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Initiatives that Assist and Barriers that Hinder the Successful Transition of Minority Youth into the Workplace

Diversity in the Workforce #4

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Preface

This is the fourth report in the Diversity in the Workforce Series sponsored by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE). This report is intended to inform and provide information to educators and people from business and industry. They will, in turn, use this information to develop practices and guidelines to follow when selecting or assessing workplace environments that are conducive to maximizing the contributions of minority youth in the workplace.

More specifically, the information from this study will enable educators to revise their curricula appropriately to more effectively assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace and illustrate for their students the continuing impact of initiatives in educational and workplace settings. The information will then help school-to-work partnership directors select sites for work-based learning, and will prepare work-site supervisors to work with students who are ethnically, culturally, and in other ways different from their current workers. Next, the results can also be used for benchmarking within organizations. The results can aid in the self-reflective process organizations use to assess their current status and assist them in developing strategic plans that address the transition of minority youth into the workplace. Finally, the information can also be used by minority youth who are selecting companies for employment, as well as by individuals who are involved in placing minority youth in work-based learning sites.

This report is devoted to providing information on initiatives that assist and barriers that hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace, as perceived by a panel of school-to-work partnership directors from across the United States.

Below is a listing of the four reports included in the Diversity in the Workforce Series:

Report #1: *Diversity in the Workforce: A Literature Review*
Report #2: *Current Status and Future Trends of Diversity Initiatives in the Workplace: Diversity Experts' Perspective*
Report #3: *Current Status of Diversity Initiatives in Multinational Corporations*
Report #4: *Initiatives that Assist and Barriers that Hinder the Successful Transition of Minority Youth into the Workplace*

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to identify initiatives that assist and barriers that hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. In addition, this study identified policies and practices that create work environments that are conducive to the development of minority youth in school-to-work programs. The study attempted to address the following major research questions: (1) What are the barriers that are most likely to affect the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace? (2) What are the initiatives that are the most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace? (3) What goals should be advocated for minority youth who are making the transition into the workplace? (4) What are the criteria for determining sensitive work-based learning sites and/or companies that assist in the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace?

Research Methods

The major method of this research study was in-depth, open-ended telephone interviews with a panel of 21 school-to-work partnership directors from across the United States. School-to-work partnership directors were chosen as study participants because they can provide current perspectives and up-to-date knowledge that cannot be found in other sources of information. Through telephone interviews, extensive data were collected in order to produce an in-depth understanding of the initiatives that assist and barriers that hinder the successful transition of minority youth.

An interview guide was developed to assist in collecting the data from the interviews. A pilot study was conducted with three people knowledgeable on school-to-work programs and minority youth issues in order to determine validity and appropriateness of the interview guide.

Initial contacts with the school-to-work partnership directors were made over the telephone at which time dates, interview appointments, and arrangements were made. Each participant received a letter confirming the telephone interview appointment and a copy of the interview guide two weeks before the scheduled interview. The study participants had the opportunity to examine the interview questions prior to the interview. The interviews lasted from one to three hours, with an overall average of two hours.

Summary of the Results

The results of this study revealed that the four categories of barriers that are most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace are (1) school (coming from the school setting), (2) workplace (coming from the workplace environment), (3) societal (coming from the community surroundings—other than school and workplace), and (4) individual (coming from the minority youth themselves). The five school-related barriers that are mostly likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace are (1) school personnel who are resistant to change, (2) lack of understanding concerning different cultures, (3) lack of integrated/relevant curriculum, (4) lack of communication between business and schools, and (5) lack of understanding about STW transition. The five workplace-related barriers that are most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace are (1) lack of communication between businesses and schools, (2) lack of understanding concerning different cultures, (3) discrimination, (4) businesses not aware of the need to become involved with the STW transition of youth, and (5) lack of workplace learning/job opportunities. The five societal-related barriers that are mostly likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace are (1) lack of understanding concerning different cultures, (2) lack of understanding about the STW transition initiative, (3) lack of support and opportunities for youth, (4) discrimination, and (5) low expectation of youth. The five individual-related barriers that are mostly likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace are (1) poverty, (2) lack of knowledge/skills needed to succeed in the workplace, (3) lack of English (language) proficiency, (4) lack of family involvement/support, and (5) lack of understanding regarding the importance of education.

The results also disclosed that two categories were inclusive of the types of initiatives that were most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace: (1) school initiatives and (2) workplace initiatives. The five school initiatives that are most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace are (1) design and implement an integrated and relevant curriculum; (2) provide training for school personnel (e.g., teachers, counselors, and administrators); (3) provide mentoring for minority youth; (4) provide career exploration and guidance for minority youth; and (5) obtain parent involvement. The five workplace initiatives that are most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace are (1) provide work-based learning; (2) provide diversity training for employers; (3) provide mentoring for minority youth; (4) provide career development programs; and (5) develop and implement organizational policies that mandate fairness and equity for all employees.

The results of the study indicated that some of the major goals that should be advocated for minority youth who are making the transition into the workplace are (1) obtain a good education; (2) get work experience; (3) develop a career plan; (4) take responsibility for your success; and (5) learn to be an effective team member.

The results of the study also revealed that the criteria for determining sensitive work-based learning sites and/or companies that assist in the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace are (1) successful in recruiting, hiring, and retaining minority employees; (2) minority employees are represented at all levels of the company; (3) absence of discrimination lawsuits; (4) use a combination of initiatives to address diversity; and (5) has a corporate culture that respects and values differences.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The demographic composition of our society is undergoing a historic transition from a predominately White society rooted in Western culture to a global society composed of diverse racial and ethnic minorities (O'Hare, 1993; Triandis, Kurowski, & Gelfand, 1994). Currently, racial and ethnic minorities comprise 28% of the U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998, pp. 2-3). According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996) projections, during the next ten years non-Hispanic White will contribute to only one-quarter of the total population growth. From 2030 to 2050, the non-Hispanic White population will contribute nothing to the Nation's population growth because it will be declining in size. Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics will out number Whites in the U.S. in the next millennium. By 2010, Hispanics are expected to supplant Blacks as the nation's largest minority group. The rapid growth of minorities has been and will continue to be marked by an increasing diversity in terms of language differences, cultural beliefs, and other practices as new immigrant groups (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodians, Dominicans, Nicaraguans) join earlier immigrants (Mexicans, Cubans, Chinese, and Japanese) (O'Hare, 1993; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996).

An increasing number of youth in the 16- to 24-year-old age group are entering the job market. They are likely to be more ethnically diverse than workers in today's workforce (Finney, 1989; Judy & D'Amico, 1998; Triandis & Bhawuk, 1994). Black and Hispanic birth rates are four and seven times respectively that of White Americans. The proportion of Black youth population, ages 14 to 24, will increase from 5,859,000 in 1990 to a projected 7,411,000 by the year 2010. Likewise, Hispanics will increase from 4,791,000 to 9,666,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). This increase in the numbers of minority youth will require business organizations to consider hiring more Black and Hispanic employees (Triandis & Bhawuk, 1994). According to Hamilton (1990), "The great challenge facing the nation is to prepare a changing population of young people to do new kinds of work. Failure imperils economic health, social progress, and democracy itself" (p. 1).

Racial and linguistic bias continues to stifle employment opportunities for minority youth, including Native American or Alaskan native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, and other racial minorities between the ages of 16-24 (Hill & Nixon, 1984). Schools have not fully developed nor have workplaces fully utilized the talents of minority youth (Hamilton, 1990; Triandis, 1976; Triandis & Bhawuk, 1994). Minority youth have a greater probability of being poor, living in poverty, or being otherwise disadvantaged. An increasing numbers of young people are diverging from the White middle-class pattern. Educational institutions and workplaces must adapt to changes in the youth population. Education and workplace training that are typically effective with advantaged youth will not

necessarily enable disadvantaged youth to reach their full potential (Bloomfield, 1989; Hamilton, 1990; Ihlanfeldt & Sjoquist, 1993).

Longitudinal surveys about youth employment conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (1993) found that almost half of the 16- to 21-year-olds reporting unemployment were high school students. Of these high school students, minorities suffered disproportionately. Disproportion among minorities and their school-to-work (STW) transition experience lies heavily upon two main groups: (1) Blacks and (2) Hispanics. These two groups make up more than 90% of America's minority population (Business-Higher Education Forum, 1990) and their unemployment rates are usually two to three times higher than those of White youth—an issue that constitutes the center of the youth joblessness problem (Hill & Nixon, 1984).

Kantor and Brenzel (1992) relate that after two-and-a-half decades of local, state, and federal efforts to improve urban education for low-income and minority children, achievement in inner-city schools continues to lag behind national norms, and dropout rates in inner-city high schools, especially among Black and Hispanic youth, remain distressingly high. At the same time, many of those who do graduate are often poorly prepared and are unable to compete successfully in the labor market. Business-Higher Education Forum (1990) underlines the joblessness issue for Blacks and Hispanics by saying that in any given month, Hispanic unemployment is about 50% higher than the rate of Whites, and Black unemployment is 2.5 times higher than that of Hispanics.

The unemployment struggle that minority youth face has an overpowering effect on America. Prior unemployment often leads to a high risk of unemployment later (Andress, 1989; Hammer, 1996). In addition, it poses huge financial and societal challenges to the competitive advantage of America. Responding to the poor STW transition of minority youth is an expensive undertaking in itself. With more than 20% of high school students dropping out and with a dropout rate of 50% in the cities, more than one-third of America's front-line labor force is at stake (Sarkees-Wircenski & Wircenski, 1994). Minority youth who are in the transition from school to work face a variety of problems and barriers. Discrimination, lack of appropriate educational programs, poverty, lack of transportation, low self-efficacy, peer pressure, poor job networking, poor basic work skills, unemployment, lack of parent involvement, cultural differences, and unavailability of workplace training are some of the barriers that hinder their successful STW transition (Cochrane, Mattai, & Huddleston-Mattai, 1994; Fernandez, 1993; Gordon, 1997; Gordon & Meroe, 1991; Ihlanfeldt, 1992; Miller, 1995; West & Penkowsky, 1994). The literature seems to suggest that barriers that hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace can be classified into four categories—(1) school-related, (2) work-related, (3) societal-related, and (4) individual-related; therefore,

this study used these categories as a conceptual framework in identifying barriers.

Minority youth typically receive very little help and this neglect results in economic hardships, reduced productivity for industry, and a dreadful waste of human potential (Allen & Mitchell, 1998; Constantine, Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998; West & Penkowsky, 1994). As we move into the next decade, it is imperative that we identify what initiatives continue to support and assist the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. In addition, to ensure that the larger, more diverse youth of the next decade are prepared to do the work of the new decade and new century, the barriers that they encounter must be determined and addressed so that their transition into the workplace can be made more smoothly and efficiently.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the initiatives that assist and barriers that hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. Initiatives are specific activities, programs, policies, and any other formal and informal process or effort designed to facilitate the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. According to McLoyd (1998), we need to better understand the cause of problems disproportionately affecting minority youth. Further, priority should be given to the identification of risk factors for problem behaviors, clarification of factors that disrupt positive development, and documentation of circumstances that lead to these outcomes. This study focused on the illumination of initiatives that assist and barriers that hinder the successful STW transition of minority youth. Thus, information from this study can be used to inform educators, people from business and industry, minority youth, and society as a whole. Being knowledgeable about the barriers that hinder the STW transition of minority youth may assist school personnel in revising their curricula and developing educational activities that will assist minority youth in overcoming these barriers. The information from this study may also assist employers in developing strategies, initiatives, and policies that address these barriers. Additionally, the information from the study can inform the community of the barriers encountered by minority youth, and this knowledge can better help them develop activities and programs to support their transition into the workplace. Lastly, information from this study can be used by minority youth to better understand the situations they face and help them make informed decisions.

Research Questions

The study examined the following four research questions:

1. What are the barriers that are most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace?
2. What are the initiatives that are the most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace?
3. What goals should be advocated for minority youth who are making the transition into the workplace?
4. What are the criteria for determining sensitive work-based learning sites and/or companies that assist in the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study can be used by several different audiences. First, the information from this study will enable educators to revise their curricula appropriately to more effectively assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace and enable them to illustrate for their students the continuing impact of initiatives in educational and workplace settings. Second, the information from this study will help STW partnership directors select sites for work-based learning, and can be used to prepare work-site supervisors to work with students who are ethnically, culturally, and in other ways different from their current workers. Third, the results of this study can also be used for benchmarking within organizations. It can aid in the self-reflective process organizations use to assess their current status and assist them in developing strategic plans that address the transition of minority youth into the workplace. Fourth, the information from this study can also be used by minority youth who are selecting companies for employment, as well as by individuals who are involved in placing minority youth in work-based learning sites.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the study and are defined in this section for clarification.

- *Initiatives:* Initiatives are specific activities, programs, policies, and any other formal processes or efforts designed to facilitate the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace.
- *School-to-Work Transition:* School-to-work transition is a systematic process(es) that assist high school graduates to move smoothly from school to employment (Glover & Marshall, 1993).
- *Minority Youth:* Minority youth include Native American or Alaskan native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black, not of Hispanic origin; Hispanic; and other racial minorities between the ages of 16-24 (Hill & Nixon, 1984).
- *Diversity:* Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued (Griggs, 1995).

Limitations

- The findings of the study will be based primarily on the perceptions of the study participants.
- The sample of the study is small and the majority of students they serve are minority; therefore, the findings may not be representative of all STW partnership program sites.
- Triangulation and/or a combination of data sources were not used; therefore, bias that is sometimes inherent by using only one data source may have occurred.

Review of Literature

Introduction

Graduation for many high school youth in the United States means that the time has come to sink or swim. Each year roughly about 1.4 million youth enter the labor market without enrolling in college and only about 25% of each graduating class ultimately obtains a baccalaureate degree (Glover & Marshall, 1993). The noncollege-bound youth, ages 16-24, transition from school to work with little or no assistance. Their fate takes on different names: milling around, the churning process, unemployed, job hopping, serial employment, moratorium, shopping around, floundering, and drifting (Anderson & Sawhill, 1978; Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1990; Osterman & Iannozzi, 1993; Stern, Finkelstein, Stone, Latting, & Dornsife, 1995).

While all noncollege-bound youth face transition problems, clear differences exist with rates of nonactivity. Klerman and Karoly (1995), reported that at nearly every age, Black high school dropouts were more likely to be out of work and out of school than their Hispanic or White counterparts. Hispanics ranked consistently in the middle, with the next highest level of nonactivity among the dropouts. Whites had the lowest fraction of dropouts out of work and out of school at any given age. They go on to say that for any given age, Black dropouts were twice as likely as White dropouts to be nonactive. Futhermore, this ranking does not only apply to high school dropouts but also to minority male high school graduates.

