

THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE IN POST-SECONDARY PLANNING

Findings for Manitoba

*The Manitoba Summary of Research
by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation
and the Canadian Career Development Foundation*

**Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth and
Manitoba Advanced Education and Training
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The Role of Guidance in Post-Secondary Planning: Findings for Manitoba

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the Manitoba portion of a research project in career guidance in the secondary school system undertaken by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation in partnership with four provinces — Manitoba, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador. It explores the availability to high school students and their parents of information and programming about careers, education and training options after high school and about financing these various options.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth and Manitoba Advanced Education and Training are pleased to have been partners in this project. We recognize that high school students have important decisions to make about their futures and need a variety of resources to help make them. These resources include accessible information, meaningful dialogue with teachers and others, exposure to a full range of education, training and career options, and opportunities to explore their own unique enthusiasm and skills.

The report looks broadly at the *career guidance function* in the high school system – from policies through practice and information – from the perspectives of officials, practitioners, students and parents. It also deals with a *broad definition of post-secondary education* (in the sense of post-high school), including college, apprenticeship, university and other educational paths, and the extent to which high school students are exposed to all of these options.

The Context

In a broader context, the Manitoba government recognizes the key role that education plays in the social and economic development of the province and in building personal careers and communities. Education and training are fundamental components of a number of the government's major strategies; for example, the *Action Strategy for Economic Growth*, *Community Economic Development*, the *Northern Development Strategy*, and *An Innovation Framework for Manitoba*.

The *Manitoba K – S4 Education Agenda for Student Success, 2002 – 2006* recognizes the importance of successful post-high school transitions in its Priority 5, strengthening pathways among secondary schools, post-secondary education and work. Other priorities in the agenda encourage strengthening links among schools, families and communities (Priority 2), a collaborative planning process for schools (Priority 3), and linking policy and practice to research and evidence (Priority 6). The *Manitoba Training Strategy* emphasizes education system accessibility and integration.

The two education departments have a strong interest in research such as this to inform dialogue with stakeholders and the decisions they make within the school and post-secondary systems.

The Report

The national report, *The Role of Guidance in Post-Secondary Planning*, an aggregate of findings and recommendations, was published in March 2003 without the individual provincial reports, which participating provinces agreed to publish separately. Research was carried out in the spring of 2002 by the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) and Ralph Kellett and Associates, under contract to the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. The national report is available online at www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/guidance.

The Role of Guidance in Post-Secondary Planning: Findings for Manitoba provides vital information of interest to education planners, guidance staff, teachers, administrators, division/district officials, parents, department staff, those responsible for post-secondary programs and institutions, and other educational stakeholders. It offers insights into present practices and potential improvements. Excerpts from the national report are included to provide context.

The Manitoba sample, though relatively small, is representative of the diversity of the education system. It is a cross-section of regions, languages, and cultures and of those in the school system with a role or interest in high school career guidance services.

Three groups were consulted during this study:

- provincial government education officials (interviews and questionnaire)
- school division and school representatives (interviews and questionnaire)
- parents and students (focus groups)

We publish the Manitoba findings with permission and thank the funder, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, and the researchers and writers of the Canadian Career Development Foundation and Ralph Kellett and Associates. The findings, themes and recommendations are those of the authors (contained in "Themes and Lessons Learned for Manitoba" at the end of this document). The departments do not necessarily endorse all recommendations in current policies and practices.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth and Manitoba Advanced Education and Training offer this document to all education stakeholders in the interest of constructive dialogue and further research about successful school completion, post-secondary and career pathways for Manitoba's young people.

I. EXCERPTS FROM THE NATIONAL REPORT

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

We know too little about the role of *guidance services* or, more broadly, the role of those in the school who are part of the *guidance function*. Nor do we know enough about the existence and usefulness of policies, funding and materials provided for guidance services. We do know that those providing these services may be coaches, classroom teachers, principals or others who engage in personal problem solving and decision making with students individually or in a group, inside or outside the classroom. What role parents play in either career or education planning is another area we need to understand more completely.

Most studies suggest, however, that high school students are poorly informed about financial assistance opportunities. A recent Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation – Ipsos Reid survey (Foundation – Ipsos Reid, 2002) on this theme discovered that almost half of students surveyed said they learned about bursaries, scholarships and awards from friends and parents. A significant proportion said they would go to the guidance office at the school to get information on student financial assistance for post-secondary education.

Students and their parents do not access information about post-secondary education and financial assistance in a vacuum. The decision to undertake post-secondary education or go directly into the workforce is related to the broader decisions students make about their careers. Indeed, the process of career planning and decision making usually begins before the secondary school years, with important attitudes formed and crucial decisions sometimes made in the middle school years (Grades 7-9).

OBJECTIVES

Overall Aim

The overall aim of much of this research is to find ways of improving the flow of information to students and their parents about:

- the value and means of accessing post-secondary education opportunities
- the scope, types and mechanisms of student financial assistance available to support access and affordability of post-secondary education opportunities

Specific Objectives

This study was undertaken in order to learn more about:

- what, when and how students and their parents learn about:
 - careers and career planning
 - post-secondary education opportunities
 - student financial assistance for post-secondary education
- the methods preferred by students and parents for receiving information on:
 - school programs and resources (guidance policies, programs, materials, staff, teachers, direction and support from school and district staff)
 - careers and career planning
 - post-secondary education
 - financial assistance for students to support post-secondary education

- what information about careers, career planning, post-secondary opportunities and student financial assistance reaches those who influence students in the school (principals, guidance staff, teachers), how that information reaches them and what method of receiving information these influential people prefer to use
- whether information about careers and career planning, post-secondary opportunities and financial assistance is equally available in a meaningful format to all students and their parents, or whether certain groups of students and parents are specifically targeted to receive this information
- the best practices for getting information on careers and career planning in general, and post-secondary education opportunities and student financial assistance information in particular, to students, their parents and those in the school who influence students and parents

Outcomes

We hope the findings from the research reported here provide constructive directions to improve both the flow and impact of information to students and those who influence them (parents, school staff, guidance staff).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Methodology

The design for this research study emerged out of an early review of documents and materials.

- The target audiences were determined to be:
 - provincial department of education officials (specifically those involved in career development, student services, student financial aid, policy and programs, planning and research, or curriculum and instruction)
 - school division/district/board staff
 - school staff (principals, teachers)
 - school guidance staff
 - school students (Grades 8-12)
 - parents of school students
- Four types of investigative tools were used:
 - background literature and materials research (seeing what is there)
 - questionnaires (sent by e-mail or given out by hand)
 - telephone interviews
 - focus groups

The Manitoba Sample

In Manitoba, four school division/district/boards and nine schools took part in the study.

