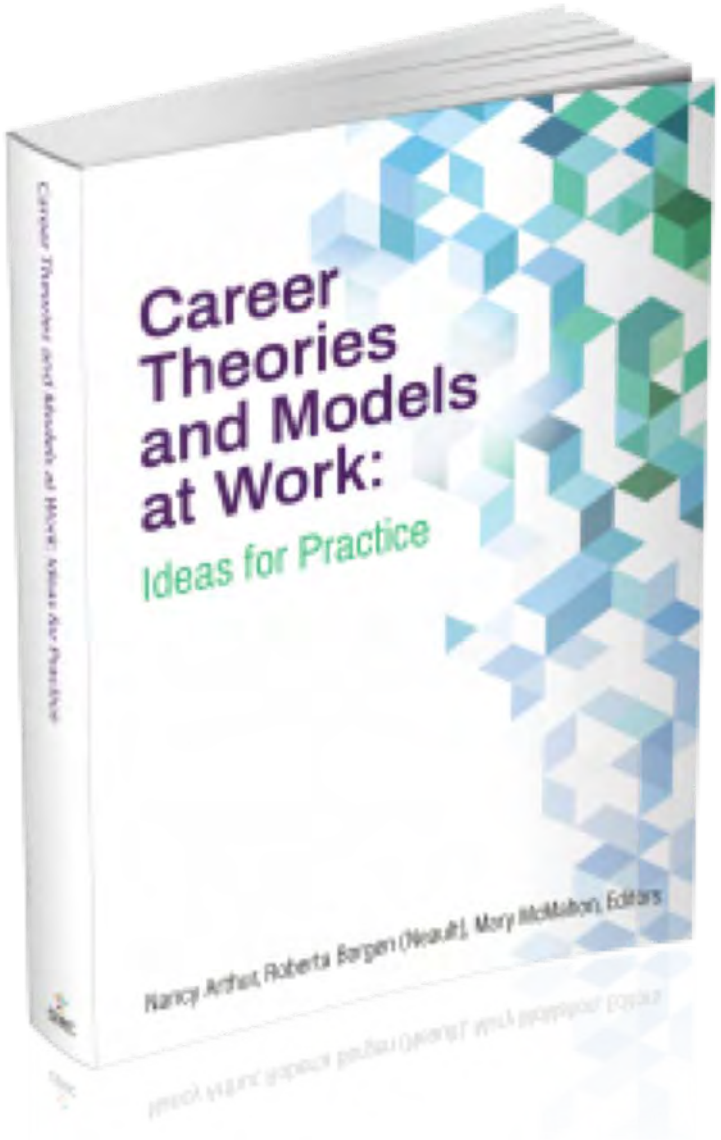

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Theory Summary

- Structural approaches showed how to gather and use information, but failed to account for complexity, change, or contextual barriers
- Developmental approaches introduced life-span concepts and multiple-role thinking, but assumed that there are age-appropriate developmental tasks
- Meaning-making approaches subsume structural and developmental approaches, but focus on how people engage with their environments and construct life-paths base on expressions of meaning

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8 Key Career Messages for Teaching Practice

Disrupting common notions that make career planning difficult for kids

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Message #1: There are Many Life-Roles

- Focus on multiple life-roles versus a singular focus on the occupational role
- Guide students to the understanding that career is a developmental progression of finding meaningful personal expression in and through the roles they are playing and will be playing.
- Help them to see themselves in their current roles

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Message #2: Career Is a Process of Building

- Imagine career building versus career deciding
- Focus on process, not outcome
- Think about how classroom activities can be designed to learn more about self, or about the world around them

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Message #3: Balance Heart with Head

- The starting place is always from the heart – what people care about and find meaningful to them
- Information (such as LMI) and logic ("true reasoning") are used to support passion (in what ways might I exercise this interest of mine?)
- Encourage conversations and examples of student passion/meaning

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Message #4: It is Better to Prepare than to Predict

- The rate of change is making accurate predictions almost impossible
- Fostering the 6 global competencies prepares students to be adaptable (more prepared for change)
- Look for ways to provide "in-the-moment" feedback whenever a student demonstrates a global competency

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Message #5: Intentions are Long-term; Goals are Short-Term

- There is too much emphasis on students setting ”career goals” which for the vast majority of students, results in discouragement
- Gelatt: Positive Uncertainty: Treat goals as hypotheses, and balance information with imagination
- Encourage flexibility when students talk about their futures

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Message #6: Strategies are More Effective Than Plans

