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INTEGRATING ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTION (Model Programs for Health Science Education Programs)

Donna B. Jordan

It has been predicted that the health care industry will grow at twice the rate of the national economy over the next few years. The demand for skilled workers in this field will continue to rise. By the year 2000, trillions will be spent on health care as more services are offered. The demand for professionals in the industry has not been able to keep pace with the growth and changes. The public school system in Palm Beach County, Florida recognized its role in preparing students for employment in this area and developed career pathways to help students focus on educational readiness and preparation for challenges health careers present.

The two health science education high school models featured in this article serve students in grades 9-12 in a four year preparatory program and are designed to offer motivational activities, problem solving, and critical thinking skills by way of educational technologies and involvement at community agencies. Students are involved in a variety of educational experiences that will assist them in decision making and in developing leadership abilities. Concepts in scientific techniques, research, math, and communications are also applied. Students in the high school programs must complete a core of studies, after which they are able to continue on a path that can lead to one or more exit completion points thus allowing the student to be multi-skilled and or cross trained in entry level jobs.

The Medicine and Health Science Education program began in 1991 as a skill based magnet at **Lake Worth High School**. The academic and career tracks offered at this site are Medical Lab Assisting,

Allied Health Assisting, Nursing Assisting, Home Health Aide and First Responder. Medical scholarships, and participation in the partnership activities with community agencies is a vital part of this program. Students of all ability levels are able to achieve in this type program.

The **Pre-Medicine** magnet at **Palm Beach Gardens High School** was established in 1993 as an intensive college preparatory program which emphasizes honors courses in many of the content areas. It prepares students to be highly competitive in the medical field at the university level of study. Students are actively involved in clinical preceptorships, Health Occupations Students of America, and other leadership building activities such as participation in volunteer clubs, debate, and teaching younger students.

The **Health Science Education program at Roosevelt Middle School** was initiated in 1998 as a magnet to provide a three year program that emphasizes science, math, and technology for entry into the high school medical programs and other related field of study. Students at this level pursue hands on laboratory activities including dissections, problem solving projects, and research on medical topics. Field trips and observation in various medical settings are integral components of this educational pathway. Students at this level are followed by way of computer to learn whether they continue on a health science pathway while in high school.