Since the school-to-work (STW) transition experiences for Blacks and Hispanics are critical, this literature will look at the following: (1) what transition is, (2) the role of government in supporting STW transition, (3) the role of education, (4) the societal issues that Blacks and Hispanics face, (5) the issues that minority youth face in the workplace, (6) the role of diversity in the STW transition, and (7) a summary of what has been learned.

School-to-Work Transition

STW transition discussions have produced different descriptions. It is seen as a systematic process(es) that assist high school graduates to move smoothly from school to employment (Glover & Marshall, 1993). It is seen as moving from a sheltered and benign world of adolescence to a competitive and harsh world that must be negotiated alone (Gaskell, 1992). Buchmann (1989) described it as an inherent aspect of the transition from youth to adulthood. He described the youth to adulthood phase as institutionalized sequences of events, positions, and roles, which shape the

individual's progression in time and space. Hammer (1996) highlighted that the discovery of each new stage of life is accompanied by the cultural definition of needs, competencies, tasks, and behaviors thought to be appropriate for individuals belonging to a given age group. He added that such officially recognized attributes constitute the basic element of social identity. STW transition, then, is seen as an institutionalized pattern; a requirement for officially recognized attributes because transition from school to work is a significant criterion for the majority of young people to achieve status.

Feather (1989) accentuated the significance criterion by saying that a failure of transition from adolescence to adulthood via employment has consequences for a person's establishment of identity, autonomy, and competence. McGinty and Fish (1992) related how transition was seen in the past: "a haphazard and uncoordinated process left largely to uninformed young people and their families. When the flow of young people, without any training or preparation, from school-to-work was interrupted by youth unemployment something had to be done" (p. 6). Today, unemployment flow continues, with minorities at the forefront. The transition for this group is governed by an uneven struggle against skill, language, socialization constraints, physical isolation from the workplace, isolation from information, changing economic structures, cultural preferences, and discrimination (Cochrane et al., 1994).

The Role of the Government

Minority joblessness has serious implications for America's competitive capability. It poses huge financial and societal challenges to the competitive advantage of America. Business-Higher Education Forum (1990) provided numbers to expose this crippling problem:

> They are: $1,100 to provide a teenager with a summer job or 20,000 a year to incarcerate law-breakers; $2,500 to provide Head Start or day care for the child of a working mother or $7,300 to provide welfare, food stamps and hearing assistance for a mother of two who cannot work because of her child-care responsibilities; $600 to provide a year of compensatory education or $2,400 to have a child repeat a grade; $600 to provide comprehensive pre-natal care for an expectant mother or an average of $12,000 under Medicaid for intensive post-natal care for underweight newborns; $68 to provide family planning services to a teenage girl or $3,000 under Medicaid to provide pre-natal care and delivery for an unemployed teenage mother; lastly, $654 million to provide literacy training and vocational experience to 40,000 trainees through Job Corps or $8.6

billion to provide welfare benefits to more than 3 million welfare families. (p. 55)

The above numbers spell some of the repercussions of reactivity to the minority unemployment problem. The solution to the problem, then, calls for the participation and commitment of every individual in America. "Who is responsible?" is the key question that needs to be asked when discussing, designing, and implementing initiatives and STW transition programs for minorities. As the Business-Higher Education Forum (1990) described it, "these issues are not their problems—that is, the problems of the minority community—but our problems. Unless we resolve them, our economy, and its corporations, universities, school systems, communities, and families will pay the price of continued failure" (p. 18).

Central to these institutions is the government. Their leadership and support is invaluable. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act (SWOA) is a vivid example of such leadership. STW transition and the restructuring of vocational-technical education received recognition and support. On May 4, 1994, President Clinton signed STWOA (Public Law 103-239) into law. President Clinton fully supported the STWOA (Hudelson, 1994). The legislation encompassed all students as it ambitiously aimed to fund education programs that would give students better opportunities for postsecondary education and for good jobs after high school (Lerman, 1994). The STWOA provides states with federal assistance to develop and implement a statewide STW transition system to assist new entrants to the labor force. An important component of this legislation is the creation of partnerships between education and employers. The legislation seeks to include employers as full partners in providing students with high-quality, work-based learning through job training or work experiences. One of the major goals for this system is to assist all students in the successful transition from school into meaningful, high-quality employment. The ethnic, race, culture, and gender composition of school-age youth is considerably more diverse than that of the contemporary workforce, and this has considerable implications for the implementation of the work-based learning component of the STWOA. The question of how to work with employers to implement the STWOA and accommodate the work-based learning needs of minority students will also become a major challenge. With its estimated $100 million tag in 1994, the legislation sought to expand the role of work-based components through many initiatives. Programs such as Tech Prep, career academies, youth apprenticeship program, and cooperative education are representative of the SWOA's efforts (Grubb & Badway, 1998; Hudelson, 1994; Phelps, Hernández-Gantes, Jones, Sanchez, & Nieri, 1995).

Tech Prep provides an alternative to the college prep curriculum. Its promoters, Dale Parnell and the Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD), seek to prepare youth for technical careers by

aligning high school and community colleges curricula into a unified, unduplicated set of courses. Additionally, the programs are flexible and may include work-site training, work experience, and even two-year apprenticeships. Tech Prep's main focus is school-to-school linkages between secondary and postsecondary schools and its impact on improving STW transitions; however, its success depends on to what extent the programs reflect meaningful participation with industry—work-based learning that meshes school and employment and integrates academic and applied learning in new ways that engage students in an authentic instructional and learning process (Glover & Marshall, 1993).

The career academy is rooted in restructuring high school vocational-technical education in the hope of improving the connections between school and work. The program is characterized by students who are at risk of failure and teachers who work together for three years using a school-within-a-school format. The main premise for this program is that students spend the 10th grade catching up on academics and integrating computers and field trips into the curriculum. Mentoring plays a crucial component of the program during the 11th grade. Students are paired with industry mentors who are responsible for introducing his or her workplace and spending some recreational time with the students at least once per month. Upon completing the 11th grade, the student should receive a summer job with one of the business partners. Students who stay in the program are promised a job upon graduation (Glover & Marshal, 1993).

Youth apprenticeship programs have many incentives for youth: (1) it allows youth to earn while they learn; (2) it is driven by a learn-by-doing premise; (3) it caters for authenticity, meaningfulness, and relevancy as learning occurs in the workplace; and (4) it offers a climate for the development of interpersonal skills, as learning occurs through interaction with employees from different age ranges. Unlike Tech Prep, the effectiveness of this program is well-documented by research. Glover and Marshall (1993) tell us that studies have demonstrated that craft workers trained through apprenticeships learn new skills faster, are promoted faster and more often, suffer less unemployment, and earn more than their counterparts who are trained in other ways. Finally, follow-up surveys of former apprentices have indicated that as many as 15% have become business owners themselves. Bailey (1995) underlined the effectiveness of youth apprenticeship by stating,

> Youth apprenticeships are among the most promising ways of preparing young people for modern work responsibilities; youth apprenticeships do an exemplary job of helping students see the relevance of academic studies to their later lives, aid their exploration of career options, foster desirable work habits, develop

> solid occupational skills and prepare young people to learn continuously while on the job. (p. 1)

Cooperative education, unlike youth apprenticeships, is more school- than industry-based, and it accounts for at least one-tenth of all students who enroll in vocational education programs. Major characteristics of this program are that its training ends with high school, its work stations are representative of training stations rather than work stations and it is more conducive to retailing and clerical work. Cooperative education has also become prominent at postsecondary schools with a consistent growth among community colleges over the past two decades. With its existence at both levels it would seem fitting for the institutions to joins hands in the pursuance of advanced training. This, however, rarely occurs (Glover & Marshall, 1993).

Phelps (1992) and Stern et al. (1995) identified three core connections among the initiatives presented: (1) the programs feature stronger connections between schools, colleges, and employers (i.e., education-business partnerships offer more extensive work-based learning opportunities such as career shadowing, internships, co-op programs, and mentoring by adults); (2) an integration of academic and vocational-technical learning is vital for connecting theory and practice in various industries, occupations, and professions; and (3) connections between secondary schools and colleges, such as advanced placement courses, have emphasized the need for further education in the technical and professional fields.

The Role of Education

Like the government-initiated programs, urban education strives to educate minority youth. The 1990s have presented many challenges—challenges that have been compounded by political, bureaucratic, administrative, and societal problems. In particular, the de-industrialization and post-industrial transformation of the urban economies and the continuation of discrimination in the labor market have clouded the ability of schooling to educate and emancipate minority youth from poverty into employment and prosperity (Kantor & Brenzel, 1992).

This has been a prevailing reality. Institutions have met the needs of most youth, the college-bound, reasonably well with the exception of Blacks and Hispanics (Anderson & Sawhill, 1978; Miller, 1995; Wenrich, 1990). With schools failing half of the youth population in high schools, many suggestions have been put forward in meeting the commitment of the employment-bound youth.

Alder (1982) was one of the first to address educational reform initiatives. They were to educate all persons, develop thinking/problem-solving skills,

recognize all kinds of learning and instruction, promote common learning and curriculum, and focus on the importance of teachers and principals in the learning process. Educational access and equity were inherent to the manifesto. The use of a variety of educational contexts, teaching styles, learning methods, and instructional materials were seen as necessary and significant. Parnell (1985) in *The Neglected Majority*, capitalized on the need for a student-centered curriculum, greater structure and substance in educational programs, articulated educational programs, connectedness between educators and the real world, continuity in learning, a larger range of program choices, and lifelong learning.

Johnston and Packer (1987), in *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers in the 21st Century*, focused on policymakers and educators and the need to identify strategies to stimulate a balanced world of growth. They promoted to accelerate productivity increases in service industries; maintain the dynamism of an aging workforce; reconcile the conflicting needs of women, work, and families; integrate Black and Hispanic workers fully into the economy; and improve the preparation of all workers.

The William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship (1988) in its report, *The Forgotten Half: Non-College Bound Youth in America*, reported about state-administered, federally funded programs intended to increase access to and equity in education and training programs that provide financial aid, counseling, and support services. Cooperative arrangements and baseline outcomes with a variety of performance measures in a wide range of education and training opportunities such as university, vocational, career, and remedial education were also mentioned.

In *Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want*, Carnevale, Gainer, and Meltzer (1990) reported that knowing how to learn, read, write, and do computation are key skills. Other important skills were listening and oral communication; creative thinking and problem-solving; self-esteem, goal setting/motivation, and personal/career development; interpersonal, negotiation, and teamwork; and organization effectiveness and leadership. The authors gave the following curriculum prescriptions: assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and personnel preparation.

The Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (1990), in its report, *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!*, dealt with the establishment of national education performance standards for all students. States were seen as being responsible for assuring that all students achieve an "initial certificate" by age 16. States were also seen as responsible for developing and financing alternative learning environments and programs for students who could not achieve the initial certificate. The existing community college/technical school system were seen as needing improvement and expansion to provide technical and professional education certificates and associate's degrees for the majority of students and adult workers. Lastly, employers were seen as vital in providing support

and incentives in the continuing education and training of workers. Overall, the Commission promoted the need for strong technical education aligned with general education, lifelong learning, and functional assessment and performance standards.

Wenrich (1990) discussed the internal administrative structures of high schools. He saw the "tracking" of students as being a consistent accusation placed on high schools. Placing students in tracks that students had not planned for results in confusion. He proposed the bifurcated system to alleviate the tracking issue. This system constitutes two main branches, schools within schools, each with a separate faculty and each headed by an assistant principal who would give instructional leadership and ensure articulation between these two major units. Further, he indicated that the "branching"—the college prep and Tech Prep—should occur after completion of the "common learnings" or the "core curriculum." This would occur when the students are in 10th grade. Cooperative training programs could be established between the staff and faculty of the Tech Prep branch and businesses and industries. Wenrich concluded by stating that the failure of high schools to serve employment-bound youth cannot be attributed to high school principals alone; however, high school principals are the key figures in the equation of both quality and equity in education.

Interdisciplinary coleadership of high school groups is a model of teamwork between a teacher and a graduate social work intern designed to prevent students from dropping out. The model offers a framework for programmatic responses to the problem of inner-city minority youth dropping out. In addition, it provides new opportunities for intern training in school social work. A prominent component of the program is the "family group." Here, expanded homerooms meet twice a week for one hour to discuss issues that may be interfering with the students' academic progress. The groups are designed to provide students with positive connections to adult figures other than their parents and with tolerant, supportive, and nonjudgmental atmospheres in which to solve problems. The designers see this model as having the potential of affecting positive results for adolescents that are not likely to encounter this type of collaboration (Arons & Schwartz, 1993).

Overall, several themes have surfaced in the identified initiatives: (1) a concrete connection between the school curriculum and work should exist; (2) educational leadership is seen as the impetus for any initiative; (3) education access, equity, and quality are seen as necessary characteristics for any educational program striving to prepare America's workforce; (4) improvement of instruction and learning that is student-centered is essential; (5) the standards that are used to assess knowledge and skills must be critically looked at to ensure that they indeed serve all audiences; (6) schools and universities are no longer seen as the only funding and resource contributors to education—private employers and communities,

state governments, and the federal government are also called upon; and (7) the importance of teacher preparation—attracting and retaining the best people in teaching—was seen as important for they are the mediums for any initiative implementation. All these themes will continue to impact STW transition programs (Greenan, 1994).

Transition Issues Among Minorities

Though initiatives seek to facilitate the STW transition, minorities face many other debilitating conditions—conditions that have little mention in the educational initiatives (Greenan, 1994). Cochrane et al. (1994) reinforce this fact when they stated, "the difficulty for minority students lies not with the students themselves, but with the conditions that inhibit their full acceptance into American society" (p. 97). The appropriation of funds and the provision of programs, gender, norms, peer pressure, inner-city unemployment, family income, transportation, and self-efficacy are only some of the factors that hinder successful STW transition (Cochrane et al., 1994; Gordon, 1997; Gordon & Meroe, 1991; Keithly & Deseran, 1995; Miller, 1995).

The appropriation of funds and programs' clientele are representative of groups other than Blacks and Hispanics. Resources are placed in the hands of the upper and lower percentiles, but rarely are they in the hands of the noncollege-bound. The provision of inadequate funding was seen as creating more problems than it was solving in that minority youth lack the resources, direction, or support they need to succeed—a condition that is very visible in urban high schools with a large minority population (Cochrane et al., 1994). Kantor and Brenzel (1992) stated that a recent report on urban education concluded that because of the continued failure to educate city youth, many people now dismiss urban schools "as little more than human storehouses to keep young people off the streets" (p. 279).

