

Vocational Education



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Have you ever wondered why you couldn't take a class at school that truly interests you, such as learning about the culinary arts or discovering the ins and outs of being an emergency medical technician? Vocational education is an option that is becoming increasingly popular for students seeking a wider variety of class choices. Sometimes, when people hear the words "vocational education," a negative image pops into their minds. Many people believe that vocational education is primarily offered to non-college bound students, dropouts, or students with special needs. What people don't realize is that vocational education can give students the opportunity to improve their employability skills, become informed about different career options, and learn helpful skills they can use throughout the rest of their lives even before going to college and being released into the real world. Therefore, I believe that vocational education should be offered to students.

One of the main reasons vocational education would be a good aspect to bring into the Public School system is that it would bring the importance and purpose of doing well in school back into students' minds who are struggling in their four years of high school. When asked her opinion on vocational education a student responded positively saying, "Kids actually have fun taking these courses, and we're not as worried about our grades because [what we are learning about is] so interesting and we want to learn about it" (Martindale). So many students are too concerned about getting a good grade in their classes that they forgot about the importance of learning and comprehending the information they learn. By offering vocational education courses students learn about something they are actually interested in and get a good grade doing it. When Orange County high schools merged career-oriented classes offered by vocational education and their standard academic classes not only were the students feedback encouraging, but also benefited the school as well. Their school system became "academically more rigorous and specialized" (Martindale). Offering vocational would boost the student's enthusiasm to learn and do well in school and in return benefit the reputation of our school system.

A positive facet of taking vocational education courses in high school is that it gives students a head start on a career that they may want to study more about and even pursue when they make it to college. Vocational education offers students the chance to get a closer look at career choices and can even lead to internships that would look good on college or job applications. When asked, 56 percent of employers said that internships and volunteer experiences were the most important factor in finding work (Parr). Still, many four-year college seeking people believe that vocational education would not benefit them in the direction they are going in life. On the contrary it does: "There is strong evidence that general technical skills and occupationally specific skills provided in vocational education increase worker productivity, skill transfer, job access, and job stability" (Wonacott). Although those students may not be in search of a job as soon as they get out of high school and go off to college, they would have still had the experience and would be able to use it later in life when they are applying for a job. A survey of Washington residents revealed that a vast majority of people do believe that vocational education would benefit high school students. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed that vocational education prepared students for good paying jobs. Another survey yielded that ninety-eight percent of people thought that internships or apprenticeships in different career fields were appropriate for high school juniors and seniors (Wonacott).

Although the outcomes of vocational education are positive, many parents believe that vocational education has a negative effect on their kids. They believe that partaking in vocational education classes could influence students to look to jobs such as working in carpentry or as an electrician instead of going to college and reaching their full potential. Most parents want their children to go to a four-year college because they believe that that will guarantee their son or daughter a job. That is not necessarily true and not always in the best interest of their child. In a recent pole only about twenty-seven percent of [Caucasian], eighteen percent of Hispanics and seventeen percent of [African American] students were employed after graduation (Wonacott). Also, many parents are so focused on the good of their children that they forget to ask if going to college is really what their child wants. Do they ever question whether their child really wants to go to college? "They[high school graduates] go to college because their parents are paying for it and college is what children of their social class are

supposed to do after they finish high school. They may have the ability to understand the material in Economics but they do not want to. They, too, need to learn to make a living—and would do better in vocational training” (Murray). Although many parents would be shocked with this statement it is very true and there is nothing wrong with vocational education as a post high school graduation option.

Perhaps the belief that vocational education has a negative effect on their kids is based on old perceptions from years ago. But in today's society, which is becoming increasingly more technical, vocational skills are becoming more and more important. For example, automobiles rely much more upon advanced electronics and machinery than in the past and now require a tremendous amount of special training for those involved in maintenance and repairs. Similarly, manufacturing machinery has also become more complex, requiring special vocational-type skills. Other examples of increasingly complex elements of today's lifestyle would include cell phones, laptop computers, iPods, and gaming systems. Vocational education provides the training necessary to maintain and repair the technically advancing elements of today's lifestyle, as further evidenced by the following comments from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization:

In today's increasingly technological society, sustainable development and an improved quality of life are to a large extent dependent on our ability to understand and utilize science and technology responsibly, respecting ethical values and protecting the systems on which life itself depends. Hence, UNESCO is placing strong emphasis on science and technology education as an essential component of basic education, paying special attention to the promotion of scientific and technological literacy for all in both formal and non-formal settings (“Worldwide”).

It's clear that vocational education is becoming increasingly important and not as fearful to parents as it once was.

Vocational education has been becoming increasingly popular in public school systems. It offers students many benefits, such as boosting high school student's enthusiasm about learning, opening their eyes to a possible career choice, and preparing them for real world by improving their employability skills. Although vocational education is a positive path for students to travel on many people, especially parents, are concerned about the effects of vocational education on their children. I believe that they don't truly understand how vocational education works, thus creating a negative image. It is hard for me to understand how people think that vocational education would not be beneficial for their children when it is clear that it can only help their them on the path to a brighter future.