

## **Letter to the editor: Regional vocational ed program is Gloucester's best choice**

August 17, 2009 05:40 am

---

To the editor:

I am writing in response to the letter headlined "City should first invest in GHS vo-tech program." (The Times, Wednesday, Aug. 11).

While I am glad to see someone speaking out in support of vocational education, I would like to dispute a couple of points raised.

Being an alumnus of the North Shore Regional Vocational Technical High School, Class of 2000, I can speak from experience that class sizes in a regional school are not overly large — my recollection is that most of the academic courses I attended generally had attendance in the teens or less.

The personal attention and care given by the teachers and staff was absolutely wonderful. The vocational courses offered even more abundant one-on-one time with teachers. My experience was that the genuine concern, care, and guidance offered by the staff had an incredibly positive effect on my education. This treatment reached beyond teachers to administration and guidance staff as well.

The statement that our kids would have to get on a bus at 5 or 6 a.m. is completely unfounded. I grew up in Pigeon Cove, seemingly the end of the world. My bus would pick me up there at 6:45 a.m.; perhaps the kids in East Gloucester had to get on at 6:30. If I took the first available bus home I was back on the Cape by 3:15; the kids at the end of the route may have been more like 4 p.m. If I elected to stay late to go the gym, or take advantage of extra-curricular programs offered I could be home by 5 or 6 p.m. A third round of buses often ran for sports players.

Much like GHS, carpentry students at NST built homes and Auto Tech students fixed cars for the cost of parts. Other services included Masonry students who built homes, a full-service restaurant run by the Culinary Arts students, an auto body center staffed by the Collision Repair students, and a full-service salon run by the Cosmetology students. I believe that certificates in 13 vocational programs were handed out that year — in those specialties and in Electronics, Graphic Arts, Commercial Arts, Marketing, Machine Tech, Health Aid, and others. Each of these

courses come with a 1,500-hour certificate, and the high school diploma you earn through academics is as good as any other.

A regional school can offer all of the support needed to operate the wide variety of vocational courses which give our young people the opportunity to learn a trade that they relate to and can succeed at. The school also maintains positive relationships with regional employers for co-op training and offers job placement services.

Vocational education will be critical in both growing the tradespeople of the future, and providing a better educational fit for those students who learn better in an environment which is more hands on.

Gloucester must figure out if it can in fact offer as good a vocational education locally as the regional program — and make a decision whether to participate in the regional program, or go it alone. Doing both hurts both programs, and is wasteful.

From my point of view, the smart decision for Gloucester is to participate in a specialized, more efficient, regional vocational education system. It will further enrich our community with young, skilled, motivated people.

Bill Johnson

Fort Square, Gloucester

Copyright © 1999-2008 cnhi, inc.