YOUR CHILDREN – OUR STUDENTS: CAN SASKATCHEWAN PARENTS AND SCHOOLS CONNECT IN SUPPORT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH?

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Vanessa Nicole Lewis, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, *Your Children – Our Students: Can Saskatchewan Parents and Schools Connect in Support of Career Development of Youth?*, in an oral examination held on November 19, 2013. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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ABSTRACT

Research has identified that parents are a key influence in the career planning process of adolescents. Despite this, limited research exists in regard to how schools and parents/guardians might connect in support of the career development process of youth. The purpose of this research was to explore what Saskatchewan parents/guardians do to support the career development process of their high school aged children, investigate what types of school-based supports parent/guardians deem most helpful in support of their children, and attempt to identify if and how parents/guardians and schools might connect in meaningful ways in support of the students’ career exploration process.

The study targeted parents/guardians of Grade 10, 11, and 12 students within the province of Saskatchewan in the 2012-2013 school year. The initial survey instrument was an online questionnaire involving both quantitative and qualitative components. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted to further explore various aspects stemming from the online results.

Results identified specific school-based career supports deemed helpful, uncovered perceived gaps in career-related supports, identified the value of career conversations and communication, supported the notion of developing a common language for career development, and acknowledged the power of partnerships. Recommendations for both practice and research were presented in an effort to identify meaningful ways in which parents/guardians and schools may connect in order to help students develop the necessary career competencies to make informed decisions while creating and recreating their preferred futures.
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DEDICATION

Working in the area of career development in Saskatchewan for approximately the last 10 years, I have come to embrace a holistic definition of the term "career" as presented later in this study. To me, career involves lifelong learning and constant change and encompasses the various roles one plays and skills one accumulates throughout one’s life. Currently, my career involves a multitude of roles and responsibilities. As well, it consists of my current skill set and lifestyle choices. My life/career has changed over time as I learn from mistakes, experience new opportunities, make decisions, meet new people, and develop new competencies.

This year of change has allowed me to invest a significant amount of time into my studies and into a local volunteer community initiative. I can honestly say I have learned more during this year than I ever anticipated at its onset. This learning journey would not have been possible without the ongoing support of many important people. My life has been made much richer through the strong relationships formed with five remarkable women and the overwhelming support of a multitude of community members within our small rural Saskatchewan community while engaged in our local initiative. Thank you to my husband, Brian, for supporting this Education Leave. I know it has resulted in family and lifestyle changes, and I very much appreciate your willingness to accommodate these adjustments. To my parents (both sides), your encouragement and support during this year and always is valued more than you know. To my boys, Layne and Cole, I hope someday my actions will inspire you to continue to learn as your life/career unfolds. It is our experiences, connections, relationships, and what we learn from them that weave the tapestry of our lives/careers.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................................ ii

DEDICATION ............................................................................................................................... iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................................... iv

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................................... vii

CHAPTER 1 ................................................................................................................................. 1

INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Career Development and the Canadian Scene ................................................................. 1

1.2 Career Development and the Saskatchewan Context ...................................................... 3

1.3 Purpose of the Study ......................................................................................................... 5

1.4 Operational Definitions .................................................................................................... 5

1.5 Limitations of the Study ................................................................................................. 8

CHAPTER 2 ................................................................................................................................ 10

LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................................... 10

2.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 10

2.2 Secondary School Students and Career Planning ........................................................... 10

2.3 Influence of Parents on the Career Exploration Process of Their Children ................. 15

2.4 Career Development Challenges Faced by Canadian Schools ....................................... 21

2.5 How Are Saskatchewan Schools Supporting Career Development? ......................... 23
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1  Are you a male or female parent or guardian of a current Saskatchewan Grade 10, 11, or 12 student(s)? ................................................................. 39
Table 4.2  Which category below includes your age? ........................................ 39
Table 4.3  Indicate all education/training you have attained .............................. 40
Table 4.4  Is your household a single or multiple income household? ................. 40
Table 4.5  What is your annual household income? ........................................... 41
Table 4.6  If employed, what occupational classification best describes your primary field of work? ........................................................... 42
Table 4.7  Do you consider yourself a single parent/guardian?............................ 42
Table 4.8  How many children do you have currently attending Grade 10, 11, or 12 in Saskatchewan? ............................................................ 43
Table 4.9  What grade is your child currently in? .............................................. 43
Table 4.10 What gender is your child? .............................................................. 44
Table 4.11 Parent/Guardian Respondents by School Division ............................ 44
Table 4.12 What do you think your child will most likely be doing in the first year after leaving high school? ................................................................. 45
Table 4.13 In thinking about this child, how important is career planning at this stage of your child’s life? .......................................................... 46
Table 4.14 In thinking about this child, how prepared is your child for his or her next career step? .......................................................... 47
Table 4.15 How prepared do you feel you are in your ability to support your child with his or her next career step? ........................................ 48
Table 4.16 From your perspective as a parent/guardian, how important do you perceive such supports in helping your CHILD with career exploration while he/she is in high school? .............................................. 53
Table 4.17 Ranked priorities in helping CHILD with career exploration while in high school .............................................. 54
Table 4.18 From your perspective as a parent/guardian, how important do you perceive such supports in helping YOU support your CHILD with career exploration? ...........................................................................................................56

Table 4.19 Ranked priorities in helping parent/guardian help CHILD with career exploration while in high school........................................................................................................................................57
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 describes the focus of this study by providing background on career development within Canada and Saskatchewan, outlining the nature and purpose of the study, addressing operational definitions and assumptions, and highlighting the limitations and significance of the study.

1.1 Career Development and the Canadian Scene

Internationally, nationally, and provincially, career development has been an area of interest by various stakeholders (Super, 1980; Blustein, Walbridge, Friedlander, & Pallandino, 1991; Hiebert & Bezanson, 2000; McMahon, Patton, & Tatham, 2003; Bezanson & Renald, 2004; Lalande and Magnusson, 2007; Response to the National Career Development Strategy Green Paper: Career Development Association of Australia, 2012). The labour market is changing and becoming increasingly complex. Comprehensive career development programs, if designed properly, can help individuals better prepare for the future. Phil Jarvis (2003), a long-time advocate of career development within Canada, stated:

For too many Canadians the traditional vocational guidance paradigm is not working. It expects youth…to make an informed, long-term career choice before graduating from high school. Yet, when groups of adults are asked if they are now doing what they expected to be doing when they graduated, few raise their hands. (p. 3-8)

Jarvis (2003) went on to suggest the need for a model in which:

The new career management paradigm is not about making the right occupational choice. It’s about equipping people with the competencies (skills, knowledge, and attitudes) to make the myriad choices with which adults are confronted continuously, in all aspects of their lives, lifelong. (p. 4-8)
The Canadian labour market has changed dramatically over the last few years. For most people, gone are the days of one job for a lifetime. “There is agreement that the ‘old way’ of ‘one job for life’ is no longer a reality for most people” (Hiebert & Bezanson, 1995, p. 105). Jarvis (2010) predicted a paradigm shift in which youth will experience multiple jobs in different occupations across varying sectors of the economy as they age. “Projections suggest that new labor market entrants are likely to experience a succession of work roles, with 12 to 25 jobs in up to 5 industry sectors in their working lives. (Alberta Learning, 1999)” (Jarvis & Keeley, 2003, p. 246). As a result, today’s youth require specific competencies, including skills, knowledge, and attitudes, to effectively manage their careers (Jarvis, 2010). Workers of the future require “‘meta-competencies’ such as learning skills, life management skills, and communication skills that are not occupation-specific and are transferable across all facets of life and work” (McMahon, Patton, & Tatham, 2003, p. 3).

For students, the transition from high school to life beyond can be full of uncertainty, excitement, and anxiety (Middleton & Loughead, 1993; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006; Campbell & Unger, 2008; Campbell, 2011; Vignoli, Croity-Belz, Chapeland, de Fillipis, & Garcia, 2005). However, there are many supports that can help students build necessary skills and competencies while in high school in order to cope with anxieties, better manage transitions, and make informed decisions. For instance, people, information, and resources can shape students' career decision making and impact their ability to develop skills and competencies. A Comprehensive Career Needs Survey (CCNS) by Magnusson and Bernes (2002) explored the career planning needs of students in Grades 7 through 12 in southern Alberta. Bloxom (2002) analyzed the grade 12 data
from the CCNS to determine their needs in regard to career development support. A number of needs were identified, including the need for “people resources” in support of career planning (p. 95). Bloxom’s research identified parents as the most significant influencers of the career path of their children. In fact, the study identified parents as the people Grade 12 students are most comfortable approaching for help with career planning. Other studies also recognized parents as key influencers in the career investigations of children (Middleton & Loughead, 1993; Young, 1994; Kracke, 1997; Trusty, Watts, & Erdman 1997; Campbell & Unger, 2008; Keller and Whiston, 2008). Parents have the greatest influence on their children’s career path and are the people youth are most likely to converse with regarding career choices (Canadian Career Information Partnership, 2006). However, despite their influence, and “[w]hile parents are the ones that young people most commonly approach for help with career planning, they (parents) often feel ill-equipped to provide guidance” (Campbell, 2011, p. 265). The transition from high school to life beyond can be full of anxiety for parents as well as young people (Campbell & Ungar, 2008). Furthermore, “[p]arents want to help their children but often feel unable to so…[m]ost have been unable to keep up with the ever-expanding information necessary to make well-informed decisions” (Jeffery, Lehr, Hache, & Campbell, 1992, p. 240).

1.2 Career Development and the Saskatchewan Context

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education’s Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF) outlined four Provincial Priorities including Higher Literacy and Achievement, Equitable Opportunities, Smooth Transitions, and System Accountability and Governance (Pre-K-12, 2008). School divisions in Saskatchewan face the challenge of
addressing the priorities of the CIF in ways that meet local needs. In addition, divisions must be accountable and report annually to the Ministry on progress. In 2007, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education announced a provincial Career Development Action Plan (CDAP) that focused on youth. Minister Deb Higgins acknowledged during the announcement that “…Saskatchewan’s youth can expect to change occupations and career sectors numerous times over their lifetime. Students and their families need to be more informed about what their career paths might involve” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2007). The CDAP highlighted six areas of action including an increase in career development practitioners in schools in all school divisions, a mandatory 30 hours of career guidance for middle level students, development of students’ personal career portfolios, the creation of Career Development action teams in each school division, development of partnerships in support of career development, and the provision of youth and family friendly web resources (Government of Saskatchewan, 2007).

At that time, the Ministry offered career development grants to school divisions willing to engage in short-term career development focused projects with results being shared provincially. In response to the CIF and CDAP, many Saskatchewan school divisions developed career development action plans in order to address Smooth Transitions and the key areas outlined in the CDAP. Although the approach to career development varies from school division to school division, numerous commonalities exist in regard to support offered to high school students based on my experiences.

Although parents are recognized as the key influence in regards to students' career decisions, “counsellors’ and educators’ attempts to enlist parents in positive ways often appear haphazard or incidental, rather than planned and purposeful” (Sinacore, Healy, &
Hasson, 1999, p. 317). Research (Young & Friesen, 1992; Young, 1994; Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, & Witko, 2005) has been conducted to investigate the role parents play in supporting their children with this process, but little has been done to identify ways parents and schools may collaborate to support the career explorations of children/students. Specifically, there is a lack of Saskatchewan-focused research in this area. Being that school divisions must address the priority of Smooth Transitions, of which career development is a part, the time is now for Saskatchewan-based investigations.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore what Saskatchewan parents/guardians are doing to support the career development process of their high school-aged children, investigate what types of school-based supports parents/guardians deem most valuable in support of their children, and attempt to identify if and how parents/guardians and schools might connect in meaningful ways to support the career exploration process of children/students. Guiding questions included:

- What are Saskatchewan parents/guardians currently doing in their role to support the life/career development process of their high school-aged children?
- Do parents/guardians perceive current career development supports offered by schools as helpful to children and/or to themselves?
- Are there any areas where Saskatchewan schools and parents/guardians might partner in support of the career development process of youth?

### 1.4 Operational Definitions

In reviewing the literature, there are differing interpretations of terms such as job, occupation, career, and career development. For instance, in a summary of the Saskatchewan Career Development Services and Supports Survey (Working
Connections: A Pan-Canadian Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development, 2004), a mail-out survey targeting career-development representatives spanning labour, government, business, industry, and community-based organizations, respondents were instructed to formulate a working definition for career development. “Definitions varied along a continuum that started from a more traditional vocational approach…towards a broader approach that also included the development of long-term career management skills that could be applied over a lifetime” (Working Connections: A Pan-Canadian Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development, 2004, p. 36). Furthermore, people may equate the word “career” with paid work and/or with work they deem valuable or prestigious. In studying the terms career and occupation as perceived by adolescents, Pyne and Bernes (2002) stated the meanings young people bestow upon such terms “are potentially limiting factors in their career behaviour and decision making” (p. 2). For instance, “if they think of career as a long-term commitment to a single (usually professional) occupation, they may quickly disengage from any career planning” (p. 2). In my personal experience as a Career Development Consultant, I have heard people say they consider waitressing a “job” but being a dentist a “career” for varying reasons. One of the reasons behind this “need for effective career program development is to determine how participants conceive of core constructs such as career, and to use that information to design more effective engagement strategies (c.f., Magnusson 1992)” (Pyne & Bernes, 2002, p. 2).

The Blueprint for Life/Work Designs is a Canadian framework of the skills and competencies necessary for Canadians to develop throughout their lifetime in order to better manage life/work and make career development intentional (Hache, Redekopp, &
The competencies involve three domains including Personal Management, Learning and Work Exploration, and Life/Work Building, which are the basis for effective career development programs (Jarvis, 2010). Below are the meanings of terms as deemed appropriate for the purposes of this study. They are consistent with the messages in the Canadian version of the Blueprint for Lifework Designs (Hache, Redekopp, & Jarvis, 2000) and as supported by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education in the Career Education (Ministry of Education, 2008) curriculum glossaries.

**Job:** “is a specific set of duties done for a specific employer” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 18). For example, Teacher at Lampman School or Caretaker at North Battleford Comprehensive High School.

**Occupation:** An occupation is “a cluster of jobs with similar tasks and training” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 19). For example, the term teacher can be used as a general occupational classification for similar roles regardless of where or at what level one teaches.

**Career:** A career is “the sum of one’s life experiences. Every person has a career which includes all of the individual’s work, learning, recreational, community, and family roles” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 18).

**Career Development:** According to Hache, Redekopp, & Jarvis (2000), career development is:

about growing through life and work; about learning, experiencing, living, working and changing; about creating and discovering pathways through one’s life and work. When intentional, career development is about actively creating the life one wants to live and the work one wants to do. (Chapter 1, p. 3)

**Secondary School/High School:** The terms secondary school and high school refer to Grade 10, 11, and 12 in the province of Saskatchewan.
**Transition:** In relation to this study, transition is the passage of students from one significant point in the school system to another such as pre-K to K, Elementary to Middle Level, Middle Level to Secondary, and Secondary to Post-secondary and/or Employment. For the purpose of this study, the focus of the transition will be on Secondary Education to Post-secondary Education and/or Employment.

**1.5 Limitations of the Study**

The following limitations should be taken into consideration in relation to this research study:

1. The study indicates perceptions of parents/guardians of Saskatchewan high school students for a specific snapshot in time.

2. The questionnaire for this study was available online and participants were recruited through various methods, including a request to Saskatchewan Directors of Education to circulate the link to the appropriate population as well as additional recruitment methods involving social media. The low response rate could be interpreted in various ways, such as the link did not reach the intended audience as anticipated, the topic was not important to the population, the population was not inclined to respond to online surveys, etc.

