

Can Vocational Classes Teach Kids to ‘Adult’?

Today’s high schoolers are pushed through a battery of tests, college applications, extra-curricular activities, and courses on everything under the sun. But in spite of all these opportunities, many students graduate without having any real-life skills which can transfer immediately into the working world.

As a recent article in *The Washington Post* [explains](#), one Maryland high school is attempting to change that. For the last several years, select students at Gaithersburg High have been given the opportunity to get hands-on nursing training alongside their normal school work. According to *The Post*:

“The goal is to prepare students for a career in health care, whether that means eventually going on to study medicine or beginning work as a certified nursing assistant, geriatric assistant or home health aide immediately out of high school.”

In addition to giving students real-life, marketable skills before they leave high school, the program also seems to be giving students a crash course in socialization skills, which, ironically, they were unable to obtain in school:

“Even if they don’t end up going into health care, the training teaches them to interact confidently with adults. ‘You kind of develop your social skills. You have to be loud and project your voice a little,’ said Mikaylah Sayles, 17. ‘You learn how to come out of your shell.’

Training in a working facility also allows them to reach across a generational divide.”

[Previous research](#) suggests that career and technical education programs in high school – such as the nursing classes at Gaithersburg – may actually keep students engaged in school for a longer period of time, diminishing the risk of dropouts.

We've pushed vocational training to the side in many schools today, reasoning that it is more important to get every single student set on the right track for college than to give them marketable skills while still in high school. The fact is, however, that not every student is cut out for or even in interested in pursuing college.

If we were to offer more vocational training for today's students, is it possible that we would diminish the number of dropouts? Furthermore, is it also possible that vocational training would set kids on the path to [becoming adults](#) far more quickly than they do today?

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