The number of telephone interviews were as follows: five with provincial education department staff, four with division/district staff, nine with the staff of an English school, and one with a staff member of a French school.

Four English and three French written questionnaires were received and, of the seven student and parent focus group sessions held, there were three English and one French student focus groups and two English and one French parent focus groups.

For individual schools, the urban/rural breakdown is shown below.

TABLE 4.1
Urban-Rural Breakdown of
School Interviews and Focus Groups

	Manitoba
School Interviews	
Urban	6
Rural	4
Student Focus Groups	
Urban	3
Rural	1
Parent Focus Groups	
Urban	2
Rural	1
Total	17

Survey Instruments

Two types of data collection instruments were developed:

- survey forms suitable for provincial, board/district/division and school staff telephone interviews (or written responses when convenient)
- focus group forms for both students and parents

The issues to be addressed through the telephone interviews (or written responses) were somewhat different for two groups of the target audiences:

- department of education and school board/district/division respondents
- school staff respondents

Two versions of the telephone/written survey form were therefore developed, one for provincial and board/district/division contacts, and one for school contacts. The survey questionnaires completed in writing by school staff (almost all guidance counsellors) were the same as the telephone interview questionnaires.

The information collected in the interviews and focus groups is largely qualitative. The purpose of the study is not to confirm hypotheses,

nor to make broad generalizations based on statistically valid sample sizes. It is to better understand the role and impact of guidance programs and staff on student career decision-making in general, and on the decision whether or not to undertake post-secondary education. As a result, the researchers looked for information in the interview and focus group reports that helped provide a clearer *description* of:

- the types and sources of career, post-secondary education and student financial support information currently available to students and their parents
- the way that information is processed by students, parents and others who influence students

This is a descriptive study. Although some frequencies of occurrence and other such descriptive statistics are presented in this report, the bulk of the analysis is devoted to highlighting indicative statements made by the various respondents.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This was a largely qualitative study involving a relatively small sample and just four of the provinces. Given the size of the sample and the short timeframe for collection of data (really from April to June 2002), it was difficult to fully address all of the specific objectives previously outlined.

Looking at the findings in relation to the objectives, several areas surface where further research would be profitable. The areas, not presented in any order of priority, follow:

- From the present study, we get a glimpse of who is providing career development assistance in the schools of the four participating provinces. The picture, however, is incomplete even in these provinces. It is important to find out more about the specific roles of career coaches, counsellor assistants and other non-teaching staff in providing career development services. How much is needed of *specialist* versus *generalist* help in career development? The effectiveness of using these types of resources, even over the short and medium term, needs to be investigated.
 - Most respondents in the present study mentioned career fairs as a primary means of providing career and post-secondary program information to students. Yet a majority also cited career fairs as one of the least effective means of providing this information. Because of their prevalence, more needs to be learned about how career fairs can best be used to help students plan their careers and make solid post-secondary education decisions. Some respondents offered suggestions for improving the career planning and decision-making value of career fairs. These suggestions should be further investigated.
 - Newfoundland and Labrador has been engaged in a high school graduate follow-up study for more than five years.
- Interesting findings have surfaced that show both advantages and disadvantages of work interludes for youth going on to post-secondary education. Besides part-time work and periods of full-time employment, the Newfoundland and Labrador study reveals that some youth, who have been out of school for some time, are accessing other sources of financing for post-secondary education, such as one-year community college programs. Federal monies for skills development seem to be one of those sources. Further investigation is needed of the contribution Human Resources Development Canada funding for skills development makes to the uptake of community college or private institution post-secondary education.
- In our surveys, we asked if career and guidance programs, and particularly efforts to improve post-secondary attendance, were targeted to any particular groups in the province. Respondents mentioned specific programs (both financial and non-financial) for Aboriginals, francophones and immigrants (particularly the youth among newcomers to Canada). Aboriginal youth, francophones in provinces outside of Quebec and immigrant youth may face different problems in accessing and using information and assistance for career development and post-secondary education planning. A study similar to the present one that focuses more on these, and perhaps other population groups, needs to be undertaken.
 - The present study involved only four provinces. Career development services are no doubt different in content and delivery method in the other provinces. Survey respondents of the present study in the four participating provinces provided a wealth of good ideas for improving the way information on career, post-secondary education and financial support and services is provided and used. Replicating this study in additional provinces should add to the body of knowledge about how best to go about encouraging and facilitating increased movement of youth into post-secondary education.

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II. THE FINDINGS FOR MANITOBA

FINDINGS FROM EDUCATION OFFICIALS - INTERVIEWS AND MAIL-BACK QUESTIONNAIRES

There are five main sections in the interview/mail-back questionnaires. What respondents told us in the five areas follows.

Section 1: About Guidance/Career-Development Programs

Respondents were asked about:

- the existence of formal policies or guidelines on providing career-development programs in the schools
- the inclusion of post-secondary education (PSE) and student financial aid information in career-development programs
- grade levels where career-development programs are available
- how career-development programs are delivered
- funding for career-development programs

Policies and Guidelines on Career-Development Programs

- Manitoba has adopted the *Blueprint for Life / Work Designs* as a comprehensive framework for providing curriculum-based guidance. This framework offers some direction on providing a career development program in schools. The guidance program should be tailored to the schools' needs.
- In Manitoba, the province does not require schools to provide a guidance program or guidance services. Divisions or schools may decline to do anything in the way of guidance. However, a guidance program of some form can be found in most schools, beginning in Grades 6 to 9. In fact, the *Real Game* series is used in many schools beginning in Grade 3.
- Manitoba has not developed province-wide curriculum-based courses in career development. However, schools have initiated their own courses. Some schools offer up to six career education courses. These can be taken for credit but are not mandatory. The schools' biggest problem is a lack of student enrolment in career education courses.
- The province has developed a new position paper on guidance and counselling in collaboration with the Manitoba School Counsellors' Association. Called *Guidelines for Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling in Manitoba*, it was recently distributed to schools.

Inclusion of PSE and Student Financial Aid Information in Career-Development Programs

- There is no requirement to include information on PSE or student financial aid for PSE in career-development programs in schools.

Grade Levels where Career-Development Programs are Available

- Career development activities are offered in schools as early as Grade 3 (the Real Game series). Many high schools (Grades 9 to 12) offer career education courses for credit.
- The *Career Explorer* program is distributed free of charge to every school in the province. It is generally used by students beginning in Grade 6.
- Most schools offer the *Take Our Kids to Work* program in Grade 9.
- Many students take a school-initiated course in career preparation.