3. As a group, the survey respondents were fairly heterogeneous in that the majority of participants were females from two-parent/guardian multi-income families with high levels of annual household income. As a result, data cannot be generalized to the larger population.
Despite the limitations, results of this study help describe the perceptions and experiences of respondents. The findings contribute to existing literature and help reveal possible connection points for parents/guardians and Saskatchewan high schools in support of the career development process of adolescents.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review explored the research problems of determining what parents/guardians are doing to influence the life/career development of children, identifying their perceptions of various supports offered by Saskatchewan schools in the area of career development, and determining if and how schools and parents/guardians might connect in support of young people involved in the transition from secondary school to life beyond. To do this, the stated research questions were considered and various search strategies employed. Research was sought to outline the importance of career planning for high school students, highlight the influence of parents in the career exploration process of their children, indicate what Saskatchewan schools are doing in support of career development, and reveal whether or not collaboration between parents and school professionals is warranted. The literature review was intended to indicate how the current study is positioned in relation to existing literature in order to further contribute to the related body of knowledge.

2.2 Secondary School Students and Career Planning

In order to better understand how secondary school students engage in career planning, it is useful to reference various career development theories. Holland’s theory surrounding personality types and occupational choices, Super’s focus on the multiple roles one plays and their importance in life/career, Savickas’s concept of career construction, Krumboltz’s ideas regarding happenstance, and Bandura’s social cognitive
research all have merit when considering the career planning of high school students. Establishing the importance of career development in the lives of secondary school students substantiates the need for the proposed research and is investigated through an understanding of career theories as theories shape practice.

Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey, & Niles (2009) described the work of John L. Holland who was an American psychologist known for his career development model dubbed the “Holland Code”. The Holland Code links one’s personality type with related occupational choices. Holland's work implied that members of any occupational group have similar personalities and find particular types of work environments suitable. The six code categories include Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Amundson, Harris-Bowlsbey, & Niles, 2009). With the Holland Code used as a model, inventories have been developed to help young people explore occupations of interest and investigate options based on personality.

Donald E. Super, a professor of psychology, defined career as “the combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a lifetime” (Super, 1980, p. 282). This definition acknowledges both life-span and life-space. Super (1980) refined his “Life-Career Rainbow” to serve as a conceptual framework for career development. This model identified a number of life stages and developmental tasks that link to occupational choice throughout one's life. Super (1980) suggested that as people age, they move through stages of Growth, Exploration, Establishment, Maintenance, and Decline implying life roles such as child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, homemaker (or various combinations) impact one's life and work. These roles impact one another and represent time and energy in one's life-span. Super (1980) suggested the more roles
we can balance successfully, the more life/work satisfaction we will achieve. Throughout his life, Super made continuous contributions to career-related literature and career theory. Therefore, his theory continued to evolve as he learned more.

Super (1990) recognized the life-span nature of career development and acknowledged people may cycle through stages many times over due to both planned and unplanned circumstances. Super’s theory did not undermine the idea that it is important to consider interests, skills, values, abilities, etc., but took additional factors into consideration. In reference to Super’s theory, Witko, Bernes, Magnusson, and Bardick (2008) stated “[t]he task of crystallizing and occupational choice involves daydreaming about possible selves and engaging in broad exploration of potential occupations. The process of exploration leads students to transform their self-understanding into educational and vocational choices; that is, a vocational identity” (p. 22). Super’s theory highlighted the importance of exploration in terms of the career development of adolescents.

Mark L. Savickas (2005) supported and expanded on Super's career theory. Savickas believed careers are based on the choices individuals make to authenticate their goals and express their self-concept. Savickas’ theory of career construction did not discount the merit of considering personality traits and attempting to match them with suitable occupations. However, his theory relied heavily on the use of narratives in identifying life themes which may provide insight into an individual's preferred future. He believed life stories in the form of narratives can uncover deeper meaning which may lead to life/career choices well suited to one’s true self. Savickas (2002) recognized adolescence as an important time in one’s overall development as well as career
development. For the purposes of the current study, the idea of career construction is worth acknowledging as engaging in career conversations and developing life stories can be useful tools in support of the career exploration process.

John Krumboltz (2009) stated career counselors should support and encourage both learning and exploration in students/clients rather than helping them select the right occupation. By doing so, he implied students/clients would be better equipped to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves because he believed in the idea of learned behaviours. Krumboltz (2009) developed the “Happenstance Learning Theory” (HLT) by which people choose occupations as a result of life experiences and influences. This theory outlines a number of areas influencing career choice and development including genetic endowment, environmental conditions, instrumental associative learning experiences, and developed skills. HLT posits that the “career destiny of each individual cannot be predicted in advance but is a function of countless planned and unplanned learning experiences beginning at birth” (p. 152).

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) of Lent, Brown, & Hackett (1994) was based on the work of Albert Bandura’s (1977, 1986) social cognitive theory. Bandura (1986) focused on the importance of self-efficacy in regard to one’s behavior. For instance, one may make the decision to engage in a specific task based on one’s self-perceived competency in being able to accomplish that task. Although now somewhat controversial in terms of predictors, Bandura (1977) identified four factors influencing career self-efficacy including verbal persuasion, performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, and physiological states. Lent, Brown, and Hackett’s (1994) SCCT indicated career choice behavior focuses on “self-efficacy, expected outcome, and goal
mechanisms and how they may interrelate with other person (e.g., gender), contextual (e.g., support system), and experiential/learning factors” (p. 79). In later work, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000) investigated contextual supports and barriers to career choice. The SCCT of Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994, 2000) indicated career self-efficacy as influenced by both individual and contextual factors and provided a theory for career development.

While grade level differences in terms of career planning needs may exist (Gati and Saka, 2001), high school students all explore and plan for post-secondary career options whether they be transitions to work, college, university, exchange opportunities, volunteer experiences, and the like (Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008). “An important task for high school students is to consider their future occupational choices. They are at an age when educational and vocational decisions are of utmost importance, and all students must decide if they will further their education or enter the workforce” (Witko, Bernes, Magnusson, & Bardick, 2008, p. 22).

The career development process and the transition between secondary school and life beyond is a significant and critical process in an individual's life. Because career involves a “combination of our experiences across our roles as workers, learners, citizens, family members, and leisurites” (Bloxom et al., 2008, p. 83), there are many factors to consider during this time of transition for adolescents. Canadian students expressed concern about what they planned to do after high school (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006) and high school students recognized “the need for assistance in career/life planning” (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006, p. 394). It is apparent the career development process is of concern to adolescents and that they seek help with career-related decisions.
The career theorists identified view career from a holistic perspective acknowledging a multitude of factors and influences which may play a role in the career-related decision making of young people. It is important to highlight career theories because they support the idea that secondary students need career planning guidance as well as provide various lenses for supporting youth with career investigations. Such theories help to explain “the relationship between individuals and their environments or their social contexts, as they undertake career development tasks” (Bloxom, 2002, p. 7). Secondary students learn and approach career planning differently and are at various stages of development (Jarvis, 2010). As a result one, or some combination of these theories, may be applicable in understanding and supporting youth with career related investigations. Past career development models and theories are under scrutiny and interest exists in reformulating them to fit current needs (Savickas et al., 2009; Sterner, 2012). These theories help us to better understand the career development process and its importance in the lives of youth.

2.3 Influence of Parents on the Career Exploration Process of Their Children

The current study explored the role parents/guardians believe they play in their children’s career exploration process as well as what they actually do to support this process. As a result, it was important to investigate research surrounding the influence of parents on the career development of their children.

Young and Friesen (1992) conducted a qualitative study exploring the role of parents in the career development of their children. The study involved interviews with 207 parents and the identification of 1,772 critical incidents which described the parents’ intentions as they attempted to influence their children’s career development. The
The overarching assumption of their study was “that parents engage purposefully in their interactions with their children” (p. 199). The study described intentional parental actions in influencing the career development of their children, such as taking a child to a university campus in hopes he or she will explore options, rather than on non-intentional interactions, such as whether or not the maternal family figure is employed and the influence that may or may not have on the child's career-related decisions. Various categories of parental intention were identified, including Skill Acquisition, Acquisition of Specific Values or Beliefs, Protection from Unwanted Experience, Increase Independent Thinking or Action, Decrease Sex Role Stereotyping, Moderation of Parent-Child Relationships, Facilitation of Human Relationships, Enhancement of Character Development, Development of Personal Responsibility, and Achievement of Parent’s Personal Goals. The current study asked parent/guardian respondents about intentional interactions by exploring what, specifically, they do to help their child with career planning.

Keller and Whiston (2008) investigated the connection between specific parental behaviors and the career development of middle level students in a Midwestern state. The participants included children from three middle schools between the ages of 11 and 15 and represented urban and rural students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. The students’ parents were also invited to participate in the study resulting in participation by approximately half of the parent population of participating students. The majority of the parent respondents were female, primarily mothers, and were married at the time of data collection. The study measured career maturity, using the revised version of the Career Maturity Inventory by Crites and Savickas, and career efficacy,
using a portion of the Middle School Self Efficacy Scale by Fouad, Smith, & Enochs. Keller and Whiston created their own checklist to evaluate specific parental behaviours as they could not locate an adequate measure. Thus, they created the Parent Career Behavior Checklist (PCBC). This measure involved asking students to select a career-concerned parent/guardian and then indicate to what degree the parent/guardian scored on a number of behaviours. The measure was reworded for a parent perspective and the same likert scale was given to the corresponding parent/guardian. Psychosocial support, career action items, and non-loading questions were asked of participants. A panel consisting of young people, parents, and career professionals reviewed the results. The results of the study indicated “that perceived parental behaviors are associated with young adolescents’ career development” (p. 210) and that adolescents “may believe in their own career decision-making abilities only to the degree to which they think their parents believe in them” (p. 210). An important finding was the influence of parental interest and support for young people, including their career questions and plans, proved more supportive of their career development than providing them with specific career-focused information. In fact, family relational and attitudinal variables correlated significantly with a number of career variables for individuals of all ages. “More specifically, this body of research concluded that family environments characterized by warmth and openness, but also respect for differences and autonomy, are highly facilitative of career development” (p. 211). The findings indicated people who work with youth should inform parents/guardians of the influence they have on the career-related attitudes, viewpoints, beliefs, and goals of their children. Although the study focused on adolescents between the ages of 11 and 15, the support of family was
identified as an important influence in the career development of young people. Therefore, Keller and Whiston determined information for parents on ways to support the career development of their children would be welcomed.

Further support was found in investigations by Amundson and Penner (1998) in which work by Penick and Jepsen was identified indicating family-functioning criteria as a stronger predictors in the career development of 11th grade children than many other predictors, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and educational achievement, although all may play a role. Kerka (2000) also acknowledged a link between career development and factors such as cultural background, socioeconomic status, and educational achievement, but presented a strong case for the importance of family functioning and family systems in creating a positive foundation for the career success of youth. Researchers have suggested parenting styles that are both demanding and responsive can help young people engage positively in career exploration (Kerka, 2000; Kracke, 1997).

Family involvement processes relating to parenting, home-school relationships, and responsibility for learning are critical during the adolescent years (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007). “With family involvement processes in place during middle and high school, youth will be better prepared for smooth transitions to college and other post-secondary settings” (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007, p. 9).

In contrast, Trusty, Watts, and Erdman (1997) looked at how variables such as the amount of time teens live with the parents, number of people financially dependent on the parent, employment situation, life events, gender of teen, family composition, parents’ education, and socio-economic status are predictors of parent involvement in the career development of their children. Trusty et al. discovered that although such variables do
impact parents, they do not necessarily affect parental involvement in the career
development process of their children. The only variable of statistical significance in this
study was that of gender. It was found female students indicated higher levels of parental
involvement than their male counterparts. Although the study did not turn up expected
results in terms of the impact of specific variables, it suggests parents are able to
compensate for variables and continue to influence the career development of children.
Trusty et al. recognized the influence of parents and indicated families from all socio-
economic backgrounds may benefit from counselor facilitated career-related support.

Similar ideas were presented in the work of Tang, Pan, and Newmeyer (2008)
which suggested school counselors should consider individual variants (gender, self-
efficacy, and outcome expectations) and contextual factors (socioeconomic status) in
developing career interventions. Their research involved a questionnaire that was
administered to high school students in a Midwest suburban public school in the United
States. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions including the occupational
and educational information of their parents. It also included questions related to any
family oriented activities about career awareness and exploration as well as questions
about career related school experiences. Tang et al. used the Social Cognitive Career
Theory (SCCT) previously developed through the work of Lent, Brown, and Hackett as a
basis for investigations stating:

[the SSCT (Lent et al., 1994) proposes that career choice behavior is shaped by
outcome expectancies, career interests, and career self-efficacy...career self-
efficacy is influenced both by individual variants (i.e., predispositions, gender,
race/ethnicity, health status) and by contextual factors such as family background
and learning experiences. (p. 285)
Tang et al. suggested counselors should appreciate these variables in supporting the career interests and choices of high school students. Blustein, Walbridge, Friedlander, and Pallandino (1991) furthered this notion suggesting counselors should recognize the role of parents and consider family relationships when developing career-related supports and interventions.

To better understand the influence of parents on career development, the Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC) (2011) surveyed Canadians about what kind of role parents played in their career development and what they thought parents should do to support the career choices of children. The results highlighted the fact that 54% of Canadian youth rated their parents as being “wonderfully supportive” of their career choices (p. vii). The younger generation valued the role of parents as only about 33% of the total respondents felt they had wonderfully supportive parents. The research highlighted the importance of the parent-child relationship as it is "the relationships they inspire, that also make a difference to Canadians’ ability to meet their career goals” (p. 17). The CERIC study also looked at how parents can help their children by having participants identify the roles they think are the most important for parents to play in shaping their child’s career choice. The top responses included “encouraging them to learn from experience (by succeeding or failing) (56%), or by exposing children to a range of character-building exercises such as sports and hobbies (51%)” (p. 18). Other responses included “helping children develop career related skills (39%), encouraging children to volunteer in a variety of places (32%), talking to children about career choices (31%) and exposing children to a variety of careers (28%)” (p. 18).
Parents understand their children’s strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes better than anyone else, and, as a result, their involvement is essential to the career development process of their children (Sage, 2004). Planned and intentional parental interactions are very important in preparing children for the future, but everyday positive and proactive family interactions may have the most significant influence in shaping the career exploration of young people (Kerka, 2000).

### 2.4 Career Development Challenges Faced by Canadian Schools

For years, Canadian governments have invested public funds into areas supporting the continuous learning of youth and adults. Lifelong learning is deemed possible when "different kinds of education and training are interconnected (primary, secondary, post-secondary education; classroom, workplace, and web-based learning); life and work goals are both served; individuals, institutions, organizations all have a means to plan and support continuous learning; and, learning is clearly situated in a career development process" (Career Development and Public Policy in Canada: Making Research Practice and Policy a Closed Loop, 2001, p. 1). In addition to lifelong learning, skill development has been an area of government priority in support of Canadians.

Provinces/territories are responsible for education in Canada and governments set their own curriculum and delivery standards for career development in support of lifelong learning and skill development. As a result, "career development varies significantly within some provinces and territories, and often from school to school. Until recently, career development has been regarded as ancillary to the academic function of schools - as valuable but optional" (Career Development and Public Policy in Canada: Making Research Practice and Policy a Closed Loop, 2001, p. 3). Some provinces have made
career development courses mandatory because, when optional, enrolment tends to be low due to competing options. Schools, employers, and unions have all recognized that not enough has been done to connect young people to the world of work. However, in attempting to create career development opportunities for students, school personnel have faced various obstacles including employers stating they are unable to offer work placement experiences to students due to "health and safety regulations or union objections to the use of unpaid student help" (Career Development and Public Policy in Canada: Making Research Practice and Policy a Closed Loop, 2001, p. 12).

Canadian schools are faced with the challenge of helping young people prepare for a world of work involving ongoing skill development and constant change (Dussault, Fournier, Spain, Lachance, & Negura, 2009). Shifting demographics, technological advances, and globalization are also impacting the Canadian labour market (Saunders & Maxwell, 2003). Young people today must have the necessary competencies to make informed decisions and adapt to various transitions. This makes career development supports, including career counseling, important throughout their lifetimes. Today's youth are faced with a broad array of options and training possibilities, making choices difficult, especially when combined with life and work goals (Dussault et al., 2009). "Young people require access to high-quality career development services to thrive in the 21st-century world of work" (Slomp & Bernes, 2012, p 33). Canadian schools can help students build competencies to self-manage their careers by supporting them in developing a positive self-image, engaging in lifelong learning, researching and evaluating information, understanding the changing labour market, being cognizant of work/life balance, building resiliency, reflecting on their abilities and interests, and
"engaging in activities that promote self-recycling and self-renewing" (Slomp & Bernes, 2012, p 33).

