A Model Job Training Program for Summer Youth: Library Interns at Grambling State University A. C. Lewis Memorial Library, Grambling, Louisiana

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ABSTRACT

A six-week university library intern program sponsored by the Job Training Partnership Act investigated the impact on 12 economically disadvantaged young persons facing nationally recognized problems pertaining to inadequate reading and math skills, work ethics, job skills, and motivation to complete school. Participants, predominantly (92%) African-American high school students, worked at Grambling State University, an historically black university, under predominantly (85%) African-American supervisors. Interns received academic enrichment, work experience, and life skills, primarily through pre-testing, classroom training, orientations by
departmental supervisor, "hands-on" group projects, written assignments, daily reviews, and post-testing. Statistical data verify recommendations in the literature that job training programs for youth be well-organized and include classroom teaching, orientation, supervision, written job descriptions and procedures, counseling on positive work attitudes and perseverance, evaluation, and development of marketable skills (especially computer technology). Interns succeeded, learned skills later described on their resumes and job application letters, and gained self-esteem and job assistance that, for most (67%), led to employment within a year. The study suggests that participants in similar library programs-most particularly those at historically black colleges or universities-improve their chances of entering the workforce permanently at higher income levels and of continuing their education at the college level.

**Problem**

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program, precursor of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-220, August 7, 1998), reported that a problem existed nationwide with a significant number of economically disadvantaged young persons, aged 14 to 21 years, who lacked adequate reading and math skills, lacked strong work foundations and employment competencies, and lacked motivation to complete school (United States Dept. of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, n.d.). The purpose of the JTPA Title II-B “Summer Youth Employment and Training Program: 1998” was to provide participants with academic enrichment and work experiences that would help them build and refine strong work foundations and employment, leading ultimately to a long-term attachment to and success in a rapidly changing labor market.1

Could a contextual learning program in a university library setting help solve the problems of inadequate reading and math skills, work ethics, job skills, and motivation to complete school that many economically disadvantaged young persons face? We wanted to know, if a group of economically disadvantaged young persons were to serve as library interns for six weeks:

1. Would their reading and math skills improve by the end of the program?
2. Would their age affect their reading or math performance?
3. Would their educational level (school grade) correlate with their reading or math performance?
4. Would their knowledge increase of alphanumeric skills, library catalogs, reference collections, special collections, serials and acquisitions, microforms and media, and technical services, following classroom and on-the-job training?
5. Would their specialized job training (classroom and on-the-job) benefit any area of the library more than another?

6. Would their test scores correlate with their job satisfaction, their own self-evaluations, and the evaluations of their work by their supervisors?

The design of the program was expected to result in improvement of interns' reading and math scores and in their knowledge of alphanumeric skills, library catalogs, and basic departments or areas within a library. The program was based on JTPA-set goals, all of which were suitable for developing entry-level employees who would contribute to achieving an employer's overall objectives; the JTPA goals were, therefore, expected to succeed when applied in a contextual-learning library setting. Factors hypothesized to relate to success or failure included participant age, grade-level achievement, assigned area, and evaluation. We expected higher test scores to be linked to higher (or more positive) evaluations, older interns, higher grade-level achievement, and greater job satisfaction. We expected lower test scores to be linked to lower (or more negative) evaluations, younger interns, lower grade-level achievement, and less job satisfaction. We also expected that adequate supervision and adequate variety in job tasks would be linked to higher test scores and higher evaluations and job satisfaction. The hypotheses were that (1) test scores and evaluations are valid indicators of on-the-job success, from the points of view of both employer and employee and (2) that adequate attention from supervisors will result in greater productivity and more positive evaluations by both employer and employee.

**Review of the Literature**

A search of the literature revealed no JTPA library internship programs similar to the one implemented by the A. C. Lewis Memorial Library at Grambling State University (GSU). Ninety-three articles listed in Library Literature (1984-1999) described the roles student assistants play in college and university libraries, 71 articles described internship programs in libraries, and 8 articles described apprentices in libraries, but none of these described JTPA-sponsored programs. Other indexes and the Internet revealed hundreds of articles describing JTPA programs that supported some type of on-the-job training, but none of them described JTPA programs in libraries. Several articles described contextual learning sites and School-to-Work settings. Terms used interchangeably in the literature with “contextual learning” included “experiential learning,” “real-world education,” “active learning,” and “learner-centered instruction” (Weinbaum and Rogers, 1995). The National School-to-Work Opportunities Office reported, in 1996, a close relationship between contextual learning and actual experience. According to this office, whether or not contextual learning sites are successful depends on the relationship of the teaching methods, content, situation, and timing. To succeed, participants in such programs must receive “hands-on” experience
that teaches them about the workplace and allows them to work. The Office reported practices developed by the Rindge School of Technical Arts in Massachusetts, which advised that contextual learning sites carefully structure their programs through a combination of in-class preparation, coordination with supervisors, and careful sequencing of learning experiences that gradually increase levels of complexity so that students have many opportunities to experience a wide variety of work settings.

Lewis, Stone, Shipley, and Madzar (1998) provided a detailed examination of the literature pertaining to School to Work. They reviewed the problems described in the 1983 report, A Nation at Risk, prepared by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, which pointed out that the nation's economic vulnerability was tied to the lack of academic basic skills (math, science, English, and computer skills). Lewis et al. stated that, from the time A Nation at Risk was published in 1983 to the present, the business community has blamed the educational system for the shortcomings in American competitiveness, especially in comparison with economic competitiveness of Japan and Germany. Apprenticeships on the German model (which last up to 3 years and include 2 days per week of vocational training) have been pointed to as one way to help high school students enter the labor market with necessary skills. Lewis et al. concluded, with numerous other studies, that groups of persons chronically lacking in “workplace basic skills are high school dropouts, welfare recipients, unwed mothers, and those with recent histories of arrests,” groups proven to be associated with race, socioeconomic class, and ethnicity (p. 16). Lewis et al. strongly recommended the need for research in the area of employers with outstanding programs of youth work to serve as models that other workplaces can imitate.

Spectrum: The Journal of State Government published an article in 1997 describing the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, which provided states with five-year federal grants to help them establish school-to-work systems. The Act was designed to help students become more aware of careers and work environments through practical work-based activities that help develop workplace and technical skills. The Act supports programs that link the curricula of schools with the workplace, so that students may more clearly understand the relationship existing between the two. (United States Dept. of Education, 1997)

Problems reported in the literature that are associated with on-the-job training programs for young persons include (1) the need for supervision; (2) the need for a written job description; (3) the need for a written outline of tasks to be accomplished; (4) the need for counseling, especially on the development of positive attitudes and perseverance; (5) the need for a structured evaluation system that mirrors evaluation provided for permanent employees; (6) the need for gaining meaningful job skills; and (7) the need for special approaches related to diverse backgrounds in the workplace (Heinrich, 1998;
As documented extensively by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), American employers see that a problem exists with the workforce (United States Dept. of Labor, Employment & Training Administration, 1990). The SCANS report lists ten core competencies identified by the National Academy of Science that are essential to workplace competency: reasoning and problem-solving, reading, writing, computation, science and technology, command of the English language, oral communication, interpersonal relationships, social and economic studies, and personal work habits and attitudes. Other basic requirements for success in the workplace, based on a thorough survey of employer needs (named in the SCANS report by the Committee for Economic Development), include ten broad areas of skill attributes, four of which were singled out as being the most important to entry-level employees: (1) striving to do well, (2) learning how to learn, (3) priority setting, and (4) communication (pp. 20-26).

