The Career Cluster Inventory (CCI) encourages career exploration by helping students identify career clusters that match their interests. This guide provides background information on the development of this instrument, information on the instrument's organization and scoring, administration steps and report options.

Career Cluster Inventory

Counselor's

Manual

intoCareers, 2014

Career Cluster Inventory Counselor's Guide

Overview

The Career Cluster Inventory (CCI) encourages career exploration by helping students identify career clusters that match their interests. This guide provides background information on the development of this instrument, information on the instrument's organization and scoring, administration steps and report options.

The CCI is an informal interest inventory that ranks the sixteen career clusters[1] identified by the States Career Cluster Initiative (SCCI). Students complete the inventory in CIS, and receive immediate feedback. Students also learn about: occupations associated with their clusters of interest, related high school courses, and related college programs of study.

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[1] States Career Cluster Initiative, Our Mission Vision and Goals." States' Career Cluster Initiative. 2009. National Career Technical Education Foundation. 1 Sep. 2009 <http://www.careerclusters.org/>.

Background

The CCI instrument evolved from an earlier interest inventory, Countdown, which is the intellectual property of the Illinois Career Information System. Illinois CIS granted intoCareers the right to modify and use Countdown.

With the Countdown tool as a starting point, intoCareers developed the CCI as an interest inventory option for middle school students using CIS Junior. Many states now make the inventory available to high school students as well.

Steps in Development of the Career Cluster Inventory

Analysts followed these steps to create the 80 new items and achieve face validity:

1. **Created an item bank**. An item bank of 160 activities were identified and written to align with specific clusters. The activities were meant to be concrete and something that middle school students were likely to experience.

2. **Matched activities to clusters**. Seventeen CIS staff members matched the new activities to career clusters to initiate face validity coding. Of the 160 items, 37 were matched to the intended cluster by all respondents and another 33 items were matched correctly by all but one respondent. Some items were matched to clusters other than those intended. Designers believed these mismatches occurred for two reasons. One, the occupation cluster definitions did not contain adequate information about every occupation, so users may have had difficulty finding a cluster that matched. Two, the activities may not have been written clearly. Some items contained more than one activity, such as "Film a football game and put it on the school's webpage."

3. **Revised activity lists**. Some items were dropped because they were determined to be activities which middle school students would not yet have engaged. Items containing more than one activity were rewritten to contain just one. Other items were rewritten to improve clarity. A few items were reassigned to different clusters based on ratings in the validity coding that suggested analysts had assigned them to the wrong cluster.

4. **Narrowed to five items per cluster**. Analysts attempted to find items for each cluster that were unique and then narrowed these to five items per cluster.

5. **Removed bias**. Analysts viewed items to remove bias. For example, "Help your parent learn to use new software" was changed to "Help an adult learn to

use new software," sensitive to those users who might not have a parent in the house or teens who might not respond favorably to helping a parent.

Rationale behind the Career Cluster Inventory

The basic principal in CCI is item selection based on activity similarity. The assumption behind activity similarity is that if an individual enjoys activities paralleling those of an occupation (within a given career cluster), then they will find occupations within that cluster satisfying.

Initiating career exploration at the career cluster level has been shown to be a beneficial strategy for assisting young students engaged in cursory career development.[2] Since the 1960s, career cluster tools have been used for career exploration and planning in schools, learning communities, and organizations across the nation.[3] Therefore helping students identify career clusters by examining activities of interests to the student should produce an appropriate starting point for career exploration.

In addition, many schools offer curriculum focus areas or career pathways organized by career clusters, so helping students identify career clusters of interest can help students identify appropriate pathways for academic focus in high school. The States' Career Cluster Initiative, whose mission is to provide leadership and serve as a clearinghouse for career cluster research, products, and services, epitomizes this focus. Their founding premise is that a career cluster focus can promote higher achievement, enhance transitions to higher education, better prepare students for career success, and promote economic development.[4]

As further examples, interest inventories such as the Ohio Vocational Interest Inventory, the Career Occupational Preference Survey, and the ACT Interest Inventory were constructed using similar career cluster rationale, each identifying occupational clusters as the first step of occupational exploration. intoCareers and other Career Information Delivery Systems have chosen to use this national organizational structure for grouping occupations.