2.5 How Are Saskatchewan Schools Supporting Career Development?

The Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) with assistance from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) coordinated the Pan-Canadian Symposium in 2003 to gather together stakeholders who impact the career development process of workers and learners with the intent being:

Career Development requires a concerted effort on the part of everyone to be successful. This involves a shared responsibility of individuals, family, service providers, employers and the community-at-large. When these sectors work together co-operatively, the benefits to the individual and society are significant. (Working Connections: A Pan Canadian Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning, and Workforce Development, 2004, p. 35)

Information has changed slightly since the Pan Canadian Symposium study was conducted, but the study refers to career development related supports offered in the Saskatchewan K-12 system:

career development course offerings are part of the K-12 curriculum for Grade 6-9 (Career Guidance) and 10-12 (Career and Work Exploration, and Life Transitions). As well, career development competencies are integrated in the more than forty (40) Practical and Applied Arts courses and the English Language Arts curricula. Career development competencies, based on the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs, are being infused across all subject areas over the next few years. The Saskatchewan Job Chart, Saskatchewan Job Futures, career fairs, career skills portfolio implementation, and the use of career tools and supports…provide additional resources for students, teachers, and counsellors. Job coaches and guidance counsellors provide information on pathways and supports for students to assist in school-to-work and school-to-school transitions. (Working Connections: A Pan Canadian Symposium on Career Development, Lifelong Learning, and Workforce Development, 2004, p. 35)

The provincial picture has changed since this symposium was held in 2003. Saskatchewan now has new middle level curriculum including mandatory Grade 6 to 9 Career Education (formerly Career Guidance) classes. The new curriculum is modeled
on the broad goals in the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs. There continues to be
Practical and Applied Arts course offerings with the focuses listed above. Although the
“infusing” of career development competencies in curricula is still encouraged, it is not
being highlighted in the newly written curricula in the same fashion. As new
Saskatchewan curricula are renewed, the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs competencies
are not explicitly outlined. Some of the “Broad Areas of Learning” and “Cross
Curricular Competencies” support career development, but a specific framework for
developing career competencies is no longer highlighted.

The Saskatchewan Career Development Sector Study (SCDSS) – Final Report
(2006) offered a number of suggestions to improve career practice within the province of
Saskatchewan. The study highlighted a number of concerns with current career services
not only secondary school related but in relation to the overall provincial picture. The
SCDSS involved an online survey directed at both career practitioners and
managers/supervisors of a cross-section of career service providers including K-12
schools, post-secondary institutions, public/private agencies, and private practitioners.
The SCDSS included the administration of an online survey to the two groups which was
succeeded by focused follow-up questions. Results highlighted the importance of
continuing to seek input from key stakeholders and in building inclusive communities.
The current research addressed the fact that parents and schools are key stakeholders in
the career exploration process of high school students. The SDCSS indicated a wealth of
relevant and appropriate information available with a career development focus, but it is
not always accurately or easily interpreted.
As previously mentioned, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education introduced the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF) consisting of four Provincial Priorities (Pre-K-12, 2008). School divisions in our province are faced with the challenge of addressing the priorities of the CIF in ways that meet local needs. In relation to Smooth Transitions, many school divisions developed career development action plans. In 2007, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education announced the youth-focused Career Development Action Plan (CDAP). The plan outlined six areas including an increase in career development practitioners in schools in all school divisions, mandatory 30 hours of career guidance for middle level students, development of students personal career portfolios, the creation of career development action teams in each school division, development of partnerships in support of career development, and provision of youth and family friendly web resources. Through my network of school-based career professionals, I have been made aware of many different ways that school divisions have addressed the CIF and CDAP, yet commonalities exist in terms of action plans and career planning supports for adolescents. The online questionnaire developed for the current study listed a number of school-based career-focused supports and had parents/guardians rank them according to their perceived helpfulness. The list was not inclusive of all initiatives/supports within the province and not all school divisions offer all types of supports. However, it was a starting point for feedback. The list was derived from the Saskatchewan Career Development Sector Study as it identified a number of commonly offered career development services. As well, the list was vetted by professionals including career consultants and career development teachers from around the province before finalizing it.
2.6 Connections Between Parents and Schools

The literature supports the notion of a need for the involvement of parents in career development programs aimed at young people. Tang, Pan, and Newmeyer (2008) suggested school counselors work with community members to identify resources to assist and improve the career self-efficacy and skills of young people and that parents are an integral part of these plans. It was identified by Palmer and Cochran (1988) that “excluding parents from career programs is unwise, due both to parents’ strategic influence and their ability to devote intensive time to their child’s career development” (Amundson, 1998, p. 136). As well, Turner and Lapan (2002) stated “the role of parents and the role of professional school counselors go hand in hand in the career development of young adolescents” (p. 44).

Turner and Lapan (2002) suggested the role of both career counselors and parents as imperative in supporting the career development process of adolescents. Turner and Lapan (2002) used the Social Cognitive Career Theory of Lents, Brown and Hackett as a “model for understanding how the perceived support of parents and the confidence gained through student participation in comprehensive guidance programs interact to support the career development of adolescents” (p. 45). Furthermore, “the literature suggested that in order to participate in a more intentional and self-directed way in their own career development process, young adolescents need both the support of their parents and involvement in a comprehensive school-based guidance program that develops confidence around such career-related competencies as career planning and occupational exploration.” (p. 45). Although this was an American study of 7th and 8th graders, the results reflect the importance of combined counselor/parent support in
relation to the career development process. Findings indicated counselors can “assist parents in increasing their adolescents’ career self-efficacy” (p. 53) and that parents need to be provided an opportunity to better understand the multitude of career-related options available to adolescents. The researchers went on to recommend possible suggestions to address the career concern of parents including bulletin boards, listservs, family nights, and parent training sessions.

According to Young and Friesen (1992), counselors will be most effective in helping parents if they focus on intentional and planned parental influence. Parental intentions are an important part of a counselor’s work (Young & Friesen, 1992; Turner & Lapan, 2002; Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008). Jeffrey, Lehr, Hache, and Campbell (1992) suggested young people who have solid relationships with their parents tend to be more open to seeking guidance from other sources. In addition, parents are an untapped resource that may be better able to help their children with career choices given the right support. “Parents, particularly mothers, are allies and resources for career counselors in facilitating the career development process” (Otto, 2000, p. 117). When surveying a cross-sectional group of juniors in six North Carolina county schools systems, Otto (2000) found young people “want to talk with their mothers; they want to talk with their school counselors; and they want to talk to their fathers” (Otto, 2000, p. 117) about their career plans.

The Comprehensive Career Needs Survey (CCNS) was designed to explore the career planning needs of students in Grades 7 through 12 in southern Alberta as it was identified that before designing effective career development programming for students, an understanding of student needs was critical. Because adolescent perceptions of the
career planning needs of students may differ from that of adults, junior and senior students were surveyed and their results were compared to the perceptions of teachers, counselors, school administrators, and parents (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, and Witko (2005) analyzed data regarding parents’ perceptions of their role in the career planning of their children collected as part of the larger CCNS. Bardick et al. (2005) investigated parental perceptions of their child’s preparedness in regard to career planning, their role in their child’s career planning, help needed in fulfilling their role, and what gaps exist in career planning programs, services, and/or resources. The majority, 50.3%, of parents identified their child’s level of career preparedness as “somewhat prepared” with confidence increasing as grade level increased (p. 154). In regards to their perceived role in their child’s career planning, parents perceive themselves as providers of information and educators in terms of helping students assess choices and values. In addition, parents viewed themselves as facilitators in helping children navigate career planning decisions and secure related experiences. The parents of senior high school students expressed more specific needs than parents of junior high school students in relation to help required to fulfill their roles. Parents of senior students identified a number of areas of support including the need for more information in support of career planning, help in connecting with mentors, and assistance in the personality development of their children. High school parents perceived gaps in existing services, programs, and resources, as they identified the need for more specific career information from high schools, an increase in government funding/scholarships, and more emphasis on job fairs. Overall, they were satisfied with the career related courses and counseling services provided to students.
The literature established a connection between schools and parents/guardians as worthwhile. A portion of the study, therefore, investigated how schools and parents/guardians might connect in meaningful ways in support of the career exploration process of young people.

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the existing body of literature supported the need for the current study. Previous studies have examined the career needs of students which gave them an active voice in identifying their perceived needs. These studies identified parents and teachers/career counselors as key influencers in the career development process of youth. However, there is not a wealth of literature on how parents influence the career choices of their children or on how schools and parents might connect to support youth with these choices.

The goal of the current research was to contribute to the understanding of Saskatchewan high school parental needs in the area of career development by exploring parent/guardian perceptions of the role they play and ways in which they support their children in this regard. It identified the perceived helpfulness of current school-based career development supports. As well, the study explored if and how school divisions and parents/guardians might collaborate in support of the career investigation process of high school students. Career development investigations need to be intentional. This may be an area parents and schools can connect on and support. The intended outcome for the study is to allow for informed reflection on current comprehensive career development programs offered in Saskatchewan high schools and possible ways to improve programming by connecting with the key influencers in the career development
process of students, their parents/guardians. The current study provided an opportunity to learn more about what Saskatchewan parents/guardians are doing to support the career exploration of their children and highlight possible intersection points for parents/guardians and schools in support of the process of the primary stakeholders – their children - our students.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology, ethical standards, setting, sample, instrumentation, and data analysis of this study.

3.2 Methodology

This research involved a descriptive study to explore the characteristics of the targeted population. The intent was to reach a geographically dispersed audience of Saskatchewan parents of Grade 10, 11, and 12 students during the 2012-2013 school year. An online survey was initially used to collect data from the targeted population. An option indicating a willingness to participate in a follow-up telephone interview was provided.

3.3 Ethical Standards

The Research Ethics Board granted ethical clearance for the proposed research (see Appendix A). In doing so, the planned questionnaire, use of multiple recruitment methods, and possible follow-up telephone interviews were approved. Potential respondents were made aware of the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of the study, and the option to participate through the Letter of Information and Statement of Consent (see Appendix B).

3.4 Setting and Sample

Since the purpose of this study was to explore parental perceptions of their role in supporting the career development process of their children, to seek input as to the
perceived helpfulness of various school-based supports, and to determine whether or not connection points exist between schools and parents/guardians in support of career development of young people, parents of current Saskatchewan high school students were the sample for this study. The proposed research involved gaining access to the parent population of Saskatchewan secondary school (Grade 10, 11, and 12) students by contacting Saskatchewan school divisions asking for support, utilizing various social media tools, and contacting provincial career groups in order to circulate the survey link and help reach and access the targeted population. The population size was extremely large as over 43,000 secondary school students attend Saskatchewan schools (Provincial School/Programs Statistics, 2012-13). This enrolment does not indicate the number of parents/guardians associated with students, but it does give some indication as to the size of the population. Because the target population spanned a significant geographical area, an effective means of reaching the targeted population was necessary for both cost and time. As a result, the study involved an initial survey in the form of a questionnaire that was available online to parents/guardians in order to collect information as to the current provincial situation. All respondents were invited to participate in a follow-up telephone interview.

Saskatchewan parents/guardians with children enrolled in secondary schools during the 2012-2013 school year were invited to participate. Questionnaires are generally subject to a relatively low return rate, but this instrument was appropriate in attempting to solicit responses from a geographically diverse population. The recruitment process involved providing a survey link to an online questionnaire using as many recruitment methods as possible in order to reach the targeted population. A letter
was emailed to the Directors of the Saskatchewan school divisions (see Appendix C) asking that information contained in the recruitment poster (see Appendix D) be forwarded to the parent/guardian population. A number of Directors responded positively in support of the request. A few agreed to circulate the link whereas others indicated they were not in the practice of forwarding outside survey requests. In some cases, division specific forms were forwarded which had to be completed in order for the initial request to be considered at the division level. As the researcher, I quickly completed and returned the forms but received responses indicating the timeframe of the study would not allow them adequate time to put the request through to the necessary parties. Email and social media tools were also used in an attempt to reach the targeted population. For example, the membership chairs of the Saskatchewan Career and Work Education Association (SCWEA) and the Saskatchewan Business Teachers Association (SBTA) were contacted by email requesting the details and link be shared with membership. As well, an email was sent to all of the province’s School Community Council (SCC) representatives. Of note, however, is the fact that some SCC representatives deemed the research valuable but could not forward the link due to the same reasons as mentioned above. A Facebook page and Twitter posts were created in hopes of creating awareness of the study. Regardless of the recruitment method, potential participants were directed to the survey link which contained the Letter of Information and Statement of Consent, so individuals were not identified unless they chose to provide contact information for a follow-up telephone interview. At that point, information remained confidential but was no longer anonymous.
3.5 Instrumentation

The initial survey instrument was an online questionnaire (see Appendix E). Questions were determined by the researcher while keeping in mind the purpose of the current study. Survey questions and methods used in related studies (Bardick et al., 2005; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002) were referred to during this process. As well, in determining the list of school-based career development supports, the list was derived from information in the Saskatchewan Career Development Sector Study – Final Report (2006) and vetted by professionals including Saskatchewan Career Development Teachers and Career Consultants. Single-response questions, categorical-response questions, 5-point Likert rating scales ranging from 0 to 4, and ranking questions were employed. Open-ended questions were also included to allow respondents to explain their thoughts and elaborate on their answers. A sample copy of the questionnaire was provided to two colleagues of the researcher for the purpose of determining completion time. Based on feedback, the time frame indicated on the drafted Letter of Information was adjusted from 15 minutes to 30 minutes as it took them an average of 17 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire utilized Survey Monkey, a third-party online website survey software, for data collection and calculation purposes. Survey Monkey and Excel were used to tabulate and run the needed statistics on the data. Descriptive measures including averages, percentages, and frequency counts were reported. As well, open-ended questions were analyzed for themes.

One-on-one telephone interviews were conducted to provide a further qualitative component to the study (see Appendix F). Questions were asked in order to further
examine findings of the online questionnaire. The questions were drafted by myself as the researcher and vetted with my supervisor before proceeding with telephone interviews. Detailed jot notes were recorded during the telephone conversations and relevant feedback was reported.

3.6 Data Analysis

Prior to the beginning of the online questionnaire, a Letter of Information and Statement of Consent were presented to participants. Of the 104 individuals who reviewed the Letter of Information and Statement of Consent, 102 decided to participate in the survey while 2 respondents opted out.

In Part 1 of the questionnaire, questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 were categorical-response questions with question 3 being a multiple-response question allowing respondents to check all responses that apply. Results are reported through the use of descriptive statistics using percentages and frequency counts. Part 1, question 8 was a single-response question for which results are also reported as percentages and frequency counts.

Part 2 explored parent/guardian perceptions on career planning and utilized a variety of question types. Questions 1 and 2 were single-response questions reported as percentages and frequency counts. Question 3 was a categorical-response questions with results also presented as percentages and frequency counts. A rating scale was used for Questions 4, 5, and 6 with results reported using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency counts as well as measures of central tendency including means and standard deviations. The mean provides an indication of the relative importance of the responses while the standard deviation is indicative of the variation of
Part 3 investigated parent/guardian perceptions of school-based career supports and involved various question formats. Questions 1 and 3 used rating scales for which results are presented using percentages and frequency counts. Questions 2 and 4 were ranking questions. Results were reported based on a weighting scale in which the first priority choices were given a weighting of 3, the second choices a weighting of 2, and the third choices a weighting of 1. The results were then tallied to determine which school-based career-development supports were perceived as most important in terms of helping the child and in helping the parent support the child with career exploration and planning. Only school-based supports that at least one respondent identified as a top priority were reported. Questions 5, 6, and 8 were open-ended questions that were reviewed and reported based on themes while question 7 involved a categorical-response reported as percentages and response counts.

Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted in order to look for additional information and explanation to support the analysis of the survey data. In total, twenty respondents agreed to participate in a possible telephone interview when answering the initial online survey. During the time span of one week, attempts were made to arrange telephone interviews with these respondents and eight interviews were successfully completed. In doing so, a greater level of trustworthiness and credibility were established by qualifying information with a sample of the online survey participants.
In summary, this chapter detailed the research methods employed in this study.

The results are reported in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The results of this study provide a provincial picture of how Saskatchewan parent/guardian respondents perceive their role in supporting the career development process of their children and what they are actually doing in terms of support. The results also provide an indication of the perceived helpfulness of various school-based career development supports and ideas for possible connection points between parents/guardians and Saskatchewan high schools in support of the career development process of youth. This chapter outlines the demographic make-up of respondents, presents survey data, addresses the research questions, and concludes with a summary.

4.2 Demographics

The first portion of the online survey provided a Letter of Information and Statement of Consent. After reviewing it, respondents were prompted to indicate whether or not they wished to participate in the study. Of the 104 individuals who visited the online questionnaire link, 102 (98.1%) agreed to participate in the study. The challenge, it seemed, was in individuals accessing the link.

A number of survey questions were designed to help understand the demographic profile of respondents. As indicated in Table 4.1, 14.3% of respondents were fathers or male guardians and 85.7% were mothers or female guardians.
Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>father</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male guardian</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female guardian</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the sample fell within an age range of 40-49 years old (61.2%) with 83.6% of the respondents falling between the ages of 40–59 as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29 or under</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally speaking, the majority of parents/guardians completed education/training beyond high school as recorded in Table 4.3 with some respondents having a combination of education/training experiences to his/her credit.
Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>some high school</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high school diploma</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college certificate</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college diploma</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>registered apprenticeship/trades certification</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university certificate or diploma</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bachelor's degree</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master's degree</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctorate degree</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>156</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>answered question</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the "Other" category were responses including some university, one masters level class, BSP, Instructor courses, second Bachelor's degree, Grade 9 with 3 years of University of Saskatchewan Adult admissions, International Association of Firefighters Officer's Course, and related professional designation training.

In terms of household income, the majority of the respondents (76.5%) were from multiple income households as indicated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is your household a single or multiple income household?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>single income household</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multiple income household</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'd rather not say</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As well, respondents reported annual household incomes ranging from $20,000 per year to $150,000+ with 24.4% of respondents with an annual household income
between $100,000 and $149,000, 24.4% earning $150,000+, and 22.1% reporting they would rather not say. Table 4.5 contains information on the ranges of household income as reported by respondents.

### Table 4.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your annual household income?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0-9,999</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-19,999</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-29,999</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-39,999</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-49,999</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-59,999</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-69,999</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70,000-79,000</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000-89,999</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$90,000-99,999</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000-149,999</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000+</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'd rather not say</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The median total income by family type reported for Saskatchewan by Statistics Canada (2010) was $72,650. In comparing the annual household income reported by respondents of the current study to the median total income by family type for Saskatchewan in 2010, the majority of the respondents reported a much higher level of annual household income than the average family.

If employed, parents/guardians were asked what occupational classification best described their primary field of work. Responses are reported in Table 4.6. Of respondents, 74.1% fell into three of the National Occupational Classifications with 38.8% indicating their primary of field of work being in the education, law and social, community and government classification, 20% of respondents identifying the business,
finance, and administration classification, and 15.3% indicating the health field as their primary classification.

Table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, finance, and administration</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural and applied sciences</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, law and social, community and government</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art, culture, recreation, and sport</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and service</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades, transport, and equipment operators</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources, agriculture, production</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing and utilities</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were asked whether they consider themselves to be single parents/guardians and how many children they currently have attending secondary school. As shown in Table 4.7, the majority of respondents (84.9%) did not consider themselves to be a single parent/guardian.

Table 4.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you consider yourself a single parent/guardian?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>84.9%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority (88.2%) of respondents also had only one child currently attending Grade 10, 11, or 12 in the province of Saskatchewan as reported in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many children do you have currently attending Grade 10, 11, or 12 in Saskatchewan?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If respondents had more than one child in Grade 10 through 12 in Saskatchewan this school year, respondents were to keep only one child in mind when responding to questions in the questionnaire. Reported responses, as presented in Table 4.9, indicate 39.4% were thinking about a child in Grade 12, 32.4% about a child in Grade 11, and 28.2% about a child in Grade 10. As reported previously in Table 4.8, 88.2% of respondents had only one child in high school.

**Table 4.9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What grade is your child currently in?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of respondents, 59.4% had a female child in mind while responding to the questions while 40.6% had a male child in mind as shown in Table 4.10.
Respondents were asked to indicate what Saskatchewan school their child attends. In order to ensure confidentiality, responses were categorized according to school division rather than individual school as some schools had only one parent/guardian respondent. Of the parents/guardians choosing to answer this question, responses were recorded from twelve Saskatchewan School Divisions as indicated in Table 4.11.

When asked what the parent/guardian thought his/her child would most likely be doing following high school, results indicated the majority of children (80.0%) are likely to attend full-time studies at a university, college, or technical institute within the first year after leaving high school as presented in Table 4.12.
Table 4.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Time Studies at university, college, or technical institute</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Time Studies at university, college or technical institute</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other training</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time work</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time work</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter military</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange experience</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to high school for upgrading</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered question</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demographic profile helped to describe respondents. Parents/guardians of current high school students in the province of Saskatchewan provided perspectives on what they do to support the career development process of their high school-aged children, what they deem to be valuable school-based supports, and whether or not they view possible connections between themselves and schools in support of the career exploration process of children/students as beneficial. The majority of respondents were females between 40 and 59 years of age from multiple income households with almost half (48.8%) bringing in annual household incomes of $100,000+. As a whole, respondents were employed and resided in multiple income households. They did not consider themselves to be single parents/guardians and the majority had only one child attending Grade 10, 11, or 12 in Saskatchewan during the 2012-2013 school year. The demographic results provide a profile of the survey respondents which are useful in exploring the research questions.
4.3 Exploring the Research Questions

This section reports data while exploring the previously stated guiding research questions.

**Question 1: What are Saskatchewan parents/guardians currently doing in their role to support the life/career development process of their high school aged children?**

In order to get a sense for this question, parents/guardians were asked about the importance of career planning at this stage of the child’s life, the level of preparedness of both child and parent/guardian in regard to the next career step, how they interpret the term “career”, and what role they perceive they play in supporting their child with the career-planning process including what they do to provide support and what might help them better fulfill their role. Results are summarized below.

When asked how important career planning is at this stage of their child’s life, the majority, 87.33% of respondents indicated career planning as being Very important and Quite important as presented in Table 4.13. The mean was high at 3.44 also indicating career planning as being of significance at this stage of the child’s life. The standard deviation was low at .71.

**Table 4.13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In thinking about this child, how important is career planning at this stage of your child's life?</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Quite important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>56.34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30.99</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Very important = 4, Quite important = 3, Somewhat important = 2, Not at all important = 1, Unsure = 0
The fact that 87.33% of respondents perceived career planning as Very important and Quite important at this stage of the child’s life adds credibility to the first research question in that it establishes career planning as significant and warrants further investigation as to the role parents/guardians play in supporting the career development process of their high school aged children.

Approximately half (50.7%) of respondents indicated their child as Not at all prepared (14.08%) and Somewhat prepared (36.62%) for his or her next career step. Nearly half of respondents indicated their child was either Quite prepared and Very prepared (49.3%) as presented in Table 4.14. The mean was 2.48 and standard deviation was low at .89.

Table 4.14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In thinking about this child, how prepared is your child for his or her next career step?</th>
<th>Very prepared</th>
<th>Quite prepared</th>
<th>Somewhat prepared</th>
<th>Not at all prepared</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.68</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36.62</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36.62</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.08</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:  Very prepared = 4, Quite prepared = 3, Somewhat prepared = 2, Not at all prepared = 1, Unsure = 0

The results contribute to the research question as, although career planning was recognized as Very important by the majority of respondents, they were split in terms of their perceptions of their child’s level of preparedness for the next career step.

In terms of how prepared parents/guardians feel they are in their own ability to support their child with his or her next career step, 19.72% of respondents indicated being Very prepared to support their child, 42.25% indicated being Quite prepared, 29.58% felt only Somewhat prepared and 8.45% felt Not at all prepared. The mean was 2.73 and standard deviation was low at .87 as indicated in Table 4.15.
Table 4.15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How prepared do you feel you are in your ability to support your child with his or her next career step?</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very prepared</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite prepared</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.72</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat prepared</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all prepared</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Very prepared = 4, Quite prepared = 3, Somewhat prepared = 2, Not at all prepared = 1, Unsure = 0

Of respondents, 72.83% indicated they are Somewhat prepared and Quite prepared to help their child with his or her next career step. These results are encouraging, but they do not clarify what parents are or are not doing that might contribute to this feeling of preparedness in their ability to support their child with career planning.

Interpretations of the term “career” were sought from online respondents. The most common response described career as work involving education and/or training. The next most common response described career as being paid work that is enjoyable and provides happiness. The third most common description defined career as a chosen work path spanning a significant period of time. Other emerging themes described it as being a chosen field of work based on one’s unique interests and as paid work providing meaning and fulfillment. Of the varied responses, only two respondents described career as being similar to the definition presented in Chapter 2 which depicted career as being a combination of all one’s experiences spanning a lifetime. All definitions have merit as the term can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. Results identified varied definitions exist. It is possible that parent/guardian interpretations of the term career may be different than that of policy makers or those offering related school-based career
development supports. As well, the perceived definition of parents/guardians might influence their role and the type of supports they offer in helping children with the career planning process.

The roles parents/guardians perceive they play in helping their child with his or her career planning were also explored. While responses varied, the most common result identified parents/guardians as playing a supportive or guiding role in terms of the career planning of their teen. The next most common response was that parents/guardians believe it is their role to assist their child in researching and exploring various career-related options. Other responses included parents/guardians believing they have an active role in helping their child identify interests and develop skills, in seeking and providing “real-life” experience for their child in order to support career decision making, and in assisting with the high school course selection process.

In relation to what parents/guardians actually do to support their child with his or her career planning, two predominant areas of focus emerged. Online respondents indicated they provide financial support, including scholarship assistance, for their child. As well, they provide opportunities for open dialogue and communication surrounding career planning. Other reported themes included helping children research career options and information, seeking and providing real experiences for children (i.e. apprenticeship opportunities), helping with the high school course selection process, and assisting with networking.

In the follow-up telephone interviews, a question was designed to further explore what parents/guardians were doing to encourage career conversations at home and provide thoughts on how schools might be able to support such conversations. Of the
eight respondents, most expressed the importance of positive open and ongoing communication about all matters within their household. Through such career-focused conversations, parents then attempt to connect children with specific opportunities. Of note, a telephone respondent expressed interest in becoming aware of what other parents are doing and suggested schools could help by providing ideas for conversation starters to parents. She also suggested schools could initiate conversations with parents and students through wikis, blogs, or other technology driven discussion tools.

While conversing with respondents during telephone interviews, I sensed most were already actively engaged in the career development process of their children regardless of how they perceived their level of preparedness. Something I fear is that this may not be representative of all families. One of the participants interviewed acknowledged the same concern in saying, “I hope there are lots of things we are doing right as parents. I worry, however, about lots of kids as I am not sure how many are getting support from home.”

When asked what would help them better fill their role, the majority of online respondents indicated the need for more support provided by career counselors at schools in helping them better fill their perceived role as a parent/guardian in support of their child’s career planning. Within this category, responses ranged from wanting more personal interaction with the counselor, to a need for parent workshops, to wanting more experienced career counselors. A secondary theme indicated parents/guardians have a need for more career-related information in order to better fill their role. Common suggestions were post-secondary information, information on a multitude of job/career options, and access to scholarship information. Another theme that emerged from the
data suggested parents are “unsure” as to what would help them better fill their role. Less common responses included parents/guardians reporting nothing as needed to help them better fill their role, the desire to have more work experience options available to children, and the need for access to aptitude/skills tests for children.

In summary, parents/guardians indicated they believe they play a significant role in the career planning process of their children. They provided insight into the perceived level of preparedness of both their child and themselves in terms of readiness for the next career step. As well, parents/guardians provided ideas as to what they do to support the career planning process of their child and what might help them better fulfill their perceived role as a guide.

**Question 2: Do parents/guardians perceive current career development supports offered by schools as helpful to children and to themselves?**

In exploring this research question, parents/guardians were asked about the perceived importance of various school-based career development services, programs, and resources in helping their child with career exploration while in high school. This does not imply that they were necessarily utilizing the listed support, but it gives an indication as to whether or not they believed it to be important. Parents/guardians indicated a number of supports as being Very important and Quite important. For instance, Post-Secondary Information was rated by 96.72% of respondents as being Very important (75.41%) and Quite important (21.31%). Scholarship Information was rated by 93.44% of respondents as being Very important (67.21%) and Quite important (26.23%). High school course selection support was rated by 93.44% of respondents as Very important (57.38%) and Quite important (36.06%). As well, job search strategies/skills
were perceived by 93.44% as being Very important (50.92%) or Quite important (42.62%). Not to go unnoticed was the perceived importance of a multitude of school-based supports in helping adolescents with career exploration including Individual Career Counseling opportunities (86.89%) and Career and Work Exploration Classes (86.89%) as indicated in Table 4.16.
### Table 4.16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Supports</th>
<th>Combined Very &amp; Quite important</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Course Selection Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Strategies/Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Inventories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Development/Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career and Work Exploration Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Career Counseling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Market Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-related Websites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Parent Access to Web-based Career Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of a Career Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Fairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-focused Guest Speakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship Credit Courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Assessments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Opportunity Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Portfolio Creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness/Self Confidence Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Shadows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Level Career Education classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Career Counseling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange Opportunity Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take our Kids to Work Day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High 5 Career Development Messages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Very important = 4, Quite important = 3, Somewhat important = 2, Not at all important = 1, Unsure = 0

Besides the High 5 Career Development Messages to which sixteen respondents reported being Unsure, the majority of respondents identified all the listed school-based career development supports as being Very and Quite important in terms of helpfulness regarding their child's career exploration.
From the list of school based supports, parents/guardians were asked what they considered to be the top three priorities in helping their child with career exploration while in high school. School-based supports that were identified by at least one respondent as being in the top three are reflected below. Responses to this question, revealed Individual Career Counseling as the top priority, Career and Work Exploration Classes as second priority, and High School Course Selection Support as third priority as recorded in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranked priorities in helping CHILD with career exploration while in high school.</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-based Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Career Counseling</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career and Work Exploration Classes</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Course Selection</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Inventories</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship Information</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Market Information</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of a Career Plan</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship Credit Courses</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Awareness/Self Esteem</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Fairs</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Shadows</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Secondary Information</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Parent Access to Web-Based Career Programs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Career Counseling</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Strategies/Skills</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Assessment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Development/Training</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-related Websites</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Our Kids To Work Day</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking Skills</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-focused Guest Speakers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Workshops</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents/guardians were also asked to rate the perceived importance of various career development services, programs, and resources in relation to how they help them as parents/guardians support their child in career exploration. Results are reported in Table 4.18 as descriptive statistics in frequencies and percentages. From the results, a few supports are reported as being Very important and Quite important. For instance, Scholarship Information is rated by 91.38% of respondents as being Very important (65.52%) and Quite important (25.86%). Post-secondary Information is rated by 85.96% as being Very important (61.40%) and Quite important (24.56%). Other supports worthy of note include Individual Career Counseling rated by 80.7% as being Very important (57.89%) and Quite important (22.81%) and Career Fairs which were rated by 80.70% as being Very important (35.09%) and Quite important (45.61%).
Table 4.18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Supports</th>
<th>Combined Very &amp; Quite important</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship Information</td>
<td>91.38%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Information</td>
<td>85.96%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Career Counseling</td>
<td>80.70%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Fairs</td>
<td>80.70%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Course Selection Support</td>
<td>78.95%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-related Websites</td>
<td>78.57%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Parent Access to Web-based Career Programs</td>
<td>74.58%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Market Information</td>
<td>74.14%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
<td>73.68%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of a Career Plan</td>
<td>73.68%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>73.68%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career and Work Exploration Classes</td>
<td>71.93%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Skills</td>
<td>70.18%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Strategies/Skills</td>
<td>67.86%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Development/Training</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-focused Guest Speakers</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking Skills</td>
<td>64.91%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program</td>
<td>63.16%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship Credit Courses</td>
<td>60.71%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Opportunity Information</td>
<td>59.65%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td>57.89%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Portfolio Creation</td>
<td>56.14%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Inventories</td>
<td>56.14%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Workshops</td>
<td>55.93%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness/Self Confidence Activities</td>
<td>54.39%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Level Career Education classes</td>
<td>54.39%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Assessments</td>
<td>50.88%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Shadows</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange Opportunity Information</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Career Counseling</td>
<td>45.61%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take our Kids to Work Day</td>
<td>43.86%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High 5 Career Development Messages</td>
<td>36.84%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Very important = 4, Quite important = 3, Somewhat important = 2, Not at all important = 1, Unsure = 0

Again, the majority of respondents identified all but three of the listed school-based career development supports as being Very and Quite important in terms of helping them support their child with career exploration while the child is in high school.