Career-Development Program and Materials Commonly Used

- Career development is generally provided, though it is not mandatory, to students in Grades 6 to 12. Students in Grades 9 to 12 participate individually and in classroom sessions. They are provided information on careers and occupations, employment and income prospects.
- Some of the more commonly used career materials are:
 - *Choices*
 - *Career Cruising*
 - *Career Explorer (Bridges)*
 - *Job Futures*
 - *HRDC website*
 - *Career Directions*
 - *Circuit Coach*
 - *Manitoba Prospects*
 - *Traces*
 - *Canada Prospects*
 - *Spectrum*
 - *The Real Game Series - Grades 3 to 12*
 - *Destination 2020*

Program Funding

- Funding for guidance and counselling programs is provided to school divisions/districts and schools. The funding formula for schools includes an allocation for guidance and counselling for Grades 5 to 12 of \$45,000 per year for every 550 students, based on enrolments, starting at Grade 5.
- Some divisions allocate a specific number of days per year to their schools for career-development programs.
- There is no specific mention in the school funding formulas of the provision of PSE or student financial aid information.

Section 2: Questions on Providing Information

Respondents at provincial, board/district/division and the school level were asked the overarching questions:

1. What kind of information is currently provided, is not provided but is needed, or should be provided on a structured formal basis in three areas?
 - career information (pathways and education/training required)
 - PSE (programs available and entry requirements for universities, colleges, apprenticeships and private post-secondary programs)
 - student financial aid (loans and bursaries for entry to PSE and for completion of PSE)
2. How well is the information reaching, and how well is it understood and used by teachers and administrators, guidance staff, students and parents?

Overall Response Summary

Respondents were asked to answer the first question above (in the telephone interview or in writing) by putting an “x” under one of three columns (currently provided, is not provided but is needed, or should be provided on a structured formal basis). This was to be done for each *type of information* (e.g., Career information/Pathways for Careers).

Overall, 94 per cent of the respondents indicated that all categories of information are currently available to teachers and administrators, guidance staff, students and parents. However:

- 25 per cent said that improvement is needed in providing *career information* to all target audiences.

- 19 per cent said improvement is needed in providing *information on PSE programs, pre-requisites, etc.*
- 31 per cent said improvement is needed in providing *information on student financial assistance.*

Perhaps 20 per cent or more of the respondents were unsure how well any of the three main categories of information (career information, PSE and student financial aid, including bursaries, student loans, scholarships and the Millennium Scholarship Excellence Awards) actually reaches parents, and if it is understood and used.

Table 1 contains a summary of the responses to the “scaled” items in the questionnaire.

For the “scaled” items, respondents were asked to indicate how well the different types of information are reaching and are *understood* and *used* by the four target audiences of teachers and administrators, guidance staff, students and parents. A four-point scale was used for this purpose. The scale points are:

Very well (v)	Well (w)
Not so well (nsw)	Not very well at all (nvw)

Under *Types of information*, several listings included in the table shown to respondents are not included in Table 1. In Manitoba, the universities and community colleges provide the lion’s share of post-secondary education. Respondents often did not provide ratings “for other institutions.” That category is not, therefore, included in Table 1. None of the respondents in the study came from post-secondary institutions. Financial aid for students already in PSE is largely arranged through the student financial services of the various PSE institutions. Respondents in this study felt they were not able to address the issue of financial aid for *completion of PSE*. This type of information (under bursaries, student loans and scholarships) is therefore not included in Table 1. It is interesting that a small percentage of Manitoba respondents said they would like to have this information and be able to discuss it with students before they choose a PSE option.

The scale values (v, w, nsw, and nvw) shown in the table are the “most commonly occurring values” assigned by the respondents.

TABLE 1
Summary of Responses to Scaled Items

Type of Information		Audience							
		Teachers/ Administrators		Guidance Staff		Students		Parents	
		Reach	Under- stood Used	Reach	Under- stood Used	Reach	Under- stood Used	Reach	Under- stood Used
Career Information	Pathways for Careers	w	w	w	w	w	w	nsw	nsw
	Education/Training required for careers	w	w	w	w	w	w	nsw	nsw
Post-Secondary Education (PSE)	Universities	w	v	v	v	w	w	w	nsw
	Colleges	w	w	v	v	w	w	nsw	nsw
	Apprenticeship	nsw	nsw	w	w	w	w	nsw	nsw
Student Financial Aid	Bursaries	w	w	w	w	w	w	nsw	nsw
	Student loans	w	w	w	w	w	w	nvw	nvw
	Scholarships	w	w	w	w	w	w	nsw	nsw
	Millennium Scholarship	w	nsw	w	w	w	w	nvw	nvw

About Providing Career Information

Overall

- A majority of the respondents were sure that career information reaches teachers/administrators, guidance staff and students. Most agreed that teachers/administrators, guidance staff and the students know how to use that information.
- Parents, in the view of provincial, division and school staff, typically do not get career information they can relate to their children’s futures; nor do they know how to make good use of it. Parents are dependent on their children to bring home the information.

Specific Comments

- In Manitoba, the most pressing problem for the delivery and use of career information is that not every school has staff dedicated to the guidance function. Some high schools do not even have part-time guidance staff. Only the larger high schools have dedicated guidance staff and maybe a head of guidance. Teachers may be assigned to provide guidance services. Where no one is assigned to the function, it is probably the case that at least a portion of the career information sent to schools never finds its way to students.
- Fortunately, counsellor interns are employed, under the supervision of guidance counsellors, in a number of schools, and they do a good job of helping students wade through and make good use of career

information. The interns help guidance counsellors provide students with labour market information and student summer employment information, access to *Choices* and *Career Explorer* (Bridges) and to speakers brought to the school. The use of the interns is likely making one of the greatest contributions to an improved career-development program in Manitoba schools.