The success of minority women and men is challenged by the norms of their culture. A female striving to succeed does not have an easy job when greater value is placed on the academic success of males (Coleman, 1961; Eder & Parker, 1987; Gaskell, 1992). Thus, women are confounded by not only the conditions of their society but also by the values set by their culture. Likewise, men face the net effect of such cultural implications. They are expected to perform at the level of their White counterparts which they read as peer pressure. Many refuse to follow the educational route, realizing that as adults they will face jobs that are unstable; have little chance of promotion; offer low wages; and offer few, if any, health benefits (Ray & Mickelson, 1993). Additionally, men experience the "culture of cutting," a culture in which minority males are interested in staying with their in-crowd due to fear of being seen as trying to act like the majority group (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; LeCompte & Dworkin, 1991).

Inner-city employment has increased over the years with the migration of companies and industries to the suburbs. What has remained are high-skill service jobs—jobs that very few minorities can perform (Cochrane et al., 1994; Kantor & Brenzel, 1992). Kantor & Brenzel (1992) related that during the 1960s and 1970s, the suburbs surrounding Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia all added jobs in the goods-producing sector. Also, suburban employment in trade and producer services expanded substantially. The growth of manufacturing in the suburbs, however, did not fully make up for the loss of manufacturing in the city. The restructuring of the labor market displaced not only the poorly educated, but also those with high school diplomas. Both groups were made up of mostly minority people.

Moving to the suburbs to seek manufacturing jobs is not as easy as most people would think. The issues of transportation, availability of job-related information (Kao & Tienda, 1998), and culture are crucial factors. Transportation is a serious problem for urban city minority youth and access to a job often becomes an issue of transportation and time. City-based public transportation is usually the only means of transportation for many minority youth and it is often inadequate or inconvenient. These transportation problems often make it difficult for minority youth to acquire and maintain a job. In 1980, approximately 88% of White urban workers over age 16 owned vehicles compared to approximately 66% of Black city workers over age 16. Interesting, too, only 10% of White central city workers used public transportation compared to 33% of the central city Black workers. These numbers give visibility to the transportation problem that minority youth face in seeking jobs in the suburbs (Cochrane et al., 1994).

As minority youth face these societal issues, their self-efficacy is greatly affected. With the increased focus on self, Anderson (1978) indicated that young Blacks tend to be more selective about the jobs that they will perform, and often will not accept employment and work conditions they consider demeaning. While this is true for some minority youth, most still don't have an environment in which they can survive the "efficacy crisis." Their environment does not provide the four major factors that influence self-efficacy: (1) successful performance; (2) vicarious experience; (3) verbal persuasion, such as praise; and (4) emotional physiological arousal (Bandura, 1977; Glover & Marshall, 1993; Hamilton, 1990).

Transition Issues in the Workplace

Demographics and international competition place minority students on the "must receive training list." Factors such as the declining birth rate of the majority, White population; the graying of the workforce; and the increasing minority populations indicate that the majority. White population will not be able to meet the demand for labor. Along with this, international competition demands highly trained workers (Cochrane et al., 1994).

Minority youth still face many issues in the workplace that keep them from being competitive in high-skill jobs. Some of these issues include limited access to job-related information, discrimination in hiring practices, and limited education and training (Cochrane et al., 1994; Hill & Nixon, 1984).

Like transportation, job-related information for minority urban youth is also limited. Word of mouth, local job postings, and community papers are some informal mediums by which minorities learn about jobs. While these mediums are somewhat successful, having little access to job openings is seen as a major crippling factor in minority youth employability (Swinton & Morse, 1983). Cochrane et al. (1994) stressed that urban minority youth are often isolated from people who might recommend them, and because of their cultural differences, lack other "known" qualities that employers prefer.

In addition to the absence of "known" qualities among minority youth are the issues of appearance, attitude, race, or ethnicity. Discrimination impacts the everyday experiences of many minority youth. Employers prefer not to hire disadvantaged youth because of seeing them as poor risks whose attitudes toward the company and other employees need to be improved; whose basic work habits, such as follow-through and dependability, need to be developed; and whose basic communication and academic skills are as limited as their ambition and motivation (Freeman, 1978; Reisner & Balasubramaniam, 1989). Race is a critical discriminatory factor. Many studies consistently show that despite Equal Opportunity Program (EOP), prejudice and racism exist (Carnevale & Stone, 1995; Cross, Kenney, Mell, & Zimmerman, 1990; Fernandez, 1993; Ihlanfeldt, 1992; Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, 1985; Tiemeyer, 1993). As former director of the National Urban League Research Department, Hill (1987) stated,

> Most of the . . . "causes" (e.g., educational attainment and movement of industries from central cities and periodic recessions) of minority youth joblessness are themselves to varying degrees determined by discrimination. For example, the fact that minority youth disproportionately reside in central cities is part due to discriminatory housing patterns in suburban areas. . . . And, finally, the discriminatory barriers to quality education for minority youth have been conclusively and repeated documented. (p. 137)

Other incidents as told by students (Cochrane et al., 1994) included racial slurs, differential wage scales, discriminatory scheduling, few promotions of minorities to supervisory positions, release from a job before a need for promotion occurred, and sexual harassment. Finally, Osterman (1980) found that race was key in explaining Black unemployment. Racial discrimination

accounted for roughly 50% of the unemployment differential between Black and White youth.

Getting into a company's workforce, therefore, is not an easy task. Discrimination is ingrained in the hiring practices of many companies. Their attitude is, "social commitment" to minority youth and, even more, this social commitment is seen as affecting the internal productivity goals of the companies (Task Force on Youth Education and Employment, 1980). Glover and Marshall (1993) compared the U.S. hiring practices and rationale with those of Germany and Japan. They found that the largest and best firms in Germany and Japan actively recruit not only the best university graduates but also the best high school graduates. In contrast, America's preferred companies usually do not hire high school graduates immediately after high school, even if they have good academic records. Minority youth expectations of the 1990s have not changed much from what they were in the 1980s. Hill and Nixon (1984) provided acute information: The largest percentage of minority youth, aged 16-24, were concentrated in service (28%) and laborer (19%) jobs. As was expected, minority youth were least likely to occupy professional/managerial/technical (4%) and crafts (2%) positions. Based on the consistency of biased hiring practices for minority youth, Glover and Marshall (1993) posited four critical consequences of American hiring practices on STW transition:

1. The delay in hiring American youth provides German and Japanese youth a five- to ten-year headstart in gaining access to significant occupational skill training.
2. These practices remove some of our best learning systems—our finest corporations—from the processes that develop our youth. By shunning any responsibility for hiring youth, the best American employers have effectively disengaged from the process of instructing and socializing their future workers.
3. The delay in hiring high school graduates eliminates a natural communication loop for employers to feed clear information back to schools about what skills are needed in the workplace.
4. Most important, effort and achievement in school are disconnected from rewards in the workplace, thus undermining student incentives to work hard and achieve in school. Improving the school-to-work transition is thus an essential school reform issue. (p. 596)

Looking at minority youth hiring trends, employers need to change their mentality and see this group as being an indispensable resource to America's competitive edge (Lewis, Stone, Shipley & Madzar, 1998).

To remain competitive, companies must support and promote lifetime employability. For this, education and training of their employees must be

at the forefront of their strategic plans. Minority youth typically are not receivers of training and education. Hill and Nixon (1984) shared that only 27 from a cross-section of 535 private employers across the nation reported having current job training programs targeted for minority youth. Nineteen firms reported having had targeted job training programs in the past. From these responses, the overwhelming majority (over 90%) of businesses surveyed never had a job training program targeted to minority youth. Carnevale and Carnevale (1994) provided the training picture for the 1990s. As in the 1980s, youth in general are at the lower end of the training and education ladder. Employees with education beyond high school are still getting more training than those with only a high school education. They go on to say that with the exception of 16- to 19-year-olds and 20- to 24-year-olds, all age groups report an increase in the percentage of people trained. Looking closely at this age group, skill-improvement training is less prevalent among 16- to 24-year-olds. They represent 17% of the labor force (21 million workers) and amassed 10% of skill-improvement training. On the other hand, the 16- to 19-year-old group was the only group to see a decrease. The numbers on skill-based training by ethnicity provided some good information. While Hispanics saw a 120% change, they represented only 5% of the total workforce population. Blacks saw a 59% change in training, and they represented 8% of the population. Whites, on the other hand, only saw a 36% change in training, and they represented 84% of the total population. It must be mentioned, though, that while both Hispanics and Blacks saw changes in their training, together they only represent 13% of the workforce population.

The Role of Diversity in School-to-Work Transition

Paige and Martin (1996) cautioned that trainers working with organizations seeking to restructure themselves need to create workplace environments that are more attentive to the needs of women and minorities. Similarly, they must become aware of the dynamics of organizational change. This requires focusing on the multiplicity of cultural settings, and becoming sensitive to this is eminent if learners are to open up to change. Geertz (1963) pointed out that learned orientations towards one's kinfolk, religion, ethnic group, and community become deeply rooted (primordial attachments) and serve as powerful motivating forces in an individual's life. If this is so, then humans need to be valued for who they are because, as Bennett (1993) stated, "It is not the normal condition of human beings to be ethnorelative—that is, culturally relativistic, appreciative of contradictory belief and behavior systems, or non judgmental when confronted with alternative cultures" (p. 29). Further, he indicated that schools and workplaces need to consider this fact when designing and implementing their educational and training curriculums.

Baly (1989) and Manuele (1983) capitalized on the fact that career development theories have been deeply rooted on the majority, White culture and have been consistently used to design career development programs for minority youth. Fisher and Griggs (1995) reported that this tendency to generalize from the dominant group has created a limited and misguided view of the constructs that shape the career profiles of minority students. Their study results posited that subjective factors such as personal/academic confidence prior to college, parental support, and personal relationships play a significant role in minority career development in comparison to factors such as intelligence, family occupational status, and objective factors of the majority culture. Similarly, Bloomfield (1989) and Fisher and Griggs (1995) highlighted the power of role models and mentors in the career development experience of minority youth. Bloomfield stated, "young people find that they need the help of adults in thinking about the uncertainties that they face, and they respond to the mentors with enthusiasm and affection" (p. 37).

Miller (1982) stressed that due to the fact that minority youth face frustrating experiences with employment, these individuals have unique needs for career development—improved basic skills, occupational strategies, and career planning skills such as job search strategies. Nicholas (1978) reported that the majority of vocational development programs have few techniques for implementation, and have limited applicability to such groups as Black, low income, inner-city individuals and other minorities. Thus, schools have not been able to meet the needs of different groups and have facilitated greatly their dropout rate and failure. Jochums (1989) identifies basic educational credentials, communication and planning skills, and entry-level job skills as barriers to effective career training of minority youth.

Phelps et al. (1995), in their article, "Student Indicators of Quality in Emerging School-to-Work Programs," underlined the role that background experiences have in everyday lessons. They reported that classroom interaction between teachers and students, and among the students themselves, were consistently important to students within and across participant sites. Integrating academic concepts to technical or professional material and activities, drawing from students' backgrounds to make learning meaningful, and providing social support to facilitate students' own learning were seen as the motivators for interaction. Within this context, the majority of their student interviewees identified the value of learning from each other when diversity—different ethnic backgrounds, age, and gender—were present in the classroom to enrich their learning and relate their experience to real-world situations. They concluded by saying that these interactions were an integral part of the instructional process and provided students with a classroom environment conducive to learning.

Critical to conducive learning environments is motivation. Ray and Mickelson (1993) described motivation as a passionate engagement to achieve a valued goal. Bailey (1995) captured this passion in saying that work-based education motivates students by showing them how skills are used in real-world settings and how their success and advancement can depend on learning particular skills. Glover and Marshall (1993) gave the reality of this passion in stating, "unfortunately, businesses often overlook a major lever in their hands for motivating students. They control the most important incentive for work-bound youngsters—access to jobs—yet most do not use it" (p. 607).

Of those who take advantage of this incentive, many are at a loss as to how to tap the available resource. A reason for this is that many do not know how to manage a diverse workforce. Stern (1995), for example, reported about alternative roles that employers can play in STW transition. All the roles mentioned reflect the structural elements of such programs. Some examples include measuring required changes in internal business operations, providing job shadowing and unpaid internships, offering placement for teachers, and recognizing new skills standards. What is interesting is that he identified counseling individual students as a role. The description of the role, however, is work-centered and no mention was made about the individual as a person. Stern's last sentence stated, "These interactions expand students' ideas of work and increase the number of adults with whom they come into contact, helping them understand how adults behave at work and what is expected of them" (p. 8). Their focus is the structural and not the human aspect of their organizations. Arredondo (1996) gave us a look into how contemporary business leaders and diversity planners describe the challenges associated with developing and managing a diverse workforce. "Individual differences contribute to differences in motivation for career development, productivity, and priorities about work and family" (p. 62). In essence, then, minority youth need more than knowledge and skills; they need to value their workplace. To do this, they must have an environment that tells them that they are valued. Employers need to be aware of what the visible and hidden cultures of their organizations are saying to minority youth.

In conclusion, valuing and managing diversity is a necessary component of all STW programs if they are to be successful. Career development is one of the first traits of successful programs. The discussion provided about the career development for minority youth indicates that educators and counselors must take an active role in redefining their programs. Likewise, curriculums need to be looked at seriously, and their design and implementation needs to reflect the diversity of students. Lastly, the workplace needs to also be sensitive to diversity, especially that of minority youth because they are treading the waters of a new and difficult phase in their lives.

Summary

The review of literature summarized key points from research studies, books, reports, and journal articles related to the STW transition of minority youth. The review included sections on the role of government in supporting STW transition, the role of schools, societal issues that minority youth encounter, the issues that minority youth confront in the workplace, and the role of diversity in the STW transition.

The intent behind the literature review was to expose the reader to the current writings on the transition of minority youth into the workplace. To more effectively assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace, there needs to be an understanding of the roles that are and should be preformed by schools, workplaces, society, and by individuals. A basic understanding of previous literature and research is essential to develop further studies to expand the knowledge base of the STW transition of minority youth.

Methodology

This segment of the research report focuses on the research methods that were used in the study. The segment includes four basic sections: (1) overview of the research design, (2) population, (3) data collection, and (4) data analysis. The procedures are described for the reader in detail to enhance understanding and to give assurances that procedural guidelines were followed in completing this study.

Overview of the Research Design

This was a descriptive and exploratory study. The major method of data collection was in-depth, open-ended telephone interviews with a panel of 21 STW partnership directors from 16 states across the United States. These STW partnership programs receive direct federally funded Urban/Rural Opportunities Grants (UROGs) from the U.S. Department of Education, National School-to-Work Office. An interview guide was developed to obtain detailed information in order to produce an in-depth understanding of initiatives that assist and barriers that hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. The data provided by the study participants consisted of words in the form of rich verbal descriptions (qualitative data), as well as quantitative data. The qualitative data was utilized to provide essential research evidence, while the quantitative data was used to form frequencies and percentages to support the qualitative data.