The school-to-work and workforce-development contingents are creating on-the-job training environments that better prepare students for work. Solutions described include (1) internships supervised at state and local levels, (2) teaching that fosters the integration of information and skills (especially math, science, reading, and writing skills), (3) the creation by employers of hiring practices that emphasize grades and school reputation for young workers, (4) hands-on skills training taught in conjunction with remedial education, (5) studies that compare different employment and training programs, (6) training of teachers in ways to link classroom work with actual jobs (integration of academic and occupational skills), and (7) high-quality, on-the-job mastering of marketable skills (Lefler, 1998; Saul, 1998; “What Employers Can Do,” 1998; “Employers Want Basic and Technical Skills, Says General Motors CEO,” 1997; McFadden and Randall, 1996; Lee, 1995; Romano, 1995; Barnes, 1994; Churchill, 1994; Greenberg, Meyer, and Wiseman, 1994; and Edling, 1993).

The exhaustive study by Ruhm (1997) reported that jobs held during the senior year of high school, in particular, “yield substantial and lasting benefits” pertaining to greater annual earnings 6 to 9 years later. He found that “student employment raises future productivity through the skills, knowledge, work habits, and experience provided on-the-job by far more than it detracts from educational human capital investments” (p. 15).

**Purpose and Rationale**

The A. C. Lewis Memorial Library, located on the campus of GSU (an historically black university, with an average student enrollment of approximately 5,000) in the
rural community of Grambling (population of 5,152),2 together with the Employment and Training Division of the Coordinating and Development Corporation of Shreveport, Louisiana, co-sponsored a JTPA Library Intern “contextual learning” program from June 15 through July 24, 1998. The purpose of the program was to provide interns with academic enrichment, work experience in a university library, and support services that included life skills and exposure to other libraries.

The two goals of the program were for interns (1) to enhance their basic math and reading skills, demonstrated through pre- and post-tests; and (2) to complete their work at the library, demonstrated through library assignments and evaluations by supervisors. The program would be considered a success if at least 50% of the interns

- enhanced their math and reading skills, as demonstrated by JTPA-administered tests;
- enhanced their library skills, as demonstrated by “library skills” tests administered by the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor;
- submitted completed library assignments pertaining to the Reference Department, the Serials Department, MicroText & Media Center, and the African-American Center; and
- received positive evaluations for shelf-reading resources in the Circulation Department (responsible for the shelving of the main library collection), the Reference Department, the African-American Center, the Serials Department, and the MicroText & Media Center.

Interns were to receive a structured learning experience where progress in reading and math skills would be measured and documented by pre- and post-tests administered by the JTPA Lincoln Parish Office, where a specially hired JTPA Instructor/Supervisor would measure and document progress via weekly evaluations, where GSU area librarians (faculty) and library paraprofessionals would evaluate overall progress at the end of the program, and where learning would take place via classroom lectures on basic job skills, professional conduct, state civil service job application processes, resume preparation, and job application letters.

The JTPA Instructor/Supervisor was to introduce and reinforce the rigors, demands, rewards, and sanctions associated with holding the job and to document the interns' learning experiences through developing employee portfolios for all interns. Interns were to receive instruction pertaining to work attitudes, work values, and work habits from both the overall JTPA Instructor/Supervisor and the area supervisor(s) to whom interns were assigned. Relevant learning was to include academic instruction on alphanumeric sequencing, development of work habits based on written job descriptions, refinement of work attitudes (discussed in the classroom by the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor and guest lecturers), refinement of work values (discussed in the
Interns were to receive awareness and prevention information on sexual harassment and AIDS and were to be transported by the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor to visit Prescott Library at Louisiana Tech University and the Lincoln Parish Public Library, both located in Ruston (a rural city of 19,615 situated six miles east of Grambling).3

Interns who completed the program were to receive a “Library Skills” Certificate of Completion for alphanumeric sequencing of books, periodicals, microforms, and media; phone etiquette; Internet searching; online searching for books and periodical articles; and CD-ROM searching. In addition, they would receive a “Career Development Skills” Certificate of Completion for resume preparation, job application letter preparation, job interviewing skills, and professional conduct; a resume describing the skills and training they received; and a sample job application letter describing the skills and training they received.

Interns who completed the program were to be asked to complete an evaluation survey to report their satisfaction with the services received.

METHOD

JTPA Interns

During the Spring of 1998, the Lincoln Parish JTPA Office notified parish high schools about the Summer Youth program and invited applicants and proposals from area government agencies. Twelve applicants were selected for placement in the contextual learning program at the library. The Lincoln Parish JTPA Officer told the interns that they would be participating in a “model” program that would be described in a final report submitted for publication and for presentation at professional meetings. The group of JTPA library interns was comprised of nine females and three males, aged 16 through 20 years, 11 of whom were African-American and one of whom was Caucasian, all of whom were economically disadvantaged and residents of rural Lincoln Parish (population of 41,635).4 The interns were diverse in their learning abilities as indicated by their math and reading pre-test scores, ranging from 4th grade to 13th grade. One teacher-certified professional librarian was hired as the on-site instructor and overall supervisor.

Materials Used and Library Setting
A budget of $1,410 was provided by JTPA for supplies and included folders, pens, pencils, tables, paper, stamp pads, printer ribbons, and other job-related materials needed by interns. Also included was the price of the rental of a vehicle for a field trip. Library interns were paid minimum wage ($5.15 per hour). The JTPA Instructor/Supervisor was paid $15 an hour. The program was conducted in the main library for GSU. Interns signed in every morning in Technical Services. The JTPA Instructor/Supervisor kept time sheets in a folder on a shelf near her desk. Actual hours worked were carefully documented by all interns, who signed in each morning at 8:00 a.m., signed out for lunch at 12:00 noon, signed in at 1:00 p.m., and signed out at 5:00 p.m. If the interns wished to do so, they ate sack lunches at a designated table in Technical Services. They were given two 15-minute breaks each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, which mirrored library policy for permanent employees.

Shortly after signing in each morning, interns proceeded to classroom training, held in a conference room that had a chalkboard. Following instruction, interns dispersed to their assigned areas: four interns were assigned to the Circulation Department, two to the Reference Department, one to the Technical Services area, two to the Acquisitions/Serials Department, one to the MicroText & Media Center, and two to the African-American Center (a special collection). Interns worked 32 hours per week, 8 hours per day, Tuesday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., whereas the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor worked 40 hours per week, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Each Monday was set aside for the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor to make lesson plans, construct learning activities and tests, purchase necessary supplies, make arrangements for guest speakers and field trips, and meet with departmental/area supervisors to discuss plans for and performance of the interns.