- Some high schools also have staff who specialize in one type of information delivery or another—careers, post-secondary options, financing of PSE.
- First Nations schools employ a home-school counsellor who also helps youth with career exploration, planning and decision making.
- Manitoba has counsellor-training programs. Some respondents note that the skills of guidance staff delivering career-development programs vary.
- The absence of full-time guidance staff is often not as much of a detriment in small rural high schools as in larger urban ones. In many rural schools, a classroom teacher may give up to 50 per cent of their time to the guidance function. Because the number of graduates each year may average only 25 or so from a school, the guidance counsellor (teacher assigned part-time) often has a lot of personal contact with the graduating students. Communities are small, and the plans and activities of the students become well known. Much of the career information reaching students comes through personal contact with part-time guidance staff.
- The perception in Manitoba is that efforts to provide career, PSE and student financial aid information are fragmented. There is a real need to provide a better blend of PSE and more general career and labour market information. Consequently, Manitoba has set up a cross-departmental committee at the provincial level to look at bringing together all the available information on careers, PSE and student financial aid into some form of common product.

The committee is currently sponsoring the development of a youth portal on the web that will include these common products.

- Two initiatives influencing career development activities in Manitoba are the Manitoba School Improvement Project and the portfolio development project. For the latter, the aim is to encourage students to complete portfolios before high school graduation. Portfolio development helps students connect career exploration with information gathering around PSE, all linked to student achievements. The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce is participating in this project.
- Another important career initiative is *CareerTrek*. This is targeted to at-risk youth in city centres. Four Winnipeg school divisions are currently involved in the initiative.
- A job shadowing program is in place in most schools through which students learn to write career resumes. This is normally delivered through the English department in schools.
- The provincial department, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, provides significant help in providing career information to school staff and students.
- A Manitoba version of *Career Explorer* (Bridges) is made available under license to every school in the province (both Internet and CD-ROM formats).
- *Manitoba Prospects* is distributed free of charge to schools, in large enough quantities to ensure that every student can get a copy.
- *Take Our Kids to Work* day brings students into parents' workplaces so they can make the connection between work and secondary programs, PSE choices and career options for students.
- Schools can obtain a free membership to Manitoba WorkInfoNet.

- *Career symposiums* (for Grades 11 and 12) are held in various regions of the province each year. These symposiums involve teachers and guidance counsellors, parents and their kids, PSE programs and businesses. Each is a three-day event.
- Several counsellor respondents observed that they do not hand out information to students unless specifically asked to do so. This may be one reason some of the information provided to schools just “sits on a shelf.”

About Providing PSE Information

Overall

- Almost all of respondents felt that PSE information is widely available to all target audiences. And they believe teachers and guidance counsellors generally know how to help students use the information. The exception is information on apprenticeships, which does not seem to reach teachers and administrators very well.
- A majority of respondents were unsure if most types of PSE information reaches parents, much less is understood and used by them. They felt parents have better access to and knowledge of information on university programs than college and apprenticeship programs.

Specific Comments

- According to respondents, school staff who provide guidance are the single most important conduit for PSE information going to students. Except for information provided through the web, CD-ROMs and print materials are generally sent to the school principal or guidance counsellor for distribution to students. This is especially the case for information from PSE institutions outside the province. Visits to schools by PSE institutions are typically arranged

by guidance staff, who also determine who attends the sessions.

- Students receive great quantities of information on PSE from institutions themselves who “sell their programs” and from the guidance office. The issue is not one of the amount of good information available, as it is of how well students use the information in making choices. Because career development is not mandatory in the province, some students in some schools may do little career exploration and career planning. Their choice of a PSE option may not be rooted in a defined career plan, and a career path may not be evident. How they use the vast quantities of PSE information depends, in large measure, on their *career maturity*.
- There appears to be a disparity in how well information reaches students. Those who are university bound get all of the information they need. Those bound for college or apprenticeships seem to receive less information and less help from school staff in learning to use available information.
- Information on the post-secondary programs at the universities and colleges get top billing in high schools. Administrators and teachers, as well as many guidance staff, provide much less information on apprenticeships, despite the Apprenticeship Branch’s active efforts to reach students and their parents.
- While information on PSE programs and their requirements for entry is abundant, less information is available to students that connects PSE to occupations and career paths. According to respondents, Manitoba needs to do a better job of articulating what PSE is for, what careers PSE programs feed into, and employment prospects within career fields.
- *Career Explorer* is not only a key means of distributing general career information to school staff, students and their parents, but it is also a major source of information on post-secondary education options,

programs, institutions and financing. *Career Explorer* is provided on CD-ROM to over 300 schools, youth-serving agencies, some First Nations schools and all employment centres in the province.

- *Career Explorer* consists of a student site and a professional site. The student site has six main components:
 - a database of careers with testimonials by people in different career fields
 - links to a Manitoba site operated by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Manitoba Education and Youth
 - information on where to study to meet requirements for different careers
 - career assessment tools
 - links to student financial assistance information for PSE
 - links to *School Finder*, which has a listing of all levels and types of PSE in Canada
- Besides *Career Explorer*, Choices is the second most highly used career and PSE information product in the province. The most recent version contains Internet hotlinks to specific PSE institutions and programs for occupations selected by the student.
- Clearly, the bulk of PSE information available to school staff, students and parents is to be found on the Internet. Yet teachers and counsellors find they have too little time to help students find their way through the abundance of information on the web. According to respondents, some school staff lack the Internet skills and access to really help students. Another problem is the lack of Internet connectivity for schools in Manitoba's North.
- Universities and colleges provide orientation sessions each fall to teachers and counsellors to help them sort through and properly use PSE information. Each institution offers sessions over a three-day period, so school staff can take part in

all of them. Universities and colleges in the province also offer to visit most high schools during the year. The Apprenticeship Branch often participates in these school visits. However, in the end, it is up to the school to accept these visit offers, and school staff also select students to attend the presentations.

- Most PSE information comes from the PSE institutions themselves. They all have their own websites. The PSE institution sites are also accessible through an omnibus provincial site (Manitoba WorkInfoNet, a provincial counterpart of the national WorkInfoNet). Guidance counsellors make good use of these sites in working with their students.
- Guidance counsellors and teachers make good use of information on PSE produced nationally by HRDC.
- No one is very certain about what PSE information reaches parents. Most parents seem to get this information from their children. However, some parents have done their own research on PSE options, programs, etc., so that their children can make informed choices.

About Providing Student Financial Aid Information

Overall

- A majority of respondents felt they could not address the issue of information on student loans, bursaries and scholarships for students to complete PSE. This was because the current study involved staff largely within provincial departments of education, school divisions and high schools. The study did not sample those specifically responsible for post-secondary institutions. Financial aid information on scholarships, bursaries and loans for completing PSE is typically available from the financial or student services offices in the different PSE institutions. The current study did not collect data from people in those offices.

