

CAREER COUNSELING

Career counseling in schools typically involves three things: interest, skills, and opportunities, with the strongest emphasis on interest.

SOI adds one more thing to the discussion: intellectual abilities.

This is our approach. We analyzed a large number of occupations in terms of the SOI abilities needed to do them. We obtained descriptions from government publications and then transcribed the tasks that they described into abilities defined by the Structure of Intellect. This produced a set of occupation profiles depicting the job requirements in Structure of Intellect terms.

Students who have taken the SOI test have an opportunity to compare their profiles of abilities with the occupational profiles that have been derived from the Structure of Intellect analysis. The comparison indicates how well their current profile of abilities fits the profiles of their interests.

This is quite different from a placement service or traditional career counseling. Instead of immediate job fulfillment, we are looking at future possibilities – career preparation rather than immediate job prospects.

In fact, SOI career counseling is two levels removed job placement. Level one comprises the skills and knowledge required for the occupation. Level two comprises the learning abilities required to obtain those skills and knowledge.

In other words, preparation for acquiring the skills and knowledge should precede the learning required for acquisition of those requirements.

As a consequence of this two-step process, we strongly encourage schools to offer SOI career counseling during the freshman year of high school rather than wait until the traditional time of immediately prior to graduation.

It might seem premature to begin preparation at the freshman year, but when students discover that they need to develop some of their learning abilities in order to successfully pursue their career choices, it is best to have two or three years to accomplish this preparation. If they find out the last semester of their senior year in high school, it will be difficult to acquire the skills they will need.

Many a career path has been derailed by not having sufficient time to prepare for the learning requirements that the candidate faces in the process of acquiring the skills and knowledge required for the occupation of their choice.

A senior leaving high school may have an abiding interest in becoming an architect, but discovers in college that the engineering aspects of the career are too demanding for his Symbolic learning abilities. At that point, it is very difficult to find the time to develop the required abilities.

Unfortunately, it is probably easier to change majors, so the budding architect is likely to go into graphic design – a decision closer to his extant learning abilities than his long-standing career interest.

This type of scenario is often repeated in contexts other than high school to college.

Prisoners who have a two-year release date are prime candidates for SOI career counseling. They have ample time to prepare themselves for the learning demands they are going to encounter when they need to satisfy the conditions of parole.

The Achilles heel of retraining programs is the inability – the lack of requisite learning abilities – of participants to benefit from the training that they are offered. Even if they realize that it is lack of learning abilities that is holding them back, it is practically impossible to prepare for learning and do the learning concurrently.

It seems obvious that the time to prepare for learning is prior to the learning itself, but learning preparation – acquiring the learning abilities – is not traditionally recognized as a separate, definable, and viable process. It is often ignored until learning fails and there is a search for the cause.

In summary, SOI career counseling is an exercise in preventing future disappointments – not foolproof, but a definite positive by any career risk assessment.