

RAISING THE BAR - FOR ALL: Technical Studies education - best of all worlds

By Superintendent Gary Maestas

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In this space, Plymouth School Superintendent Gary Maestas discusses various ways Plymouth Public Schools provide all students the tools to excel and flourish.

Why do we educate our children? Besides it being the law, it's our desire to teach our children to learn how to be self-sufficient. College used to be defined as the desired end and the best chance to get a good job, support yourself and, eventually, a family. Those who may not have been as gifted in the classroom could go to vocational school to learn a trade with the goal, again, being that you could one day support yourself and a family.

Thankfully, the times and that mindset have changed.

The Plymouth Public Schools offers a career and technical education that allows our students to leave high school with a career. This is not your father's vocational education. "At least 3,500 students have been placed on waiting lists for entrance into public vocational schools in Massachusetts in the past two years," according to a survey conducted by the Northeastern University School of Law and reported in the Boston Globe in 2014.

Plymouth's College, Career and Technical Education program offers a significant number of high quality programs that are blended into the comprehensive academic environment. The depth and range of the areas of study provide numerous options for students that include Automotive Repair & Collision, Computer Assisted Drafting and Banners, Cosmetology, Graphic Design & Visual Communication, Construction Cluster (HVAC, Plumbing, and Carpentry), Culinary Arts, Early Education & Care Preschool, Electrical, Marketing, Allied Health CNA, Medical Assisting, and Engineering. Overall, 894 students from both of Plymouth's high schools are enrolled in these programs.

In addition to training in these specialized fields, our Technical Studies students take classes that prepare them for college. Ultimately, what we have happening is CCTE students learning a trade or skill and preparing for college simultaneously. Many will use the trade or skill they are studying in the Technical Studies program to get after-school and summer jobs. This allows them to gain experience in their chosen field prior to graduation.

Positive Placement is the term used to describe the data collected through a voluntary survey of high school students a year after graduation. In plain terms, it tells us where our students have gone: college, military service, employment in field of study, or employment not related

to their field of study. The Plymouth CTE Follow-Up Study Data is collected and reported to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education one year after graduation. Not only are our Technical Studies students able to secure after school and summer jobs, allowing them to earn money for college if they choose, but they position themselves for full-time employment immediately after graduation.

Gary E. Maestas, Ed.D., is superintendent of Plymouth Public Schools. He can be reached at 508-224-5035 and gmaestas@plymouth.k12.ma.us. It is the stated goal of the Plymouth Public Schools District to encourage children to realize their full social, emotional, physical, and intellectual potential. In this space Superintendent Maestas discusses various ways Plymouth Public Schools provide all students the tools to excel and flourish.