Population

The population for this study was composed of all 21 direct federally funded UROG STW partnership programs in the U.S. listed in the report, *School-to-Work Grantee List* (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). This population of STW partnership programs was selected because these partnerships are more likely to support minority youth, since the grants support specific strategies to address the multiple needs of urban and rural in-school and out-of-school youth in high poverty areas (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). The 21 STW partnerships were located in the following states: Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, Utah, and Washington each had one partnership; California, Oklahoma, and Oregon each had two partnerships; and the State of Texas had three partnerships.

Since the target population of STW sites is small and the majority of students they serve are minority students (86%), the findings may not be representative of all STW partnership program sites. It is believed, however,

that what we learn from these sites can have implications for other STW sites that serve minority youth.

Data Collection

The researchers conducted telephone interviews with the directors of the 21 STW partnerships. The researchers developed a semistructured interview guide to assist in collecting the data from the interviews. The semistructured interview guide was divided into the following four sections: (1) barriers that are most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workforce; (2) initiatives that are most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace; (3) goals advocated for minority youth; and (4) criteria for determining sensitive workplaces. All the study participants were encouraged to describe the barriers, initiatives, goals, and criteria in detail, and the researchers later placed them under the appropriate categories.

The interview is a research tool in which data are obtained through verbal interaction. The interview is a method that can be adaptable to different situations, allows for follow-up, and also permits in-depth clarification (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Semistructured interviews were also chosen because they are "reasonably objective while still permitting a thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions and the reasons behind them" (p. 452). The semistructured interview "provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained by any other approach" (p. 452); therefore, flexibility was retained to probe into each participant's statements and replies and to pursue additional issues related to the focus of the study that were not included in the interview guide.

Names and phone numbers of the 21 STW partnership directors who participated in the study were obtained from the *School-to-Work Grantee List* (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Initial contacts with the STW partnership directors were made over the telephone, at which time interview appointments and arrangements were made. Study participants were selected based on their willingness to take part in the study. All 21 STW partnership directors that were contacted consented to participate in the study. Each participant received a letter confirming the telephone interview appointment and a copy of the interview guide two weeks before the scheduled interview. The study participants had the opportunity to examine the interview questions prior to the interview. The telephone interviews were conducted by the researchers from March to June 1998. All interviews were tape recorded and extensive notes were also taken during each interview. Before starting the interviews, each interviewee was asked for approval for taping the interview.

In addition, each participant completed a Demographic Information Form that asked for information about themselves and the STW partnership. The form included participant information in the following eight areas: (1) gender, (2) age range, (3) race/ethnicity, (4) educational background by degree, (5) major field of study, (6) number of years in current position, (7) number of years working in education, and (8) number of years of work experience. The form also included STW partnership information in the following eight areas: (1) location of the partnership (urban or rural), (2) year the partnership started, (3) types of programs offered, (4) grade level of students in the partnership, (5) race/ethnicity of current students, (6) total number of current students, (7) gender of students, and (8) type of student (in-school or out-of-school youth).

A study advisory committee, made up of three vocational educators from a leading university who had expertise in STW programs and qualitative research methods, reviewed the interview guide and study procedures. Also, a pilot study was conducted with three STW partnership directors in order to determine the content validity and appropriateness of the interview guide. The pilot test results indicated that the content of the instrument was appropriate for the intended use. The three STW partnership directors that participated in the pilot test were also included as part of the study. There was agreement by the advisory committee and the pilot test study participants that the interview guide and the data being collected were appropriate for meeting the objectives of the study.

Data Analysis

The data from the interviews were content-analyzed manually and with the computer. Content analysis is a research technique for systematically examining the content of communications—in this instance, the interview data. Study participants' responses to interview guide questions and the related issues that arose during the interview process were read and put together as complete quotations and filed according to the topic or issue addressed. Responses were analyzed thematically. Emergent themes were ranked by their frequency of mention and were ultimately categorized. Essentially, the study used a qualitative approach to analyze the responses. A quantitative method in the form of frequencies and percentages supported the qualitative data. The qualitative method was considered an appropriate way to explore the initiatives that assist and barriers that hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace because of its descriptive nature to understand the whole of an event through insight and discovery (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

To further ensure the reliability of the data analysis, the researchers each separately reviewed the interview data from all the interviews and identified the various barriers, initiatives, goals, and criteria mentioned in the text. In

addition, the researchers invited an STW partnership director to review the interview data from three of the interviews and identify the various barriers, initiatives, goals, and criteria. There was unanimous agreement between the researchers and the STW partnership director regarding the barriers, initiatives, goals, and criteria identified.

Profiles of School-to-Work Partnerships

Twenty-one direct federally funded UROG STW partnership programs were part of this study. Of the 21 STW partnerships, 12 (57%) were urban and 9 (43%) were rural. The majority of the STW partnerships had been in existence since the late 1980s or early 1990s. The types of programs that the partnerships offered are presented in Table 1. The table shows that the partnerships offer a variety of programs to the individuals they serve. The most frequent types of programs mentioned by the study participants included career development/guidance and exploration, 21 (100%); work-based learning, 21 (100%); internships, 12 (57%); job shadowing, 10 (48%); and workplace mentoring, 9 (43%). The grade level of the students in the STW partnerships ranged from K to 16. Of the 21 partnerships, 8 (38%) served students in grades K-12; 6 (29%) served grades 9-12; 2 (10%) served grades K-16; 2 (10%) served grades 3-14; 2 (10%) served grades 9-14; and 1 (5%) served grades 10-12.

Table 1. Types of Programs Offered by School-to-Work Partnerships (n=21)

Types of Programs	f	%
Career Development/Guidance & Exploration	21	100
Work-Based Learning	21	100
Internships	12	57
Job Shadowing	10	48
Workplace Mentoring	9	43
Tech Prep	8	38
Apprenticeships	7	33
Teacher Internships	6	29
Job Placement/Follow-Up	5	24
Cooperative Education	4	19
Entrepreneurial Training	3	14
Others	8	38

Multiple responses were accepted.

The total number of students currently in the 21 STW partnerships is 50,664, with a range from 150 to 7,033, and an average of 2,413 students. Table 2 shows the race/ethnicity and the number of students in each category. The majority (73%) of the students in the STW partnership

programs were Hispanic (39%) and Black (34%). The remainder of the students were Native American or Alaskan Native (12%), Asian American or Pacific Islander (1%), and White (14%). Nineteen (90%) of the partnerships serve Black students; 9 (43%) have Native American or Alaskan Native; 11 (52%) have Asian American or Pacific Islander; 19 (90%) have Hispanic students; and 14 (67%) have White students. Table 2 shows that even though a large number of partnerships serve Native American or Alaskan Native, Asian American or Pacific Islander, and White, the number of students in these categories are much smaller than for Hispanic and Black youth. Fifty-three percent of the students in the partnerships are male, and 47% are female. All of the partnerships in the study served in-school youth, while only 29% served out-of-school youth.

Table 2. Race/Ethnicity and Number of Students in School-to-Work Partnerships (n=21)

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Partnerships	%	Number of Students	%
Black	19	90	17,256	34
Asian American or Pacific Islander	11	52	740	1
Hispanic	19	90	19,536	39
Native American or Alaskan Native	9	43	6,153	12
White	14	67	6,979	14
Totals	*		50,664	100

*Multiple responses were accepted.

Profiles of Study Participants

Telephone interviews were conducted with 21 STW partnership directors from 16 states across the United States. Of the 21 study participants, 13 (57%) were women and 9 (43%) were men. Three (14%) of the study participants were in the age range of 30 to 39 years old; 10 (48%) were 40 to 49 years old; 6 (29%) were 50 to 59 years old; and 2 (9%) were 60 and plus years old. Of the 21 study participants, 14 (67%) were White; 4 (19%) were Black; 2 (9%) were Hispanic; and 1 (5%) was Asian American. Seven (33%) of the study participants had either a B.A. or B.S. degree; 9 (43%) had an M.A., M.Ed., or M.S. degree; and 5 (24%) had a Ph.D. or Ed.D. The major fields of study of the study participants were quite varied as Table 3 reveals. The most frequent fields of study mentioned by the study participants included guidance and counseling, 4 (19%); educational/public administration, 4 (19%); educational psychology, 4 (19%); English, 3 (14%); and sociology, 2 (9%). The number of years the study participants have been in their current position ranged from 1 to 10 years, with an average of

5.2 years. The number of years they have worked in education ranged from 5 to 40 years, with an average of 13.7 years. The number of years of work experience ranged from 10 to 40 years, with an average of 22.7 years.

Table 3. Participants' Major Fields of Study (n=21)

Major Fields	f	%
Guidance and Counseling	4	19
Educational/Public Administration	4	19
Educational Psychology	4	19
English	3	14
Sociology	2	9
American Studies	1	5
Organizational Behavior	1	5
Liberal Arts	1	5
Humanities	1	5
Totals	21	100

Results

The results of this study are organized and summarized in four sections in accordance with the research questions that guided this study: (1) barriers that are most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace; (2) initiatives that are most likely to address these barriers and assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace; (3) goals that should be advocated for minority youth who are making the transition from school to work; and (4) the criteria for determining sensitive work-based learning sites and/or companies that assist in the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace.

Barriers that Hinder the Successful Transition of Minority Youth into the Workplace

The STW partnership directors were asked about their perceptions regarding the barriers that are most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. All together they identified 103 barriers. The researchers placed the barriers in the four categories that were inclusive of the range of barriers cited by the study participants: (1) school (coming from the school setting), (2) workplace (coming from the workplace environment), (3) societal (coming from the community surroundings—other than school and workplace), and (4) individual (coming from the minority youth themselves).

School-Related Barriers

In total, the study participants cited 31 barriers that the researchers assembled under the category of school-related barriers. Table 4 lists all these school-related barriers in rank order by frequency. School personnel resistance to change was a barrier that was identified by 17 of the study participants (81%). Study participants felt that the resistance to change by school personnel prevents the implementation and management of change within the school from taking place proactively, efficiently, and effectively. This problem is attributed to the lack of buy-in to work-based learning among teachers, administrators, and counselors. Lack of vision and willingness to change among school personnel has stifled the transition of minority youth into the workplace. According to study participants, teachers are not willing to utilize the teaching designs that are most appropriate for accommodating students with diverse learning styles. The study participants indicated that many teachers continue to teach the way they were taught and to believe that all students should learn the same way. This has resulted in students not receiving a variety of learning opportunities and not getting the academic preparation they need to succeed

Table 4. School-Related Barriers (n=21)

Barrier	f	%
School personnel resistance to change	17	81
Lack of understanding concerning different cultures	16	76
Lack of integrated/relevant curriculum	15	71
Lack of communication between business and schools	13	62
Lack of understanding about STW transition	12	57
Lack of appropriate training for school personnel	11	52
Difficulty in staying current with workforce and technological changes	10	48
Lack of parent/community involvement/support	9	43
Limited career guidance for youth	8	38
Low expectations of youth	8	38
Lack of school personnel who can serve as role models/ mentors for youth	8	33
Bias testing procedures	7	33
Finding appropriate work-based learning sites for youth	7	33
Counselors lack of knowledge in advising students on STW transition	7	33
Inflexible school schedules	7	33
Others	16	76

Multiple responses were accepted.

in the workplace. This poor academic preparation in many cases has resulted in minority students being placed in low-level classes, which then manifests into low expectations of minority youth by school personnel.

In addition, 16 of the study participants (76%) indicated lack of understanding about different cultures by school personnel as a barrier. The study participants felt it is essential that school personnel be cognizant of the different cultures of their student population if there is to be a ripple effect of productive behaviors and outcomes. The study participants felt that to facilitate success for minority students, school personnel need to become versed on the language and cultural issues that these students are facing. Study participants felt that lack of awareness of the existing cultures among the school personnel has brought about a clash of value systems. Study participants mentioned that this clash is more prone when the teacher demographics do not mirror the student population's. A study participant described the following value clash:

> Traditional Hispanic families believe that it is the school's responsibility to educate and prepare the child for the world of work; therefore, they usually turn over their child to the school and very rarely do they question the school's authority. The result being that fewer parents become involved in school activities, and

many teachers construe this behavior to mean that Hispanic parents are not interested in or value their child's education.

Study participants indicated that many teachers continue to downplay the presence, impact, and importance of cultural issues in the school. This cultural insensitivity many times results in minority youth having difficulties finding school personnel who can serve as role models or mentors. In addition, cultural insensitivity may cause bias testing procedures, discrimination, and negative attitudes toward minority youth.

Fifteen of the study participants (71%) identified lack of integrated and/or relevant curriculum as a barrier. The study participants indicated that the segregation between the academic and vocational curricula has triggered the tracking notion. They stated that there are many teachers in schools who are still advocating two different curricula with two different tracks. They further reported that the segregation of vocational and academic education in the schools hinders the advancement of minority students, since they are usually the ones who are selected or placed in the prevocational curriculums and the lowest academic tracks. Generally, these type of curriculums do not prepare minority students to be successful in the workplace.

Lack of communication between businesses and schools was cited as a barrier by 13 of the study participants (62%). Study participants felt that many schools are unaware of what businesses are expecting or demanding. The two sectors do not communicate, and this lack of communication results in false assumptions. The schools blame the businesses for lack of cooperation and the businesses blame the schools for not preparing students well for the world of work. Study participants felt that schools and businesses have not come together to determine how they can facilitate the teaching and reinforcement of relevant and significant knowledge and skills required for students to make a successful transition into the workplace.

Twelve of the study participants (57%) identified lack of understanding about the STW transition of minority youth as a barrier. According to the study participants, the limited awareness that school personnel (e.g., administrators, teachers, and counselors) have of the STW transition of minority youth is having a disastrous effect on the effectiveness and longevity of the STW initiative. In essence, the study participants felt that school personnel are failing to see that STW is an important part of the educational system and not merely a program or another additional task that has been added to their list of responsibilities. Lack of appropriate training for school personnel and difficulty staying current with workforce and technological changes were also mentioned by 11 of the study participants (52%) as barriers. The study participants felt that a lack of training hinders the relevancy, meaningfulness, and authenticity of student preparation for the workplace or higher education.

Nine of the study participants (43%) indicated lack of parent/community involvement/support as a barrier. The study participants felt that effective collaborative working relationships between the school, parents, employers, and other people from the community was often missing. Parents and other family members are often overlooked as primary sources of information and insight about the world of work. In addition, the community has not been recognized by many teachers as a rich learning laboratory, which has hindered locating appropriate work-based learning sites for minority youth. The absence of this realization has marred the learning experiences of minority students, especially those who are poor and have few opportunities to interact with role models, network, or have career exposure.

