

REPORT OF THE
JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE STUDYING VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL
AND CAREER EDUCATION
TO
THE GOVERNOR
AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 12

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1981

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE

Edythe C. Harrison, Chairman
Rufus W. Beamer
John H. Chichester
James S. Christian, Jr.
J. Paul Councill, Jr.
Gordon K. Davies
S. John Davis
Alan A. Diamonstein
Richard J. Ernst
Edward M. Holland
Thomas S. Kubala
Willard J. Moody
Dallas T. Stallings, Jr.
Mary Sue Terry

Consultant: Thomas H. Hohenshil, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Administrative and Clerical Staff

Office of Clerk, House of Delegates

**Report of the
JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE STUDYING VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL
AND CAREER EDUCATION**

**To
The Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia
December, 1981**

To: Honorable Charles S. Robb, Governor of Virginia
and

The General Assembly of Virginia

BACKGROUND

The 1980 General Assembly created the Joint Subcommittee on Vocational-Technical and Career Education to study and make recommendations for the improvement of vocational-technical and career education in Virginia. (House Joint Resolution No. 97) The subcommittee limited its study to twelve issues identified during its initial meetings. In an effort to solicit public opinion on each of the issues, the subcommittee held public hearings in Fairfax, Norfolk, Richmond, and Roanoke. Approximately 1,000 persons attended the public hearings and more than 135 interested citizens testified. This testimony strongly supported increased emphasis upon vocational-technical education and career education.

Several alternative recommendations were considered for each of the twelve issues studied by the subcommittee. The subcommittee made recommendations on seven of the twelve, but felt it did not receive sufficient data from the Department of Education to arrive at recommendations for the other five issues. The subcommittee made its report to the Governor and General Assembly through House Document No. 21. In its report, the subcommittee recommended that it be continued for another year and that the Department of Education supply it with the data and analyses necessary to make recommendations for the remaining five issues. House Joint Resolution No. 225 continued the subcommittee for the purpose of receiving and studying the data requested of the Department of Education, and directed the subcommittee to make recommendations to the 1982 General Assembly regarding those five issues.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In addition to the information requested from the Department of Education, the subcommittee also requested relevant information from the Departments of Corrections and Welfare. The information received from these Departments supported the need for a responsive and well-developed system of vocational education programs in the Commonwealth. These data indicated that a large proportion of our citizens most in need of high quality vocational skills do not have them.

The Department of Welfare has as one of its major goals the enhancement of self-sufficiency, including occupational sufficiency, among public assistance recipients. As of October 31, 1980, there was a total of 131,004 ADC recipients. (It should be noted that information regarding the ADC population reported here does not include Fairfax County, Portsmouth, or Richmond as these locations are not part of the statewide computer system.) The majority of these recipients (68%) were under the age of 18. Of the remaining 42,000, 74% were at the most employable ages of 21-44. Although approximately 44% of these adults had gone to high school, only 25% graduated. Seventeen percent of the adults completed only elementary school. What emerges is a picture of an undereducated group of recipients in an age range that prospective employers would normally be interested in hiring. The Department of Welfare does not have any hard statistical data on the skill levels of the State's recipients. However, through the experience of the Work Incentive (WIN) Program and other employment programs designed to assist ADC recipients over the age of 16 to enter the labor market, it was found that the occupational skills of the majority of these recipients are not sufficient to enable them to be competitive in the labor market. One could also easily surmise that since only 25% of ADC recipients successfully completed high school, the majority of

the remaining 75% did not complete vocational programs designed to prepare them for competitive employment.

Data from the Department of Corrections present an equally dismal picture. As of May, 1981, only about 36% of the inmates had completed grade 12 or its equivalent. As with the ADC recipients, this suggests that at least 64% of the inmates did not complete a vocational program designed to help them acquire occupational skills for competitive employment. This lack is further supported by data provided by the Department of Corrections regarding previous occupations of current inmates. These data indicate that more than 50% were employed as unskilled laborers or were unemployed at the time of confinement.