- All respondents felt that information on bursaries, student loans and scholarships for entry into PSE is currently provided and reaches both teachers and administrators. They also felt administrators and teachers generally understand and use the information. Guidance staff are perceived as having a better understanding of this type of information than administrators/teachers. They also make better use of it in helping students.
- Parents are often seen as getting this information from their children. However, late in the spring each year, parents do approach schools for information on student loans in particular.
- Students complain that many bursaries are small, restrict eligibility and require a lot of work to apply. The demand for bursary information is not strong, and as a result, teachers and guidance staff pay relatively little attention to getting bursary information out to students and their parents.
- Respondents said that scholarships are not well understood by students and their parents. Many students feel they cannot meet the prerequisites for most scholarships (although this is generally not true).
- The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation Excellence Awards are not well known to teachers, students or parents. They are seen as belonging to the elite. Students report that some questions on the applications are difficult to answer. Several teachers said their students were not selected for an award because they did not qualify for a student loan. If there is a connection between the Excellence Awards and student loans, it is not well known or understood.

Specific Comments

- Most student financial aid information provided comes as pamphlets. However, students and their parents seem to get more of this kind of information for themselves from the Internet.
- Student loans are the form of assistance best known to students and their parents. However, many teachers complain this information arrives too late in the school year to be used in planning with students. They end up just handing out information packages to students rather than working with them. Some high schools hold formal sessions during the school year on student loans.
- Students access information on financial assistance in Grades 11 and 12, when most career planning takes place. Teachers and counsellors will typically try to find information for students when they or their parents ask. Few ask about bursaries. It seems that teachers, students and their parents have only a slight grasp of what bursaries are all about. This may be because there are so many small bursaries and grants with specific provisions. Bursary and grant applications are also overly complicated. Students and their parents most frequently do not follow through in applying for bursaries and grants.
- In general, guidance counsellors say that student financial aid information is hard to work with. There are all kinds of rules, and it is very difficult to get answers to many simple questions such as, "Do I qualify?"
- Some guidance counsellors feel the Manitoba government has not done a good job of packaging this information and getting it out to them. Typically, they do not know whom to contact to get answers to students' questions.

Section 3: Forms of Information Provided on Post-secondary Education and Student Financial Aid

Respondents were asked about:

- the forms (formats) in which PSE and student financial aid information are typically provided
- forms (formats) considered most effective and any suggestions for improvement
- ways in which provided information is supported (specific instructions, policies, guidelines)
- types of follow-up done, if any, to find out if and how information is used
- any targeting by user group of information provided

Forms (Formats) for Providing PSE and Student Financial Aid Information

Current Situation

- For post-secondary education information:
 - Currently, the most used format for presentation includes pamphlets and career fairs.
 - The second format typically used consists of student visits to PSE institutions and PSE staff visits to schools.
- For student financial aid information:
 - The most used form of student financial aid information is on the Internet.
 - The second form typically used is pamphlets, followed by career fairs.

Most Effective Forms of Providing Information

- Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated the most effective means of providing both PSE and student financial aid information was personal contact with someone who has the information. The contact may be with an informed school guidance counsellor, guidance intern or teacher. It may occur when students visit PSE institutions, or when representatives of the institutions give presentations at the school.
- Visits to institutions are undertaken each year, with students from a single school possibly visiting several institutions, both in the local community and at a distance. Many schools in Manitoba send their students to universities and colleges outside their local area and even to other provinces. These visits usually take place in October and April of the school year.
- Respondents felt that school visits by PSE representatives were also very effective in providing PSE and student financial aid information. Some felt that presentations from PSE representatives were more effective than having students visit the institutions, because many students seem to treat the visits to institutions as a “sight-seeing” trip.
- There is a growing use of websites to disseminate PSE and financial aid information. All PSE institutions have their own websites. There are provincial and national sites that feature information on university and college programs. Accessing the information on the web is appealing to students and their parents. They can get at the information they need without waiting to see a counsellor or hear back from a PSE institution. The web is not seen as a replacement for student visits to institutions or PSE staff visits to high schools.

- Some respondents considered career fairs to be one of the least effective means of providing information on PSE opportunities and financial aid arrangements to some students. Despite teachers' and counsellors' efforts to make career fairs more useful, some students see them simply as a "day off."
- Teachers and guidance staff feel that students really need much more "one-on-one" help than they typically get. Deciding among PSE options is a demanding task. Most students do not do all that well at it when working without help. While some students can get time with a guidance counsellor, not all can. The use of interns is helping both full- and part-time guidance counsellors free up more time to help students individually.
- The new portfolio-development process is driving schools to find better ways of helping students track down the information they need to complete their portfolios, which includes a career plan. Career Explorer would be more helpful in this process if it included a "scholarship guide."
- Direct funding is not provided to high schools to develop mechanisms for providing information (such as pamphlets and websites). Funding for this activity comes from general grants to schools.
- The province supports the provision of student financial aid information through the Student Aid Branch within Manitoba Advanced Education and Training. The branch develops criteria, programs and promotional materials on student financial aid.
- Most PSE and student financial aid information materials (such as pamphlets) are given to teachers and guidance counsellors without any instructions on how to use them. On the other hand, websites focused on PSE and student financial assistance may contain helpful directions, such as tips on how to use the site, what to look for and what to do with the information.
- Formal procedures for following up on how well PSE and student financial aid information is provided do not exist. That is why it is difficult to say for sure whether certain types of information have been disseminated, received and used by the targeted audiences (teachers and guidance counsellors, students and parents). Occasionally, a school division will hold focus groups with students to inquire about their use of certain materials. Books and booklets distributed by the PSE institutions frequently contain a comments or feedback sheet. All the websites have a section soliciting comments and suggestions. It is not known if many people provide comments, and if so, how the comments are used to structure future information.

Support for Providing PSE and Financial Aid Information

- *Guidelines for Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling in Manitoba*, developed by a committee of counsellors and educators, has been distributed. Even though providing PSE information to students is one of the guidance tasks recommended, the report does not give a detailed description of what information to provide and does not specifically include student financial aid information. It says nothing about the qualifications of those delivering guidance in schools.
- A longer term vision and policy for providing PSE information in Manitoba is contained in the *Manitoba Training Strategy* and the *K to Senior 4 Agenda*.

Targeting of Information

- In Manitoba, some PSE and student financial aid information is targeted specifically to youth, Aboriginal and francophone Manitobans. Some career fairs are held specifically for First Nations students. Some bursaries, grants and awards for attending PSE are directed to First Nations students. Some band schools have specific programs for First Nations youth that include Manitoba First Nations Educational Resource Centres (MFNERC).
- Manitoba has four programs directed to youth and Aboriginal people:
 - Partners for Careers (youth)
 - network of Adult Learning Centres (adults)
 - Aboriginal Role Models
 - High-Demand Occupations for Aboriginal People
- A separate Francophone school division spans the entire province. In addition, the provincial department has a division (Bureau de l'Éducation française) and an assistant deputy minister responsible for Francophone education.

