

OPINION

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By [MARIN IJ EDITORIAL BOARD](#) |

Editorial: Educational Support key in technical areas

Local high schools' laser focus on getting students into four-year universities, sadly, left many young people behind.

Auto shops and metal- and woodworking classes took a backseat and, often, fell victim to budget cuts and students' needs to take more academic classes to polish their school resumes.

Now, high schools are trying to broaden their offerings to include focus on job training, not just getting university diplomas.

Working closely with College of Marin, Marin high schools are improving their career technical education offerings, providing a stronger path to COM's job-training programs.

It is a recognition that not every student needs to be focused on a university diploma, but can be better served by classes that will help pave their way to careers, auto repair to sustainable agriculture.

They can get their start as part of their high school curriculum and hone that knowledge and skill at COM, readying them for the job market.

In many cases, that course work makes them prime candidates to fill jobs for which our economy is hungry.

Local educators involved in building this curricular road call it “pathways of focus,” providing high school students with educational and training routes to two dozen careers, among them agriculture, auto repair, health care, cooking, computer technology and gaming.

They also have reached out and involved more than 200 local businesses and organizations in helping build these programs.

That participation helps make sure that those programs are focused on meeting current and anticipated workforce skills.

The state has realized the need to help create that pathway. Its funding of more than \$5 million in grants for Marin schools has made the growth of such programs financially possible.

The high school programs also give students the opportunity to explore possible career opportunities as they chart their educational careers toward joining the workforce.

There’s no single path, but keeping them open – and in some cases reopening them – improves current and future opportunities for high school students. Having COM’s door wide open to further that education and training is a huge plus.

Having local high school districts, the Marin County Office of Education’s Regional Occupational Program and College of Marin working closely together to create a continuity in the curriculum benefits those students.

They are providing local students with paths and opportunities much broader than the “one size fits all” curriculum that may work for many students, but not all.

COM has proven itself, year after year, as being an education opportunity where students can develop and navigate their career goals.

In many cases, those students include many who were following that high school-to-university expectation, only to discover they weren’t ready for that leap.

COM provides that opportunity for a re-grounding and building a strong educational foundation important for those students to transfer to four-year colleges or build the knowledge and skills they need to join the workforce.

Dovetailing local high school programs with COM’s offerings makes a lot of sense and helps build a foundation of academics, training and experience for Marin youth as they face that challenge of deciding what they want to do with their lives.