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Shop class to be replaced with job-training programs

CPS | Students will compete for vocational spots, focus on job training

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BY [ROSALIND ROSSI](#) Education Reporter/rrossi@suntimes.com

Shop and auto classes that kids meandered into as electives are being replaced with 21st century job-training programs that students will vie for citywide -- with higher-scoring kids getting first dibs -- under a vocational education shake-up announced Monday.

And starting next school year, central office officials, rather than principals, would select kids for new "College and Career Academy" programs -- ranging from agriculture to transportation --based on applications listing each student's top five picks.

Those were some of the details revealed Monday as Mayor Daley and Chicago Public Schools CEO Ron Huberman announced plans to take vocational education at city schools into the 21st century.

Huberman said the effort is based on an analysis by the Chicago Workforce Investment Council that identified "mid-skill-level" Chicago-area jobs that require a high school diploma but not necessarily a college one, and will be in demand through 2010.

Based on that analysis, CPS is axing some offerings -- such as "plastic fabrication," basic data entry and fashion design, Huberman said. It's also auditing the expertise of all 300 vocational education teachers to make sure they have both the credentials and "industry skills" to teach their courses, he said.

Over five years, the number of schools offering updated vocational programs will shrink from about 70 to 35, but the programs will be more evenly spread across the city and boast higher quality, Huberman said. More job shadowing and internships should be offered.

Students citywide can apply by listing their top five picks on a centralized application. In a set-aside reminiscent of those used by coveted magnet schools, at least 30 percent of all College and Career Academy seats will be reserved for neighborhood kids.

Jitu Brown of the Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization wondered if some kids would get shut out of their neighborhood schools under the new program.

"It sounds like a blow to the neighborhood high school," Brown said.

However, Aarti Dhupelia, CPS director of Career and Technical Education, said only one school -- Washington High -- currently has more than 30 percent neighborhood kids in a career-based program. The neighborhood threshold is being increased there and can be changed at other schools each year, if need be, Dhupelia said.

"In the past, kids just enrolled [in vocational programs] to take up a seat. They used it as an elective," Dhupelia said. "We want students to say, 'This is a career path that interests me.'"

Applications for fall 2010 will be accepted through Jan. 20 and are available at chooseyourfuture.org.

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The views expressed in these blog posts are those of the author and not of the Chicago Sun-Times.

hey you wrote:

Children need to be taught life lessons that will prepare them to create means of living that will fluctuate with the ever-changing socio-economic climate, not just job training. In fact, as a parent and a product of the Chicago public school system, what I have been most disappointed with is the fact that the school systems do not educate students to become deep thinkers, philosophers, entrepreneurs, innovators, etc. The public school system teaches kids how to function within a societal role that has been mapped out for them, i.e. employee, criminal, etc. It merely teaches our kids how to follow directions and memorize data. This is not acceptable. Our children should learn how to become LEADERS in the communities, in the household, and in the world of business/commerce and education. These new "initiatives" seem to be moving us backward, rather than forward.

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nomoremachine wrote:

Enough of the PC bullshite... it's high time high schools (middle schools even) started teaching kids about "real life" - you know, balancing a checkbook, balancing your diet, knowing how to do basic home repairs/car repairs, money management, budgeting and job training. All this multicult garbage is teaching them NOTHING.

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fastfreddie1 wrote:

lucien wrote: Fastfreddie, "My guess is you have never taught high school. Instead, you are making your claims from the point of a businessman." Isn't it time CPS runs their schools like a business and not some 'money-draining' system? If you're a teacher, you're well aware of the waste that takes place in CPS schools in terms of materials used, time wasted, and 'ill-conceived' programs. Prosser's shop classes, like other CPS ones, aren't working as a whole and it's time to 'stop the bleeding' of taxpayers' monies. (Tons of paper and printer ink, wood, glue, nails, auto shop supplies, etc.. are being wasted for students which aren't learning anything in their shop classes) This isn't about black or white, it's about green that's being wasted on shop classes which aren't getting students ready for life after high school. 85%-95% of Prosser students aren't working in any field related to their shop classes from their ETC 'work study' program. And, I'm sure this is the same city-wide. While, I don't have the numbers, I'm sure there are less students which work in the field of which they take shop classes at Prosser after graduating. So, please stop the 'poor is getting robbed' theme. It's the city's taxpayers that are getting robbed, especially paying teachers an

