

# ***The Seamless Web: Minnesota's New Education System***

## **16 The Lifework Plan**

### **Joe, age 18**

Joe is a senior at Jones High School. As he sits at his bedroom desk filling out college application forms, he is reflecting back on how fast time has gone since 9th grade. Although he is still not absolutely sure about his future, Joe knows that he would be lost without some of the experiences he has had over the past years through the school's system requirement for lifework planning. He pulls out his portfolio that is very useful for filling out application materials because it has all of his transcript and academic credit information. It also includes all of the interest inventories, test scores, resource lists, employer references, and other pieces of valuable information that he has collected.

Joe feels very grateful for all the time he has spent in the guidance office talking about post-high-school options, gathering materials on different types of colleges and meeting with college representatives. He can't imagine how students who have not had those opportunities have made a decision about what direction to take after high school. Joe is happy that he has had the chance to take an English class in his high school and receive both high school and college credit from a nearby college for the same course.

Joe has also taken a class in 12th grade called Business and Personal Law. The high school credit for that class can be counted for college. In that class, a local legal aid would come in and teach the class and the teacher was able to do research in a lawyer's office. The whole class got to sit in on two different court cases. Joe is very glad that his parents talked him into taking the class during one of their planning sessions with his counselor. Some law-related career will probably be the right choice for the future.

As Joe finishes his application, the phone rings. It is Joe's mentor wondering if he has finished his volunteer hours for his service learning credit. Each student at Jones is required to put in 60 hours of volunteer work in the community before graduation. Each student is assigned a mentor to help him set up the volunteer experience. At first, Joe remembers being angry about having to do the work, but it wasn't long before he really enjoyed the work with the residents in the nursing home.

Joe reviews his application with confidence. His mentor has worked with him on the vignette he has written to describe his service and he has used that to respond to the essay questions on the application form. It feels good to have plans for the future.

### **Jim, age 40**

If you had asked Jim three years ago what he would be doing today, whatever answer he gave would probably have been way off the mark. When Jim had contacted the Workforce Center, he was at his wits end. After working ten years in a meat-packing plant, he went to work in the sales department at a local business. When that job was eliminated after two years, he realized that he would need some type of retraining if he was going to have any kind of stability in the future. Although he was a high school graduate, the skills from his past jobs were not worth much in the local job market.

With help from the Private Industry Council, Jim developed his Lifework Plan and followed his expressed interests by completing an Automotive Technology course at the area technical college. He is now the foreman at a business in his home town. Jim says that he could not believe something like this would ever happen to him. In his words, "If I had a dream, this would be it."<sup>130</sup>

These two examples were written by Minnesota's Department of Children, Families and Learning and are intended both to illustrate the nature of lifework plans as well as to put a positive spin on such plans. While state law does not require such plans, School-to-Work does,

and Minnesota's STW grant application says "All Minnesota learners will develop a lifework plan which will be included as one component of the stated Profile of Learning." (Emphasis added.)<sup>131</sup>

CFL defines the program as follows:

A lifework plan is a personal information system that will benefit decision-making. It is a living document, frequently revised. The Lifework plan should support and integrate elements that are already in place in the local community, such as individualized learning plans and/or career development plans. It should provide a format such as a portfolio for collecting relevant materials. Most educators foresee a computer record-keeping system that supplements paper files. [Emphasis added.]<sup>132</sup>

Notice that the lifework plan is much more than career counseling. CFL calls it a "personal information system." Notice also that CFL intends that all learners have a "mentor" who helps them design and complete this lifework plan. The example above of "Joe" refers to this mentor three times. It refers to his parents once.

A mentor is much more than a counselor. A "mentor," by definition, is a role-model, an object of affection and admiration, and a substitute parent. In the fields of child and adolescent psychology, a mentor provides the pattern used in the formation of a child's or adolescent's identity. The child subconsciously says, "I will be like this person; I will define myself by becoming like this person." A child's personality, attitudes, values, beliefs, world-view, goals, dreams—almost everything is deeply affected by this mentoring relationship. Normally this identification process involves a personal and private relationship. In the new system of education, however, it becomes very public and is oriented toward a group consciousness. The lifework plan is part of the national seamless web from cradle-to-grave and is recorded on the computerized data system that will be interconnected with all other Minnesota schools, with CFL, with potential employers and with various agencies of the federal government. CFL says:

The learner, the learner's parent or guardian, school and career counselors, and other appropriately trained personnel can review a record of all the lifework development activities and progress on the Basic Skills and Profile of Learning elements of the Graduation Standards. The record includes, but is not limited to, the most current information regarding:

- 1) goals, skills, abilities needs and interests;
- 2) progress on the graduation standards;
- 3) service learning experiences;
- 4) out-of-school learning experiences;
- 5) career development experiences;
- 6) other work-based activities.[Emphasis added.]<sup>133</sup>

Why doesn't the public nature of this highly personal information raise serious questions about confidentiality in the minds of the architects of this system? The reason is because it's all about a child's identity, which, to CFL, is a group identity.

