Study: Vocational Classes Keep High School Students Interested

Last year, Intellectual Takeout posted a popular quote from *Mythbusters* star Adam Savage on the need to reinstate shop class. Savage said:

"If you want the kids' test scores up, bring back band and bring back shop and get kids actually learning stuff instead of teaching them how to take a test."

The effectiveness of more vocational training in schools – now known as Career and Technical Education (CTE) – was tested in a study recently released by the Fordham Institute. While the study didn't find that increased Career and Technical Education raised achievement scores, it did find that CTE courses provided a number of other benefits to those who took them.

The researchers focused on the state of Arkansas, where "the average student takes 4.9 CTE courses during his or her high school career." It was then discovered that students who took only one more than this average number were more likely to graduate from high school, get a job, and have higher earnings.

The benefits to those who "concentrated" their studies by taking several CTE courses in one area (such as business or agriculture) were even greater. These students were more likely to graduate from high school by *21 percentage points*!

As the importance and prestige of the college track has grown, many high schools seem to have pushed vocational training to the back burner. But in doing so, have they abandoned a golden opportunity to interest students and encourage them to stick with their education for a longer period of time? Could it be that many students need the practical, hands-on nature of vocational training to ignite their interest for life and future work?

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