Eight of the study participants (38%) identified lack of career guidance for minority youth as a barrier and 7 (33%) mentioned counselors' lack of knowledge in advising students on STW transition as a barrier. The study participants indicated that counselors do not focus their attention on assisting minority youth in making the STW transition. They felt that career guidance by counselors was mostly designed for the college-bound student. This type of guidance usually does not help improve the transition of minority youth into the workplace.

Seven of the study participants (33%) mentioned inflexible school schedules as a barrier. Study participants indicated that it is difficult to get students to work-based learning sites because there is usually time conflicts and the students find themselves missing academic time. There is little schedule flexibility, and workplaces cannot change their schedules to accommodate that of the school. The misalignment in the school and workplace schedules gives the STW initiative an intruding perspective.

Workplace-Related Barriers

The study participants cited 22 workplace-related barriers that are most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. Table 5 lists all the workplace-related barriers in rank order by frequency. Lack of communication between businesses and schools was cited as a barrier by 15 of the study participants (71%). Study participants felt that many businesses are still unsure of their role in education. They indicated that the communication gap was sometimes so wide that when businesses were dissatisfied with the quality of high school graduates in their area, they are more likely to respond by criticizing the educational system. According to the study participants, often the least likely course of action by businesses was to work jointly with and communicate their needs to the local educational system.

Lack of understanding concerning the cultures of minority youth was seen as another barrier by 14 of the study participants (67%). According to the study participants, the cultural differences between the minority youth and the business cultures as it relates to values, beliefs, norms, and behaviors

Table 5. Workplace-Related Barriers (n=21)

Barrier	f	%
Lack of communication between businesses and schools	15	71
Lack of understanding concerning different cultures	14	67
Discrimination	12	57
Businesses not aware of the need to become involved with the STW transition of minority youth	10	48
Lack of workplace learning/job opportunities	10	48
Low expectations of youth	9	43
Time and financial constraints of businesses	9	43
Lack of role models/mentoring relationships in business	9	43
Problems with school and work schedules	7	33
Others	13	62

Multiple responses were accepted.

is likely to affect the STW transition of youth if it is not managed well. At present, study participants said that the workplace is doing very little to learn about the cultures of minority youth and how they impact the workforce. Study participants said that this unfamiliarity brings about cultural insensitivity, which results in employers showing little or no empathy and tolerance for these differences. This cultural insensitivity makes it difficult for minority youth to find role models and/or mentors that can understand and help them advance in the workplace. These types of circumstances and low expectations of minority youth negatively affect their self-esteem and motivation.

Twelve of the study participants (57%) said that discrimination also affects the transition of minority youth from school to work. Inaccessibility to work experiences is not always based on minority youth not having the skills needed by the company or the company not having vacancies; rather, it rests on the prejudicial and racial mindsets of the employers. Study participants mentioned that a major obstacle many minority youth encounter is getting into the workplace because a common perception among employers is that "they will not be able to perform." Biased hiring, then, often becomes the norm, and workplace learning and job opportunities for minority youth decrease.

Businesses not aware of the need to become involved with the STW transition of minority youth was cited by 10 of the study participants (48%). They said that at present there are very few companies that are doing curriculum development, providing technology grants to schools, and coordinating and implementing teacher and student workplace learning. Study participants indicated that even though some businesses are involved in the STW transition of minority youth, the majority are not, and they have the attitude as described by one study participant, "Businesses think

that they are going to go out in the backyard and pluck a plum or an apple off the tree and they do not realize that they have to till the soil, plant the tree, and help produce the fruit."

Nine of the study participants (43%) mentioned time and financial constraints of businesses as a barrier. They indicated that many employers have voiced concerns regarding the amount of time and money required to participate in the STW initiative. In addition, extra training, monitoring, and supervision are often necessary for minority youth, which are time consuming and cost employers money.

Problems with school and work schedules was another barrier identified by 7 of the study participants (33%). They indicated that the traditional school day limits the time available for minority youth to work. This limitation hinders minority youth from being able to work on a job from start to finish, and this creates problems in some industries such as construction, electrical, and health.

Societal-Related Barriers

The study participants cited 18 societal-related barriers. All the societal-related barriers are listed in Table 6 in rank order by frequency. Sixteen of the study participants (76%) identified the lack of understanding concerning the cultures of minority youth as a major societal barrier. Study participants emphasized that there is a lack of realization by community people that the different cultures within the United States are all equally important. Study participants indicated that because minority youth are different they are often not readily accepted in the community. Instead, judgments are made about them that prevent them from actively engaging in community programs (e.g., apprenticeship programs, internships, business networks, and/or job shadowing) that facilitate their transition from school to work. Study participants further indicated that minority youth get stigmatized based on how they dress and how they speak. This leads to conclusions

Table 6. Societal-Related Barriers (n=21)

Barrier	f	%
Lack of understanding concerning different cultures	16	76
Lack of understanding about STW transition initiative	12	57
Lack of support and opportunities for youth	11	52
Discrimination	10	48
Low expectation of youth	8	38
Lack of role models/mentors in community	7	33
Traditional views about education	7	33
Inadequate transportation	7	33
Others	10	48

Multiple responses were accepted.

such as "they must all be gangsters" or "they can't make it." Study participants said that these conclusions enunciate the low expectations that adults in the community have for minority youth, which leads to lack of support and opportunities for them. According to the study participants, minority youth are often isolated from people in the community who can recommend them for a job, and because of their cultural differences, they may be seen as a poor risk by employers.

Lack of understanding about the STW transition initiative was seen as a barrier by 12 of the study participants (57%). Study participants reported that a common STW myth is that it serves students that cannot go to college or those students who are not academically capable of succeeding in college. Study participants said that this view distorts the fact that STW extends rather than limits the options for minority youth in general. These views interfere with minority youth realizing that STW initiatives can assist them in finding employment; completing high school; and even going on to attend a junior college, a four-year university, or participating in educational training programs.

Discrimination was also seen as a major barrier by 10 of the study participants (48%). They indicated that discrimination plays a part in both obtaining and retaining a job for minority youth. Frequently, minority youth are not considered for a job because of their appearance, race, or ethnicity. These types of actions can discourage minority youth from continuing to seek out jobs in their communities. Discrimination isolates minority youth and prevents them from integrating and establishing relationships from within the community. This isolation often impedes them from finding role models and establishing mentoring relationships with individuals who can help them set and achieve challenging goals.

Another barrier that 7 of the study participants (33%) indicated hinder the STW transition of minority youth is the traditional views about education. A traditional notion reported by the study participants was that many community people believe that every child should go to college. This notion constrains choice, as minority youth are led to believe that anything less than college is not valuable. Because of these traditional views, minority youth may be tracked into a college-bound track that they are not ready or motivated to pursue at this point in their lives. This may cause minority youth to drop out of school before graduating, which does not help improve their transitioning to either work or postsecondary education.

Inadequate transportation was also seen as a barrier by 7 of the study participants (33%). They reported that access to jobs for minority youth many times becomes an issue of transportation. Minority youth may depend solely on public transportation to get to and from work. Public transportation is often inadequate, inconvenient, and limited to certain areas outside and within the community, which may stifle job opportunities for minority youth.

Individual-Related Barriers

Thirty-two individual-related barriers were reported by the study participants. Table 7 lists in rank order by frequency all the individual-related barriers. Poverty was the most frequently mentioned individual-related barrier (86%). Study participants stated that a large percentage of minority youth live in poverty, and that poverty interferes with their ability to acquire the educational credentials and the work attitudes and behaviors that are required to succeed in the workplace. Study participants indicated that poverty impacts minority youth in powerful ways. They felt that problem behavior was generally associated with poverty and/or discrimination. According to the study participants, the effects of poverty are so debilitating that the many hardships that students experience at school and in the workplace can be attributed to the poor conditions in which they live. The economic standards in which many minority youth live decrease their opportunities for appropriate skill and attitude development. Study participants emphasized that minority youth who come from middle or upper class homes don't experience the same problems as minority youth who come from poverty backgrounds. Poor minority youth face a deviation from the middle class experience which study participants classified as the "subcultural." A study participant stated, "I worry very little about middle class minority youth; these barriers are usually problems of youth that come from disenfranchised families, single parent homes, and families that are poor and undereducated." Study participants indicated that the difference is clear to see between youth who have been brought up in a middle class lifestyle and those who live in poverty stricken neighborhoods in which gang violence and criminal

Table 7. Individual-Related Barriers (n=21)

Barrier	f	%
Poverty	18	86
Lack of knowledge/skills needed to succeed in the workplace	15	71
Lack of English (language) proficiency	14	67
Lack of family involvement/support	13	62
Lack of understanding regarding the importance of education	12	57
Low academic achievement	10	48
Lack of career strategy/vision	9	43
Lack of access to transportation	9	43
Limited career/information exposure	9	43
Low self-esteem/confidence	8	38
Lack of motivation/commitment	8	38
Peer pressure	7	33
Others	19	90

Multiple responses were accepted.

activity are evident. Study participants said that some minority youth do not expect to live to be 21 and indirectly say to themselves, "Why prepare for the future when I don't have one."

Lack of knowledge/skills needed to succeed in the workplace was identified as a barrier by 18 of the study participants (71%). According to the study participants, employers often opt not to hire minority youth because they see them as poor risks whose attitudes toward work and other employees is undesirable. The absence of basic work knowledge/skills leaves minority youth unaware that interpersonal skills, punctuality, dependability, dedication, and regular attendance at work are crucial for success in the workplace. In addition, study participants felt that minority youth do not know how to access or become aware of the workplace culture. They indicated that minority youth often have difficulties conforming to company norms, fitting in, and adapting to the business culture.

Lack of English language proficiency was seen as a barrier by 14 of the study participants (67%). According to the study participants, language problems restrict minority youth from performing well in school and at work. English language comprehension often hinders the academic progress of minority youth in school. This may result in poor grades and possibly the minority youth being held back a grade or two. The lack of English language proficiency also has a negative impact on workplace performance. The lack of ability to communicate effectively with fellow workers and with customers can present negative images that could cause them to lose their job or an advancement. Study participants indicated that the expressions of minority youth frequently reflect street slang and idioms. This is not accepted well in the workplace because it causes ineffective communication, which may impede performance and have a negative impact on the company's bottomline.

The lack of family involvement/support was cited by 13 of the study participants (62%) as a barrier. Study participants indicated that parents of minority youth many times do not get involved in their children's education because of their own lack of formal education and their belief that they have little to offer. The home environments of minority youth often lack role models, high academic expectations, appropriate study materials, electricity, and family and friends who can provide employment and job information. Parents and family members of minority youth often do not have a broad exposure to the variety of jobs in the community or know where job openings are occurring. This lack of information and insight prevents parents of minority youth from becoming effective advocates for them, which hinders their progress in school and in the workplace. According to study participants, lack of parent support fosters a negative response to school assignments and education as a whole. A study participant stated, "it is very visible when parents are involved in their

child's education, the type of work that students produce in the classroom and at home tells the story."

Twelve of the study participants (57%) cited lack of understanding regarding the importance of education as a barrier. According to the study participants, many minority youth simply do not take education seriously. They do not realize or are not convinced that doing well in school will make a difference in their future. This attitude towards school causes a lack of motivation to perform well in school, which then leads to unacceptable performance in the workplace.

Lack of academic achievement was seen as a barrier by 10 of the study participants (48%). According to the study participants, insufficient academic achievement blocks the advancement of minority youth both in school and at the workplace. They felt that technological changes, high-performance workplaces, and many jobs that now demand high levels of technical knowledge and skill make it a necessity for minority youth to have high academic achievement. Minority youth with substandard academic skills will not be able make a successful transition into the workplace or compete effectively in the job market of today.

Lack of career strategy/vision was cited as a barrier by 9 of the study participants (43%). Minority youth many times do not have the proper career guidance to effectively know their career options and how to pursue them. According to the study participants, in minority youth homes, many times careers are not talked about because parents don't have steady jobs or are on welfare. This lack of career/information exposure combined with a lack of mentors and role models leave minority youth uncertain of what they can do or want to do in the future.

Lack of access to transportation was identified as a barrier by 9 of the study participants (43%). Minority youth often do not have the means privately or publicly to get themselves to work, especially when work is away from their communities. Due to the decline of industries and jobs in the inner cities and the unavailability of transportation in the rural areas, study participants reported that transportation is considered a big expense by minority youth. Minority youth oftentimes do not have the money to pay for transportation; therefore, this reality has made them very dependent on public transportation and this dependency has a negative impact on their attendance and punctuality in the workplace.

Low self-esteem/confidence was cited as a barrier by 8 of the study participants (38%). Study participants said that low self-esteem/confidence seemed unavoidable for minority youth because they are engulfed by poverty, discrimination, and low academic achievement. Minority youth who lack reading, writing, math, and communication skills fail consistently in school and the workplace. This failure pattern triggers low self-esteem/confidence and minority youth find themselves losing hope. Their disadvantaged home environments add to their distress and oftentimes

there is no joy in their lives. What the school, workplace, and society see are youth that don't have vision and commitment, which results in a common belief that minority youth lack the ability to set and accomplish goals. This has a negative impact on their school performance and transition into the workplace, which also adds to their fragile self-esteem/confidence.

Seven of the study participants (33%) reported peer pressure as a barrier and another 7 (33%) cited lack of motivation/commitment. According to the study participants, a great degree of peer pressure is placed on minority youth. The presence of drugs, alcohol, gangs, and teenage pregnancy frequently distorts the minds of minority youth and gravely affects their school and workplace performance. In addition, many times the friends of minority youth see academic success as a waste of time because they do not see any correlation between academic success and career opportunities. This type of peer pressure many times diminishes their motivation and commitment in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for successful transition into the workplace. Unfortunately, oftentimes there is no one to tell them of the long-term cost of a limited education, costs which they later will discover only after repeated failure in the job market.

In total, the study participants together cited 103 barriers that are likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace (see Table 8). While there may be some perceived overlap in categories and some barriers could be included under a larger category, each type of barrier has a distinct impact on the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. For example, discrimination in the workplace may have a much different impact on minority youth than discrimination in society as a whole. Another example is the lack of role models/mentors at school could impact minority youth differently than lack of role model/mentors in the workplace. The largest number of barriers cited was in the individual category. The second largest category was school-related barriers. Table 8 summarizes this breakdown.