CFL says the task is about: "This is who and where I am."<sup>134</sup> We can see, once again, that this means the lifework plan includes career planning, but that is not the heart and center of it. The heart and center of the lifework plan is describing "Who I am." The lifework plan is all about self- definition. It is all about a person's new group identity.

Along these lines, CFL said that the first principle underlying career development is "a lifelong process of self-development, [with] work being viewed as a vehicle for self-clarification." (Emphasis added.)<sup>135</sup> So what is career planning really all about? CFL says once

again that it is a means for "self-clarification." *The real goal is forming the identity of the student.*

If forming the student's identity is the first goal of life work planning, what is the second goal? CFL describes it as, "the opportunity to examine life roles, occupations, and life styles."<sup>136</sup> What are "life roles" and "lifestyles"? They are highly specific, and often controversial, aspects of self-clarification. This second goal of the lifework plan is the same as the first—identity formation—only stated in more detail.

Where is all this coming from? CFL answers that, too. It says:

The concept of reviewing a student's life plan each year is taken from the concept of life stages which has long been used in the field of developmental psychology....The person most significant in the field of career development has been the late Donald Super. He is [known for using]...the work of Carl Rogers (1942) to develop his self-concept theory in which he believed a person's behavior is a reflection of individual's attempts to implement their self-descriptive and self-evaluative thought, or their concept of who they thought they were.<sup>137</sup>

What is this? The goal of the new educational programs is identity-formation based on the controversial theory of Donald Super. Super's books include: *Appraising Vocational Fitness by Means of Psychological Tests and Career Development: Self-Concept Theory.*"

Super's theories are founded on the world-view of the late prominent humanist, Carl Rogers. The reader may wish to review the work of psychologist Paul Vitz, called *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self Worship*, where Vitz argues that Roger's self-concept theory is far more about religious values than about science.<sup>138</sup>

As CFL has so clearly said, career counseling in the lifework planning process is not the primary goal; the primary goal is self-definition, which, according to CFL, includes "cross-cultural differences [e. g. homosexuality, see glossary], gender, spirituality, family and leisure." (Emphasis added.)<sup>139</sup> *Do we really want the education central-planners deeply involved in defining the spirituality of our children? (Or their "gender," "family," and "leisure"?)*

Self-definition necessarily includes a deep spiritual component. It cannot be avoided. Self-definition includes all attitudes and values—moral, religious, and occupational. Self-definition includes every significant aspect of a person's life. If self-definition is now a central purpose of all our schools, from cradle-to-grave, then considerations that are inescapably religious must be part of the process. Self-definition—that includes spirituality, that includes group consciousness, that includes life-styles—is the ultimate in social-engineering.

Remember how CFL defended the new system of education by telling us we should ask what we wanted students "to be like." Social engineering that culminates in self-definition is the means for answering that question. Throw in the progressive education assumption that society is responsible for all the evils in the world; then add a myriad of group identification activities, and we end up with a highly programmed, collective view of life, personality and responsibility.

What will be the result of this social engineering? Jennifer Morse describes it as follows: "Collectivizing the formation of character and values is a recipe for disaster. A more promising argument, then, is that the individual is responsible for the content of his preferences and the behavior that flows from them."<sup>140</sup>

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Notes:

130. Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, "Lifework Planning: A Discussion Guide for Minnesota Communities," October, 1997, pp. D-3 & D-5.
131. Minnesota School-to-Work Initiative, p. 20.
132. "Lifework Planning: A discussion Guide for Minnesota Communities," p. A-1.
133. Ibid., p. B-7.
134. Ibid., p. B-6
135. Ibid., p. C-16
136. Ibid., p. C-17
137. Ibid., P. C-16
138. Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion: the Cult of Self Worship*,(Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977).
139. "Lifework Planning," p. C-17
140. Jennifer Roback Morse, "Who puts the self in self-interest?" *Religion and Liberty*, November and December 1998. p. 7.