Procedure

The program consisted of several components: academic enrichment, work experience, and life-skills training.

Academic Enrichment

Interns' reading and math skills were measured and documented through pre- and post-tests administered by the JTPA Lincoln Parish Office. Interns took part in a structured learning experience on the job (contextual learning) in which progress in library skills was measured through pre- and post-testing by the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor and through evaluations by librarians (faculty) and library paraprofessionals.

On the first morning that the interns arrived at the job site, the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor gave them a tour of the library. Librarians and paraprofessionals
provided brief introductions of their areas when the group arrived on the tour. Supervisors described the policies, regulations, and routines interns would be expected to follow, which included dressing as professionally as possible. The Instructor/Supervisor stressed punctuality and courteous behavior. Each week, Tuesday mornings were designated as the time when interns were pre-tested on skills for a particular department or area of the library. The Instructor/Supervisor and interns met in a conference room that was reserved exclusively for their use during the six-week period. After the pre-test, the Instructor/Supervisor taught the interns about the department or area on which they had just been tested. All of the information presented during class was directly related to the skills necessary for successful job performance. Following the classroom presentation, the interns were taken to the department or area on which they had just been pre-tested and trained, and there they received a tour by the head librarian. The interns were given an assignment pertaining to each department or area, which had to be completed and turned in to the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor according to a designated deadline each week.

Every morning the Instructor/Supervisor gave the interns several minutes to write an account of their activities from the previous day and to ask questions and share work experiences. The Instructor/Supervisor then instructed the interns further. During the second week of the program, one of the librarians, who had worked as a professional resume consultant for ten years, spoke to the interns about the preparation of a resume and appropriate ways to seek employment. Some of the classroom instruction time each morning was devoted to preparation of resumes, from the rough draft to the final copy. Friday mornings were designated for post-testing on library skills taught in the classroom and practiced on the job during the previous three days. The library skills post-tests, identical to the pre-tests, were created, administered, and graded by the Instructor/Supervisor.

Because the library was divided into six departments or areas, the academic enrichment component was divided into six week-long segments. During the first week, the Instructor/Supervisor taught the interns about Melvil Dewey and the rationale behind the Dewey Decimal System of Classification, the system utilized by the library. Classroom lectures described the types of books in each of the ten main classes, the shelf order of books, and the correct way to arrange numbers in sequence. The Instructor/Supervisor explained proper sequencing for three-digit numbers first, then numbers with decimals, followed by classification numbers with Cutter numbers. The card and online catalogs were described, along with alphabetical order and the way to identify author, title, and subject cards or entries. The Instructor/Supervisor also lectured on the parts of a catalog entry and how to use the online catalog to locate materials.
The Instructor/Supervisor continued instructing the interns about shelf order during the second week when the Reference area of the library was studied. Especially important during this time was the recognition of various prefixes to the Dewey Decimal Classification numbers, which designated various sections of the Reference collection unique to the A. C. Lewis Memorial Library. The Instructor/Supervisor taught the interns the differences between reference books and the circulating collection and explained four types of reference questions: directional, ready reference, specific search, and research. She also taught them to recognize and know the purpose of the basic types of reference works such as the atlas, the dictionary, the encyclopedia, and the almanac. The Instructor/Supervisor, Reference librarians, and Reference paraprofessionals also introduced the interns to ProQuest (General Periodicals and ABI Inform). The Reference assignment for the week included several reference questions to answer.

The African-American Center (the library's special collection of material by and about persons of African-American descent) was the focus of the third week of the program. The Instructor/Supervisor and African-American Center Librarian both taught the interns about the purpose of the collection and its contents. The head librarian explained to the interns the importance of the vertical file to the special collection and also explained how it was maintained. Shelf order and special prefixes were again stressed since all African-American Center call numbers were preceded by the letter “A.” Interns were taught to be especially alert to books (without the “A”) which might be misshelved so that they could be returned to the proper location in the library. As part of the weekly assignment, the Instructor/Supervisor requested the interns to locate specific books and periodicals from this special collection.

During the fourth week of the program the emphasis was on serials. The Instructor/Supervisor introduced the interns to the location of several major newspapers in the library, which they needed to be able to identify to library patrons. The Instructor/Supervisor and Serials Librarian lectured on the shelf order of bound periodicals (arranged by call number) and unbound periodicals (arranged alphabetically by title) and the peculiarities involved with the alphabetizing of periodical titles (e.g., omission of initial articles). Interns also were taught how to use the online databases accessed through Louisiana Online University Information System (LOUIS) to locate holdings of academic libraries throughout Louisiana and to use several online periodical indexes, including Readers' Guide Abstracts. The Serials Librarian taught the interns how to use InfoTrac, and she reviewed ProQuest (General Periodicals and ABI Inform), emphasizing the retrieval of full-text and citations of magazine articles. At this point, the Instructor/Supervisor taught the interns about magazine articles that might be on microfilm or microfiche and pointed out that an article might sometimes be found in
several different formats. She then gave the interns a special assignment to determine their understanding of serials.

The MicroText & Media Department was covered during the fifth week. The Instructor/Supervisor lectured the interns on the difference between microfilm and microfiche and why libraries use materials in microform. The MicroText & Media Librarian made the interns aware of the newspapers the library had available on microfilm and taught them how to use the microfilm/microfiche readers/printers. She also discussed the video collection as well as its arrangement. The online databases taught in this area included NewsBank and New York Times. Of special interest to some of the interns were the college catalogs on microfiche. Each intern was given an individual assignment to locate several specific items on microfiche, on microfilm, and in the electronic databases.

During the final week of the program, the interns were shown the various aspects of the Technical Services area. The Head of Acquisitions/Serials taught the interns how to use Books in Print to determine prices and availability of books that had been requested by faculty. The Coordinator of Technical Services showed the interns several ways in which a cataloger might locate information to classify a book (using Online Computer Library Center data, Cataloging in Publication, and original cataloging from the Dewey Decimal System of Classification schedules). Technical Services paraprofessionals demonstrated to the interns the steps involved in processing new materials.

**Work Experience**

Under the direction of the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor, interns were taught about the responsibilities of employment, including appropriate attire, punctuality, initiative, and efficiency. Area librarians taught the interns the particular skills unique for working in their areas.