Section 4: About Consultative Mechanisms

Respondents were asked:

Does the province or school division have a formal consultative mechanism for getting the views of various stakeholders on the provision of PSE and student financial aid information? Are the PSE institutions involved?

Four main mechanisms are used to bring education and labour market stakeholders together:

- The two ministers involved (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth and Minister of Advanced Education and Training) have held summit meetings with a variety of stakeholders.
- The province has an Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board and Provincial Trade Advisory Committees with government, employer and employee representation.
- All key stakeholders are represented on the Manitoba WorkInfoNet board.
- Aboriginal representatives consult with government on the Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Career Awareness Committee (MAYCAC).

Section 5: Sufficiency in Providing Information

Two main types of issues were addressed in this portion of the interviews:

1. the need for promotional materials to interest target audiences in looking for and using PSE and student aid information
2. the adequacy of the current provision of information to students and their parents

Need for Promotional Materials

- Respondents were not aware of any specific, current strategy to use promotional materials to market PSE and student financial aid information products.

Adequacy of Current Information Provision

- Three questions were asked about the adequacy of information provision, seeking an opinion by choosing one point on a five-point scale. The three questions follow, along with the most common rating on a scale of: very well informed, well informed, unsure, not well informed, very poorly informed.
 1. Are students sufficiently well informed about PSE opportunities? — Most common response was *well informed*.
 2. Are students sufficiently well informed about student financial assistance? — Most common response was *well informed*.
 3. Are students sufficiently well informed about careers? — Most common response was *unsure*.
- One question was asked about the possibility that students choose not to go on to PSE because they cannot afford it. The most common response to this issue (on a scale of: very frequently, frequently, unsure, not frequently, not very frequently) was *frequently*. Some respondents added other, perhaps more influential, factors causing students not to go on. They are:
 - Students are tired of school and want a break.
 - Students have not really decided what to do in life.
- Finally, respondents were asked to list the PSE issues about which students and their parents:
 - a) lacked information -- responses were:
 - breadth of career alternatives
 - breadth of PSE and training options
 - current labour market context, its demands and newer occupational structures
 - strategies for getting PSE financing
 - relevance of school subjects to careers
 - how to break generational patterns of unemployment
 - range of financial help available for PSE
 - tuition costs at most PSE institutions
 - restrictions on student loan amounts because of parental income
 - realistic expectations
 - high school courses needed for admission to PSE
 - trades and apprenticeships
 - on-the-job training provided by employers
 - financial planning for PSE
 - debt management
 - outcomes of PSE
 - study skills needed to succeed in PSE
 - transferable skills
 - b) were best informed -- responses were:
 - traditional university programs
 - need for technological literacy
 - grants, awards, scholarships and bursaries for Aboriginals
 - National Aboriginal Achievement Awards
 - Grade 12 not enough to succeed in work life
 - occupations in demand
 - student loans available
 - other ways to get money for PSE

FINDINGS FROM STUDENTS AND PARENTS - FOCUS GROUPS

We asked the following types of questions.

Student and parent focus-group questions varied slightly. However, the same issues were explored, in the same sequence, for both types of groups. Participants were asked for their responses to some probing questions in four areas:

- career exploration and decision making
- sources and forms of information (on careers, post-secondary education and student financial aid)
- when information is received and should be received
- expectations for the future and suggestions for improvement

Section 1: Career Exploration and Decision Making

The key issues examined in this part of the focus group are:

- the extent to which students get to explore their strengths and weaknesses as well as their options
- the extent to which students get the opportunity to learn about careers and how to prepare for them
- the role of schools (school guidance program, teachers, guidance counsellors) and parents in helping with career exploration and decision making
- where students and parents get help, or should get help, with career exploration and decision making

The School Guidance Program and Staff

- Students and parents both had difficulty describing the guidance program at their schools. They did not feel it was well planned or equipped with adequate resources to make it all work. They were aware of career symposiums and the occasional speaker from industry or the university in the school. Parents said they knew someone in the school was supposed to provide career guidance, but did not know who it was or what they were supposed to provide. Students said they had little contact with guidance staff regarding the choice of a career and planning for post-secondary education.
- Students commented that they became more aware of “what they are good at” through regular classroom courses and conversations with their teachers (both positive and negative comments from teachers) than through specific career activities. A few students had taken a career education program but still learned more about themselves (interests and abilities) from regular school courses.
- Students who are interested in music, drama, the arts or academic areas such as mathematics felt their exposure to these classroom subjects helps them “find themselves” and begin to imagine a career in one of these fields. Students whose interests are in management, technology or computers felt they get less exposure since these subjects are not taught in schools to the same degree as the others. They also felt there are few teachers in the school with much experience in these areas. Many students said they were considering teaching as a career because that is what they see most of during their school years.

- Students are invited to participate in a career symposium and the occasional career event such as a presentation by someone from outside of the school. These are events separated from the daily school schedule and the curriculum. Students and their parents felt that career exploration should be “a regular part of the classroom experience” and be a greater part of many more subjects in the curriculum.
- Many students had used the *Career Explorer* program either on CD-ROM or through the Internet at school. They felt the program helped them understand what they like and could do in the future. However, they said the explanations of various occupations and jobs were very general, not specific enough to help them make any kind of decision. For example, when interested in a particular occupation, students wanted to know how long they would need to spend in university or college. They could not find this information in *Career Explorer*.
- Students said they found the information presented in university and college *calendars* somewhat overwhelming and confusing. The school gives students access to calendars but provides little individual help as follow-up. Again, students complained that their use of the calendar information was hit and miss, not well integrated into other career-related activities.
- Both students and parents said there is a clear bias in schools toward attending university after high school. Students said they felt this expectation as early as Grade 9. Students are told to choose high school subjects that will give them prerequisites for university programs. Students more interested in trades or technology said they got little help in Grade 9 and even later in choosing appropriate courses for trades and technology areas.
- Most parents said they urge their children to select high school courses that will give them the greatest flexibility later on for PSE. Parents felt the school does not do

a good enough job in Grade 9 of providing early career guidance so their children can choose the right high school courses. Parents felt a formal guidance program is needed in schools starting in Grade 9. Much more information and help in exploring careers should be provided at that time. Students need to set up a *career tree* showing them what to take in high school and how it relates to PSE and specific career fields. At the moment, there is almost no link between PSE requirements for specific career fields and students’ choices of high school subjects in Grade 9.