- Setting rigid plans invites failure and discouragement
- Having a strategy to achieve an intention allows for flexibility when confronting obstacles
- Encourage students to think about "back-up" plans: What might you do if …

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Message #7: Purposeful Meandering is More Engaging

- Active forms of exploration – where the direction is more important than the destination – help students retain interest.
- In addition to looking for something that they care about, direct students' attention to other related ideas (E.g., If your grade 3 class is doing a music lesson and Jane shows interest in the drums, have her find 2 other forms of percussion instrument)

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Message #8: Explore Sectors not Occupations

- There are a wide range of occupations within a general area of interest; focusing on the sector broadens the understanding of possibilities and allows for more flexible decision-making
- “I want to do work that improves peoples’ health” versus ”I want to be a paramedic/lab tech/nurse/doctor).
- Encourage meandering through sectors

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Summary

- The rate of change renders traditional forms of career thinking at best ineffective and at worst destructive
- By thinking about how the world is changing, and keeping a few core messages for teaching in mind, teachers can do things within any grade and subject level that will foster the career development of their students.

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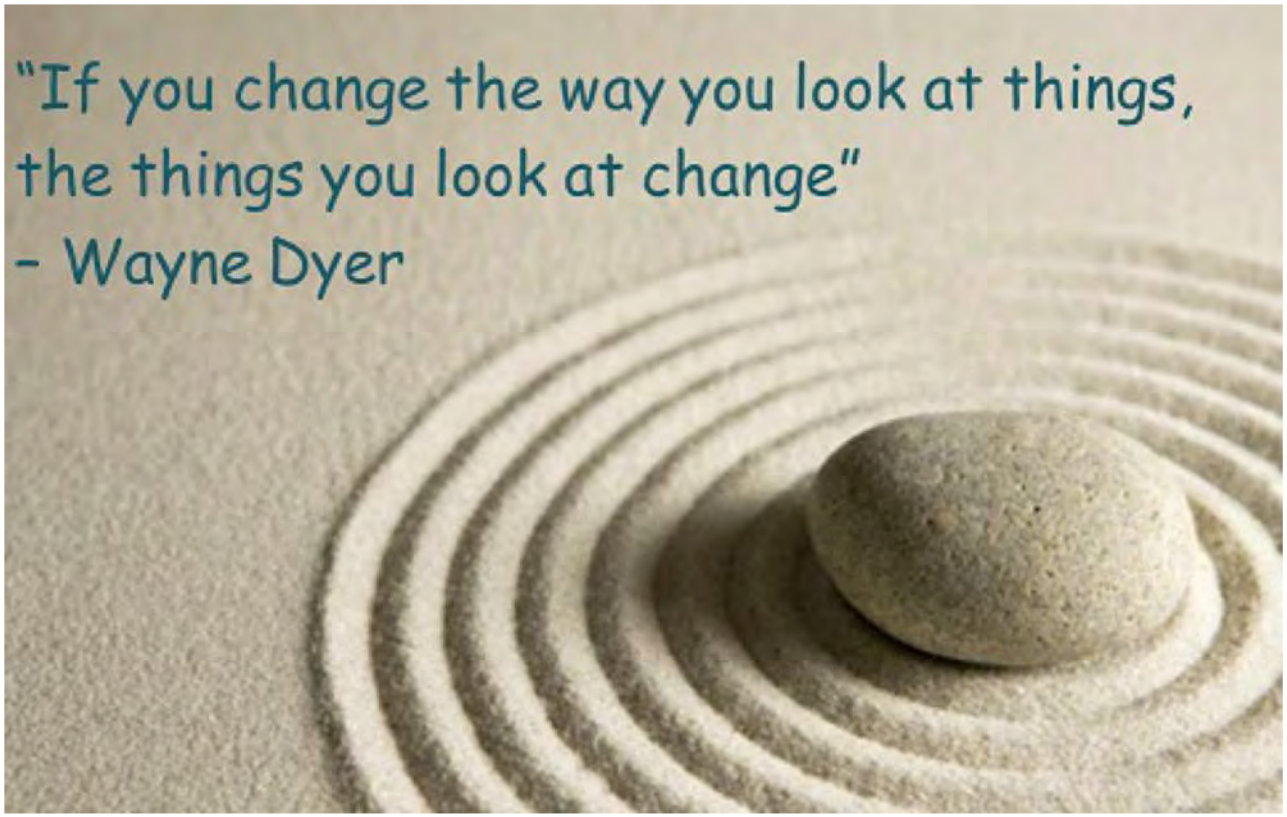
A Matter of Perspective



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