The Department of Education-Vocational and Adult Education (October, 1980) in a report on the youth not served by vocational education stated the following:

First, the number who graduate from secondary schools (in Virginia) but do not go on to further education and do not complete an occupational program comes to almost 15 percent of all graduates. This translates to more than 10,000 students annually, most of whom enter the labor market without needed preparation.

Second, more than 20,000 students leave the public schools (in Virginia) each year before they graduate. This is more than 5 percent of all students enrolled in grades 8-12. Most of them have not been served by voc ed, and many are included in today's youth unemployment figures which have risen to a new alarming high.

So—we are talking about some 30,000 people a year.... While it may not be reasonable to expect voc ed to be all things to all people, it is reasonable to expect a group of highly dedicated vocational educators - with the support of school officials, politicians, and business and industry - to come to grips with this problem.

In view of the above and other data supplied by the Departments of Corrections, Education, and Welfare, as well as that produced through the public hearings, it is apparent that large numbers of students leave the educational system each year lacking the occupational skills necessary to compete successfully in the labor market. It is equally apparent that a disproportionate number of these individuals also become wards of the State through corrections and welfare, resulting in considerable monetary and social expense to the Commonwealth and to the individuals themselves. For example, it costs the Commonwealth of Virginia approximately \$1,900 per year to support a student in high school, while the yearly expense for an inmate in a correctional institution is in excess of \$12,000 and the average yearly cost per ADC case is over \$2,500.

It is also important to note that 72% of all crimes leading to incarceration in Virginia are against property. These are generally committed by young adults (nearly 70% of the inmates are between 19-30 years of age) who lack marketable skills and who commit offenses against the public for material gain. Although cause and effect relationships are difficult to demonstrate, it is certainly reasonable to assume that if our prison inmates had acquired high quality vocational skills while in school which led to desirable employment, then there would be substantially fewer crimes against property in Virginia. This being the case, it is obvious that public expenditures for the prison system would be considerably reduced. The same case can also be made for welfare recipients, had they acquired high quality marketable skills prior to leaving the educational system.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following is a list of the five remaining issues and resulting recommendations:

ISSUE 1 - Should the vocational and technical aspects of the Standards of Quality be expanded?

Subcommittee Recommendation

The subcommittee recommends that:

The Standards of Quality for vocational and technical education be expanded by requiring that all students acquire vocational skills prior to leaving high school through graduation or

otherwise.

Discussion

There was a consensus among those who testified at the public hearing that the Standards of Quality relating to vocational and technical education should be expanded. There was a pervasive concern that vocational education not be viewed as an alternative form of education and that it not be targeted for a particular type of student such as a dropout, underachiever, or handicapped. It was the opinion of many that the Standards of Quality should be expanded to require that all students leaving high school acquire vocational skills regardless of whether or not they are college bound. To implement this, it was suggested that all students be required to have one or more credits in vocational education in order to meet minimum high school graduation standards by the 1984-86 biennium.

It is clear from Department of Education data that approximately 30,000 students are leaving the educational system in Virginia each year without marketable skills. It is equally evident from data supplied by the Departments of Corrections and Welfare that a large percentage of persons supported by these agencies lack the marketable skills necessary for employment. Considering these data, along with the information derived from the public hearings, the subcommittee concludes that the present Standard of Quality relating to career preparation is not sufficient to assure that all of our citizens acquire the occupational skills necessary for competitive employment before leaving the education system.

ISSUE 2 - Is vocational and technical education available to all students who wish to participate in such programs at various ages and education levels?

Subcommittee Recommendation

The subcommittee recommends that:

Vocational course offerings (both skill training and exploratory) be significantly expanded at both junior high and senior high school levels (including those for "nontraditional" students such as the gifted and handicapped, as well as "nontraditional" vocational courses such as the arts).

Discussion

Issues 2 and 3 drew the greatest amount of testimony at the public hearings. The clear majority of those testifying stated that vocational and technical education is not available to all students who wish to participate. It was indicated that access to vocational education is not readily available to the handicapped, gifted, or college bound students. Many of the individuals most in need of training—the hard core unemployed, high school dropouts, prison inmates and ex-offenders—do not have opportunities for vocational education. There was support for more vocational programs (both skill training and exploratory) at the junior high level so dropout prone students can be reached before leaving high school. In addition, several expressed concern about students who graduate from high school with no vocational skills to obtain employment.