- When asked about obstacles to realizing their career dreams, students said a lack of money would likely be the greatest barrier. They also said they were generally uncertain of what they really wanted to do, and needed further study to do. They felt that some good teachers had helped them realize they will somehow be able to overcome most obstacles. They were also encouraged to hear from a few teachers that people can change their minds about careers even while in university. Parents felt the chief obstacle to their children moving forward in a career was making a career decision. This suggests the importance of expanding career exploration and decision-making programs in high schools.

Role of the School

- Parents and students feel schools need to communicate with them better about what it can provide in the way of help in planning for a career and PSE. Schools need to do a better job of telling parents and students about what is in the guidance program. Guidance counsellors should be “marketing” their help to students, not just waiting for students to come to them with questions (which many just do not do). They want schools to better inform students of the variety of occupations and career options available to them.
- Schools should be providing more career education courses in each grade, beginning in Grade 9.

- According to students and parents, it is clearly the role of the school to advise students in Grade 9 on what courses to take in high school so they are well prepared for entry to various career fields. This has to be done in a very tightly managed process, as students are not all that concerned in Grade 9 about what high school courses they should take. They often are not well informed about the impacts of their choices. The role of the school is to get that information and tell students.
- The provision of accurate career and occupational information is seen as a key role of the school. Some parents do research on careers and the labour market to help advise their children. But parents feel they should not be the primary source of information students should have to make informed career choices. Parents said the school should take greater responsibility for getting some of the good information on careers available from the Manitoba government and HRDC and for helping students use it to make their high school course selections and plan for post-secondary education.
- The school needs to communicate better with parents. Students turn to their family and friends first for advice on what to take, then where to go after high school and what jobs to consider. Guidance staff at the school should have this kind of information and should be very active in providing it to students and parents.
- Parents feel they have a role to follow up with their children. They have to encourage their children to make a firm career choice, select the kind of post-secondary education they need and then apply. Some parents also see it as their role to suggest good sources of career and labour market information outside of the school, for example, the labour market analysis group at the local HRDC office.
- Parents also feel they should encourage their children to continue on with what they are good at, and even continue when they are not so good at something. They should help boost their children's self-esteem and self-confidence and help them know their own limitations (not all students should go on to university).

Where Students and Parents Go for Help

Role of Parents

- Students suggested that they depend on parents and friends first, and teachers second, to help them explore careers and make decisions about their futures. They would like to have more help from guidance counsellors, but they normally do not get to see counsellors individually about career planning.
- Parents said they are not the ones their children really want to hear from about careers and going on to PSE. As parents, they depend on the school guidance program to help their children plan their careers and make decisions about PSE. However, they felt they have too little contact and time with guidance counsellors ("so many limitations here, as we cannot sit down and meet with them without watching the clock").
- Parents keep themselves informed largely by reading newspapers and looking up various websites (for example, the HRDC website is considered to be excellent for this).

Section 2:

Sources and Forms of Information

Students and parents were asked about the *types of information* they use to understand careers and work, *where they get the information now* and their *preferred sources* of information.

- Students said that the volume of information on careers and PSE is often overwhelming. The main problem is in sorting through and making sense of the information. Better search mechanisms are needed for computer-delivered information. Students also suggest they need to have a better idea of how to use the information for good career planning. They said they get too little help in career planning. Only some of the students had taken a career education course before the end of their Grade 12 year.
- Most students said they would like to have the option of taking more courses on careers during high school.
- Students said they get the university and college calendars from the school to find information on post-secondary programs. In their view, the calendars are thick and difficult to use. Also, they typically do not see the connection of programs to specific careers and occupations.
- To get information on student financial aid (scholarships, bursaries and student loans), students and parents look to the school. Students complained that they receive too little information on *scholarships and bursaries*. Few ever learn much about bursaries. Students tend to use the direct approach of contacting a university or college and asking about financial assistance. They find the information they get in this way inadequate, as they still need help to apply for anything.
- For parents and students, websites are a primary source of information on careers, work and PSE financial aid. Parents also use the newspaper as a major source of information.
- Students prefer to talk to a “live person” who is in an occupation. They sometimes get this opportunity at the career symposium. Some students make the connection with someone through their family or friends.
- Students like the presentations made at the school by speakers from various professions and industries. They would like to have more of these during school hours.
- Parents praised school work experience programs. They felt students could get a good exposure to careers in this way. Students said they preferred part-time work to give them exposure to various types of jobs.

Section 3: When Information is Received and Should be Received

Parents and students were asked about when *career and PSE information is received* and when they feel *it should be received*.

- In Manitoba, students are introduced to careers as early as Grade 3 with the *Real Game* series. However, the first real use of career and PSE information comes in Grade 9 when they are expected to make high school course choices. It is also in Grade 9 that they attend the career symposium and participate in the *Take Our Kids to Work* program.
- Some parents feel their children should participate in the career symposium as early as Grade 7. However, students feel the pressure to make what they see as “irreversible choices” in Grade 9 is too much for them. Students suggest that by Grade 10 they are more ready to make these choices and begin to explore careers.

Section 4: Expectations for the Future and Suggestions for Improvement

- Most parents expect their children will go on to some type of PSE. Students and their parents expressed some concern about students’ ability to finance post-secondary education. Students felt they will somehow get the money they need for PSE. Few felt they could get a scholarship, which seemed unattainable to them (and most are university-bound). Most parents said the majority of the finances will come from them and from children’s part-time employment.
- In order of where the money will come from, students said they expect to finance PSE from:
 - their parents’ savings
 - student loans
 - part-time work
- For Aboriginal students, band sponsorships appear to be the primary source of PSE financing.
- Students said they learn about student financial aid for PSE largely through “word of mouth.” They said they would like to have much more information on grants and bursaries, but these seem to have many restrictions on who can get them.

THEMES AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR MANITOBA

Theme 1 – Information on careers, post-secondary programs and prerequisites, and student financial aid are provided in Manitoba high schools to teachers and administrators, guidance counsellors and students. Both the quantity and quality of the information is generally considered adequate. However, improvement is needed in how information is distributed and used by the different target audiences. Parents receive little of the information directly.