From the list of options, parents/guardians were asked to identify the top three
priorities in terms of helping them, as parents/guardians, support their child with career exploration while in high school. Supports that were identified by at least one respondent as being in the top three are reported in Table 4.19. Individual Career Counseling was reported as the top priority, Career and Work Exploration Classes as second priority, and Financial Planning as the third priority. Other areas worthy of note include Scholarship Information, Student/Parent Access to Web-based Supports, Parent Workshops, and High School Course Selection Support.

Table 4.19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School-based Support</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Career Counseling</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career and Work Exploration Classes</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship Information</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Parent Access to Web-Based Career Programs</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Workshops</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Course Selection Support</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Market Information</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Secondary Information</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of a Career Plan</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-related Websites</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Fairs</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship Credit Courses</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Portfolio Creation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Inventories</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Strategies/Skills</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making Skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Career Counseling</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Awareness/Self Esteem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Development/Training</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-focused Guest Speakers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Level Career Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Awareness/Self Esteem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking Skills</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Opportunity Information</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality Assessment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Our Kids To Work Day</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Numerous school-based career supports were perceived as significant in terms of importance in helping both the child with career exploration and the parent/guardian support the child. In identifying the top priorities from these perspectives, parents/guardians indicated Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration Classes as key supports. One of the questions in the follow-up telephone interview acknowledged the perceived helpfulness of Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration classes as the top two priorities in terms of helping the child and in helping a parent/guardian support the child with the career exploration process and asked respondents to share thoughts. All telephone interview participants agreed with the helpfulness of these two options in helping both child and parent/guardian. A telephone respondent stated it was through individual counseling that his “child picked up some classes for next year we might not have otherwise been aware of.” He also mentioned, “there is more point to it [Career and Work Exploration courses], than many other classes.” Another stated, “I agree 100%. We [kids and parents] need to be able to talk to someone about career ideas to know what is out there. Both [Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration] help, in some form, to see the realities and options.”

In reflecting on results presented in Tables 4.16 through 4.19, one might consider the differences in perceived importance of certain school-based career-development supports from the perspective of parents/guardians versus that of those in charge of career-related programming at our Saskatchewan schools. For instance, career development portfolios are viewed as positive tools in support of the students' career exploration process and are often part of career development programs at the high school
level. Accordingly, the creation of career portfolios was perceived by 72.13% of respondents as being Very or Quite important in helping children, but they did not receive a rating in terms of top priority. As well, portfolio creation was identified by 56.14% of respondents as being Very or Quite important in helping them support the child with career exploration, yet it weighted low on the list in terms of top priorities. These results do not necessarily mean supports such as this are not useful. Rather, these results are perhaps a reflection as to how the purpose and value of these supports aid in the career investigations of young people could be better communicated with students and parents/guardians.

In summary, parents/guardians provided insight as to school-based career-development supports perceived as important to their children and to themselves.

**Question 3: Are there any areas where Saskatchewan schools and parents/guardians might partner in support of the career development process of youth?**

To investigate this question, parents/guardians were asked to provide thoughts as to perceived gaps in career-related supports, about what connections could be made between parents/schools in relation to career development supports, and what might help schools better understand and plan for the career planning needs of youth.

In terms of the perceived gaps in services, programs, or resources, parents/guardians reported a lack of awareness of the various supports offered by high schools as the most significant gap in helping children with career development. The next most significant gap reported was the perceived lack of student access to “real-world” experiences to assist youth with career development and exploration. As well,
respondents reported limited career resources and support available at the school while others were satisfied with current career development supports offered. Additional responses included the need for support with new math curriculum, earlier access to career guidance and counselors, the provision of labour market information, skills and portfolio development, career fairs, and ideas for how parents/guardians can support children with career development.

Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted in order to further explore the two main gaps. In relation to the lack of awareness of the career-related supports provided by Saskatchewan high schools, the majority of parents/guardians interviewed confirmed this as being their experience and expressed thoughts as to why this was the case. For example, a telephone interview respondent reported that a career teacher/counselor services her child’s school one day per school cycle but beyond that was unaware of the individual’s role and responsibilities. Although two other interview participants were from different Saskatchewan school divisions, they expressed similar concerns. Both thought the career counselor was sharing information with their children, but the information was not finding its way home. Respondents also expressed concerns over the differences in career-related services being offered by high schools within our province. For instance, a respondent stated “career services vary so much from school to school in our area.” Another stated “I am in a small town with [a] small high school but work in a neighbouring city. Even though schools are in the same school division, there is a very big difference between supports including career supports at the rural school versus the one in the larger centre”. Finally, yet another mentioned “the services
provided in the four schools I have been involved with over the last several years have been horrendously different.” She continued with:

In the school in which I currently work, the career services person is phenomenal. She shares information by email, hosts parent nights, works with kids in Grade 10 and 11 personally…and speaks directly to every Grade 12 student at least three times per year. She also teaches Career Education classes to all the Grade 7, 8, and 9 students at our school, so students have that connection with her before they enter high school. I wish my kids attended this school…as a parent at my child’s school, there may be more going on than I am aware of, but the information is not filtering through to me.

Telephone interview participants also provided thoughts on “real-world” experiences they perceived as being valuable to their children. All parents/guardians stressed the importance of exposing youth to a variety of real-world opportunities. Some felt it to be their responsibility as parents/guardians to seek and provide these experiences for their children. Many saw merit in relation to schools offering Career and Work Exploration classes but identified timetabling issues, the lack of available relevant work experiences within their home communities, and the costs involved in accessing a wider variety of options as problems. For instance, a telephone interview participant valued Career and Work Exploration classes, but her child was unable to access it as it was “backed with another needed class.” Another participant reiterated this message in saying, “Career and Work Exploration courses are great, but they are not an option for every student. My child didn’t take the class because it conflicted with something else he needed to take”. Yet another said, “some communities may not have enough opportunities” and her school officials are “saying no to a lot of extras in terms of career investigations, and…kids are not allowed to travel to Career and Work Exploration placements for the day.” Similar concerns are expressed in that another participant said:
Career and Work Exploration is offered at some schools…the problem is that in our rural areas, there are so few opportunities for students. Often they are getting bottom end experience…for us, it would involve about an hour drive if the school was able to work something out.

In terms of other possible real-world experience, parents/guardians mentioned shorter-term opportunities as valuable. For instance, a telephone interview participant stated that our kids need more “go-to opportunities…maybe…day trips to see what is out there. Or, maybe some day or afternoon training sessions in different skill-related areas.” Another respondent identified “early exposure to career fairs” as being beneficial as well as finding other ways such as special credit courses to recognize young people for learning that occurs outside of the classroom. Other telephone interview respondents mentioned value in spend-a-day opportunities at post-secondary institutions while several saw merit in job shadows. Regardless, exposure to various real-world opportunities was identified as key. As mentioned by an interviewee, “There has to be more chances for kids to explore broader possibilities or fear can kick in if they have to make career decisions but don’t have any real experiences to base them on.” Another respondent stated that, as a parent, she “would like for kids to have more hands-on experiences before spending a lot of money on post-secondary.”

In relation to what connections could be made between parents and schools in relation to career development supports for children/students, various categories of responses emerged with the most common being a focus theme on communication. The most common suggestion focused on improved three-way communication between students, parents, and career counselors. Within this theme, respondents suggested offering three-way counseling sessions, to conduct parent/student/counselor workshops, to create opportunities to attend career fairs with students, to share the career-related
progress of a child, and to receive pertinent information and resources on a variety of
topics including course selection information, scholarships, post-secondary information,
volunteer opportunities, labour market information, and career-related events. Direct
email to parents/guardians was identified as a possible means of communication. Also
worthy of note were suggestions for more student/career counselor contact time within
schools and the possibility of capitalizing on parents' experiences by inviting them to
participate in career conversations within the classroom.

In the telephone interviews, parents/guardians were invited to share opinions as to
some ways improved three-way communication between students/children,
parents/guardians, and career counselors could be accomplished. Some respondents felt
strongly that positive three-way communication had already been established. For
instance, a telephone respondent indicated “we [child, parent, counselor] had a meeting
last June with the Career Counselor and reviewed new math, course options, various
career pathways, etc.” This was helpful as “parents, then, can guide children.” One
telephone interview participant also stated the lines of communication are open within
her child’s school:

Parents are made aware through interviews. After Caps/Cops/Copes testing,
parents must get together with child and counselor for career conversations. At
that time, websites and scholarships are explored. Our career counselor has
helped expand our personal network by introducing us to an individual in our
daughter’s program of interest.

Other suggestions for improved three-way communication included the use of the
school division’s online assessment system to which students and parents have access,
utilizing direct and personal career-focused parent/student emails, and the creation of a
career-related website or blog. A respondent said:
As parents, we would appreciate a school and/or provincial-based website. With our smart phones, we can stay connected more easily than in the past, but we need to know what is pertinent information at given stages as there is way too much information out there.

It was deemed important to do something to keep the lines of communication open between students, parents, and career counselors. As another respondent mentioned,

It is hard to gather three people together at the same time given everyone’s schedules. As well, everyone can view (the) same information from different perspectives, so it would be nice to be able to have opportunities for this type of conversation.

Given that some parents/guardians mentioned information shared directly with students is not necessarily filtering home, almost any form of direct career-related communication between school and home would be welcomed.

Online survey participants were invited to share any additional comments they believed would help schools better understand and plan for the career planning needs of Saskatchewan youth. Participants expressed several ideas including the concern that many school-based career development supports mentioned on the survey were not available at the high school level. As well, respondents perceived the role of the career counselor as an essential one which must be done properly. In terms of suggestions as to how to accomplish this, responses included the importance of adequate training for those serving as career counselors, the need for more contact time between career counselors and students, and the need to involve more people in the career planning of youth as mentioned in the anonymous statement that it is “very hard for a single career counselor to help all the kids in one high school. There must be a way to get more people involved in helping the students make realistic career choices.”

The importance of helping our young people develop skills and competencies which will serve them well in the future was articulated in the anonymous online
comment “the labour force will hire every last person you send it if they are able to think on their feet, can spell, can communicate effectively, can organize their activities, and have an expectation of having to actually work, not just play on the computer or their phone all day.” Finally, there was a general sense that the amount of career-related information is overwhelming, making it very difficult for parents and students to interpret. Possible solutions to this concern included the development of a provincial newsletter or a web portal containing timely career-related information geared to parents and/or students.

Parents/guardians identified a lack of awareness of the various career-related supports offered by high schools as a significant gap. As well, they expressed the importance of exposing their children to more real-world experiences in support of career investigations. Therefore improved communication between students, parents, and counselors is needed.

4.4 Summary

The responses were collected from parents/guardians encompassing various school divisions throughout the province of Saskatchewan. According to the demographic data, there was a relatively even percentage of grade levels represented in terms of parents/guardians thinking about the career planning of a child as 39.4% indicated thinking about a child in Grade 12, 32.4% about a child in Grade 11, and 28.2% about a child in Grade 10. Potentially, there could be differences when comparing parental perceptions of the career-planning needs of children at various grade levels, but differences between perceptions based on grade levels were not explored in this study.
It has been suggested that parental socioeconomic status may have a high correlation with child participation in post-secondary education (Gluszynski, n.d.). In reflecting on results of the current study, there may be a skewed focus on children planning to attend post-secondary studies immediately following high school completion based on the responding sample. Regardless, access to school-based career supports for all students is deemed relevant regardless of plans immediately following high school.

Three guiding questions were kept in mind throughout the study in order to stay true to its purpose. The first research question explored parent/guardian perceptions in relation to their role in the career planning of children. In reviewing the results, the need for career planning during high school was perceived as important at this stage of the child’s life and parents/guardians perceived themselves as having a significant role in their children’s career planning. Yet, parents/guardians reported only a moderate level of preparedness in relation to both the child’s preparedness for the next career step and in regard to their own preparedness in supporting a child with career planning. Parents/guardians shared information about the role they play in helping a child with career planning with the most predominant role being one providing support and guidance. Parents/guardians reported providing financial assistance as a specific way in which they provide career-related support for their children. In addition, open dialogue and communication with their children regarding the career-planning process was another way of offering support. In terms of suggestions for helping parents/guardians better fulfill their role, more career counseling provided by school career counselors was the predominant theme. Interestingly, the term “career” was interpreted in a variety of ways by respondents.
The second research question involved parent/guardian perceptions of school-based career supports. Many school-based career development supports were recognized as important in terms of helping high school-aged children with career exploration with the top three priorities being Individual Career Counseling, Career and Work Exploration Classes, and High School Course Selection Support. Parents/guardians ranked the perceived importance of various school-based services, programs, and resources in terms of helping themselves as parents support a child with the career exploration process. Of these, Individual Career Counseling, Career and Work Exploration Classes, and Financial Planning/Scholarship Information were identified as top priorities.

The final research question explored possible connection points between schools and parents/guardians in support of the career development process of youth. Parents/guardians identified a lack of awareness of the various career-related supports offered by high schools as the greatest gap while they identified a need for real-life experiences for their children as of secondary importance. In terms of possible connections between parents/guardians and schools, improved three-way communication between students, parents, and counselors was deemed most important. As well, parents/guardians provided thoughtful comments about how schools could further support career-planning needs of youth. Of note, respondents valued career development supports offered by schools and viewed the role of the career counselor as essential. In acknowledging the importance of the role, parents/guardians suggested adequate training, more contact time, and the involvement of more people in the career-planning process as being ways the role could be performed more effectively. Finally, respondents
acknowledged the existence of a wealth of career-related information but expressed feelings of being overwhelmed with how to deal with it.

The results were presented while reflecting on the research questions. The next chapter identifies and discusses a number of key findings from the results of this study and includes recommendations for both theory and practice.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Because parents/guardians are key influencers in the career development process of their children, their perspective is of interest. The aim of this research study was to understand more about the perceptions of Saskatchewan parents/guardians in regard to the career development process of their high school-aged children. Specifically, the study sought:

- To explore the role of Saskatchewan parents/guardians and what they are doing to support the career development process of their high school aged children;
- To identify the helpfulness of various career-related school-based supports from the perspective of parents/guardians;
- To explore if and how parents/guardians and schools might connect in meaningful ways in support of the career exploration process of children/students.

The results in Chapter 4 provided a glimpse into the current Saskatchewan picture. The following discussions are intended to provide insight into the key findings followed by recommendations for future practice and research.

5.2 Key Findings

This section highlights the key findings that emerged from the current study. Discussions and suggestions are presented in the context of the guiding research questions.
Specific Career-Focused School-Based Supports Perceived as Helpful

The top three priorities in terms of the perceived helpfulness of various career-focused school-based resources in support of children were Individual Career Counseling, Career and Work Exploration Classes, and High School Course Selection Support. The top three priorities identified as supporting parents/guardians in helping children were Individual Career Counseling, Career and Work Exploration Classes, and Financial Planning/Scholarship Information. Interestingly, the same top two priorities, Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration Classes, were identified as supporting both children and parents/guardians. This suggests that if school divisions focus on these two types of supports, much could be done to help secondary school children and their families with the career development process. The challenge lies in better understanding what parents perceive as helpful in regards to each of these supports and what challenges might exist.