There was also a considerable amount of citizen input about the narrow range of vocational program offerings. There was support expressed at several public hearings for the initiation of vocational education programs for the arts at secondary schools, community colleges and four-year institutions. This included programs for musicians and other performing artists as well as such support personnel as carpenters, electricians, light and sound technicians, and art administrators. Persons supporting vocational education for the arts believed that most people do not understand that preparation for many careers in the arts can be accomplished through high school vocational education programs.

More attention was suggested for adult and continuing vocational education, with the hope that community colleges will continue to give primary emphasis to vocational preparation programs as opposed to college preparatory programs. There was also concern expressed regarding the need for better articulation and coordination among those institutions providing vocational programs for adults. In addition, testimony was presented regarding the negative influence of early dismissal policies and increasing numbers of required courses as a reaction to the basics movement. It was felt that both tend to reduce the number of students who choose vocational education as an elective.

Data provided by the Department of Education did not indicate the number of students in the Commonwealth who wish to participate in vocational education at the junior high and senior high levels. The data supplied to the Subcommittee consisted of student follow-up data of 3,000 students already participating in vocational education programs in five school divisions during the 1979-80 school year. Although the data presented indicated that 93% of the vocational students surveyed were able to enroll in the program of their choice, no data were presented to indicate the number of students who chose not to participate in vocational education at all because a program was not available in their area of interest. Therefore, based upon the overwhelming evidence produced through the public hearings, the Subcommittee concludes that vocational program offerings are not sufficient in quantity or variety to enable all students to participate in programs commensurate with their interests and abilities at the junior high and senior high levels.

Issue 3 – Are sufficient resources available to vocational and technical education to ensure an adequate number of high quality programs (equipment, facilities, instructional materials, et cetera)?

Subcommittee Recommendations :

The subcommittee recommends:

- (1) An increase in state aid for vocational education in additional cost and categorical funding, which has been requested by the Board of Education in the “addendum budget.”
- (2) A maintenance of earmarked funding for vocational education, including additional cost funds and categorical aid for special program activities and services.

Discussion

Testimony from the public hearings clearly revealed that Issues 2 and 3 are closely related. Whether high quality vocational and technical programs are available to all students who wish to participate depends largely upon whether sufficient resources are available at the federal, state and local levels. There was overwhelming testimony that sufficient state funds are not available to ensure an adequate number of high quality vocational programs. Of special concern was the recent cut in additional funding for vocational education as a result of increasing basic aid. Most speakers testified that the prospect of expanding or upgrading facilities and equipment is dim unless funds for vocational and technical education are increased in future state budgets.

Data provided by the Department of Education further support the need for additional funds to ensure an adequate number of high quality vocational programs. The Department indicates that for the past two years, the state has not provided sufficient funds to support its share of project costs. As a result, the Department believes that many localities have not implemented needed activities or purchased new or replacement equipment which is needed. Local funding requests exceeded the state funds by \$7,060,971 for operations and equipment in 1979-80. The initial approval for 1980-81 is at a lesser percentage of state participation than in 1979-80. Therefore, the Department expects localities to further reduce vocational activities.

Based upon information provided by the Department of Education and the testimony received through the public hearings, the subcommittee concludes that there are insufficient resources available to vocational and technical education to ensure an adequate number of high quality programs.

Issue 4 – What is the best delivery system for vocational and technical education at the high school level (comprehensive high schools, separate vocational schools, industry, or some combination thereof)?

Subcommittee Recommendation :

The subcommittee recommends that:

The best delivery system for vocational education is the comprehensive secondary school with close working relationships with the business/industrial community. Where it is not possible for individual secondary schools (because of size, low demand, and cost) to offer a comprehensive program, a vocational center or joint vocational center is the preferred delivery

system.

