



LITERACY TODAY

FOR THE WORLD OF WORK TOMORROW

World of Work (WoW) Theoretical Framework

The WoW recognizes and utilizes the most established career theories. Two main components make career theories very unique: 1) they each offer specific strengths, and 2) they are largely complementary. Therefore choosing one career theory to base the WoW upon is unnecessary and conflicts with the way theories developed in this area of scholarship. In essence, because of these unique features, we can take the best components of each theory to help inform and guide the World of Work Initiative in partnership with school districts. The following theoretical framework is organized hierarchically in relation to the roles and functions played by different theoretical groupings:

1. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and related Educational Psychology Theories

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was first presented by Albert Bandura in the 1980s and grew to SCT (primarily the relationships between self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations) being one of the most thoroughly investigated constructs in the social sciences. Social Cognitive *Career* Theory builds from this robust research base and adds components specific to career development. SCCT helps us to learn about and explain how students develop interests, make choices, and process experiences (all of which are crucial to the WoW program). Furthermore, because WoW is largely delivered within educational environments, it is essential to utilize theories with strong track records of efficacy within these environments. Theories specific to goal setting, motivation, self-regulation, and self-determination are particularly important to the WoW initiative.

2. Person - Environment Fit Theories: Holland and Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA)

Both theories set out to help individuals find the 'right' work environments and address any issues that might affect their performance or satisfaction within those work environments.

The most researched and resourced component of the Holland theory is its ability to organize characteristics of different work environments and match them to different

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personality types. These categories (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional) are crucial to making sense of the world of work and are a huge component of the WoW approaches to career exploration. This theory can be found across resources for students and teachers uniquely embedded in materials such as the career cards and student job-exploration-activities designed to align to the six themes of the Holland theory.

The TWA categorizes work environments from another angle by focusing on work 'values' (e.g., achievement, comfort, status, altruism, safety, and autonomy) that are either reinforced or lacking within different work environments. TWA was also inspired by research related to rehabilitation and disability job coaching practices. This developed into a very useful model to solve problems or make improvements (to both individuals and environments). TWA is particularly valuable to the WOW program because of its focus on skill development and coaching.

3. Developmental Career Theories: Super and Gottfredson

Super and Gottfredson are categorized as developmental career theories. They help to chart phases of career development over time. Both theories are very focused on the development of the 'self.' Gottfredson views this development through a social/psychological lens. Super views it more as a process that involves actively learning about yourself so that you can 'construct' your best identity. Due to the focus on personal development within both theories, developmental activities and practices tend to be more future oriented, creative, and hands on. The WOW incorporates these principles into activities that include personal narratives, art, and visualization.

How These Theories Influence the Development Team

These theories complement each other, working seamlessly to inform the development of tools and resources. The materials and activities align to the RIASEC framework, creating a connected experience for the learner. Included in this range of activities are personal narratives, exploration of family messages around "work", and goal setting. Additionally, students participate in simulations or tasks in which students explore career scenarios. To complete these tasks, students explore their own strengths and interests. They also evaluate the "fit" of that kind of work environment. Personal strengths and interests directly influence the decisions students make and inform the reflection on progress. This purposeful combination of research, which is then woven into the fabric of all of the resources, provides an evidence-based and integrated experience for students.