

Some new ideas from Matthew W. Prophet

# Opportunity unparalleled for vocational education

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For far too long, vocational-technical education in America, Oregon, and Portland has been the neglected step-child of the public schools. If the schools are to keep pace with our rapidly changing society and stay in tune with tomorrow in meeting the needs of children and young adults, the great social, economic and political transition society is now experiencing must be matched in kind by an educational revolution that places greater emphasis on career/vocational/technical education and training. Society must accept the fact that the world is shifting from the traditional and industrial based economy to an information based society.

Implicit in this shift in the fundamental base of our global economy are massive and all-encompassing needs for the public schools to provide training, retraining, and computer literacy programs for children, young adults and adults. The time has come for public education to tangibly recognize these demands and more readily respond to the needs of society in general and local communities in particular. In this context there is also a need for greater emphasis on vocational education and training for all elements of society. This means public education must begin to think and plan in terms of lifetime education. The world is in the midst of a fledgling "computer revolution." As it stabilizes and establishes new needs and makes new demands on the traditional institutions of our society, it will become articulated in ways that can scarcely be anticipated or predicted today.

It will call upon public education at all levels to respond with programs and services that will enable those who will live and work in the 21st century to function effectively and efficiently in a world committed by technological change to interdependence, cooperation, international understanding, and the ever-changing educational opportunities for all citizens at the grassroots level.

## Recommitment required

A recommitment to career/vocational/technical education in no way should be construed as an effort to denigrate or downgrade the traditional, intellectual and academic mission of the public schools.

To the contrary, the new emphasis on the "world of work" in public schools enhances, enriches and complements academic education, particularly in the area of basic skills. In a very real sense it simply adds a new aspect to the responsibility and commitment of public education to basic skills. It makes dollars and "sense" to recognize that one of the most efficient techniques for teaching basic skills is a critical element of career, vocational and technical education programs. Where these skills can easily be identified as transferable to the marketplace, they serve as a springboard for students to see the practical applications of basic skills in the "real world." In point of fact, career/vocational/technical education itself is a basic survival skill essential to the total educational development of the individual.

## Reversal in order

Clearly the time has come to reverse the pattern of benign neglect that has characterized career/vocational/technical education for generations. A new day is dawning and it demands new responses if public education is to continue to serve American society as the one institution that most effectively transmits the cultural heritage and prepares young people to live, work, and function as productive citizens in our changing world.

How best can this be done? What are the steps that must be taken to meet this challenge and to insure that today's students, who will live and spend most of their work lives in the 21st century, are not "sold short" or betrayed by theorists and communities that refuse to recognize and accept the responsibility of preparing young people today to live and lead productive lives in tomorrow's world?

First and foremost is recognition that the need exists. This demands acceptance of the fact that career/vocational/technical education must be an integral part of the total educational delivery system to the benefit of both individuals and society. Recent local and national public attitude surveys tend to confirm that there is general public recognition of the need to place increased emphasis on training individuals for productive lives at all levels of society, not just children and young adults. Key elements identified in these surveys, in delineating how best to provide these services, include emphasis on basic skills, on the job training, hands-on experience in the classroom, and coordination of programs and services up and down the educational spectrum.

Another key element in expanding the horizon of career/vocational technical education for the future is commitment of the energy and resources required to do the job. As citizens and communities determine how best to expend dwindle

educational resources, it is important to keep in mind the level of lifetime benefit yielded by the service or program for which the resources are to be expended. Recent studies indicate participants in such public school programs show a higher rate of employment, earn more money and felt a greater positive correlation between training and job performance than their non-vocational counterparts. Another recent study in Portland indicated that 95 percent of vocational students were employed or in post secondary schools following graduation.

## Business cooperation vital

To meet the needs of today's young people and a changing society will require long-range planning, commitment and the cooperation of all elements of our society. It is essential that the too-long dormant partnership between the business community and the schools undergo a reawakening for the mutual benefit of the schools and the community.