Respondents reported in the follow-up interviews that the delivery of Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration Classes varies greatly. The current study did not explore the realities of each school division’s approach to career development or if and how career-related programs, resources, or supports are offered or implemented. However, it is highly likely such supports vary from school division to school division and from school to school across the province. In my own experience, I have been part of a provincial cadre of career development professionals for several years and have been exposed to various means of meeting provincial initiatives in regard to career development. As well, a Canadian study which explored how career development helps youth when accessing career pathways identified that career-development services
across our country are highly decentralized with decisions about what and how to offer services made at school board levels (Bell & Bezanson, 2006). Also, in engaging in career conversations through the follow-up telephone interviews, some respondents observed and reported differences between career supports, such as Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration Classes, between rural and urban settings and between schools within the same school division.

Being that these two school-based supports were deemed helpful, further investigation could be done as to the successes and challenges of the various delivery approaches being offered across the province. As was evidenced in the past during the gathering of school division professionals at provincial career development meetings, there is significant merit in learning from others and then determining if and how ideas fit school division initiatives and local needs. These provincial meetings, originally sponsored by the Ministry of Education, provided individuals with similar roles, such as Superintendents, Career Development Consultants, Career Education Teachers, and Career Counselors, with the opportunity to network and share ideas and developments in the area of career development as well as present findings of government-funded career development projects conducted by provincial school divisions. However, funding for these meetings and career development grants was cut making it difficult for such focused discussions to continue. There are certainly alternate ways of sharing information and ideas, but it is difficult for all to stay connected without a key group in charge of leading discussions and providing a platform from which to do so. I believe the opportunity to share successes and challenges and engage in conversations with those
involved in career development programming within our province's school divisions is a positive way to strengthen existing programs.

Although numerous school-based career development supports were perceived as helpful to children and/or parents/guardians, one wonders about those that received lower ratings. Are they worth the resources devoted to them? Is there a disconnect between what schools and teachers view as important in terms of career-related supports? The current study does not address these questions, but one can speculate that school-based personnel in charge of career-related programs and parents/guardians view programming differently. Therefore, varied perspectives should be considered when acting on key findings of the study. The current study is limited to providing insight into meaningful connection points between students, parents, and schools in relation to career planning.

**Significant Gaps in School-Based Career Supports Exist**

It was difficult to interpret why parents/guardians reported a lack of awareness of the various supports offered by high schools and the need for access to more real-world experiences to assist children with career exploration as gaps in existing school-based career supports. The telephone interviews attempted to further explore these gaps, but responses varied with most indicating agreement about the lack of awareness of career-related services while expressing uncertainty about the role of career counselors and concerns regarding perceived differences of career supports provided from school to school within our province. It may be that schools are already providing career-development supports deemed important by parents/guardians, but information may not be reaching them in a timely or adequate fashion, if at all. It seems that better communication about the role of the career counselor and the details of the career-related
supports offered would go a long way in increasing parent/guardian awareness of the
career-related supports offered by Saskatchewan schools.

In reviewing the results, parents/guardians identified the need for more school-based
career supports to assist them in their role. In thinking about this, it may be wise to
balance comments about not having the necessary career information to support their role
and having an overwhelming amount of information. It may be that schools can find
ways to help parents/guardians access pertinent information in a relevant and timely
fashion. Parents/guardians obviously want to help their children and would welcome
assistance from the school. A Canadian Career Development Foundation (2003) study
supports this notion as parents indicated a desire to become “more involved in the
guidance program if they had the information and coaching to do it well” (p. 26). They
also valued the assistance of counselors in supporting their children’s career-related
decision making. Because parents/guardians in this study perceived themselves as having
a guiding role in the career development process of their children, ways of supporting
their role as a coach and guide may be worthwhile.

Respondents in the current study expressed a need to expose children to more
real-world experiences such as Career and Work Exploration courses, job shadow
opportunities, spend-a-days, and recognition of outside-of-school experiences. This key
finding emphasizes the perceived importance of real-life experiences in support of career
decision making. It seems Saskatchewan parents/guardians believe children can learn
about occupations, work environments, and educational pathways as well as develop
workplace skills and competencies through what they express as real-world experiences.
This aligns with what Jarvis (2010) mentioned as he stated young people require specific
competencies in order to self-manage their careers. Current labour market trends indicate today’s youth will experience constant change as they navigate through their working lives. Furthermore, a Canadian Education and Research Institute For Counselling (CERIC) (2011) study indicated responses regarding important ways in which parents can help children explore career goals. Of note was the importance of learning from experiences, being involved in character-building activities, helping children with skill development, encouraging volunteerism, and talking to and exposing children to a variety of career options. Finally, the plenary speaker of a youth panel as part of a career-focused Canadian symposium indicated experiential learning as critical for Canadian youth (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2013). As a result, having youth “be able to self-manage learning and work transitions and their own career development is critical. Career-management skills are no longer optional but are recognized as essential skills for youth today” (Bell & Bezanson, 2006, p. 2). It is evident that parents/guardians in the current study identified the same critical area of focus in supporting children with career exploration as supported in the literature.

Specifically, the current study explored what parents perceived as real-world experiences helpful to their children. Of note were suggestions for experiences including but not limited to Career and Work Exploration courses. Suggestions for shorter-term options such as job shadows, career fairs, and spend-a-days were suggested as these experiences would help expose students to workplace realities. As well, connections to and recognition for activities and programs students are participating in outside of high school would be welcomed and beneficial. These suggestions provide a useful starting place for reflecting on current career-related programming, future planning, and in
helping young people develop necessary 21st century competencies.

**Value of Career Conversations and Communication**

Middleton and Loughead (1993) expressed caution in terms of well-meaning parental engagement in relation to the career exploration of youth, as the range of options may be limited by the parents' perceptions of what is acceptable. As Young et al. (2001) suggested, parental intentions could have undesirable outcomes. Despite this, the fact that open dialogue and communication between parents/guardians and children on career-related issues was expressed in the current study as something parents/guardians are doing in support of career planning is extremely encouraging as it is a solid starting place for career conversations. Perhaps school divisions could investigate ways to support parents with these important career conversations which are already occurring in the household. An attempt to do so was made in the follow-up telephone interviews as parents were asked what they do to encourage such conversations as well as if and how schools might be able to support such discussions.

To generalize, open dialogue and communication appear to occur naturally within households as a normal part of parenting style as reported by the interviewed parents/guardians. This may vary greatly from household to household as expressed by some respondents who worried for families in which such supportive and natural conversations are not a part of everyday discussions. Some suggestions for connections between schools and home included the desire to learn about what other parents are doing to support their children with career exploration and the provision of home-based career conversation starters as provided by career counselors.
Respondents perceived connections between home and school regarding career conversations as positive. Because of this, further investigation into the research of Savickas (2002; 2005) surrounding the use of narratives and storytelling as tools for career development may be worthwhile. As mentioned previously, it has been recommended parents and children work towards a common ground and shared understanding of career goals in order to engage in effective career conversations and counselors can play a role in supporting this process (Young et al., 1997). Home can be an important place for career conversations with youth (Young et al., 2001) and well-informed and intentional parental interactions are significant, yet regular positive family conversations and interactions may have the most significant impact in shaping young people's career investigations (Kerka, 2000).

Although limited in scope, the current study contributes to the literature in terms of new findings. Research has been conducted to investigate the role parents play in supporting their children with this process (Young & Friesen, 1992; Young, 1994; Bardick et al., 2005), but little has been studied to identify ways parents/guardians and schools may collaborate to support the career explorations of children/students. Given the career-related priorities within the province of Saskatchewan and the limited research, the current study provides new findings in relation to possible connections between parents/guardians and schools. The need for improved communication was prevalent. Parents/guardians suggested the desire for improved three-way communication between students, parents, and career counselors on a multitude of career-related matters is a key connection point. The telephone interviews further explored possible ways to improve three-way communications.
Technology was identified as a useful communication tool, as respondents mentioned the utilization of student-reporting software as a mode of communication. In addition, email, websites and social media tools were provided as suggestions for sharing career-focused information and ideas. Opportunities for face-to-face interactions, such as three-way interviews or parent workshops, would also be appreciated. These thoughts provide relevant insight into decisions being made by Saskatchewan school divisions in the area of career development as the voice of the parents can be considered as validating current services, programs, and supports as well as making possible adjustments.

As a result, connections between home and school in relation to the career-planning process and progress of children/students as well as ways to improve three-way communication between parents/students/career counselors can support positive dialogue and communication in support of the career investigations of young people. Support for ongoing career conversations and improved communication appears to be a logical connection point between schools and families.

**Need to Establish a Common Language**

As anticipated at the onset of the study, the results of the current study suggested varied interpretations of the meaning of “career”. Survey respondents expressed a variety of interpretations of career with common themes being work involving further education and/or training, work that is enjoyable and provides happiness, and work spanning a significant period of time. Most themes defined career as being some form of paid work. Although work is an important aspect of career in terms of the transition planning of secondary students, it is not as all-encompassing of an interpretation as is embraced by some researchers or as defined in this study. For instance, Super, Savickas, and Super
(1996) do not define career as paid work. Instead, they view career as a combination of all one’s experiences in various roles which should be given consideration in career planning. As a result, in any attempts to improve career-related communication between parents/guardians, students, and schools, it may be worth considering and defining the term career so all stakeholders are talking a common language.

If career is interpreted as mentioned in the operational definitions section of this study as the combination of all one’s life experiences and that “every person has a career which includes all of the individual’s work, learning, recreational, community, and family roles” (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 18), then such a definition should be communicated with parents. This broad definition of career was explored with parents during the telephone interviews. Feedback varied, but one telephone respondent provided a notable comment:

I understand and agree with the broad definition of career, but then I think there needs to be more communication and work done by schools in connecting to outside programs and resources if they can’t be offered in-house. As well, taking a look at career this way may mean having to acknowledge experiences within our credit system to support students who are pursuing their passions. If we are trying to develop a holistic child, they need access to more opportunities.

As well, another respondent mentioned:

I think kids need more general life-skills classes dealing with finances and leading to a balanced lifestyle, including volunteerism, relationships, managing stress, learning, etc., as all are important.

Finally, an additional telephone interview participant acknowledged the presence and impact of many factors with such a broad definition of career and suggested the importance of “fostering curiosity” in our young people if interpreting the term this way encourages them to explore options.

Thinking about career this way may open up additional possibilities in supporting
high school students and their parents/guardians with career development supports that help them build and develop the skills and competencies suggested by the Blueprint for Life Work Designs (Hache, Redekopp, & Jarvis, 2000) in regard to Personal Management, Learning and Work Exploration, and Life/Work building as needed to make intentional career decisions in the 21st century. Through a combination of paid work, unpaid work, educational experience, extra-curricular activities, and volunteer work, young people may develop essential skills to support career decisions. The challenge is in speaking a common language so all stakeholders are aware of the intended interpretation or interpretations of the term. Defining and embracing the term in a multifaceted way may lead to a more holistic approach to comprehensive career development planning and programming within Saskatchewan secondary schools.

**Power in Partnerships**

Past research has identified that connections between counselors/educators and parents tend to be hit and miss (Sinacore, Healy, & Hasson, 1999). Input into how parents/guardians and schools may collaborate to support the career exploration of children/students can guide policy makers in making informed decisions as to related services, programs, and resources in support of youth. It is certainly best practice for needs assessments to be conducted prior to programming, but such is not necessarily the reality. For instance, Bezanson (2004) argued that career development has often focused on what is supplied rather than what is truly needed. Although a few studies have addressed needs, Bezanson suggested it is time to shift from a supply-based focus to a demand-based focus for career-related programs, services, and resources. As well, Bezanson mentioned that counselors spend most of their time on 30% of the students and
wonders how many more students might be helped with innovative programming. In thinking about the current study, it is worthwhile for school division personnel to explore the career development needs of youth from the viewpoint of various stakeholders, including parents/guardians. Doing so may lead to further ideas in regard to needed career-focused services, resources, and programs.

This study explored ideas surrounding possible connections between parents/guardians and schools in relation to career development supports for children/students. One of the online responses that resonates with me is “Ask me for an opinion on how to help. Don’t assume I’m clueless and start from that paradigm.” The current study was an attempt to do just that and so its results may be of interest to school divisions. There is power in collaboration, communication, and conversation. As Bezanson (2004) mentioned, it is time to shift to a needs-based system regarding the delivery and creation of career related services and programs. As well, in a Florida-based study that investigated high school counselor perceptions of school practices that included parents in career planning, Alford-Davidson (2009) used the Social Cognitive Theory of Lent, Brown, and Hackett to identify the importance of interaction between families and school in relation to students’ career planning. Alford-Davidson asserted that school personnel can “influence the quality of students’ home experiences by virtue of their support of parents and the quality of their programs for parents” (p. 117).

Because parents/guardians are significant influencers in the life/career decisions of their children (Bloxom, 2002; Campbell & Unger, 2008; Keller and Whiston, 2008), partnering with parents/guardians and attempting to meet their needs may go a long way in supporting their children, our students, in a career development capacity.
5.3 Recommendations for Practice

This section identifies recommendations for practice given the key findings of this study.

Reflect on Current Models for Career-focused School-based Supports

Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration courses are often components of Saskatchewan school-based career-related programs. Both concepts may warrant further reflection when considering possible connections between home and school in support of the career development of youth.

Policy makers may want to consider an increase or improvement in one-to-one access between parents, students, and career counselors, as individual career counseling was identified as the top priority in supporting both the child and parents/guardians with career exploration while the child attends high school. This may involve identifying unique and innovative ways to address the need for a customized approach to career counseling while being sensitive to the realities of each school's needs, budgetary considerations, and other variables.

Within our province, the provision of career counseling services in secondary schools varies greatly. Although mandatory Career Education classes exist for Grade 6 through 9 students, provincial requirements for mandatory career counseling and career courses are not part of secondary school programming. Within Saskatchewan, many school divisions do offer some form of career counseling sometimes by trained professionals with a related counseling designation but more often by teachers with an interest in career counseling. School-based career services may not be currently accessed by all secondary level students. For instance, the Canadian Career Development
Foundation (CCDF) (2003) reported that a Canadian provincial study indicated about one-third of secondary students access career counseling and that most are post-secondary bound. Being that such a multitude of career options are available to young people, not all involving post-secondary studies immediately following high school, it is important for all secondary students to access school-based career counseling. This may mean rethinking how career-counseling supports are currently being offered within Saskatchewan high schools in order to ensure equitable access.

Finding unique ways to engage and support students and their parents/guardians through individualized career counseling can help young people develop necessary skills and navigate through the wealth of career-related information as they explore their options. This recommendation is substantiated by past research in that, the CCDF (2003) study found young Canadians indicated a need for more time with career specialists and a preference for one-on-one assistance in relation to career related services and supports. In addition, parents place high expectations on guidance counselors. Parents highly value school guidance programs in which “counselors are known to be interacting with the students and parents get a chance to be involved in some way” (p. 26). Parents also appreciate school programs that include parents in planned activities. Reflecting on current practices and determining meaningful ways to include all secondary students in career planning while also supporting and encouraging parent/guardian involvement can help students navigate their preferred futures.

Career and Work Exploration classes are a Practical and Applied Arts offering available to high school students within Saskatchewan. They must be taught by an individual who possesses a valid provincial teaching certificate and must adhere to
specific placement-monitoring requirements. The theory-based and practical components of the courses aid in the career exploration process of students by helping them gain transferable skills, enabling them to investigate an occupation of interest, allowing for networking opportunities, and building related career competencies. However, offering the courses can prove challenging. For instance, if students have to travel for relevant workplace experiences, timetables must be adequately scheduled in order to allow teachers time to provide adequate supervision. Travel arrangements and costs for the teacher and students must also be considered. Some school divisions have made some combination of Career and Work Exploration courses mandatory, but for the most part, they exist as one of a multitude of optional Practical and Applied Arts electives. From my experience, the success of Career and Work Exploration programs rests with the school division personnel responsible for programming. In order for these courses to serve their purpose, it is important to make them accessible to all students while, at the same time, allowing for the necessary supports in terms of scheduling and monitoring. Accessibility, placements which suit the needs and interests of students, and adequate supervision and feedback are necessary in order to provide young people with the opportunity to investigate occupations of interest while developing transferable skills and 21st century competencies.