Discussion

The clear majority of the public testimony on this issue indicated that the best type of delivery system depends upon the characteristics of the particular locality. The comprehensive high school was favored for areas with a large enough student enrollment to support a broad range of vocational programs. The regional vocational school model appeared to receive the most support for sparsely populated areas where the student population is not sufficient to support a broad range of vocational offerings. Regardless of the model or combination of models adopted, those testifying support a close working relationship between the business/industrial community and vocational education programs. These close working relationships should involve sharing of expensive equipment, assistance in instruction and development of vocational advisory councils.

Data and opinions supplied by the Department of Education generally support the public testimony. These data indicate that the mean number of vocational programs in comprehensive high schools in Virginia is 16.5; joint vocational centers is 13.6; and vocational centers is 12.9. The Department believes that the comprehensive secondary school is generally the best delivery system if it is of sufficient size to offer a wide range of vocational programs. When it is not possible for individual schools (usually because of size, low demand, and/or cost) to provide needed programs, it is then recommended that an arrangement be worked out where students from two or more high schools are served through a center, thus expanding opportunities for students from each participating high school.

On the basis of the above information supplied by the Department of Education and the public hearings, the subcommittee concludes that, other factors being equal, the comprehensive school is the best delivery system for vocational education at the high school level.

Issue 5 – What modifications should be made in high school vocational education programs for handicapped students who want to acquire entry level job skills for use upon graduation?

Subcommittee Recommendations

The subcommittee recommends that:

(1) Additional emphasis be placed on certification/recertification standards of preparing teachers, counselors, and administrators to work more effectively with handicapped students (vocational assessment procedures as well as instruction).

(2) Additional state funds be appropriated to enable proper assessment of the needs of handicapped students and to make appropriate modifications of equipment and facilities to accommodate those needs.

(3) Additional vocational programs be made available for handicapped students (through mainstreaming or special vocational courses).

Discussion

It was the opinion of those at the public hearings that high quality vocational programs for handicapped students are essential. However, there was a considerable amount of public testimony indicating that some vocational programs are not accessible to handicapped persons; that additional moneys are needed to modify equipment; that vocational teachers need more pre-service and inservice training to work more effectively with handicapped students; and that better vocational assessment programs are necessary prior to the placement of handicapped persons into vocational courses. There was special concern about the quality and scope of vocational evaluation services for handicapped students. There was also support to increase the quality of career education and career counseling programs for handicapped students.

The Department of Education's information supplied to the subcommittee generally supports the testimony from the public hearings. Although the subcommittee requested data on the total number and percentage of handicapped students served by vocational education, this information was not supplied by the Department. Thus, it was not possible to determine from the data provided by the

Department whether vocational program offerings are sufficient to meet the needs of handicapped students in Virginia. The report provided by the Department of Education indicates that efforts have been undertaken to provide inservice training to vocational teachers, modify instructional equipment, and modify curriculum; however, additional efforts are needed in the future.

Based upon the information provided by the Department of Education and the public hearings, the subcommittee concludes that vocational programs in the Commonwealth are not sufficient to provide entry level job skills for all handicapped students who wish to acquire them for use upon graduation.

Conclusion

We believe that a strong vocational and technical education program, along with a vigorous career education program, is vital to ensure the success of today's youth in meeting society's employment needs upon their completion of formal education. The Commonwealth has many fine programs, but not enough is being done, as our investigation and the testimony at our public hearings has revealed. We believe the recommendations contained in this report represent a major step toward creating a strong vocational and technical education component in our public school systems. We urge their adoption by the Governor and the General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Edythe C. Harrison

Rufus W. Beamer

James S. Christian, Jr.

J. Paul Councill, Jr.

Alan A. Diamonstein

Richard J. Ernst

Edward M. Holland

Thomas S. Kubala

Willard J. Moody

Dallas T. Stallings, Jr.