The head of each department or area was responsible for assigning tasks and supervising the interns, and at times a paraprofessional also shared this responsibility. The JTPA Instructor/Supervisor visited the various departments or areas several times daily to determine if the interns were performing their assigned duties and to learn from the interns and department heads if conditions were satisfactory. Depending on the needs of the library program, interns were sometimes asked to work either in pairs or in teams. They were required to interact with each other, with the library staff, and with patrons. Sometimes a librarian gave the interns a specific problem to solve which required a considerable amount of thought and strategy. The Instructor/Supervisor gradually increased the complexity of the lessons in order to teach the organization of the library. In every department, interns were called upon to organize materials.
Every Friday during the six-week program, the Instructor/Supervisor met with the interns individually to discuss their job performances. The evaluation was based on observations by the Instructor/Supervisor and on discussions with the supervising librarians. The Instructor/Supervisor gave each intern a written evaluation sheet which rated the intern as “above average,” “average,” or “needs counsel” in the areas of attitude, quality of work, working with others, and responsibility. The supervising departmental librarian also wrote additional comments as needed. The Instructor/Supervisor invited the interns to discuss their weekly evaluations or make comments if they wished to do so.

At the end of the six-week program, the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor evaluated each intern overall. In addition, the interns' supervisors evaluated the interns using a form similar to that used by the Instructor/Supervisor. Each intern completed a self-evaluation form on the last day of the program. Seven characteristics were measured using five ratings. Characteristics included “work productivity,” “dependability,” “cooperativeness,” “adaptability,” “communication,” “daily decision-making/problem-solving,” and “service to the public.” Ratings included “outstanding,” “very good,” “satisfactory,” “needs improvement,” and “poor.”

**Life Skills Training**

Interns received training in work habits, attitudes, values, and goal-setting through discussions with their departmental or area supervisors and through presentations by guest speakers. Interns heard lectures on basic job skills, professional conduct, job service processes, and preparation of resumes. During the fourth week of the program, guest speakers presented programs to the interns on three different days. The first speaker was an alumnus, a young man who had been GSU Student Government Association President, and who had, following graduation, become Special Assistant to the President of the University. He spoke to the interns about leadership qualities and the meaning of being a good citizen. The second speaker was the Director of Management Development (from the Management Information Center of GSU), who presented a seminar on sexual harassment in the workplace. The third speaker, a job counselor from the Louisiana Job Service Office from Ouachita Parish, spoke about the procedures for seeking employment through his agency.

During the fifth week, a representative from the GSU Counseling Center spoke to the interns about AIDS. He presented them with information and then held a discussion with them. On another morning during that week, the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor took the interns to the Lincoln Parish Public Library and the Prescott Library (the main library for Louisiana Tech University), both located in Ruston. At both libraries, a
librarian took the interns on a tour and told them about procedures and possible job opportunities for paraprofessionals.

RESULTS

Data were gathered by way of pre- and post-tests pertaining to alphanumeric sequencing of library resources, use of the library catalog of resources, and knowledge of specific areas within the library (Reference, African-American Center, Serials/Acquisitions, MicroText & Media, and Technical Services). Data were also gathered by way of evaluations (from the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor, area supervisors, and JTPA library interns) pertaining to the interns' work attitudes, work quality and quantity, ability to work with others, work responsibility, communication skills, adaptability to change of job tasks, and critical thinking. Demographic data pertaining to JTPA interns' grade-level completed, age, gender, and ethnicity were also gathered.

Using a spreadsheet computer program, raw scores were entered in tabular format and converted to percentage scores. Composite percentage scores on all library skills tests and on all tests (library skills, reading, and math) for each intern were calculated as needed in the creation of graphs and charts that illustrated whether or not post-test scores were improved and that illustrated the correlation between post-test scores and evaluations, age, grade-level achievement, and job satisfaction (supervision). Percentage scores were translated into letter-grade equivalents, based on the grading system utilized by the Lincoln Parish School Board, and an interpretation of “higher” assigned to letter-grade equivalent scores of “A” or “B,” when called for in comparisons. Rankings were tallied pertaining to the value the interns placed on work areas in the library, on key library skills, and on special activities. These rankings were used in the creation of bar graphs.

Statistical Data Summarized

The main findings of the statistical data were that (1) reading test scores either improved or remained at the highest most possible score for 75% of the interns; (2) math test scores either improved or remained at the highest most possible score for 50% of the interns; (3) test scores pertaining to alphanumeric sequencing, the library catalog, reference, special collections, serials/acquisitions, microforms and media, and technical services improved for 92% of the interns; (4) higher post-test scores were more often than not indicative of higher evaluations by employer and interns, (5) higher post-test scores were not indicative of older interns nor were lower post-test scores indicative of younger interns, (6) higher post-test scores more often than not indicated higher grade-level achievements of interns and lower post-test scores indicated lower grade-level achievements, (7) higher post-test scores for reading and library skills more often than
not indicated greater job satisfaction, and (8) adequate supervision more often than not indicated higher (more positive) evaluation scores by employer and interns.

**Reading Test**

Reading test scores either improved or remained at the highest most possible score for 75% of the interns (Fig. 1). Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the interns scored the highest possible score (grade-level 13) on both the pre-test and post-test, and 8% of the interns scored higher on the post-test than on the pre-test. However, 25% of the interns scored lower on the post-test than on the pre-test, dropping by three grade levels. [Fig. 1. Percentage of post-test reading scores that were enhanced or remained at highest possible grade-level.]

**Math Test**

Math test scores either improved or remained at the highest possible score for 50% of the interns (Fig. 2). Of the interns, 33% remained at grade-level 13 (the highest possible score); 17% improved their scores by two grade levels; 8% remained at grade-level 11.9. Forty-two percent (42%) of the interns scored lower on the post-test than on the pre-test, dropping by one to two grade levels. [Fig. 2. Percentage of post-test math scores that were enhanced or remained at highest possible grade-level.]

**Library Skills: Tests 1-8**

Test scores pertaining to alphanumeric sequencing, the library catalog, reference, special collections, serials/acquisitions, microforms and media, and technical services improved for 92% of the interns on all eight tests; the post-test scores for 8% of the interns were higher on six of the eight tests but lower on two of the tests, dropping 2% to 24%.

Composite pre- and post-test scores on the eight library skills tests are shown in Fig. 3. The first two library skills tests dealt with shelf-order (Circulation Department) and the scores for both Test 1 and 2 are combined below in “A.” The remaining tests dealt with the Card Catalog, Reference, African-American Center, Serials/Acquisitions, MicroText & Media Center, and Technical Services. The area showing the most improved post-test scores was MicroText & Media; next in line was Technical Services, then the African-American Center. The areas which showed the least improvement were those pertaining to shelf-order, the card catalog, and reference.

- **A:** Composite Shelf-Order (Library Skills Tests 1 & 2)
- **B:** Card Catalog (Library Skills Test 3)
- **C:** Reference (Library Skills Test 4)
Comparison of Post-test Scores and Evaluation Scores

Post-test reading scores that were higher than pre-test scores were more often than not indicative of higher evaluations by employer and employee, but post-test reading scores that were lower than pre-test scores were not indicative of lower evaluations. However, such was not the case with math post-test scores. Forty-two percent (42%) of the higher post-test math scores corresponded with higher evaluations, but 58% did not correspond. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the higher library skills post-test scores were linked to higher evaluations. When the average of all three post-test scores (for reading, math, and library skills) were combined to form a composite score, 64% positively corresponded with like evaluation ratings (average of all ratings received from the Instructor/Supervisor, the departmental/area supervisor, and the intern); whereas 36% of the post-test scores did not correspond with like evaluation ratings, that is, the composite post-test score was the opposite of the overall evaluation rating (Fig. 4). [Fig. 4. Percentage of evaluation ratings and post-test scores that correlated.]

