

# High School Students + Vocation Education = Better Decisions?

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## Mixed Methods, Group Comparison Study of Students at a Midwestern, Suburban High School

### Introduction

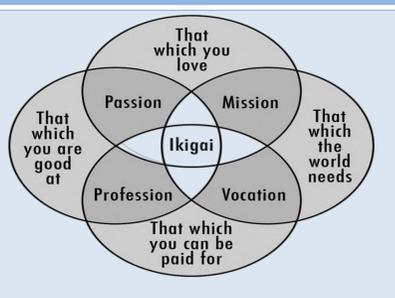
Every year, students who have just graduated high school blithely begin their journeys through postsecondary education and into adult life. This study sought to discover if addressing the concept of vocation and character strengths would influence those decisions.

### Research Questions

- 1) Is there a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between pre and post test Brief Calling Scale scores of high school seniors and juniors exposed to the Ikigai/Vocation/Character Strengths workshop at a Midwestern suburban high school?
- 2) How do these students describe the influence of the Ikigai/Vocation/Character Strengths workshop on their postsecondary decisions?

### Methodology

- 1) Administer a pre-test using the 4-item Brief Calling Scale
- 2) Administer the Ikigai/Vocation/Character Strengths workshop
- 3) Administer the post-test using the 4-item Brief Calling Scale, three additional qualitative questions, and four demographic questions



Creativity Perspective  
Judgment Curiosity  
Honesty Bravery Fairness HUMOR Zest  
PERSEVERANCE Teamwork  
Love Kindness Leadership  
Social Intelligence Love of Learning  
Forgiveness HOPE PRUDENCE  
Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence Humility  
Spirituality SELF-REGULATION Gratitude  
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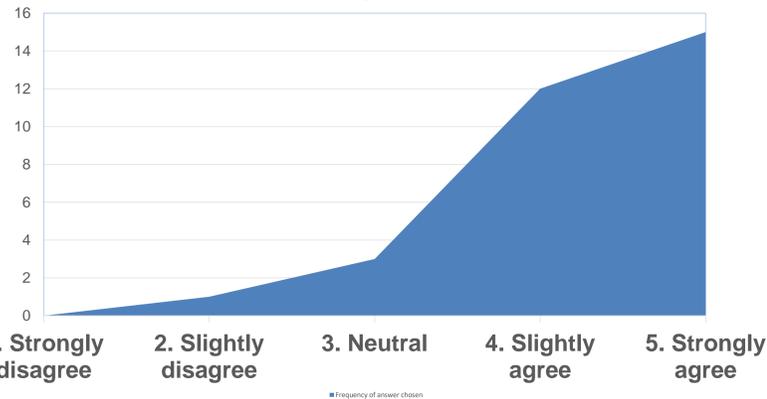


**A Statistically Significant Difference**



*“Answering a call to discover one’s unique gifts and employ them in service for the common good in ways that are personally satisfying and bring meaning to one’s life.”*  
(VIT, 2017)

Knowing my Character Strengths will help me when I leave High School.



The Character Strengths were an impactful part of this decision-making process for 27 out of the 31 students, who found that knowing their character strengths would be helpful after high school. The top Character Strengths identified by these students were perseverance, curiosity, kindness, creativity, honesty, and perspective.

**Acknowledgements:** to my family for supporting me on this journey, those at UD who believed enough in me to grant me this opportunity, and to Conor Kutner and Marissa McCray for a collaboration of excellence.

Pre and Post Test Experimental Group comparisons of the four items,  $n = 31$

Survey Items	Paired differences and 2-tailed significance				
	Pair	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
I have a calling to a particular kind of work.	Pre-test 1 Post-test 1	-.129	.846	-.849	.403
I have a good understanding of my calling as it applies to my (future) career.	Pre-test 2 Post-test 2	-.194	.749	-1.438	.161
I am trying to figure out my calling in my career.	Pre-test 3 Post-test 3	.581	1.089	2.970	.006
I am searching for my calling as it applies to my (future) career	Pre-test 4 Post-test 4	.484	1.092	2.468	.020

### Select References

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### Findings

The students in this study were able to use information from the Ikigai/Vocation/Character Strengths workshop and make more holistic postsecondary decisions in discerning their callings and considering how those callings will apply to their careers.

There was a statistically significant difference between the pre and post-test scores on item 3, “I am trying to figure out my calling in my career”;  $t(30) = 2.97, p = .006$ .

There was a statistically significant difference between the pre and post-test scores on item 4, “I am searching for my calling as it applies to my (future) career”;  $t(30) = 2.47, p = .020$ .

Upon finding statistically significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) on items 3 and 4, the researcher calculated effect sizes using *Cohen’s d = M/SD*.

For item 3: *Cohen’s d = .53*, indicating a medium effect size;  
For item 4: *Cohen’s d = .44*, also indicating a medium effect size (Pallant, 2010).

### Recommendations

Vocation is not an end point, but a journey and is best traveled with caring, honest others. Further longitudinal research into teaching the concept of vocation to students while still in high school and perhaps even earlier is recommended.