Mary Sue Terry

**Dissenting Statement
Of
John H. Chichester:**

The report of the subcommittee assigns to the public secondary schools too much of the state's total responsibility for vocational education. It does not give sufficient attention to the vocational education roles of other agencies, organizations, and institutions, and therefore may inadvertently encourage costly duplications of effort. A greater emphasis on the activities of agencies, organizations, and institutions other than public secondary schools is particularly appropriate in view of one of the State Board of Education's six goals for vocational education. This goal calls for youth and adults to benefit, through cooperative efforts, from a coordinated vocational education delivery system which fully uses all resources – public, private, and proprietary.

In addition, the conclusions upon which several of the recommendations are based are not adequately supported by the data in the report. In other instances, there appear to be gaps in logic.

By adopting the position that all citizens should be required to acquire vocational skills before leaving high school, the report also denies individuals their right to determine where and at what stage in their lives such skills are learned. Equally important, such a position fails to take into account the substantial vocational training opportunities currently provided by organizations other than the public secondary schools. It implies that the primary responsibility for providing all citizens with marketable skills lies at the secondary level. Current trends suggest otherwise. Department of Education enrollment projections indicate that high school enrollments will steadily decline through the 1980's. Given the increased number of older persons in the population, the growing number of women who re-enter the work force in mid-life, and the rapid rate of technological change in all phases of American life, the demand for vocational education in the 1980's probably will be most pronounced at the postsecondary level. People will need vocational education again and again throughout their adult lives. In view of this, the implementation of costly expansions of vocational training opportunities at the secondary level may not be cost effective.

The scant attention paid to the roles and responsibilities of postsecondary institutions (colleges and universities, proprietary schools, apprenticeship programs, and military and industrial programs) for vocational education is most noticeable with regard to Issues 2 and 3. There the report suggests that the resources available to vocational and technical education at all levels are insufficient to ensure an adequate number of high quality vocational programs. Yet the recommendations focus on secondary school offerings, and there is little attention given to the need to improve the quality of postsecondary vocational programs.

In addition to the report's undue emphasis on secondary schools, I am concerned by the lack of data to support the report's recommendation that additional state aid is needed for vocational education at the secondary level. If the recommendation is to be credible, the supporting data must be provided. For instance, the fact that funding requests from localities exceeded the amount of state funds by over seven million dollars bears little relationship to the question of whether the number of high quality vocational programs statewide is adequate. Neither is the fact that 135 persons testified in support of vocational program expansion persuasive, particularly in view of the fact that many of these persons represented organizations partially supported by public vocational education funds.

Finally, the report omits discussion of an issue basic to many of its recommendations, namely, how many high quality programs across all educational levels are needed and how many currently exist. The data do not support the conclusions upon which Recommendations 2 and 3 are based.

The lack of supporting data notwithstanding, the logic of parts of the report needs to be re-examined. For example, the report notes that it was not possible to determine from the Department of Education's data whether vocational program offerings are sufficient to meet the needs of handicapped students. The report then concludes, based in part on information provided by the Department of Education, that vocational programs are insufficient to provide handicapped students with entry level job skills. Although this may be true for some vocational fields in some localities at some educational levels, one cannot presume, on the basis of the limited data available, that it is true for all fields and localities at all levels of education statewide. In order to support such a conclusion, one would need data that permit comparisons of the unemployment rates for handicapped students who completed vocational programs (versus college preparatory and general

programs) and who, in addition, had completed comparable levels of education. In the absence of more persuasive supporting data such as this, the report's recommendation that additional vocational programs be made available for handicapped students, although laudable, is premature.

In yet another instance, the report indicates under Issue 2 that the data provided by the Department of Education did not indicate the number of students who wish to participate in vocational education at the secondary level. Yet the report concludes – based on the testimony of less than 135 persons – that vocational program offerings are not sufficient in quantity or variety to enable all vocationally inclined students to participate. Despite acknowledgement that 93% of 3,000 vocational students were enrolled in the program of their choice, the report recommends “significant [and costly] expansion” of vocational skill programs at public secondary schools. Such a recommendation is not supportable in view of the scant data on which it is based.