Of the post-test reading scores that were higher than the pre-test scores, 81% corresponded with “high” evaluation ratings (Fig. 5). Only 19% of the “high” post-test reading scores did not correspond with “high” evaluation ratings. [Fig. 5. Percentage of “high” evaluation ratings that correlated with “high” post-test reading scores.]

Of the post-test reading scores that were lower than the pre-test scores, only 11% corresponded with like evaluation ratings (Fig. 6). In fact, 89% of the “low” post-test scores contrasted with “high” evaluation ratings. [Fig. 6. Percentage of “low” evaluation ratings that correlated with “low” post-test reading scores.]

Only 42% of the post-test math scores that were higher than pre-test scores corresponded with higher evaluations by employer and employee. In fact, 58% of the time, no correspondence existed of either high-to-high or low-to-low between post-test math scores and evaluations (Fig. 7). [Fig. 7. Percentage of “high” evaluation ratings that correlated with “high” post-test math scores.]

Composite library skills post-test scores that were higher than pre-test scores were almost always (83% of the time) linked to higher evaluations by employer and
Comparison of Post-test Scores with Job Satisfaction, Grade-Level, Age, and Supervisory Attention

Comparison were made between post-test scores and the interns' job satisfaction, grade-level achievement, and age to determine if a correlation existed. Job satisfaction from the employee's viewpoint was based on the amount of supervision or one-on-one instruction the employee received from both the area supervisor and the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor, on the variety of job tasks performed, and the number of job tasks performed.

More often than not, post-test scores that were higher than pre-test scores did not correspond with older interns, nor did post-test scores that were lower than pre-test scores correspond with younger interns (Fig. 9). Of the composite percentage grades for all post-tests, 67% revealed no correlation of older interns to post-test scores that were higher than pre-test scores. Eight percent (8%) of the composite post-test scores were the same as pre-test scores, which again showed neither a high-to-old nor a low-to-young correlation. [Fig. 9. Percentage of post-test scores that correlated with age: higher scores to older interns or lower scores to younger interns.

In fact, more often than not, post-test scores that were higher than pre-test scores corresponded with younger interns, and post-test scores that were lower than pre-test scores corresponded with older interns (Fig. 10). Of the composite percentage grades for all post-tests, 58% revealed a correlation of either younger interns to post-test scores that were higher than pre-test scores or a correlation of older interns to post-test scores that were lower than pre-test scores. Eight percent (8%) of the composite post-test scores were the same as pre-test scores, which again showed neither a high-to-young nor a low-to-old correlation. [Fig. 10. Percentage of post-test scores that correlated with age: higher scores to younger interns or lower scores to older interns.

More often than not, post-test scores that were higher than pre-test scores corresponded with higher grade-level achievement of the intern, and, conversely, post-test scores that were lower than pre-test scores corresponded with lower grade-level achievement (Fig. 11). Of the composite percentage grades for all post-tests, 75% revealed a correlation of high-to-high or low-to-low between post-test scores and grade-level achievement. [Fig. 11. Percentage of post-test scores that correlated with grade-level of intern: higher scores to higher grade-level or lower scores to lower grade-level.]
Of the composite percentage grades for all post-tests, 75% revealed a correlation of high-to-high between post-test scores and job satisfaction (Fig. 12). None of the composite evaluation scores (pertaining to job satisfaction) were lower than 83%, although certain areas of the job were ranked as low as 33%. [Fig. 12. Percentage of post-test scores that correlated with job satisfaction: higher scores to greater job satisfaction.]

**Comparison of Supervisory Attention with Evaluation Scores**

Adequacy of supervision as perceived by the intern was compared with evaluation scores by the area supervisors, the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor, and the intern, with a letter-grade equivalent score of “A” or “B” considered to be “adequate supervision” or a “higher evaluation score” and a letter-grade equivalent score of “C,” “D,” or “F” considered to be “inadequate supervision” or a “lower evaluation score.”

Adequate supervision and job satisfaction corresponded with higher evaluations by the area supervisors, the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor, and intern 75% of the time (Fig. 13). For the remaining 25% of the time when correspondence did not exist across the board for the area supervisors, the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor, and intern, adequate supervision corresponded half the time with higher evaluations by the area supervisors and the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor. [Fig. 13. Correspondence of adequate supervision to higher evaluation scores by employer and employee.]

**Significance of Library Departments, Job Skills, and Special Activities to Interns**

Figures 14, 15, and 16 reveal the value the interns placed on different areas or departments in the library, on key library skills, and on several special activities. The two areas or departments in the library the interns valued most were the MicroText & Media Center and the Reference Department, and the two least valued were Acquisitions and Technical Services (Fig. 14). [Fig. 14. Ranking by library interns of library work areas.]

- L1: Main Collection
- L2: Circulation Desk
- L3: Reference
- L4: Serials
- L5: Technical Services
• L6: Acquisitions
• L7: Special Collections (African-American Center)
• L8: MicroText & Media Center

Of the eight skills canvassed, the two skills most valued by the interns were searching the online library catalogs and the Internet; however, almost equally valued were searching other electronic services (InfoTrac, ProQuest, New York Times, NewsBank, SearchBank, and the SilverPlatter indexes available via the LOUIS consortium) and providing Information Desk Service; the two least valued skills were shifting (or rearranging library resources) and shelf-reading library resources (Fig. 15). [Fig. 15, Ranking by library interns of eight library skills.]

• S1: Shelving library resources
• S2: Shelf-reading library resources
• S3: Shifting/rearranging library resources
• S4: Searching online library catalogs
• S5: Searching CD-ROM resources (InfoTrac, ProQuest, New York Times, NewsBank)
• S6: Searching telnet resources (SearchBank and Silver Platter Indexes)
• S7: Searching the Internet
• S8: Providing Information Desk Service

Of the seven special activities provided the interns, the two activities most valued by the interns were the guest lectures on AIDS Awareness and on job services; the two activities least valued by the interns were the field trip to the Lincoln Parish Public Library and the guest lecture on work ethics and professional conduct (Fig. 16). [Fig. 16, Ranking by library interns of seven special activities.]