Table 9 lists the top 34 barriers; these barriers were cited in 38% or more of the interviews. This table combines the highest ranked barriers presented in Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Table 8. Number of Barriers by Type

Category of Barrier	No. of Barriers	%
School	31	30
Work	22	21
Societal	18	18
Individual	32	31
Total	103	100

Table 9. Barriers Most Frequently Cited by Study Participants (n=21)

Barrier **(Type)**	f	%
Poverty **(Individual)**	18	86
School personnel resistance to change **(School)**	17	81
Lack of understanding concerning different cultures **(School)**	16	76
Lack of understanding concerning different cultures **(Societal)**	16	76
Lack of integrated/relevant curriculum **(School)**	15	71
Lack of communication between businesses and schools **(Work)**	15	71
Lack of knowledge/skills needed to succeed in the workplace **(Individual)**	15	71
Lack of understanding concerning different cultures **(Work)**	14	67
Lack of English (language) proficiency **(Individual)**	14	67
Lack of family involvement/support **(Individual)**	13	62
Lack of understanding about STW transition **(School)**	12	57
Discrimination **(Work)**	12	57
Lack of understanding about STW transition initiative **(Societal)**	12	57
Lack of understanding regarding the importance of education **(Individual)**	12	57
Lack of support and opportunities for youth **(Societal)**	11	52
Lack of appropriate training for school personnel **(School)**	11	52
Difficulty in staying current with workforce and technological changes **(School)**	10	48
Businesses not aware of the need to become involved with the STW transition of youth **(Work)**	10	48
Discrimination **(Societal)**	10	48
Low academic achievement **(Individual)**	10	48
Lack of workplace learning/job opportunities **(Work)**	10	48
Lack of parent/community involvement/support **(School)**	9	43
Low expectations of youth **(Work)**	9	43
Time and financial constraints of businesses **(Work)**	9	43
Lack of role models/mentoring relationships in business **(Work)**	9	43
Lack of career strategy/vision **(Individual)**	9	43
Lack of access to transportation **(Individual)**	9	43
Limited career/information exposure **(Individual)**	9	43
Limited career guidance for youth **(School)**	8	38
Low expectations of youth **(School)**	8	38
Low expectation of youth **(Societal)**	8	38
Low self-esteem/confidence **(Individual)**	8	38
Lack of motivation/commitment **(Individual)**	8	38

Initiatives that Assist and Support the Successful Transition of Minority Youth into the Workplace

The study participants were asked to identify the initiatives that are most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. Altogether they identified 49 initiatives. The researchers placed the initiatives in two categories that were inclusive of the types of initiatives cited by the study participants: (1) school initiatives and (2) workplace initiatives.

School Initiatives that Assist and Support Minority Youth

In total, the study participants cited 28 school initiatives that are most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. Table 10 lists all the school initiatives in rank order by frequency. The five school initiatives most frequently mentioned by the STW partnership directors included (1) design and implement an integrated and relevant curriculum, 21 (100%); (2) provide training for school personnel (e.g., teachers, counselors, administrators), 15 (71%); (3) provide mentoring for minority youth, 14 (67%); (4) provide career exploration and guidance for minority youth, 12 (57%); and (5) obtain parent involvement, 11 (52%).

Table 10. School Initiatives (n=21)

Initiative	f	%
Integrated and relevant curriculum	21	100
Training for school personnel	15	71
Mentoring for minority youth	14	67
Career exploration and guidance for minority youth	12	57
Obtain parent involvement	11	52
School leaders' commitment and support	10	48
High academic standards/expectations for minority youth	10	48
Parent counseling/training	9	43
Language/communication training for minority youth	8	38
Afterschool/summer programs for minority youth	7	33
Entrepreneurship education	7	33
Community minority support groups	7	33
Advisory board on STW transition issues	7	33
More school funding	8	38
Others	14	67

Multiple responses were accepted.

Integrated and Relevant Curriculum

Designing and implementing an integrated and relevant curriculum was mentioned by all the study participants as an important school initiative for assisting and supporting the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. An integrated and relevant curriculum enables minority youth to connect classroom learning with activities in the workplace, as well as other settings. An integrated and relevant curriculum also allows minority youth to see how knowledge from different subject areas can be applied. Study participants indicated that what minority students learn in the classroom needs to be better connected to the workplace. According to the study participants, social, employability, academic, and vocational skills all need to be integrated into the school curriculum. Generally, these types of curricula that integrate academic and applied learning and engage the

students in the instructional process are better at preparing minority youth to be successful in the workplace. In addition, minority youth are likely to be more motivated to stay in school because they have a better understanding of the connection between what they learn in school and obtaining a good job.

Training for School Personnel

Nearly two-thirds of the study participants (71%) indicated training for school personnel (e.g., teachers, counselors, and administrators) as an initiative that assists and supports the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. The areas of training most frequently mentioned by study participants included diversity, technology, instructional methods, workplace knowledge and skills, and mentoring minority youth. Study participants indicated that attention needs to be devoted to diversity training for all school personnel. This type of training can provide school personnel with awareness of the cultural and other differences that minority youth bring with them to school. The training can also provide the specific information needed to work with and teach a diverse student population. These skills and knowledge can then assist school personnel to establish networks and support systems for minority youth in the schools.

Study participants also indicated that technological training will assist school personnel in staying current with the dynamic changes occurring in the workplace. Technology in the workplace has caused much of the direct labor to be done by machines, while humans increasingly are more involved in indirect work, mainly with knowledge and information. These technological changes require minority youth to have more higher-order thinking skills to be competitive in the job market. According to the study participants, technological training will assist school personnel in designing classes that emphasize the more analytical skills needed in today's job market.

According to study participants, teachers also need training that will introduce them to a variety of instructional methods. This type of training should provide them with the skills necessary to utilize the teaching designs that are most appropriate for accommodating minority students with diverse learning styles.

Study participants stated that there are some teachers who lag in workplace knowledge and skills, and that this handicaps their teaching capability. Teachers need workplace training so that they can better understand workplace cultures, systems, procedures, structures, and expectations. Study participants stated that school personnel need to participate in workplace internships. This practical experience exposes them to the workplace and help them to see how classroom learning applies to the world of work. For example, they can obtain a better understanding on how math and physics can have visible applications in the workplace. Thus,

this type of training helps teachers to give minority youth a more realistic workplace preparation in the classroom.

Study participants indicated that school personnel need training on how to effectively mentor minority youth. They said that such training should include information in such areas as the academic performance, educational background, culture, and environmental constraints of minority youth. School personnel that undergo such training are more likely to have the knowledge to customize their mentoring approach to individual minority youth. Additionally, mentor training offers school personnel who have not worked with minority youth the strategies and tools necessary to effectively reach this particular group. Through mentor training, school personnel learn to set and maintain high standards for minority youth, a crucial issue for assisting minority youth in achieving success. According to the study participants, school personnel need to demand high expectations of minority youth because they have the tendency to rise to the level of expectation that is placed on them. School personnel need to be persistent with minority youth because they can easily lose focus and drop out of school.

Mentoring for Minority Youth

Over half of the study participants (67%) identified mentoring as an initiative that assists and supports in the STW transition of minority youth. Mentoring was mentioned as an important approach that schools can take to change the attitudes of youth toward school and work. These mentors could be teachers, counselors, or other adults from the community who work closely with the schools. These adult mentors can provide minority youth with important guidance, support, and encouragement. According to study participants, the exposure that mentoring offers minority youth goes beyond that of school and work-related advice; it has the power to positively impact their motivation, self-esteem and self-confidence, which is much needed for their development. While any teacher or other adult who has the best interest of the minority youth in mind can be a good mentor, study participants felt that mentors who speak the student's language, or who has some similarity with the student's background is capable of reaching the student at a deeper level and at a quicker pace. Study participants said that this is crucial for minority youth because they often need to establish a comfort and trust level before they start talking and listening. Study participants stated that caring adult mentors are central to the empowerment of minority youth. What makes a difference in a minority youth's life is having someone who cares and provides guidance through demonstration, instruction, challenge, and encouragement. Although there are minority youth who have this support at home, there are many whose parents are unable because of their poverty and lack of experience to help them set and achieve challenging goals. Study

participants indicated that minority youth who establish long-term relationships with adult mentors are usually the most likely to be successful in school and the workplace.

Career Exploration and Guidance for Minority Youth

Fifty-seven percent of the study participants reported providing career exploration and guidance as an initiative that assists and supports in the STW transition of minority youth. Effective career exploration and guidance programs help minority youth explore careers so that they can set realistic goals for the future and establish plans to achieve them. It is essential that minority youth have opportunities for career exploration and a broad perspective on the many career options. In many cases, minority youth do not have the proper guidance to determine their career options and how to effectively pursue them. According to the study participants, in many minority youth homes, careers are not discussed because parents don't have steady jobs themselves or because they are on welfare. This lack of career information and exposure combined with a lack of mentors and role models leave minority youth uncertain of what they can do or want to do in the future. Proper career exploration and guidance programs in schools can help minority youth understand the wide range of career opportunities that are available to them, so that they can better plan for the future.

Parent Involvement

Fifty-two percent of the study participants cited obtaining parent involvement as an initiative that assists and supports in the school-to-work transition of minority youth. The study participants believed that parental involvement is essential to minority student achievement. The problem is that parents of minority youth oftentimes do not get involved in their children's education because of their own lack of formal education and because of their belief that they have little to offer, especially those who speak little or no English. To maximize minority parent involvement, study participants stated that school personnel need to realize that the degree of involvement will depend on the parents' perception of the purpose and benefits, their comfort level, and their sense of self. School personnel, then, need to investigate what these perceptions are in order to demystify perceptions, remove obstacles, and improve processes or change systems. Study participants said that while continuous communication is key to maintaining minority parent involvement, school personnel need to pay keen attention to which medium works best. Study participants also stressed that the medium has to be engaging and non-intimidating.

Workplace Initiatives that Assist and Support Minority Youth

In total, the study participants cited 21 workplace initiatives that are most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth

into the workplace. Table 11 lists all the workplace initiatives in rank order by frequency. The five workplace initiatives most frequently mentioned by the STW partnership directors included (1) provide work-based learning, 21 (100%); (2) provide diversity training for employers, 19 (90%); (3) provide mentoring for minority youth, 14 (67%); (4) provide career development programs, 12 (57%); and (5) develop and implement organizational policies that mandate fairness and equity for all employees, 11 (52%).

Table 11. Workplace Initiatives (n=21)

Initiative	f	%
Work-based learning	21	100
Diversity training for employers	19	90
Mentoring for minority youth	14	67
Career development programs	12	57
Organizational policies that mandate fairness and equity for all employees	11	52
Summer employment for minority youth	10	48
Workplace/business tours for schools	8	38
Speakers from business to schools	8	38
Others	13	62

Multiple responses were accepted.

Provide Work-Based Learning

All of the study participants identified work-based learning as an initiative that can assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. According to the study participants, work-based learning is a planned program of on-the-job education and supervised work experiences. They indicated that work-based learning gives relevance, meaning, and leverage to classroom learning and serves as an initiation into the world of work. Work-based learning may include such activities as job shadowing, internships, guided business tours, and apprenticeships. Through work-based learning, minority youth can better understand, apply, and make connections between what is taking place in school and the workplace. Study participants indicated that students who participate in work-based learning are better able to select courses, discern the importance of academic performance, and have a basis from which to validate career and academic decisions. Study participants added that work-based learning provides minority youth with a sense of direction and assists them in developing a career plan—something that is often lacking among many minority youth. In addition, work-based learning gives minority youth the opportunity to learn about a company's corporate culture (e.g., mission, vision, values, beliefs, dress code, work ethic, and appropriate behaviors)

through daily observation, interaction, and communication. This, study participants say, sets the stage for subsequent workplace experiences because minority youth enter the workplace with awareness and with strategies that can help them access a company's culture more readily. Through work-based learning activities, minority youth come in contact with real workplace issues that require problem-solving and decisionmaking skills. According to study participants, this practice gives minority youth the experience they need to more likely succeed in today's competitive workforce.

Diversity Training for Employers

"Provide diversity training for employers" was cited by 90% of the study participants as an initiative that can assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. Diversity training as it relates to minority youth was capitalized as an acute need in organizations. This type of training was considered important for such areas as awareness building, skill building, and educating employees about the cultural and other differences that minority youth bring to the workplace. The training should provide the specific information and skills needed to work effectively with minority youth in order to give them the opportunity to do their job well and have the chance for advancement. Study participants mentioned that there are too many misconceptions and assumptions about minority youth and their capability in the workplace, and that this negatively impacts their STW transition. An example cited by the study participants is the tendency employers have to lower performance expectations for minority youth. Study participants indicated that culture also needs to be addressed. Employers often are not knowledgeable about how culture impacts the behaviors and mindsets of minority youth and this has led to stereotypes and overgeneralizations. Study participants emphasized that it is imperative to dispel such notions. Diversity training, if done effectively, can foster understanding and assist employers in engaging in the right course of action when working with minority youth.

Mentoring for Minority Youth

Mentoring programs were also frequently mentioned by the diversity experts (67%) as an initiative to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. The study participants felt that mentoring programs for minority youth are extremely important. Minority youth need mentors who will assist them in understanding the organization's standards, offer feedback on their performance, make them aware of organizational norms and politics, suggest strategies for advancing in their careers, and encourage them to meet high-performance standards. The study participants also believed that companies need to have formal mentoring programs because otherwise the mentoring for minority youth may not happen. People have a tendency to mentor people who are like

themselves; therefore, if minority youth come into a workplace in which there are no people like them, they are not likely to obtain a mentor on an informal basis. According to the study participants, mentoring programs positively impact the plight of especially poor minority youth. Poor minority youth are able to develop relationships that they may never have had before. Mentoring relationships that extend over time positively impact the aspirations, motivation, inner strength, awareness, self-confidence, and self-esteem of minority youth. Study participants reported that mentors accentuate the power of lifelong learning, validate classroom learning, and make the workplace more accessible and less intimidating for minority youth.

Career Development Programs

Over half of the study participants (57%) identified career development programs as an initiative that could assist minority youth in successfully transitioning into the workplace. They believed that in order for companies to create an environment that is fair; equitable; and which develops trust, loyalty, and commitment among all employees, they must develop more systematic employee career planning and guidance programs. They felt that individuals such as human resource professionals should be available to guide minority youth through the career planning process. They felt that it is important for minority youth to understanding their own strengths and weaknesses in order for them to more effectively establish their career goals and objectives. The study participants emphasized that poor career planning opportunities is one of the main reasons minority youth fail to advance in many organizations. When career guidance and information are provided to all employees, minority youth are able to compete more effectively with other employees by using these resources to obtain career information that may otherwise not be available to them.

Organizational Policies that Mandate Fairness and Equity for All Employees

Development of organizational policies that mandate fairness and equity for all employees was also an initiative that was frequently mentioned by the study participants (52%). They felt that revising organizational policies and procedures so that they support diverse needs is an essential initiative for assisting and supporting the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. The range of possibilities mentioned by the study participants were very broad and some of the examples they stated included changing corporate culture and policies so that racism, sexism, and discrimination are not tolerated; developing a company's mission statement in such a way that it makes it clear that diversity needs to be valued, honored, and differences need to be respected; changing recruitment policies to focus on recruiting, hiring, and retaining minority employees; developing performance appraisals that are nondiscriminatory; and developing policies

that ensure pay equity for all workers. The study participants emphasized that companies need to change their organizational cultures and develop new policies and systems to accommodate for the changes taking place in the workplace. This does not mean lowering standards, but, instead, changing the way companies do business to assure that everybody, including minority youth, can work to their full potential.