**Dissenting statement of
John H. Chichester
and**

Gordon K. Davies:

Several of the report's recommendations advocate costly expansion of vocational education programs at the secondary level. In view of the admitted weakness of some of the data supporting the need for expansion and Virginia's present fiscal climate, we believe such recommendations are inappropriate. Instead, we suggest that the report be revised so as to place greater emphasis on (1) the documentation of the need for expansion and, if need is demonstrated, (2) the development of potentially less costly alternatives to program expansion. Reliance on less costly alternatives would ensure greater use of existing vocational education resources at the postsecondary level (two- and four-year colleges, private business trade and technical schools, apprenticeship training, military and industrial education).

Less costly alternatives to program expansion might include contracting with private vocational schools or businesses to provide additional services, consolidating programs in order to reduce unit costs, and sharing expensive vocational education resources through the development of cooperative agreements.

We propose that the report's recommendations under Issues 1, 2, and 3 be amended (portions underlined) to read as follows:

Issue 1 Should the vocational and technical education aspects of the Standards of Quality be expanded?

The Subcommittee should recommend that:

Part D of the Standard of Quality which deals with career preparation be expanded so as to ensure that all students are made fully aware early in their education of the implications of leaving the educational system without a marketable skill.

Issue 2 Is vocational and technical education available to all students who wish to participate in such programs at various ages and educational levels?

The subcommittee should recommend that:

- (1) Vocational course offerings (both skill training and exploratory) **be expanded, as financial resources permit, in those geographic areas where the need for expansion is demonstrated** (including those for non-traditional students such as the gifted and handicapped, as well as "non-traditional" vocational courses such as the arts); and
- (2) **That demonstration of the need for program expansion, for purposes of justifying increased state support, should include evidence that all potentially less-costly alternatives to program expansion (eg. contract training with proprietary schools, resource sharing with local industries) had been investigated.**

Issue 3 Are sufficient resources available to vocational education to ensure an adequate number of high quality programs?

The subcommittee should recommend:

- (1) An increase in state aid for vocational education in additional cost and categorical funding **where such increases are justified on the basis of demonstrated need.**
- (2) A maintenance of earmarked funding for vocational education, including **additional funds for special program activities and services for which a need is demonstrated.**

Dissenting statement of

S. John Davis

Following staff review, I do not feel that I can approve the draft report for the Joint Subcommittee Studying Vocational-Technical and Career Education. The following reactions concerning each of the recommendations are provided:

ISSUE 1 This recommendation may be an admirable goal but as stated presents some formidable problems. Our review would indicate that in addition to the 30,000 students identified in the report's discussion, there would be approximately 38,000 graduates continuing their education after graduation who have not acquired a vocational skill. Therefore, the change recommended in the Standards of Quality would require programs to support 68,000 additional students without vocational skills. This could require an increase of state financial support by approximately \$10,500,000 per year and an increase of local financial support by approximately \$7,750,000 per year.

Unless the state basic aid is funded at the level of actual cost, I would not be able to endorse this type of increase in categorical funding for vocational education of all students for the 1984-86 biennium.

The Board of Education has indicated an interest in more rigid requirements for the college-bound student, and recent studies indicate that college requirements may be increased by certain institutions of higher education. We must be careful that increased standards for vocational education do not prevent students from indepth studies in the area of foreign language, mathematics, or science if it is their intention to attend one of the institutions of higher education with rigid academic standards. Public schools must continue to meet the needs of all students by providing strong vocational programs, academic programs, and arts programs. It would be difficult to support all students acquiring vocational skills unless some exemption could be made for the students planning to attend colleges with rigid academic standards.

ISSUE 2 I support this issue and urge that the report point out that additional programs with appropriate funding will be necessary if surveys indicate large numbers of students desire programs.

ISSUE 3 The support for the "addendum budget" request is appreciated. This will, however, only maintain our present level of vocational education with some increases projected by localities. It will not bring about major additions or new efforts in vocational education.

ISSUE 4 I support this recommendation. There is a need to include in the discussion support for construction funds. Since federal funding will be very limited in the future, localities will be unable to provide construction funds for programs with high cost.

ISSUE 5 A worthy objective that will also require additional funding and the encouragement of regional solutions to some of the high cost needs.