Within the Career Cluster Inventory, each activity or response item is an activity that typifies those activities of an occupation within one of the CIS career clusters. Typically, these activities relate to specific activities in which a middle school student

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[2] Stewart, Julia. "Report Card XI." Louden Independent (Apr. 22 2009): 2. 1 Sep. 2009 <http://www.loudouni.com/ education/2009-04-23/report-card-part-xi>.

[3] Askew, Mary. "Career Clusters, A Bridge between Education and Career Planning." Job Bank USA (2007): 1. 1 Sep. 2009 .

[4] Ibid.

might engage. An example of the linkage procedure used in the supporting rationale follows:

- Work activity: *Act in a school play*.
    - Related Occupation activity: *Act in a play*.
        - Occupation*: Actor*
            - Cluster: *Arts, Communications, Humanities*.

Career Cluster Inventory Organization and Scoring

The CCI inventory is a user-friendly informal interest assessment that ranks sixteen career clusters. Students complete the interest inventory in CIS, and receive immediate, graphic feedback about clusters that match their interests. They also receive information about occupations associated with these clusters and associated programs of study in high school and college.

Scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 15. The rankings are based on responses to interest questions related to each cluster. The inventory contains five response items for each of the 16 clusters, a total of 80 items. The users select from response choices of: "Like Very Much" (scores 3), "Like" (scores 2), "Not Sure" (scores 1), and "Dislike" (scores 0).

The sixteen career clusters are:

1. Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources
2. Architecture & Construction
3. Arts, A/V Technology & Communication
4. Business, Management & Administration
5. Education & Training
6. Finance
7. Government & Public Administration
8. Health Science
9. Hospitality & Tourism
10. Human Services
11. Information Technology
12. Law, Public Safety & Security
13. Manufacturing
14. Marketing, Sales & Service
15. Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
16. Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

Administration

The assessment experience will be most meaningful if students understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. This guide gives you the background you need to prepare your students and interpret results.

Administration Steps

1. Remember, if students want to save the results of this inventory, they need to have a portfolio.
2. Distribute a Career Cluster Inventory Quick Reference Guide and tell students that the Career Cluster Inventory will help them identify career clusters that match their interests.
3. Explain that the instrument contains 80 items (activities). They will be asked to rate items on how much they think they would enjoy doing these activities.
4. Explain that many of the activities will be ones they have experienced. For those items, tell students to reflect on their experience and ask themselves, "Did I like doing that activity before?" They will rate how much they like doing the activity.
5. Other activities are things they will not have done before. For these activities, they will need to imagine doing it and rate how much they think they would like it.
6. For each activity (item) the response choices are:
   - Like very much
   - Like
   - Dislike
   - Not sure
7. Tell students their results will be saved automatically when they reach the **Scores** page. If they need to log off before rating all the activities, they need to click **Save** to save what they have completed.
8. When students have saved their results, they will have an option to add personal reflections. If the students need suggestions on how to phrase their reflections, they can use: "My three highest clusters are _____ _____ and _____. Occupation and training programs linked to these clusters that interest me are: _____ _____ and _____."
9. Tell students to read the instructions carefully, then provide logon instructions.

Follow-up with your students

Students should be encouraged to explore career clusters of interest, associated occupations, training programs and other related information in CIS. Use the Career Cluster Inventory Quick Reference Guide to advise students on where to find this information in CIS.

In addition, students should explore associated career pathways in their school district, and consider creating cursory high school plans based on what they have learned.

Career Cluster Inventory Usage Reports

Use CIS administration tools to generate reports for individual students or track group results or activity levels.

1. Log into the CIS Administration Tools
2. View the Dashboard, find the Career Cluster Inventory under the **Modules with Saved Records** header
3. Click Career Cluster Inventory
4. View report and click Career Cluster Inventory on this page for more detailed reports
5. Select your desired report date range, type, and output (See image below)
6. Save the report
7. Print the report

CAREER CLUSTER INVENTORY - BETA TEST SITE

Select Report Type and Output ⓘ

Date Range:

Begin Date: 8/1/2013   End Date: 7/21/2014

Select Report Type:

- ⦿ Summary by Student
- ○ Summary by Cluster
- ○ Detail by Student

Select output option: (applies only to Detail)

- ⦿ Print
- ○ Excel

[Generate Report]