Goals Advocated for Minority Youth

The STW partnership directors were asked to identify the goals that should be advocated for minority youth who are making the transition into the workplace. In total, they identified 29 goals. Table 12 lists all the goals in rank order by frequency. The following five goals were most frequently mentioned by the study participants: (1) obtain a good education, 17 (81%); (2) get work experience, 15 (71%); (3) develop a career plan, 14 (67%); (4) take responsibility for your success, 13 (62%); and (5) learn to be an effective team member, 11 (52%).

Table 12. Goals Advocated for Minority Youth (n=21)

Goal	f	%
Obtain a good education	17	81
Get work experience	15	71
Develop a career plan	14	67
Take responsibility for your success	13	62
Learn to be an effective team member	11	52
Learn the behaviors/skills needed to succeed in the workplace	10	48
Have high expectations	10	48
Set future goals and determine ways to achieve them	10	48
Be persistent/do not give up	9	43
Seek help when you need it	9	43
Take advantage of opportunities	9	43
Seek role models/mentors that can help	9	43
Have a positive attitude	8	38
Be accountable/dependable/responsible	7	33
Learn to communicate effectively	7	33
Develop leadership skills	7	33
Identify your barriers and determine ways to overcome them	7	33
Others	12	57

Multiple responses were accepted.

Obtain a Good Education

Obtain a good education was the goal most frequently mentioned by the study participants (81%) that should be advocated for minority youth who are making the transition into the workplace. They felt that

technological changes, continuing shifts from manufacturing to service industries, and many jobs which now demand high levels of technical knowledge and skill make it a necessity for minority youth to obtain a good education. The study participants believed that a good education will help minority youth improve their prospects in the workplace and equip them with the skills needed to compete more effectively in the job market. According to the study participants, a good education will increase job wages and job opportunities for minority youth. The study participants recommended that minority students work hard in school in order to acquire the education and skills they need to succeed. They also emphasized that education does not only take place in schools, but can occur at home; in workplaces; and in other community settings such as churches, youth organizations, shelters, and nursing homes. The best chance of motivating minority youth to perform well in school is to convince them that by doing so they can improve their own future prospects. This is especially important, since many minority youth, particularly those who grew up in disadvantaged environments, regard school as unreal and unimportant. Because of that perception, many times they fail to perform well academically.

Get Work Experience

Nearly three-fourths of the study participants (71%) identified work experience as another goal that should be advocated to minority youth. Study participants indicated that work experience offers minority youth exposure to different jobs and serves as a knowledge base from which they can start to make informed decisions about furthering their education or choosing a career. Study participants stated that work experiences may encourage minority youth to remain in school, which may decrease dropout rates. Work experience may also stimulate pursuance of postsecondary school training and education through the military, community college, technical school, or university. Study participants claimed that another advantage of work experience is that minority youth learn how to better function within workplace environments. Minority youth are then more socially and technically prepared to either enter a career or pursue more training or education. Work experience gives minority youth a framework to which they can refer to when attempting to understand new workplace environments and concepts. Study participants also related that work experience emphasizes the importance and relevance of school-based learning and reveals how academics fit into the world of work.

Develop a Career Plan

Develop a career plan was another goal that was frequently mentioned by the study participants (67%). They indicated that it is extremely important for minority youth to understand their career options and what is needed

to pursue them. They suggested that minority youth periodically meet with a teacher, school counselor, parent, relative, or some other individual who is knowledgeable and willing to discuss job and career options. According to the study participants, minority youth oftentimes do not have the proper guidance to approach the world of work. The study participants believed that if minority youth are expected to be in a position to make decisions about careers, providing better and earlier occupational information or guidance is essential. To be successful in the job market, minority youth need better information on how to get and keep a job. Minority students must be able to present themselves on paper and in person.

Take Responsibility for Your Success

Take responsibility for your success was another goal that was frequently mentioned by the study participants (62%). They indicated that minority youth should establish high-performance standards for themselves in school and at work and be responsible for meeting those standards. Study participants stated that minority youth need to be actively involved and should make the effort to learn about what programs are available to them in the school, workplace, and community. Minority youth need to have high expectations of themselves and to take advantage of all resources and opportunities that are available to them. In addition, they should be willing to pursue the assistance and support they need to meet their high-performance standards. Also, minority youth need to have the discipline to persist even when they encounter obstacles. According to the study participants, minority youth who meet high-performance standards at school and at work are more successful in making the transition into the workplace.

Learn To Be an Effective Team Member

Learn to be an effective team member was mentioned by over half of the study participants (52%). They indicated that teamwork should be a concept that is purported both in the school and in the workplace. School personnel need to realize that having the ability to work as a team member is a marketable skill in the workplace, and that minority youth need to acquire a level of expertise in this area. According to the study participants, work teams are now a reality in most companies and, in most cases, these work teams are very diverse. Without effective work teams, companies will not be able to be competitive and produce high-quality products and services. In order to be an effective team member in a diverse workplace, minority youth must learn to value and respect people who are different from themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, age, ability, status, sexual orientation, family structure, and so forth. They must also be able to effectively listen and communicate with many diverse individuals. According to the study participants, the extent to which minority youth

succeed in the workplace will depend greatly on their interactions with other people and especially within work teams.

Criteria for Determining Sensitive Workplaces

Lastly, the study participants were asked to identify the criteria for determining sensitive workplaces. In total, they identified 24 different criteria. Table 13 lists all the various criteria in rank order by frequency. The criteria most frequently mentioned by the STW partnership directors included (1) successful in recruiting, hiring, and retaining minority employees, 16 (76%); (2) minority employees are represented at all levels of the company, 14 (67%); (3) absence of discrimination lawsuits, 13 (62%); (4) use a combination of initiatives to address diversity, 12 (57%); and (5) has a corporate culture that respects and values differences, 11 (52%).

Table 13. Criteria for Determining Sensitive Workplaces (n=21)

Criteria	f	%
Successful in recruiting, hiring, and retaining minority employees	16	76
Minority employees are represented at all levels of the company	14	67
Absence of discrimination lawsuits	13	62
Use a combination of initiatives to address diversity	12	57
Corporate culture that respects and values differences	11	52
Have mentors	10	48
Have employees who are capable & willing to supervise minority youth effectively	9	43
Friendly and supportive work environment	8	38
Provide outreach programs in the community	8	38
Have the support of top management in the STW transition of minority youth	7	33
Others	14	67

Multiple responses were accepted.

Successful in Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Minority Employees

Successful in recruiting, hiring, and retaining minority employees was the criteria most frequently mentioned by the study participants (76%) related to determining sensitive workplaces. They indicated that recruiting, hiring, and retaining minority employees is one of the most visible means of determining a sensitive workplace that is likely to assist and support the successful STW transition of minority youth. According to the study participants, recruitment practices need to be used to attract qualified minority job candidates for all levels of the organization. Once qualified minority employees are hired, they need to be provided with advancement opportunities along with the support systems they may need to overcome

barriers that they may encounter. Further, the study participants believed that setting goals for recruiting, hiring, and retaining minorities demonstrates that the organization places value on minority employees, including minority youth, and provides a positive image for the company, which in the future may assist the organization in more effectively hiring minority employees.

Minority Employees Are Represented at all Levels of the Company

Minority employees are represented at all levels of the organization was another criteria that was frequently mentioned by the study participants (67%). They stated that minority employees should be fully integrated into all levels of the organization, including middle and upper level management positions. It is motivating for minority youth when they know that minority employees are promoted and hold high-level positions in an organization. Companies with minorities in high-level positions are more willing to show minority youth all aspects of the business—not just the entry-level positions. They are also more willing to expose minority youth to the highest levels within the company and to sit down and explain to them the educational requirements that are necessary to move up the ladder. According to the study participants, having minorities in senior-level management positions is one of the most important signs that the company is likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. Not only are minority managers important role models for minority youth, but many times their individual efforts may help to shape and vitalize diversity activities that directly and indirectly assist minority youth.

Absence of Discrimination Lawsuits

Absence of discrimination lawsuits was another criteria that was frequently mentioned by the study participants (62%). According to the study participants, the number of discrimination lawsuits filed, including the number lost by the company, may be a useful measure of how effectively the company values and manages diversity. A closer, examination of those lawsuits to determine where they originated, and the nature of the complaint, may reveal the kinds of problems being solved or not solved in a company and whether the work environment is likely to be supportive of the STW transition of minority youth.

Utilizes a Combination of Initiatives To Address Diversity

Utilizes a combination of initiatives to address diversity was also a criteria that was frequently mentioned by the study participants (57%). According to the study participants, companies that utilize a combination of diversity initiatives to address the employees' needs and strategically uses these initiatives as part of their organization systems and processes, are more likely to be sensitive to the STW transition issues of minority youth. Some

initiatives mentioned by the study participants included education and training programs intended to reduce stereotyping, increase cultural sensitivity, and develop skills for working in diverse work environments; mentoring programs that provide access to formal and informal networks; career development programs designed to promote constructive feedback to employees; outreach programs such as internships, scholarships, and partnerships with schools; and nontraditional work arrangements such as flextime and homework stations. Organizations that openly honor differences and that go beyond race and gender issues are more likely to support and assist in the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace.

Corporate Culture that Respects and Values Differences

Presence of a corporate culture that respects and values differences was mentioned by over half of the study participants (52%). A corporate culture that respects and values diversity is one that provides a better work environment for all employees regardless of their sex or ethnicity. This type of corporate culture involves increasing the consciousness and appreciation of differences associated with the heritage, characteristics, and values of many different groups, as well as respecting the uniqueness of each individual. It captures the unique contributions that everyone has to offer because of his or her background, affiliations, talents, values, or other differences and is linked to the overall performance of the organization. A study participant stated that, "if minority youth know that the person supervising them wants to make their experience valuable and respects them as individuals, this makes their workplace experiences more likely to be successful." Overall, the study participants indicated that companies that have work environments that respect and value differences are more likely to support and assist in the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace.

Conclusions

The results of this study led to the following major conclusions.

- The four categories of barriers that were most frequently mentioned by respondents as most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace include (1) school (coming from the school setting), (2) workplace (coming from the workplace environment), (3) societal (coming from the community surroundings—other than school and workplace), and (4) individual (coming from the minority youth themselves).
- The five school-related barriers that were most frequently mentioned by respondents as most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace include (1) school personnel resistance to change, (2) lack of understanding concerning different cultures, (3) lack of integrated/relevant curriculum, (4) lack of communication between business and schools, and (5) lack of understanding about STW transition.
- The five workplace-related barriers that were most frequently mentioned by respondents as most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace include (1) lack of communication between businesses and schools, (2) lack of understanding concerning different cultures, (3) discrimination, (4) businesses not aware of the need to become involved with the STW transition of youth, and (5) lack of workplace learning/job opportunities.
- The five societal-related barriers that were most frequently mentioned by respondents as most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace include (1) lack of understanding concerning different cultures, (2) lack of understanding about STW transition initiative, (3) lack of support and opportunities for youth, (4) discrimination, and (5) low expectation of youth.
- The five individual-related barriers that were most frequently mentioned by respondents as most likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace include (1) poverty, (2) lack of knowledge/skills needed to succeed in the workplace, (3) lack of English (language) proficiency, (4) lack of family involvement/support, and (5) lack of understanding regarding the importance of education.
- The two categories that are inclusive of the types of initiatives that are most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace include (1) school initiatives and (2) workplace initiatives.
- The five school initiatives that were most frequently mentioned by respondents as most likely to assist and support the successful transition

of minority youth into the workplace include (1) design and implement an integrated and relevant curriculum, (2) provide training for school personnel (e.g., teachers, counselors, and administrators), (3) provide mentoring for minority youth, (4) provide career exploration and guidance for minority youth, and (5) obtain parent involvement.

- The five workplace initiatives that were most frequently mentioned by respondents as most likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace include (1) provide work-based learning, (2) provide diversity training for employers, (3) provide mentoring for minority youth, (4) provide career development programs, and (5) develop and implement organizational policies that mandate fairness and equity for all employees.
- The major goals that should be advocated for minority youth who are making the transition into the workplace include (1) obtain a good education, (2) get work experience, (3) develop a career plan, (4) take responsibility for your success, and (5) learn to be an effective team member.
- The criteria for determining sensitive work-based learning sites and/or companies that assist in the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace include (1) successful in recruiting, hiring, and retaining minority employees; (2) minority employees are represented at all levels of the company; (3) absence of discrimination lawsuits; (4) use a combination of initiatives to address diversity; and (5) has a corporate culture that respects and values differences.

Discussion and Implications

It is important to note that the barriers, initiatives, and other factors identified in this study were derived from the perceptions and beliefs of a selected group of STW partnership directors. Members of different groups (e.g., parents, students, and businesspeople) could have identified different barriers, initiatives, and other factors. Nonetheless, this study revealed that a wide range of barriers are likely to hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. The results of this study seem to indicate that the ability of minority youth to succeed academically and in the workplace may be highly dependent on school personnel, employers, society, and the minority youth themselves addressing these existing barriers. The study also showed that a systemic approach to counteracting these barriers is critical because the barriers are interrelated but sometimes invisible and because of this, they may go undetected. In addition, this study supported previous research that identified discrimination, lack of integrated and relevant curriculum, lack of communication between school and business, poverty, and lack of parent involvement and support as barriers that affect minority youth transition into the workplace (Brown, 1998; Cochrane et al., 1994; Dean, 1997; Harris, 1993; Tiemeyer, 1993). Unlike other research, however, we situated barriers within a context (school, workplace, societal, and individual) and attempted to give a greater understanding of the different types of barriers. Hopefully, this will sharpen the visibility of barriers, foster a clearer identification of relevant and systemic initiatives, and more clearly highlight who should foster their realization to support and assist the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace.

Although this study focused on barriers that hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace, the literature shows that many of these barriers are also encountered by nonminority youth (Ginzberg, 1980; Hamilton, 1990; Lerman, 1994; Tiemeyer, 1993). Hamilton (1990) related that one-fourth of all minors, White as well as Black and Hispanic, live in poverty. He reported that many of the same problem behaviors generally associated with minority youth who live in poverty are also found among White youth who live in poverty. Lerman (1994) reported the lack of student motivation; the unavailability of job/career information; and the lack of an integrated, meaningful curriculum as hindering the STW transition of all youth. Ginzberg (1980) highlighted discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, or sex; lack of family support; low expectations; lack of role models/mentors; and lack of English language proficiency as barriers for many youth, but that they continue to be more damaging for minority youth. This study shows that these barriers, among others, persist in profoundly affecting minority youth.