In this study, Career and Work Exploration classes were recognized as helpful but concerns, such as timetabling conflicts and a lack of variety of relevant work placement opportunities, were identified. Policy makers should reflect on current practices and include various stakeholders in brainstorming creative solutions to the perceived challenges in order to offer Career and Work Exploration courses. Given their perceived
helpfulness, it is necessary to make these courses accessible to more young people. As well, it is important these classes allow students to investigate areas of interest while acquiring work-related competencies.

Despite research showing the benefits of work experience programs in helping high school students make decisions about the future, these programs are often targeted at academically challenged students (Campbell, 2011). Within some Saskatchewan schools, Career and Work Exploration classes might be presented in this manner or perceived this way by students and parents, whether or not that is the intent. Parents/guardians in this study are supportive of Career and Work Exploration classes, but there is definitely room for policy makers to consider how to improve the offerings. These classes offer students a real-world opportunity to explore an occupation of interest in a safe and supportive learning environment, which can lead to informed decisions regarding career choices.

Providing funding for students to travel to other communities for the work experience, offering theory components by distance learning, making one or some combination of the course offerings mandatory, forming unique partnerships with various businesses to offer relevant work experiences, and/or providing adequate teacher training at the post-secondary level within our province might be ways of addressing these concerns while realizing specific monitoring requirements must be met.

Policy makers at the provincial level could reflect on this information in considering any future adjustments to the Saskatchewan Career Development Action Plan (CDAP). In the meantime, policy makers at the school division level should revisit and reflect on the current delivery model for both Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration classes. There may also be ways to offer additional secondary
level career-focused courses or further infuse career education competencies, career counseling, or work exploration opportunities into other curriculum areas in a planned and purposeful way. Regardless, both Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration are critical areas of consideration for Saskatchewan secondary schools as they are perceived as helpful in terms of supporting the child directly and in helping the parent/guardian support his/her child with career exploration.

**Exposure to "Real-World" Experiences**

In addition to Career and Work Exploration classes, other ways of helping students acquire meaningful work experiences should be examined. For instance, school division policies regarding career investigation supports such as job shadows, informational interviews, portfolio development, exit interviews, and/or apprenticeship opportunities could be revisited or developed. Paid employment, extracurricular activities, and volunteer opportunities can also inform career-related decision making (Campbell, 2011). Because parents/guardians know the interests and abilities of their children and have time to devote to their development (Amundson, 1998), it makes sense to involve parents/guardians in support of real-world experiences.

Just as important as the real-world experiences are ways to help children/students reflect on them. To learn from exposure to real-world opportunities, young people must consider these experiences in terms of their own interests and abilities. Reflecting on experiences can have a significant impact in helping young people make informed choices about future career pathways because learning is enhanced through reflection (Bell & Bezanson, 2006; Campbell, 2011).
Of note is the fact that the creation of career development portfolios did not receive an overly high rating in terms of importance from a parent/guardian perspective. The development of personal career portfolios was identified as part of the Ministry’s Career Development Action Plan. If used properly, research suggests career portfolios can be excellent tools for reflection. According to Morrissey et al. (2008), a career portfolio involves a collection of materials representative of one’s academic, leisure, and career development activities while showcasing skills, learning, and strengths. Such portfolios involve reflection in relation to one’s interests (Morrissey et al., 2008). If properly utilized, portfolios can help young people reflect on real world experiences as they develop new skills and engage in informed decision making. Schools, parents/guardians, and students could all play an important part in this reflective process by establishing a connection between the relevance of such career portfolios and the career exploration process of students.

**Training for Individuals Delivering School-based Career-focused Supports**

Respondents also identified adequate training of those delivering career development services, programs, and resources as important. Despite efforts to address the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education’s Career Development Action Plan and the priority of Smooth Transitions as highlighted in the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF), very little has been done to educate and/or train individuals in the area of career development. It is recommended that those who are involved in career counseling, teaching Career and Work and Work Exploration courses, or making decisions pertaining to school division plans for career development have sufficient background and preparation to provide legitimate experiences for students and parents/guardians.
Within the province of Saskatchewan, a teaching certificate is necessary to teach curriculum, but educators do not have to have specific background in order to teach Career and Work Exploration courses. As well, approaches to career counseling within Saskatchewan secondary schools vary. In my experience, career counselors within our school division consist primarily of teachers with an interest in career development. It is not required that they have specific post-secondary training other than being qualified to teach within Saskatchewan. For example, within Sun West School Division, itinerant Career Development Teachers in smaller rural schools are responsible for teaching various combinations of middle level Career Education courses and Career and Work Exploration courses in addition to performing Career Counselor duties. Within larger schools, lead Career Development Teachers serve as Career Counselor and act as the key contact for Career Education and Career and Work Exploration Teachers within their school. The Career Development Teachers meet with me, the Career Development Consultant, several times per year in a professional development capacity. In other provincial school divisions, various approaches exist because elements of career development may be carried out by individuals designated as career counselors, or by administrators, teachers, youth counselors, or some combination.

Parents/guardians of the current study acknowledged career counseling as being an important role, but one requiring training. The most effective way to provide training is debatable; different schools of thought exist in support of both formal and informal training of career counselors (Niles, Engels, & Lenz, 2009; Burwell, Kalbfleisch & Woodside, 2010). Discussions at a joint symposium in 2007 held by the International Association for Education and Vocational Guidance, the Society for Vocational
Psychology, and the National Career Development Foundation focused on the training of researchers and practitioners while exploring the need for public policies, greater competency standardization, and innovative training programs in support of career development (Niles, Engels, & Lenz, 2009).

Although a certificate or diploma from one of the many programs offered in Canada or elsewhere could be beneficial, I do not personally believe career counseling in our Saskatchewan schools requires a professional counseling designation. However, there are key elements worth exploring in support of training. In addressing the concerns of parents/guardians in this study, it seems reasonable to investigate ways to ensure all those involved in the delivery of school-based career-related services, programs, and resources share common knowledge, recognize key career-development competencies, and speak a common language in order to deliver consistent career information and messages to students and parents/guardians across our province. Numerous career models and studies identify secondary school as an important time in the career planning of young people (Super, 1990; Savickas, 2002; Tang, Pan, & Newmeyer, 2008). In addition, theories provide insight grounded in research into the career planning process of individuals. An in-depth understanding of career-related theories may not be required by all stakeholders, but it may be useful for those involved in school-based career development supports to have a solid understanding of related theories. Having an understanding of the standards and guidelines for career development practitioners is essential in order to offer effective and ethical career-related supports (Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners, n.d.).
A model worth consideration is one offered at the University of Lethbridge in which preservice teachers are provided with career education training. The program is entitled Career Coaching Across the Curriculum: Integrating Career Development into Classroom Instruction (Slomp & Bernes, 2012). Research was conducted surrounding this pilot project created to train teachers to infuse career education competencies into K-12 curricula. Training consisted of an introduction to career theories, strategies for assessing student career-planning needs and involving students in the career-planning process, insight into the world of work in the 21st century, introduction to career assessments, and the like. As part of the course, preservice teachers were required to design unit plans and deliver lesson plans integrating career outcomes into their primary subject areas. Results were positive in terms of the career-focused learning of preservice teachers and the benefits to their students as meaningful career-related learning experiences were created (Slomp & Bernes, 2012).

This pilot project might be worth consideration in Saskatchewan. It may not be the model best suited for our province, but could be used to initiate discussion as to the importance of specific of career-related training in existing Education programs at the University level. As well, similar training could be accomplished in additional ways. For instance, relevant training might be offered through an existing or newly formed provincial organization in support of career development, the re-establishment of career-focused provincial school division sessions as were once available in Saskatchewan, the development of a provincial career-related website incorporating the needs of career practitioners as well as other stakeholders, the creation of formal career-focused training for aspiring teachers studying at post-secondary institutions, the delivery of related in-
person or on-line professional development at the school division level, or some combination. Regardless, some form of common background and training is viewed as helpful in acknowledging and addressing the inconsistencies in the delivery of career-related services, programs, and resources expressed by parents/guardians in this study.

Creation of Partnerships and Importance of Ongoing Communication

The formation of partnerships between students, parents, and schools in relation to the career planning of secondary students within our province is recommended as a worthwhile initiative. Partnering in a variety of ways may make it possible to address areas of career concern, such as the need for improved three-way communication and exposure to more real-world experiences. As mentioned, results from the current study revealed Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration Classes as first and second priorities respectively in support of the career planning process. These two priorities are consistent with the expressed need for improved communication between schools and parent/guardians and the need for more real-life work experiences which were perceived as significant gaps in the available programs, services, and resources.

Young people need to develop relevant skills and competencies needed to navigate through an ever-changing world. Today’s youth are likely to experience constant change and various jobs throughout their lifetimes (Hiebert & Bezanson, 1995; Jarvis, 2010). They need to be able to think critically and creatively in order to make informed decisions. Collaboration and communication are important skills for youth to develop as well as essential tools for the establishment of solid partnerships. Thus, in order to address the ideas presented by parents/guardians in this study, it is beneficial for Saskatchewan high schools to collaborate and communicate with parents/guardians,
students, and community-based stakeholders in support of career planning. The formation of partnerships in support of meaningful real-world career exploration opportunities for young people can be beneficial for all involved including students, parents/guardians, industry, post-secondary institutions, and schools.

Students, themselves, have identified career-planning as an area in which they want schools to focus (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003) and parents are key influencers in the life/career decision making of young people. Knowing young people approach their parents above anyone else for career-planning purposes (Bardick et al., 2005) supports the importance of considering parental perceptions in regard to the career planning and exploration of youth. As Bardick et al. mentioned, “Examining parents’ perceptions of their role in adolescent career planning is important in order to better meet the career development needs of adolescents” (p 152). Also, parents have the ability to invest significant time in their children’s career development (Amundson & Penner, 1998), and it has been found that young people believe in their career-related decisions and abilities in correlation to the degree their parent’s believe in them (Keller & Whiston, 2008). Finally, Alford-Davidson (2009) indicated “the involvement of parents can be a possible resource for educators to utilize as they assist students in making educational and occupational choices” (p. 10) and “parents are not only their child’s first teacher, but…have the best understanding of their child’s background, abilities, and interests” (p. 10). Because of the time parents/guardians can potentially devote to supporting their individual child with career-related decisions and the significant influence their perceptions of their child’s career choices have, it is reasonable for schools to connect with families. This message was reiterated in one of the telephone
interviews in which a participant welcomed the sharing of career-related information from the school and career counselor yet states, “My child is MY child. The career counselor has 300+ students to help, anything they can do is great, but it is my responsibility to help my child.” The Pan-Canadian Study of Career Practices in K-12 Public Schools (2009) indicated a high ratio of students to counselors in the K-12 school system and suggests the responsibility for career-related support needs to be shared among such stakeholders as schools, parents/guardians, and community. Therefore, it makes good sense for schools to consider how to ensure access for all students and how to involve families when determining career-planning supports.

The intense demands on career counselors and the varied interpretations of career were among the areas of career concern presented by parents/guardians in this study. Perhaps creative uses of counselor time and ways of including parents/guardians in the career-planning process can help share the load, improve lines of communication, and further support the career exploration process of all young people.

It may be beneficial for policy makers at the school level to provide programs geared towards providing parents/guardians with the knowledge, skills, and information necessary to positively support the career development process of their children (Campbell, 2011; Witko et al., 2008). There are various programs and resources in existence which may be utilized by school personnel. One such tool which could be incorporated into parent/guardian programs or workshops is entitled *Your Future, Your Way Career Planning Resources: Career Ally Edition*, which was developed by the Saskatoon Industry and Education Partnership (2009). This tool outlines a career-planning model, provides strategies in support of the career-planning process, includes
tips in becoming a career ally, and highlights reflective questions (Saskatoon Industry Education Council, 2009).

There is great value in communication and collaboration. Policy and decision makers at the provincial, school division, and local school levels are encouraged to revisit the current plan for career development within Saskatchewan while engaging in career-related conversations and exploring partnerships with various stakeholders. The goal is to devise a delivery model that supports the development of the necessary skills and competencies today’s youth require in order to navigate the 21st century in order to create and recreate their preferred futures. "Young people require access to high quality career development services to thrive in the 21st century world of work" (Slomp & Bernes, 2012). Given the influence parents/guardians have on the life/career-planning process of adolescents, forging partnerships in support of their children, our students, is deemed a worthwhile endeavour.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Continued career development research is important in order to shift from a supply-based to a demand-based system as suggested by Bezanson (2004). Parents/guardians in the current study identified the lack of real-world experiences as a gap in current school-based services, programs, or resources. Further research on ways to provide children/students with real experiences in support of career investigations may be worthwhile as work experience, job shadows, guest speakers, apprenticeship opportunities, spend-a-days, hands-on opportunities, volunteer experiences, field trips, extra-curricular participation, project-based learning experiences, dual credits, skill development, classroom connections, infusing career competencies into curriculum, or
related simulations may be possibilities. Other ideas may be uncovered which were not identified in the current study. Regardless, localized needs assessments of parents/guardians and children/students may better inform schools as to areas of need from which innovative and effective supports could be accessed, implemented, or developed. Further research and creative solutions will support young people in building career-development competencies.

When asked about what parents/guardians need to better fulfill their role in helping children with career planning, many reported being uncertain about what would be useful. The response of being unsure was very hard to interpret as it could mean they feel they are currently fulfilling their role, do not know what to ask for, or have a limited view of “career.” This theme is similar to past research conducted in which parents/guardians reported active involvement in the career-related decision making of their children yet were uneasy, unsure, and/or unprepared as to how to be effectively involved. (Downing & D’Andrea, 1994; Campbell, 2011; Jeffery, Lehr, Hache, & Campbell, 1992). Further exploration into this response through qualitative research may uncover what parents are truly thinking and what they need in terms of helping them further fulfill what they express as being an essential role.

It may be worth replicating this study or designing a similar one in a few years time in order to compare results and try to reach a larger and more diverse population. For instance, the majority of respondents were females reporting high-income levels and various training and educational experiences of their own. Therefore, parents/guardians of this study perceived scholarship and post-secondary information as important, which is logical given the strong majority of respondents reported the likelihood of their child
going on to full-time post-secondary studies immediately following high school. Further research with families whose socioeconomic level is different from the respondents of the current study may be useful as their perceptions are worthy of consideration when policy makers at the school division level are considering adequate career-related supports for students and their parents/guardians. As identified in the literature review, Trusty et al. (1997) acknowledged the influence of parents and suggested families from all socio-economic backgrounds could benefit from counselor facilitated career-related support. Further Saskatchewan-based research into relevant career-related supports for marginalized groups such as new Canadians, impoverished families, indigenous people, and the like should be explored to better inform practice.

This study provided more information on Saskatchewan parent/guardian perspectives as to what they are doing to support the career development process of their high school-aged children, what career-related school-based supports parents/guardians deem helpful, and how parents/guardians and schools might connect in meaningful ways in support of the career exploration process.
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Appendix A: Ethical Approval

DATE: February 20, 2013

TO: Vanessa Nicole Lewis
    Box 246
    Eircse, SK S0L 0Z0

FROM: Dr. David Senkow
       Acting Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: Your Children – Our Students: Can Saskatchewan Parents and Schools Connect in Support of Career Development of Youth? (File # 5351213)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☐ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F), ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. "Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. "Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

[Signature]

Dr. David Senkow

cc: Dr. Cyril Kesten - Education

**supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office for Research, Innovation and Partnership (Research and Innovation Centre Room 139) or by e-mail to Phone: (306) 585-4776
Fax: (306) 585-4893**
Appendix B: Information Form and Statement of Consent

Greetings Parents/Guardians!

RE: LETTER OF INFORMATION REGARDING “YOUR CHILDREN – OUR STUDENTS: CAN SASKATCHEWAN PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND SCHOOLS CONNECT IN SUPPORT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH?”