• A1: Guest Lecture on Job Service
• A2: Guest Lecture on Sexual Harassment
• A3: Guest Lecture on Work Ethics and Professional Conduct
• A4: Guest Lecture on AIDS Awareness
• A5: Field Trip to La. Tech University Library
• A6: Field Trip to Lincoln Parish Public Library
• A7: Ice Cream Break Hosted by Library Staff

Follow-Up Survey One Year After Program

All participants were contacted and asked to respond to a follow-up survey pertaining to whether or not they had remained in school following the program, graduated from high school, become employed, used their resume for any purpose, used their “model” job application letter to apply for work, planned to continue their training or education
after high school, or had selected a vocation or career. Participants were also asked to state which of three job skills acquired during the program were most valuable to their job plans and to make any comments they wished about the program. Only 92% of the participants responded to the follow-up survey, and all respondents did not answer all questions. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the respondents reported they had remained in school following the program and had achieved a higher grade-level. Of the participants who had been seniors in high school (all of whom responded to the follow-up survey), 100% reported that they had graduated. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of all participants obtained employment following the program. Eight percent (8%) of the participants had worked in a bank (15-40 hours per week), 17% of the participants had worked in libraries (10-20 hours per week), 8% of the participants had worked in an elementary school (25 hours per week), 8% had worked in a radio station on weekends, and 25% had worked in fast-food restaurants (up to 30 hours per week) and/or had joined the military (National Guard) and were in basic training (full-time). Fifty percent (50%) of the participants had used their resume; of the respondents to the follow-up survey, 75% reported that they had not used their job application letter. Of the participants who had been in high school during the program, 73% reported that they planned to continue their education—most at the college level. Of the respondents to the follow-up survey, 58% had selected a vocation or career in Accounting, Law or Law Enforcement, Nursing, Business Administration, Photography, or Cosmetology. Participants were asked to rate three job skills they had acquired during the program: (1) alphanumeric sequencing (shelving of books, periodicals, microforms, etc.), (2) library catalog searching (author, title, and subject), and (3) electronic or online database searching (ProQuest, InfoTrac, NewsBank, New York Times, and Readers' Guide). Of the participants who responded to the survey, 63% said electronic/online skills were the most pertinent to their job plans, and 4% named the library catalog searching skills as the most relevant. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the respondents did not reply to this question on the survey. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the participants responded positively when asked to make comments about the program. Remarks included “Good Program,” “Valuable Experience,” “Good Experience—learned a lot,” “Now I can find anything in the library,” “Good program; showed fellow high school students how to access library resources for term paper,” “Learned responsibility and personal finance,” “Really good program,” “I liked it,” and “It was very nice working for JTPA last year. It is so hard to get a job in Ruston. I wish I would have applied for JTPA this year.” The remaining 25% of the participants either did not respond to the survey at all or did not respond to this particular question.

DISCUSSION

Both original hypotheses were found to be true: (1) test scores and evaluations are valid indicators of success on-the-job, from the points of view of both employer and
employee, and (2) adequate attention from supervisors results in higher evaluations by both employer and employee.

The structure of the program and the job tasks performed by the interns helped most of them improve their reading and library skills but not their math skills. When post-test scores improved, most participants were also succeeding in their assigned job tasks in the eyes of their employer and themselves.

We expected older participants to score higher on post-tests, but we found the opposite to be true: the younger the participant, the higher the post-test score. In contrast, the higher the grade-level achievement of a participant, the higher the post-test score. When participants received adequate supervision, they scored higher on post-tests. The department or area within the library that most benefited from classroom and on-the-job training was MicroText & Media and the one that benefited least was the Circulation Department (in the area of call number sequencing).

**Support/Non-Support of Goals**

The two goals of the program were achieved: (1) at least 50% of the interns enhanced or maintained the highest measurable level of their basic math and reading skills, demonstrated through improved scores on post-tests or through maintaining the highest possible scores on post-tests, and (2) at least 50% of the interns completed their work at the library, as demonstrated by completed library assignments and by positive evaluations by supervisors. Originally, the program was to be considered successful if at least 50% of the interns enhanced their math and reading skill, enhanced their library skills, submitted completed library assignments, and received positive evaluations. We did not anticipate that 67% of the interns would score the maximum on the JTPA-administered reading pre-test, which did not allow any way to measure score enhancement, if any, on the post-test. Because these interns scored the maximum on the reading post-test as well, their scores were considered to be “enhanced” for the purpose of calculating the percentage for measuring success, even though their scores remained the same, that is, at the highest possible score (grade-level 13). This same circumstance presented itself on the math test, on which 33% of the interns scored the maximum on both the pre- and post-test, and their scores, likewise, were also considered to be “enhanced” for the purpose of calculating the percentage for measuring success. Allowing for this oddity in calculation, 75% of the interns enhanced (or maintained the highest possible score on) their reading skills; 50% enhanced (or maintained the highest possible score on) their math skills; 100% enhanced their library skills pertaining to alphanumeric sequencing, to the library catalog, to the special collection, to microforms and media, and to technical services; 92% of the interns enhanced their library skills pertaining to reference and serials/acquisitions; 100% of the interns completed their
library assignments; and 92% of the interns received positive evaluations for alphanumeric sequencing of materials. The program far exceeded our expectations.

The direct cost per participant for this highly successful program was $1,406.30. Expenditures used in calculating the direct costs only included salary for participants and the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor (specially hired for the program) and supplies. No indirect costs (for JTPA administration) were included.

The interns built and refined a strong work foundation and employment competency through their observation of the librarians and library paraprofessionals and through learning about resumes and seeking employment. They experienced the discipline of work by adjusting to a daily routine and by adhering to all the demands made of them. The interns became aware of the connection between classroom training and the actual library work. They realized that the tasks assigned them in their work stations were much easier to perform because of their structured classroom instruction. As the interns learned about each area of the library, they were able to develop their technological expertise. They became adept at using the online catalog, several online databases, and microform readers/printers.

**Comparison of Results with Similar Studies**

Our study supports what was found in the literature concerning several issues, including the connection between contextual learning and actual work experience. The following order for training was used by the library and succeeded for almost all interns: pre-test, classroom training, orientation by area supervisor, “hands-on” group practica, written assignment, daily review of the previous day's work, and post-test. This approach was in line with the recommendations of the Massachusetts Rindge School of Technical Arts study (Contextual Learning: Resource Bulletin 1996) for carefully structured programs that combine in-class preparation, coordination with supervisors, and careful sequencing of increasingly complex learning experiences.

Problems which were faced in the present study and which had been identified by Heinrich (1998), Kathman and Kathman (1998), Lefler (1998), Young (1998), Romano (1995), Barnes (1994), and Walsh (1991) included the interns' (1) need for supervision, (2) need for a written job description, (3) need for a written outline of tasks to be accomplished, (4) need for counseling on positive attitudes and perseverance, (5) need for structured evaluation, (6) need for gaining meaningful job skills, and (7) need for special approaches related to diverse backgrounds in the workplace.