An essential component of long-range planning must be the recognition of the issue of equity. New programs and services must be equally and equitably available to students of all races, creeds and colors. The new demands of our global society must be accompanied, to be most effective, by educational planning that is color blind.

While the accelerating demands of the globalization of contemporary society, economics and education will articulate the shape and nature of the specifics of change, not only internationally, but at the grass roots as well, patterns are beginning to become clearer with the passage of time. At this early point in time, some of the elements of the configurations for tomorrow can be identified. Among them are the following: more and more workers will work in service and information-related occupations; small businesses will increase in number, as we move to a decentralized society; regional economics and global trade will be a large factor in most communities; technological literacy will be required for nearly every job; schools

will be pressed to teach higher-order thinking skills; workers may face temporary periods of unemployment; people will continue to change jobs and careers several times; and pushes for accountability will be stronger.

## Opportunity unparalleled

Public education has an unequalled opportunity to plan and commit itself to new demands. The chips are on the table. In Portland, public education is responding with a "Blue Chip Plan" for career, vocational and technical education that promises a rebirth of emphasis on the fundamental educational needs of the future. It would emphasize citizen involvement, a renewal of a business-community partnership, possible creation of an opportunity school, K-12 orientation, increased emphasis on basic skills, programs and services accessible to all, lifetime educational programs, and planning and new approaches to staff training and development to build greater understanding and cooperation. All of this must have, as its companion, public willingness to commit the resources required to do the job that needs to be done.

As usual in this country when facing difficult problems, communities turn to public education for answers and solutions. In the present era of economic uncertainty and transition from one economic base to another, public education is again expected to fill the gap. It is expected to take the lead in ameliorating the wrenching impact of obsolescence, unemployment and mechanization with training, retraining, and lifetime educational and vocational programs. The public schools are again, as always, expected to play the key role in restructuring the disoriented social order.

At this point in time, public education has a singular opportunity to "stay in tune with tomorrow." But if it is to succeed in its newest rescue mission, it must have the support, cooperation and active involvement of all elements of the community as it prepares people to live, work, survive and lead productive lives in the promising new era

# Woman's Health

## Pregnancy and Work

By James L. Breen, M.D.  
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Today, more women than ever continue to work outside the home throughout their pregnancy. According to current laws, if a woman chooses to work up until the onset of labor, she may do so.

Yet, quite often a woman will ask, "Is it safe for me to continue working during pregnancy and will working injure my baby?" The answer to that depends on the woman's health, how she reacts to pregnancy, her job, and her lifestyle. According to The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, a woman with an uncomplicated pregnancy in a job that poses no hazards to her health or her baby's health, may work until labor begins and may resume working several weeks after an uncomplicated delivery.

Obviously, no two women have the exact same job, lifestyle, or pregnancy. So, if you work and decide to become pregnant, you should discuss your individual situation with your doctor. He or she will be familiar with your medical history and can help you evaluate your job conditions.

One consideration is the physical demands of your job. Are you on your feet all day, have to lift or move awkward items, or work in higher than normal temperatures? Your doctor might be able to suggest pos-

sible job modifications that would prevent additional strain on you during your pregnancy.

Doctors and health officials are now aware that almost anyone can be exposed to hazardous substances in their job. Whether you are a hair dresser, medical technician, factory worker, or even a teacher, you may be exposed to hazardous substances or environmental conditions that may be harmful. So you should consult with your doctor, and company medical personnel if possible, about your position. If the nature of the work, the complications of pregnancy or other disease prevents you from working, you are entitled to the same disability and health insurance benefits as are other workers.

It is especially important to watch your nutrition, exercise, and rest if you continue to work during pregnancy. Try to eat well-balanced, high protein meals, and if possible, keep a supply of nourishing snacks nearby. Get enough sleep at home and try to rest during breaks at work. A regular program of exercise, if begun before pregnancy, will help keep your energy levels up. If you sit most of the day, get up every so often and move around to restore your circulation.

If you're undecided about working during pregnancy or concerned about your health, talk to your doctor. Your job may be important but so is the health of you and your baby.

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