Poverty, an individual barrier, was cited most often among the four categories. Poverty seeps into and debilitates every aspect of a minority youth's life, and only the conscious observer is able to detect its presence and its effect. Poverty affects the whole individual including their attitudes, behaviors, self-esteem, motivation, achievement, values, language skills, interpersonal skills, job accessibility, job networks, and expectations. Quane and Rankin (1998) reported that poor neighborhoods are more likely to have higher proportions of youth that downplay the importance of education. School personnel, employers, and the society at large sometimes see this barrier at the surface level; this superficiality perpetuates stereotype reinforcement which leads to generalizations about minority youth. Lynch (1993) reported that employers are more likely to train workers who seem trainable and who are highly motivated. The words "seem trainable and highly motivated" are descriptors that could instantly remove poverty stricken minority youth from the training list. It is imperative that school personnel, employers, and society at large recognize the impact poverty has on the lives of minority youth. According to Figueira-McDonough (1998), minority youth recognize the advantages of schooling but are keenly aware that, in their experience, a high school education does not ensure an escape from poverty. School personnel and employers, then, need to be cognizant of the backgrounds of minority youth and use that knowledge to best support rather than label them. Without this recognition, minority youth will continue to be viewed inappropriately, and be deprived of opportunities for development.

School personnel resistance to change, a school-related barrier, was the second most frequently mentioned barrier among the four categories. Resistance to change constrains the effective planning, implementation, and accountability phases of the STW initiative. Resistance to change by school personnel disconnect the STW initiative from its core principles and mission. School personnel fail to see that STW is a system intervention and not merely a program or another additional task that has been added to their responsibilities. McLaughlin (1990), in a follow-up analysis on educational change, also found that a systemic approach to change is a major issue for organizations. McLaughlin reported that, "Special projects focused on single issues or single inputs typically (by necessity) ignore the systemic and interconnected conditions that influence classroom practice" (p. 15). Reiter (1995), in his study about motivation of noncollege-bound youth, revealed the dangers of resistance to change by school personnel:

> While public school educators of today are besieged by needy students, a demanding public, and serious financial difficulties, they must guard against the simplistic, quick fixes. . . . Restructuring efforts must first consider the real problems of the current system and then take into careful account the short and long-range

implications of systemic, curricular, and pedagogical changes. (p. 196)

Brown (1998) also identified teacher resistance to change as a barrier for successful STW transition. Teachers may be fearful of change and reluctant to devote time and effort required to learn and incorporate new ways of teaching and learning into their instruction, curriculum, and classroom management. What the results of this may also indicate, however, is that reluctance to change can be the result of a lack of appropriate training in implementing and managing change and workplace learning. Dean (1997) concluded that resources must be provided to support a desired change. In essence, what may be needed are school administrators who are supportive and committed to the STW transition of minority youth and are willing to provide school personnel with the professional development, materials, and supportive and aligned systems and structures that are required for effective change.

Lack of understanding of different cultures was cited as a school, workplace, and societal barrier. This barrier has affected the integration and adaptation of minority youth to schools, workplace, and the community learning environments. Minority youth need to feel valued in their learning environments for this to happen; school personnel, employers, and community members need to think and act strategically when working with different cultures because culture is unavoidable, powerful, and cannot be ignored. Yogan (1994), in her study on the use of Black culture, reported that cultural congruence between teacher and student is invaluable for student learning. She added that students who are educated in schools that use the students' home culture to influence the atmosphere of the classroom, learning assignments, interactions, and discipline processes perform better and report more satisfaction than students who are educated in classrooms that are culturally incongruent. Yogan captured the effect that is absent when there is a lack of understanding of different cultures. Likewise, Romo (1997) emphasized that school must work to prevent racial and ethnic clashes in order to focus on academics: "Recognizing common values (all students want to feel that they belong) and differential power (some groups "belong" more that others) is essential in order to maintain stability and positive relationships in multiethnic classrooms" (p. 2).

Furthermore, according to the study participants' perceptions, discrimination against minority youth is still very much a part of the workplace and society. Discrimination plays a critical role in eliminating or reducing opportunities for minority youth. Minority youth are often prevented from actively engaging in programs that facilitate the transition from school to work. We are nearing the millennium and the perceptions of the study participants indicate that discrimination, a historical problem, continues to prevail. Its prevalence is stifling creativity and productivity of

minority youth in school and in the workplace. Several studies have demonstrated that discrimination occurs in the workplace and in the society at large (Carnevale & Stone, 1995; Cochrane et al., 1994; Ihlanfeldt, 1992; Reisner & Balasubramaniam, 1989; Tiemeyer, 1993). Lynch (1993) found that women and non-Whites are much less likely to receive company-provided training or to be in apprenticeships

Low expectations of minority youth was cited as a school, workplace, and societal barrier. Participants in this study indicated that minority youth consistently—directly and indirectly—come in contact with low expectations. The consistency of this message is prone to create a self-fulfilling prophecy in which minority youth get entangled in a vicious circle of mediocre performance and self- efficacy crises. Glover and Marshall (1993) reported that "Germany and Japan have systematic incentives and high expectations for performance of their adolescents and their expectations are fulfilled; Americans expect little of adolescents and our expectations are equally fulfilled" (p. 595). It is important that school personnel, employers, and society have a conscious awareness of their actions that exhibit low expectations of minority youth and modify their behavior in such a way that it does not have negative implications on their efforts and performance.

This study identified a lack of integrated and relevant curriculum as a major barrier of the STW transition of minority youth. Absence of such curriculum minimizes the occurrence of a progressive education that is student-centered, has real-world representation, incorporates students' previous knowledge, focuses on learning styles, and centers on accountability of acquisition and transfer of learning. Dean (1997) concluded that "curricular changes must be based on sound educational research and professional literature about best educational practices" (p. 20) and "curricular changes must be based on connections to the workplace" (p. 21). Dean underlined the importance of viewing the learning process systemically by taking into account how each part affects others and the whole. Several authors have reported that development of educational curricula that strengthens awareness, knowledge, and skills for students is vital if schools are to provide culturally relevant, respectful, and affirming teaching environments (Quane & Rankin, 1998; Sanchez, 1995). These types of environments are essential if the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the workplace are to be cultivated. This is also vital because the demands of today's global and technological environments require individuals with multiple skills, cultural competence, and an adaptability to change.

This study also revealed a wide range of initiatives that assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. The results of this study seem to indicate that the ability of minority youth to succeed academically and in the workplace is contingent upon the types and quality of interventions that both the school and the workplace undertake. The

study showed that successful initiatives are usually collaborative in nature; they have some type of work-based input; and they are systemic and strategic in both planning and implementation. Work-based learning and an integrated and relevant school curriculum were initiatives that were mentioned by all study participants.

This study revealed that work-based learning engages minority youth in practical experiences that bring value to their classroom learning. Minority youth become active experimenters and concrete learners; understand workplace culture and expectations; make informed career decisions; and learn to solve problems. This study showed that work-based learning opportunities, such as job shadowing, apprenticeships, business/workplace tours, and internships, capitalize on relevancy, authenticity, and meaningfulness of the content and its learning environment. Although this study focused on initiatives that assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace, the literature shows that many of these initiatives may also assist and support nonminority youth (Ginzberg, 1980; Hamilton, 1990; Hudelson, 1994; Lerman, 1994; Tiemeyer, 1993). A 1995 report from the Office of Technology Assessment reported that work-based programs such as youth apprenticeships are among the most promising ways of preparing young people for modern work responsibilities. Additionally, the report stated that youth apprenticeships help students see the relevance of academic studies to their later lives, aid their exploration of career options, foster desirable work habits, develop solid occupational skills, and prepare young people to learn continuously while on the job. Work-based learning has continuously been identified as an initiative instrumental in the education of all youth (Grubb & Badway, 1998; Hudelson, 1994; Lerman 1994; Office of Technology Assessment, 1995). This study also emphasized work-based learning as important, especially in the education of minority youth.

An integrated and relevant curriculum was another resounding initiative. This study showed that curricula that is integrated and relevant is more likely to have a positive impact on the academic development and workplace success of minority youth. Curricula with a school-work integration give opportunities for contextual and hands-on-learning which help minority youth to better understand the significance of what they are learning.

Diversity training was another initiative that was identified as important in supporting the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. This study showed that cultural and other differences that minority youth bring to school and the workplace are important elements to consider in their academic and professional development. Burdette-Williamson (1996) and French (1996) purported that teachers and other adults who interact and work with minority youth need to be aware and sensitive to their cultural differences. This study similarly highlighted that school personnel

and employers need to be cognizant of the cultural differences and their effects on the school and workplace performance of minority youth. This study found that diversity training is significant in providing awareness and the skills needed to work with and teach a diverse student population. Through diversity training, school personnel and employers can obtain a better understanding of how they can create a conducive learning environment for minority youth.

This study revealed that mentoring, whether it be school-based or work-based, if done well, can give impetus to the lives and STW transition of minority youth. Mentoring was seen in this study as an initiative that can help minority youth with information accessibility, job networking, self-esteem, self-confidence, and motivation. Mentoring can also foster the development of relationships and encourage minority youth to communicate their fears and expectations. This study also disclosed that mentors who have knowledge of the mentee's language, culture, and social background, and have the best interest of the mentee as central to their mentor role are likely to reach minority youth at a deeper level and at a quicker pace. Blechman (1992), in discussing mentors for high-risk minority youth, recommended that communication skills and bicultural competence be weighted heavily when screening mentors. Rowe (1990), in describing the benefits of her mentoring program entitled, *Youth Activities Task Force*, reported that mentoring demonstrates that minority youth have true potential. While they might not have material things, she continues, they have youth, vigor, and enthusiasm. According to Rowe, effective mentoring helps make minority youth less likely to get involved with drugs and gangs; instead, it helps them to find employment; have self-respect; and, in general, be an asset to their communities.

Career development was another recurrent initiative. The career development initiative was seen as essential to the future success of minority youth, especially those who face job inaccessibility, absence of a job network, and lack of basic skills. This study revealed that career development programs communicate to minority youth the importance of goal setting, hard work, and determination. Fisher and Griggs (1995) reported in their career development study that generalizations from the dominant group have created a limited and misguided view of the constructs that shape the career profiles of minority students. Similarly, this study found that implementation of a career development initiative is not only dependent on having well-trained, well-informed adults who know about careers and their relevant programs, but also needs to understand minority youth from a cognitive, cultural, social, racial, and historical perspective. Additionally, Constantine et al. (1998) believe that for career development programs to be successful with minority youth, they need to focus on both internal and external factors that may affect their occupational attainment, including socialization experiences, perceptions of career barriers, and discrimination.

Training for school personnel was another frequently cited initiative. This study revealed that by school personnel receiving training in such areas as diversity, technology, instructional methods, mentoring, and workplace knowledge and skills, they can create conducive learning environments at school and make meaningful contributions to the successful STW transition of minority youth. This study disclosed that workplace internships can give teachers creative insight into workplace culture, skills, and systems. Farrell (1992), in discussing what teachers can learn from internships, reported that teachers who completed summer internships accentuated the nonscientific knowledge and skills that persons who work in industry need. The importance of team, networking, interpersonal, communication, and problem-solving skills, among others, were identified

This study also revealed that parent involvement is crucial to the successful STW transition of minority youth. Other studies have also found that parent involvement is important to the successful STW transition of minority youth (Aalborg, 1998; Deblieux, 1996; Lopez, 1998). According to Poczik (1995), providing minority parents with awareness of the school's various educational efforts and employing several involvement strategies, such as parents' school nights, facilitators who work with families at home and through training (e.g., literacy, language, computer) can enhance parent involvement. Similarly, this study revealed that school personnel need to employ innovative ways to help minority parents understand the importance of education and to help them become and remain involved because they are powerful players in the life of their children.

The results of this study also indicated that minority youth must take responsibility for enhancing their successful transition into the workplace by obtaining a good education, getting work experience, developing a career plan, and learning to be an effective team member. A primary aim should then be to provide minority youth with incentives to stay in school and perform well academically. A powerful motivation is to connect performance and achievement in school with rewards in the labor market. Minority youth must know that achievement in school pays off unmistakably in terms of economic opportunity (Bloomfield, 1989; Glover & Marshall, 1993; Hamilton, 1990; Kronick, 1991). In addition, learning is a joint enterprise involving teachers and students. While good teaching can facilitate learning, it is ultimately the responsibility of the minority student to learn. Learning cannot occur without minority students taking action. Motivation is a key to effective learning (Glover & Marshall, 1993; Hamilton, 1990; Rosenbaum, 1990). It is essential that minority youth learn how to learn in order to constantly upgrade and improve their skills to match the needs of the workplace.

The results of this study on the criteria related to sensitive workplaces revealed that issues related to valuing and managing diversity were important in assisting and supporting the successful transition of minority

youth into the workplace. An increasing amount of research literature suggests that organizations that support diversity enhance their overall performance (Carnevale & Stone, 1995; Catalyst, 1993; Cox, 1993; Fernandez, 1993; Henderson, 1994; Morrison, 1992; Triandis et al., 1994; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998). The inevitability of a diverse workforce in American organizations suggests that organizations that support and that are sensitive to diversity will be best able to attract and retain the best available human resources. As minorities and other diverse groups become an increased share of available workers, it becomes more important for organizations to be successful in hiring and retaining workers from these groups.

The results of this study on criteria related to sensitive workplaces can be used for benchmarking within organizations. It can also aid in the self-reflective process organizations use to assess their current status and to assist them in developing strategic plans for addressing diversity within their organizations. The criteria related to sensitive workplaces identified in this study can also be used by minority youth who are selecting companies for employment, as well as by individuals who are involved in placing minority youth in work-based learning sites. According to the study participants, companies that meet these criteria are more likely to assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace.

Determining the specific barriers that hinder the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace is one of the first steps in developing strategies and initiatives to address these barriers and assist and support the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace. Barriers that prevent minority youth from successfully transitioning into the workplace prevent schools, organizations, and communities from developing the future workforce which is their competitive advantage. The initiatives and other factors identified in this study can help provide needed skills for minority youth, as well as combat against discriminatory practices. According to the study participants, the initiatives that they identified can improve the employment prospects of minority youth who are making the transition into the workplace and provide them with better opportunities for advancement. Initiatives that provide awareness and knowledge about school and work, promote skill development, and enhance interpersonal relationships among all individuals involved are invaluable. It is important to recognize the systemic, strategic relationships that exist among all initiatives in their efforts to foster a successful STW transition for all minority youth.

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