As reported by Walsh (1991), because Summer Youth “need supervision, . . . this program is a bit more complicated to manage” (p. 65). We found this problem as well, especially in departments or areas to which more than one participant had been
assigned. Walsh (1991) reported that, for his Farm Bureau JTPA-sponsored youth program in Illinois, written job descriptions and an outline of tasks to be accomplished had to be submitted to the JTPA office in advance, something not required of us. Although our original proposal detailed the overall plan and goals and stated that written job descriptions would be provided to the interns, no mechanism by the JTPA office was in place to require us to provide JTPA with copies of job descriptions. Although the JTPA guidelines did specify that participants were to receive job descriptions, guidelines did not require participants to receive a description of specific assignments or tasks they would be expected to perform. We think some problems we experienced associated with supervision and with interns who at times were seen to be off task could be solved or at least reduced by requiring these two documents early in the program, within a day or two after the program begins.

Young (1998) suggested that creating jobs that matter and that teach useful job skills is essential for librarians hiring student workers. Although Young was discussing the federal work study program, we see direct application to the JTPA Summer Youth program. Young stated that when jobs are created where no need exists [. . . libraries] may end up with a bored and apathetic workforce. Similar problems occur when supervisors, who lack the time to adequately train and supervise students to do complex work, assign them simple, repetitious, and boring tasks. Departments that hire students to do unchallenging tasks will face problems associated with poorly motivated workers. Such employees may make careless errors that detrimentally impact a library's ability to fulfill its mission. . . . Administrators may avoid the problems that poorly challenged workers cause by requesting only that number of . . . positions for which genuine need and adequate supervision exists. (p. 491)

Young concluded that library student assistants can perform short-term and long-term work, from processing material and shelving materials to completing special projects. Variety in job tasks, according to Young, makes it possible for student workers to work at their full potential (p. 491). Our program included both circumstances described by Young. In areas where more than one participant had been assigned, where the tasks lacked variety (e.g., which involved shelving or shelf-reading only), and where area supervisors were unable to be present at all times, interns exhibited such traits as boredom and apathy. We observed that keeping interns on task when the work at hand was repetitive required more, not less, supervision. We observed that areas employing only one or two interns (who were required to perform repetitive tasks) could, nevertheless, keep interns on task if area supervisors were nearby or if they returned to the area periodically to check on the progress of work. The interns clearly favored their assignments that allowed them to use the computer. Using electronic databases (online catalogs, commercial services, or the Internet) was, perhaps, the most meaningful job skill our interns acquired. Young also discussed a problem we faced in our program as
well. She described situations where “supervisors may find themselves faced with the
seemingly overwhelming job of training several new student workers simultaneously”
(p. 492). Toward the end of the program, some area supervisors were on vacation or
unavailable, which caused interns from several departments to be routed to one area
supervisor and the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor. For several days, special projects had
to be planned and implemented by one or two supervisors that would utilize all
participants, a situation unanticipated by the supervisors and one which placed an
unexpected demand on their time. We concur with Young that “common sense
principles of job design and personnel management . . . can make the program work as
intended” (p. 525).

Heinrich (1998) pointed out that the highly disadvantaged person experiences
motivational problems and requires counseling on positive attitudes and perseverance.
Her study of JTPA Title 2A adult participants reported that extra services and intensive
case management were provided—over and above formal job search assistance: “all
participants were members of ‘job clubs' during the employment-seeking stage, and all
also received special counseling assistance to prepare for job search activities” (p. 7).
Although our program was for economically disadvantaged youth, most of whom were
still in high school, the program was similar to the one described by Heinrich in its
provision of intensive preparation for the job search process via the daily classroom and
on-the-job training and counseling about the importance of maintaining positive
attitudes and perseverance. The JTPA Instructor/Supervisor daily spoke to each intern
about attitude and determination, and her counseling was supported by guest lecturers
and area supervisors. However, the most important “case manager” was the
Instructor/Supervisor, who consistently supported the interns and steered them back on
task when they became discouraged or distracted. She counseled them to continue
working and doing their best even when they observed differences in work requirements
among the departments and questioned why they had to do certain tasks when other
interns did not. Support services described by Heinrich that were not used in our
program but which we think would be effective included role-playing, mock job
interviews, and guidance on personal presentation. Services named by Heinrich which
were incorporated in our program included “vocabulary development, . . . motivational
sessions, and assistance with the development of resumes” (p. 13). Vocabulary
development occurred naturally because of the classroom training and structured focus
on the different areas of the library. Motivational sessions were a part of the daily group
meetings held before interns dispersed to their assigned areas, and they were the
complete focus of guest lectures, including one by the Library Director. Like the
program reported by Heinrich, our program required interns to work on the
development of their resumes. We suggest that all these support services contributed to
the success of the participants in completing the program, continuing their employment
elsewhere, and remaining in school. Like the JTPA counselors in Heinrich's study, the
JTPA Instructor/Supervisor in our program “went well beyond the minimum requirements for case management to help participants overcome barriers to successful program completion” (p. 12). For six weeks, our JTPA Instructor/Supervisor rotated from one department to the next throughout each day to ensure that interns were fulfilling their job responsibilities and to help interns get back on task if they drifted off or were not applying themselves. Because of the daily close contact between the interns and the Instructor/Supervisor, a high level of trust was developed and maintained, just as was noted in Heinrich's study. We suggest that this trust contributed to the success of our program and to all interns not only completing the entire six-week internship but also doing so at higher levels than anticipated.

As discussed in the literature, “many African Americans come from backgrounds that prefer oral over written communication.” Verbal instruction was the primary form of communication utilized by all area supervisors and, to a lesser extent, by the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor, in keeping with the ethnicity of the participants (92% African American) and the area supervisors and JTPA Instructor/Supervisor (85% African American) (Kathman and Kathman, 1998, p. 384). Oral instructions and practical “hands-on” demonstrations were used throughout all departments in teaching skills to the interns. All but one department provided written job descriptions and procedures to interns in addition to oral instructions.

Kathman and Kathman (1998) suggested that during “the performance review meeting, the supervisor should discuss what is going well and what can be improved, and set new learning goals” (p. 387). The JTPA Instructor/Supervisor used this same approach in her weekly evaluation meetings with each participant. She maintained the same tone in the evaluation sessions as she used during classroom training and other activities, another approach recommended by Kathman and Kathman.

**Strengths**

Foremost was the fact that the Coordinating and Development Corporation provided funding adequate for personnel (interns and a qualified Instructor/Supervisor), supplies and materials (for interns and Instructor/Supervisor), and travel (for field trips). The success of the program rests largely on funding, but closely following in strength is the stabilizing influence provided by the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor, who had been hired specially to oversee the program. Because of the addition of this full-time professionally trained and teacher-certified librarian, who was experienced as a school librarian, interns received uniform training and “hands-on” practice in basic library skills unique to each area within the library. Interns also received daily counseling on developing positive attitudes and perseverance, which most benefited those who were not required to perform varied tasks by their area supervisor. The JTPA Instructor/Supervisor
regularly introduced variety to all interns by her weekly change of focus to a new area. An immediate confirmation of success came during the fifth week of the program, when the interns took field trips to two nearby libraries (the Prescott Library at Louisiana Tech University and the Lincoln Parish Public Library) and discovered during the tours that their vocabulary had expanded and now included new concepts and words, such as “shifting” and “shelf-reading.”