As a parent/guardian of a Grade 10, 11, or 12 child (or children) in the province of Saskatchewan, you are invited to participate in this career development focused study being conducted by University of Regina Graduate Student, Vanessa Lewis, under the supervision of Dr. Cyril Kesten, Professor, Faculty of Education.

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this study is to describe what parents/guardians of Saskatchewan high school students are currently doing to support the career development of their children, to better understand how they perceive career development supports offered by schools, and to explore whether or not any possible connections can be made between parents and schools in order to help young people with the career exploration process especially during the time of transition from secondary school to life beyond. This study is viewed as an opportunity to highlight possible intersection points for parents and schools in support of the career exploration process of the primary stakeholders - your children - our students.

Questionnaire
As a parent/guardian, you are a key influencer in the career development process of your child(ren). You are invited to participate in this study via an online survey. The questionnaire includes a series of selected response, ranking, and open-ended questions. The survey involves an estimated time commitment of approximately 15 minutes. Answers to all questions are greatly appreciated, but optional. Please know, your information will be kept confidential as I am not collecting personal information unless you choose to provide details at the close of the survey. Below is the Statement of Consent. Thank you for your considered participation.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Lewis
University of Regina Graduate Student, Faculty of Education
Career Development Consultant, Sun West School Division
Statement of Consent

Confidentiality
Information provided in the survey will be kept confidential. All information will be kept on a password protected computer and backed up to a flash drive stored in a locked cabinet. Only the primary investigator and research committee members will have access to raw data. This data will be deleted 6 years after the completion of the study.

There will be a section at the close of the survey inviting you to volunteer for a telephone interview. If you respond with “yes”, you will be prompted to enter personal data including name, telephone number, and email address. At this point your feedback remains confidential but is no longer anonymous. Information provided in the telephone interview will not be connected to your survey responses and only the primary investigator and research committee will know the identity of the interview participants.

It is important for you to know that Survey Monkey is a web-survey company located in the USA and is the host of this on-line research. Survey Monkey has built-in security features to ensure the safety of data. However, this company is subject to U.S. laws; in particular, the US Patriot Act that allows authorities access to the records of internet service providers. The web survey company servers record incoming IP addresses-including that of the computer you use to access the survey. However, no connection is made between your data and your computer’s IP address. If you choose to participate in the survey, you understand your responses to the survey questions will be stored and accessed in the USA. For further detail on Survey Monkey’s Privacy Policy, visit http://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/privacy-policy/. For information on Survey Monkey’s Security Statement, see http://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/security/. Data will be deleted from Survey Monkey 6 months after data analysis is complete.

Right to Withdraw
Your participation is completely voluntary. By selecting “no” below or by not submitting the survey, you indicate withdrawal. Please know, once your completed survey is submitted, responses can no longer be withdrawn due to the anonymous nature of the data collection.

Questions and Follow-up
This study has been granted approval by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. (REB #53S1213) There are no known risks associated with this study.

The results of this research will be published in my graduate thesis and may be presented in educational circles or published in professional journals. Any reports will indicate only overall findings consisting of aggregated data and anonymous quotes so individuals cannot be identified.

If you have any questions/concerns about this study or if you are interested in receiving a final summary, please contact the researcher or provide an email address at the end of the survey.
Consent
I have read the above Letter of Information and Statement of Consent and understand selecting “yes” below and completing the questionnaire implies my consent to participate in this study.

- Yes, I wish to participate in the survey.
- No, I do not wish to participate in the survey.
Appendix C: Letter to Directors of Saskatchewan School Divisions

February 25, 2013

Dear Director of Education:

RE: Request to Circulate Recruitment Poster for Research on YOUR CHILDREN – OUR STUDENTS: CAN SASKATCHEWAN PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND SCHOOLS CONNECT IN SUPPORT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH?

Greetings! My name is Vanessa Lewis and I am completing my Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Regina under the supervision of Dr. Cyril Kesten. As partial fulfillment of the degree, I am conducting a study titled “YOUR CHILDREN – OUR STUDENTS: CAN SASKATCHEWAN PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND SCHOOLS CONNECT IN SUPPORT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH?”. As a Career Development Consultant, I have a passion for career development and look forward to this research opportunity. I respectfully request your support of this study by circulating a recruitment poster to parents/guardians of current Saskatchewan Grade 10, 11, and 12 students.

Knowing parents/guardians are key influencers in the career development process of their children, the purpose of this study is to describe what parents/guardians of Saskatchewan high school students are currently doing to support the career development of their children and to better understand how they perceive career development supports offered by schools. It will explore whether or not any possible connections can be made between parents/guardians and schools in order to help young people with future choices especially during the time of transition from secondary school to life beyond. Exceptional programs and resources for parents do exist, but this study is viewed as an opportunity to learn more about what Saskatchewan parents are doing to help their children with career exploration and highlight possible intersection points between parents/guardians and schools in support of the career development process of the primary stakeholders – their children - our students.

In support of this research, I kindly ask you to circulate this information to parents/guardians of current Grade 10 through 12 students within your school division by providing a copy of this email, the attached Parent Recruitment Poster, and your endorsement to Administrators and/or Career Counsellors inviting them to share the Parent Recruitment Poster with your parent population using methods which ensure anonymity of the potential participant. This may involve inviting them to share the attached Parent Recruitment Poster with the parent/guardian population through group email, website link, school newsletter, etc. Participation is completely voluntary and potential participants can go directly to the survey link to make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate while remaining anonymous to the Director/Administrator/Career Counsellor/Researcher, etc. (Please see attached Parent Recruitment Poster)
For further information regarding the study:
The survey is accessible online at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/skcareerdevelopment](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/skcareerdevelopment)
The survey will be active from **February 25th to March 22nd, 2013**.
The first portion of the survey link provides potential participants with information on the study followed by the option to participate. If you wish to view details, feel free to visit the survey link to see the **Letter of Information and Statement of Consent**. You will be able to exit the survey if it does not pertain to you and certainly have the option to participate if it does.

This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the U of R Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at 1-306-585-4775 or research.ethics@uregina.ca. Out of town participants may call collect. (REB #53S1213)

If you have any other questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact:
Researcher - Vanessa Lewis, pipervx@uregina.ca
Supervisor - Dr. Cyril Kesten, (306) 585-4532, cyril.kesten@uregina.ca

Thank you for considering this request. Please contact me by email if you support this research and/or wish for a summary of findings once research is completed. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Lewis
University of Regina Graduate Student, Faculty of Education
Career Development Consultant, Sun West School Division
Appendix D: Parent Recruitment Poster

University of Regina

As a parent/guardian of current Grade 10, 11, or 12 children in the province of Saskatchewan, you are an important influence on your children’s lives and career decisions.

Please help University of Regina student researcher, Vanessa Lewis, understand how our schools can support you with the career exploration process of your children.

The study is titled “YOUR CHILDREN – OUR STUDENTS: CAN SASKATCHEWAN PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND SCHOOLS CONNECT IN SUPPORT OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH?”. This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the U of R Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding rights as a participant may be addressed to the committee at 1-306-585-4778 or research.ethics@uregina.ca. Out of town participants may call collect. (REB #55S1213)

The purpose of this study is to describe what parents/guardians of Saskatchewan high school students are currently doing to support the career development of their children, to better understand how they perceive career development supports offered by schools, and to explore whether or not any possible connections can be made between parents and schools in order to help young people with the career exploration process especially during the time of transition from secondary school to life beyond. This study is viewed as an opportunity to highlight possible intersection points for parents and schools in support of the career exploration process of the primary stakeholders - your children - our students.

To access the survey:

The survey is accessible online at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/skcareerdevelopment
The survey will be active from February 25th to March 22nd, 2013 and will take approx 30 minutes to complete. (The first portion of the survey link provides potential participants with further information regarding the study and the option to participate. Thank you for your consideration. Participation is voluntary and appreciated. Please feel free to share this information with other parents/guardians.)

If you have any other questions/concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Researcher - Vanessa Lewis, piperv@uregina.ca
Supervisor - Dr. Cyril Kesten, (306) 585-4532, cyril.kesten@uregina.ca
# Appendix E: Online Questionnaire

## 2. Part 1: Demographics

There are several sections to this survey. Please advance using the NEXT button which will appear at the bottom of each section. THANK YOU!

1. Are you a male or female parent or guardian of a current Saskatchewan Grade 10, 11, or 12 student(s)?
   - [ ] father
   - [ ] male guardian
   - [ ] mother
   - [ ] female guardian

2. Which category below includes your age?
   - [ ] 29 or under
   - [ ] 30-39
   - [ ] 40-49
   - [ ] 50-69
   - [ ] 70+

3. Indicate all education/training you have attained. (Check all that apply)
   - [ ] some high school
   - [ ] high school diploma
   - [ ] apprenticeship/trade/certification
   - [ ] college diploma
   - [ ] university certificate or diploma
   - [ ] bachelor's degree
   - [ ] master's degree
   - [ ] doctorate degree
   - [ ] Other (please specify): 

4. Is your household a single or multiple income household?
   - [ ] single income household
   - [ ] multiple income household
   - [ ] I'd rather not say
5. What is your annual household income?
   - $0-9,999
   - $10,000-19,999
   - $20,000-29,999
   - $30,000-39,999
   - $40,000-49,999
   - $50,000-59,999
   - $60,000-69,999
   - $70,000-79,999
   - $80,000-89,999
   - $90,000-99,999
   - $100,000-149,999
   - $150,000-
   - I'd rather not say

6. If employed, what occupational classification best describes your primary field of work?
   - Management
   - Business, finance, and administration
   - Natural and applied sciences
   - Health
   - Education, law, and social, community, and government services
   - Arts, culture, recreation, and sport
   - Sales and service
   - Trade, transport, and equipment operators
   - Natural resources, agriculture, and production
   - Manufacturing and utilities
   - Other (please specify):

7. Do you consider yourself a single parent/guardian?
   - Yes
   - No

8. How many children do you have currently attending Grade 10, 11, or 12 in Saskatchewan?

If more than 1 child in Grade 10 through 12 in Saskatchewan this school year, please keep ONE CHILD in mind as you respond to the following questions:

1. What school does your child currently attend?  
(please spell out name of school)

2. What grade is your child currently in?

3. What gender is your child?  
   - Male  
   - Female

4. In thinking about this child, how important is career planning at this stage of your child's life?  
   - Very Important  
   - Quite Important  
   - Somewhat Important  
   - Not at all Important  
   - Unsure

5. In thinking about this child, how prepared is your child for his or her next career step?  
   - Very prepared  
   - Quite prepared  
   - Somewhat prepared  
   - Not at all prepared  
   - Unsure

6. How prepared do you feel you are in your ability to support your child with his or her next career step?  
   - Very prepared  
   - Quite prepared  
   - Somewhat prepared  
   - Not at all prepared  
   - Unsure

7. What does the term 'career' mean to you?

8. As a parent/guardian, what role do you think you have to play in helping your child with his or her career planning?
9. Specifically, what are you doing to support your child with his/her career planning?

10. What would help you better fill this role?

1. Saskatchewan School Divisions offer various career development services, programs, and resources. From your perspective as a parent/guardian, how important do you perceive such supports in helping your CHILD with career exploration while he/she is in high school?

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<th>Service</th>
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2. From the list, what do you consider the TOP 3 priorities in helping your CHILD with career exploration while he/she is in high school? (1st=top priority)

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<td>2nd Priority</td>
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<td>3rd Priority</td>
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3. Saskatchewan School Divisions offer various career development services, programs, and resources. From your perspective as a parent/guardian, how important do you perceive such supports in helping YOU support your CHILD with career exploration?

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4. From the list, what do you consider the TOP 3 priorities in relation to helping YOU support your CHILD with career exploration while in high school? (1st=top priority)

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<tr>
<td>1st Priority</td>
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<td>2nd Priority</td>
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<td>3rd Priority</td>
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</table>

5. What gaps in services, programs or resources do you see in helping your child with his or her career development?

6. What connections could be made between parents and schools in relation to career development supports for children/students?
7. What do you think your child will most likely be doing in the first year after leaving high school? (Check all that apply.)

☐ Full Time Studies at university, college, or technical institute
☐ Part Time Studies at university, college or technical institute
☐ Apprenticeship
☐ Other training
☐ Full time work
☐ Part time work
☐ Travel
☐ Enter military
☐ Volunteer
☐ Exchange experience
☐ Return to high school or upgrading

Other (please specify) ________________________________________________

8. Please feel free to provide any additional comments you believe will help schools better understand and plan for the career planning needs of Saskatchewan youth.

__________________________________________________________________
5. Conclusion

1. If you wish to be provided with a summary of the findings upon completion of the study, please provide your email address. Please know confidentiality is ensured, but anonymity can no longer be guaranteed.

2. Are you willing to engage in a telephone interview to further discuss ideas presented in this survey?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
6. Telephone Interview Contact Information

1. Thanks for your willingness to engage in a possible telephone interview. Please know, by providing information below, your confidentiality is ensured but anonymity can no longer be guaranteed.

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<th>Information</th>
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7. End of Survey

Thank you for your time.

Results of this study will provide a provincial picture of what parents are doing to support the career investigations of their children and how they perceive various school-based supports. In doing so, it is hoped the findings will contribute to the current literature and help reveal possible connection points for parents/guardians and Saskatchewan high schools in support of the career development process of high-school children.

Your contribution is appreciated.

Cheers!
Appendix F: Telephone Interview Questions

Telephone Interview Script:
Greetings! This is Vanessa Lewis, a graduate student at the University of Regina. Thank you for indicating your willingness to participate in a telephone interview as a follow up to the online questionnaire you completed as part of a Saskatchewan career-development focused research study.

As a parent/guardian, you are a key influencer in the career development process of your child(ren). This telephone interview will involve about 10 minutes of your time and will consist of open response questions. Please know, your responses will be kept confidential and you are not obligated to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. All data will be aggregated so individuals cannot be identified.

As mentioned on the online survey, the purpose of this study is to describe what parents/guardians of Saskatchewan high school students are currently doing to support the life career development of their children, to better understand how they perceive career development supports offered by schools, and to explore whether or not any possible connections can be made between parents and schools in order to help young people with the career exploration process especially during the time of transition from secondary school to life beyond. This study is viewed as an opportunity to highlight possible intersection points for parents and schools in support of the career exploration process of the primary stakeholders – your children.

This study has been granted approval by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. There are no known risks associated with this study. The results of this research may be presented in educational circles or published in professional journals, but reports will indicate only overall findings consisting of aggregated data and anonymous quotes so individuals cannot be identified.

Statement of Consent:
I must ask, are you willing to participate in this telephone interview?
If yes, thank participant and proceed with interview questions.
If no, thank participant for time and end call.
Follow-up Interview Questions:

1. In relation to gaps in current career-related services, programs, and resources offered by SK high schools, 2 main gaps were reported.
   a. The first gap indicated by survey respondents is the lack of awareness of the career-related supports provided by SK high schools. What are your thoughts on this?
   b. The next most significant gap reported is in relation to the need for student access to “real-world” experiences to help youth with career development and exploration. In your opinion, what types of ‘real-world’ experiences would be most valuable to your children/our students?

2. Survey respondents suggested possible connections that could be made between parents and schools in regard to career development supports for children/students. The main connection suggested is for improved 3 way communication between students/children, parents, and career counselors. In your opinion, what are some ways this could be accomplished?

3. Interestingly, when parents/guardians reported on the perceived helpfulness of various career development supports for children and themselves, there was some overlap. For instance, Individual Career Counseling and Career and Work Exploration classes were viewed as the Top 2 priorities in terms of helping child and in helping parent/guardian support child with career exploration process. What do you think about this?

4. If it were suggested to you that ‘career’ is “the sum of one’s life experiences and that every person has a career which includes all of the individuals work, learning, recreational, community, and family roles”, what are your thoughts on ways Saskatchewan schools and parent/guardians might partner in support of the career development process of youth?

5. Home is an important place for career conversations, interactions, and interventions with youth and it is very encouraging a theme emerged in this study indicating parents are allowing for open dialogue and communication within the home regarding career-related issues. What are some things you are doing to encourage these conversations? Do you have any thoughts on how schools may be able to support such conversations?

Thank you for your time.