

I Want to be a Scientist: Secondary Students' Perceptions of Science as a Career

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Much thought and effort on the part of high school science teachers is put into educating and engaging American youth in science with the hope that our country will have a bright future in science disciplines. But do high school students consider careers in science viable occupational options, or are the subjects of chemistry and physics simply course credits they are expected to complete? This study seeks to answer that question by investigating high school students' perceptions of careers in science as they consider their own future career paths. Data collection consists of a survey distributed to sophomore, junior, and senior students currently enrolled in a secondary-level science course at a local high school. The survey questions probe student perception of the nature of professional work in science, applications of scientific work, and the role of the scientist in society. A more full and accurate understanding of these things may lead to an increase in talented students, who have benefited from an excellent education in science subjects, actually becoming interested in pursuing careers in science. Having talented scientists in the field provides more opportunity for the bright future of science, which is one of the main goals of science education.

Information about the Author:

Kayla Kutz is a third year physics and secondary education double major who, following the completion of a Bachelor's and a Master of Science degree in Physics, plans to begin a career teaching high school physics. The subject of high school students' perceptions of science as a viable career choice has interested her since she became interested in the profession through the Physics Department's weekly colloquia and is immediately relevant to her career plans.

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