All interns completed the program successfully and complied with rules set by JTPA and the library. Another strength of the program was the cooperation and support the library staff provided the interns. Librarians and paraprofessionals were very positive and encouraging to the interns in their efforts and performance.

Another strength of the program was the development of professional resumes and “model” job application letters during the last two weeks of the program. One of the interns used the resume developed in the program to apply for another job before the conclusion of the program. Another participant used the resume to obtain a job in the Lincoln Parish Public Library.

One of the strongest points of the program (and which the interns most valued) was that interns developed marketable skills in computer technology through special assignments which required online searching of the Grambling Online Public Access Catalog (GOPAC), Readers' Guide Abstracts, InfoTrac (Expanded Academic, Magazine Index), NewsBank (NewsFile, Business NewsBank, NewsBank Reference Service), and ProQuest (General Periodicals, ABI/Inform, New York Times).

The average of all interns' scores reveal 100% improvement on library skills, from a score below 30% on a pre-test to a high score of 99% on a post-test. On the average, interns showed the most improvement in scores (40%-50%) on tests for MicroText & Media Center and for Technical Services. Excepting the first alphanumeric test, which was the simplest and which only showed a 1% improvement, the scores on which interns showed the least improvement (4%-7%) were the Special Collection (African-American Center) and Reference tests. As indicated by the pre-test and post-test scores, interns definitely gained job skills and knowledge during the course of the week they were being trained on a new area within the library.

From the employer's point of view, the strengths of the program were the accomplishment of several essential tasks in the operation of the library, as follows:

- the planning and implementation of a major rearrangement of the bound periodicals to accommodate twice the number of volumes as before,
- a major rearrangement of the book collection,
• the shelf-reading and rearrangement of one-fourth of the compact storage area for bound periodicals,
• the verification of the printing on spines for approximately 1000 volumes of periodicals returned from binder,
• the re-labeling of call number signs at the end of shelves, following the major rearrangement of bound periodicals,
• the retrieval of citations pertaining to contextual learning and JTPA programs from ERIC,
• the shelving and shelf-reading of the entire collection (books, microforms and media, reference, special collections, and serials),
• the processing of books, bound periodicals, and unbound periodical issues,
• the assistance to patrons using computer resources, reference, serials, microforms and media, special collections, and books from the main collection,
• the provision of directional and photocopier assistance to patrons, and
• the preparation and filing of newspaper clippings for the special collection vertical file.

Weaknesses

Not all area supervisors provided the same level of supervision, which created differences in work habits among the interns. Not all area supervisors were assigned the same number of interns, which created differences in the amount of time interns spent in one-on-one interaction with supervisors. Not all interns were required to remain on task in their assigned area, which created distractions to other interns and additional work for area supervisors in the areas to which interns came. For instance, the Reference Area was a popular place with all interns, largely because of the attraction of ProQuest and a graphical personal computer with Internet access, not available in the other areas. Interns in less supervised areas tended to go to Reference without any communication having taken place between area supervisors. Not all interns received the same amount of variety in their work tasks given them by their area supervisors. Interns with more varied assignments stayed on task more than did interns with less varied assignments. We see these as weaknesses in the program that need to be addressed by area or departmental supervisors and the overall JTPA Instructor/Supervisor.

The testing conditions surrounding the final post-test on reading and math skills also need to be structured in a way that encourages all interns to apply themselves to the test. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of the JTPA program when interns were competing for assignments according to their suitability to work sites, whereas the post-test was administered on the last day of the program, following a “bon voyage” ice-cream party for the interns. Many interns were looking forward to being on vacation rather than taking a test. The testing conditions for the post-test are seen as a weakness
in the program that needs to be addressed by the overall JTPA Instructor/Supervisor and by the JTPA Officer who administers the test.

None of the persons who directly supervised an intern were asked to evaluate the program in writing or to offer suggestions for improving the program in writing. We see this as a weakness that needs to be addressed when a proposal is written and submitted to a funding organization. The evaluation instruments used by the interns in their self-evaluation, by the area supervisor in their evaluation of the interns, and by the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor of the interns were not the same and this condition made direct comparisons of perceptions between employee and employer impossible. We see this as a weakness that needs to be addressed by the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The main contributions of our study are that statistical data have been gathered through pre- and post-tests that verify the appropriateness of recommendations and observations found in the literature pertaining to contextual learning. Our study supports the view that to be effective, contextual learning (job training) programs for young persons need to be well-organized and include classroom teaching, orientation, supervision, written job descriptions and procedures, counseling on positive work attitudes and perseverance, evaluation, and the development of marketable skills (especially of computer technology). When all components are present, economically disadvantaged young persons can be expected to succeed and leave the program with marketable skills. Furthermore, when participants are provided with professional resumes and “model” job application letters, based on the job skills they have added through the program, they will leave the program with greater self-esteem and practical job assistance that will likely lead to employment within a year for most participants (58%).

Recommendations

Pre- and post-testing are strongly recommended as essential components of contextual learning programs in libraries so that effectiveness of the training can be measured objectively and compared with other studies. A full-time classroom teacher (also qualified as a librarian) responsible for overall program supervision, uniform supervision by all supervisors of interns, written job descriptions, written procedures, written work schedules, and varied tasks are the most important aspects for developing an effective library-intern program that will keep interns on task.

Post-tests should be administered early in the final week of the program along with encouragement to perform as well as possible. Distractions should be kept to a minimum, and interns should be informed that their scores are being used as one of the
measuring devices to determine whether or not the program has succeeded in one of the goals (enhancing math and reading skills). Special job assignments for interns that require them to utilize critical thinking skills and incorporate math, reading, and writing should be developed and used by all area supervisors or the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor.

Evaluations of the program by interns should also be administered early in the final week of the program. Interns should be informed that their evaluations will be used in further refining the program so that, in the future, the program can be made more effective for both employee and employer. The same instrument utilized by the interns for the evaluation of the program should be administered to all persons (librarians, library paraprofessionals, and the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor) who provide direct supervision of intern. The evaluation instrument should be the same for all persons so that evaluation data from employee and employer can be compared.

The self-evaluation instrument administered to the interns should be mirrored in the evaluation instruments used by the area supervisor and the JTPA Instructor/Supervisor to evaluate the interns so that perceptions of employee and employer can be compared more meaningfully.

We recommend that this summer youth program be extended to a year-round program and suggest that participants—most particularly those employed at historically black colleges or universities—would greatly improve their chances of entering the workforce permanently at higher income levels and of continuing their training and education at the college level. Our recommendation concurs with the conclusion of Ruhm (1998) that work during the school year—especially the senior year of high school—would provide important long-term benefits and should be encouraged. We further recommend that economically disadvantaged youth be employed in departments that will require them to develop their computer skills, most particularly those associated with providing public service and retrieval of information from electronic databases and the Internet.


3 Ibid.
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