- While improvement is needed in how all types of information are provided to teachers and administrators, guidance counsellors and students, the weakest link in Manitoba is in the provision of information on student financial assistance (scholarships, bursaries, grants, awards and loans). A majority of students and their parents said finances are expected to be a significant obstacle to going on to PSE. It is critical that steps be taken to develop more comprehensive and easier-to-use information on the various forms of financial aid.
- The provision of career, PSE and student financial aid information in Manitoba is fragmented. Students do not easily connect career exploration with decisions about attending post-secondary schools. And the search for financial assistance for PSE comes as almost an afterthought—usually in the last quarter of the Grade 12 year.
- A positive step forward in Manitoba is the creation of a provincial cross-departmental committee to look at bringing together the many types of information.
- Manitoba has set up a youth portal on the Internet to serve as a conduit for all types of information of interest to youth, including information needed for career planning. The “missing link” in this effort is some integrating theme or process youth can apply in working through the large volume of available information.
- The adoption in Manitoba of portfolio development for senior years, before high school graduation, may provide that integrating theme needed to make initiatives such as the youth portal truly effective.
- Too much career and PSE information sits on a shelf in schools. Too often the information is handed out only when students ask for it.
- A good practice started in Manitoba is the conduct each year of a series of career symposia for Grades 9 to 12, involving teachers and guidance counsellors, parents, students, PSE institutions and businesses. These are three-day events. More of the information on the shelves should find its way to these symposia, which are well received by students and parents alike.
- Parents are typically “left out of the loop.” They hear about careers, PSE programs and sources of student financial aid for PSE from their own children, not from schools. Parents are reported to be the primary influence on their children when it comes to careers and PSE. Parents believe that guidance to students would be more effective if the school communicated better with them, for example, by letting them know school staff’s responsibilities for helping students with career planning.

Theme 2 – Teachers and guidance staff play a key role in Manitoba in distributing and effectively using career, PSE and student financial aid information. Teachers are not always well equipped to help students with their career and post-secondary education planning. There are often too few staff assigned to the guidance function in Manitoba high schools to give adequate attention to post-secondary education and career planning.

- Not every high school in Manitoba has someone assigned to the guidance function. Where no one is assigned, students do not get all of the career and PSE information that should be available to them.
- A good practice adopted in Manitoba is the use of counsellor interns. Having interns in the school is more affordable than trying to double the number of counsellors. Interns are reported to be very effective in helping students with career planning activities and deciding on PSE options. The downside here is that Manitoba does not have a counsellor-training program, nor does it have a paraprofessional-training program for interns.
- Finding and understanding how to best use information on careers, PSE and student financial aid is a complex task. It is difficult for one professional, whether a teacher or guidance counsellor, to keep abreast of all types of information and help students use it. Some schools have addressed this issue by having staff who specialize in one type of information or another (e.g., student loans and scholarships).
- It is also important to help students and their parents understand the nature of careers, what forms of PSE are required for different careers and how to finance PSE using the community's resources. First Nations schools are helping to bring the total community perspective into the process by using home-school counsellors to help students with their career and PSE planning.

Theme 3 – Students receive their information on PSE institutions, programs and the admission requirements most frequently from (in order of frequency):

- university/college calendars, pamphlets and career fairs
- visits to schools by staff from PSE institutions
- visits to PSE institutions by students
- Most university and college calendars are available on the institutions' websites. Students prefer to access this information using the Internet. They find printed calendars thick and overwhelming. Information on websites might be better used if it were easier to search the calendars online. Web-based calendars with their own search engines are the requirement of the future.
- Students receive a lot of information on university programs in high school, particularly during Grade 12. Many students and their parents feel there is a lack of balance in the information provided. They would like to see more information on, and encouragement to consider, careers in the trades and technology at a community college or in an apprenticeship program.
- Given the importance of university and college calendars in informing students about their PSE options, these sources of information should do a better job of connecting their programs to relevant careers. Students find calendar information most useful in planning and decision making when the calendars better explain the education and training requirements of the various occupations and how specific university/college programs help students meet those requirements.
- Manitoba has opted to purchase *Career Explorer* (Bridges) licenses for all schools in the province. This web-based and CD-ROM product consists of both a professional site and a student site. The student site is very comprehensive, having six main components that include everything

from a database of career descriptions to information on PSE required for various occupations. Students say the program helps them “understand what they like and could do in the future.” The Manitoba approach seems practical and is paying off. It is definitely a good practice to select a comprehensive career-development program and obtain licenses for all schools in a province.

Theme 4 – Information on student financial aid for colleges and universities (bursaries, student loans, scholarships, and the Millennium Scholarship Excellence Awards) is provided to students chiefly through pamphlets. Students and their parents frequently search the Internet for this information.

- Students say that a lack of money is one of the chief reasons they may not go on to PSE. Considerable financial aid goes untapped each year, especially bursaries. Most bursary and student loan application forms are complex, and the rules governing them are complicated. Yet Manitoba schools do not hold information sessions on this subject for either students or parents. Teachers, administrators and guidance counsellors have difficulty keeping up with this information and are not readily available to give information sessions.
- Students and their parents say they really need to “talk to a live person” about student financial aid. A good practice may be half-day workshops on scholarships, loans and bursaries for students, *during school hours*. These sessions could be given by guidance staff who specialize in this type of information. Parents could benefit from having schools arrange, early in the school year, for more *information nights* on student financial assistance, again given by guidance staff who specialize in student financial assistance for PSE.

Theme 5 – Manitoba needs to have a mandated program of career development that spans Grades 7 to 12 and is supported by a formal provincial framework (legislation, policies or guidelines) and appropriate funding formulas.

- Career development is not a mandatory part of the curriculum. Provincial, school division and school staff in Manitoba say it is important to find a way of putting mandated curriculum or student services in place. At the moment, the province has distributed a recommendation on guidance. It has also recognized the importance of student transitions in its *Manitoba Training Strategy, Kindergarten to Senior 4 Education Agenda for Student Success*, and its school planning process. The province has also adopted the *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* to guide the integration of subject matter content with career development. This is a good start.
- Neither the province nor the school division guides schools on *what* they provide as a part of the guidance function. The funding for career development is also indirect. All funding is *block funded* to schools. Separate or additional funds are not provided for the career-development program. This area should be examined carefully.
- Students, parents, teachers and guidance counsellors agree it would be a good practice to have a *formal* career-development program, whether mandated or not, that begins at least in Grade 9 and extends to Grade 12. Students currently select their high school courses in Grades 9 and 10, sometimes making “career-limiting” choices. Better career planning at the beginning of high school that builds incrementally over four years is a good practice. Educators, students and parents would like to see this happen.