

The Gloucester Public Schools

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners

School Committee

October 28, 2009

Towards A Policy On Vocational Education Report of the Superintendent of Schools

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper, which is developed from reports considered by the Program Sub-Committee at its meeting on August 5, 2009, and the Building and Finance Sub-Committee at its meeting on October 21, 2009, is to recommend that the School Committee adopt a formal policy on vocational education and advise the City Council on the question of the municipality's participation in the new regional technical high school district. The report also addresses the Mayor's proposal that the funding to meet the tuition costs of students who attend technical high schools outside the district be transferred, along with the responsibility for meeting them, from the City Council operating budget to the School Committee's operating budget.

2. Recommendation

The committee is requested to consider and approve the following recommendations:

- a) That the School Committee adopt Section 4 of this report as a draft policy statement on Vocational Education and consult thereon;
- b) That the School Committee commit itself to maintaining existing vocational education programs at Gloucester High School as a priority, subject to their remaining viable in terms of enrollment, quality and cost effectiveness;
- c) That the School Committee advise the City Council that while it should support the municipality's participation in the new regional technical high school district in principle, it should defer making a decision on membership until the financial future is clearer;
- d) That as part of the FY11 budget development process the committee should pay attention to the adequacy of resources available for vocational education programs;
- e) That the School Committee pursue its recently adopted goal that it explore the feasibility of expanding the current Gloucester High School vocational education program; and

- f) That, subject to further consideration regarding the additional expenditures which would fall to the committee if the city is not in membership of the new regional technical high school district, the committee endorse the Mayor's proposal that the funding to meet the tuition costs of students who attend technical high schools outside the district be transferred, along with the responsibility for meeting them, from the City Council operating budget to the School Committee's operating budget.

3. Background

- 3.1 Unlike many industrial and post-industrial societies, opportunities of publicly funded vocational and technical education courses on the North Shore are limited. Nor are there established arrangements that provide "bridges and ladders" for those taking basic vocational courses to progress to technical and graduate level studies.
- 3.2 The emphasis placed on the value of a "college" education means that less attention and less status tends to be given to vocational programs. The result is that many students who would be motivated by courses with a vocational theme are denied the opportunity. The North Shore Technical High School (450) and the Essex Agricultural and technical High School (450) currently provide 900 places between them, with active proposals to increase the number of places to 1,400.
- 3.3 Health and safety issues which require smaller classes, together with the need for specialist equipment and, in some cases expensive materials, result in vocational education costs typically being higher than those for general education programs.
- 3.4 Effective vocational education programs are actively supported by employers, and are related to the needs of the labor market.
- 3.5 There are differing levels of demand for the output of vocational education programs. It is therefore important that, if provision is to be cost effective, there has to be some planning and approval of provision. This function is performed by the DESE. – See Annex I.
- 3.6 Quality vocational education programs:
- Help to provide skilled workers
 - Contribute to efforts to raise employment and reduce unemployment
 - Contribute to economic growth and prosperity
 - Enable individuals to realize their full potential
- 3.7 Membership of the new regional technical high school district would maintain opportunities for Gloucester students to pursue courses which cannot be made available in Gloucester, and opportunity for the city to exercise influence over the policies, practices and expenditures of the new district.

- 3.8 The notion that closing the Gloucester High School programs will result in expenditure reductions is false, in that the district would either need to make alternative provision for the (currently 147) students and/or face the prospect of more students choosing to attend the North Shore technical High School with the associated higher tuition costs.
- 3.9 There is some potential for the expansion of Gloucester High School programs if there is support from local employers; in particular the culinary arts, health assisting, cosmetology, graphics and marine related engineering and services. It is not suggested that GHS could support all these kinds of opportunities; but they are worth exploring. The potential for vocational program development will be limited by:
- a) levels of student interest and parental support
 - b) the extent of support from employers, particularly in terms of internship availability;
 - c) assessments of labor market needs
 - d) available facilities
 - e) the availability of additional funding – offset by increases in Chapter 74 state aid, any reductions in enrollment at the regional technical high school, and inward school choice.

4. Towards A Policy For Vocational Education

The School Committee may wish to consider establishing the following policy goals with regard to its vocational education responsibilities:

- a) To recognize quality vocational education programs as legitimate alternatives to general education programs, which match the interests and aptitudes, and meet developmental needs of a significant proportion of students.
- b) To provide rigorous courses of study that are developmentally appropriate and enable students to master basic knowledge and skills in the context of an applied vocational theme, together with occupationally relevant skills and knowledge.
- c) To maximize access to high quality vocational education opportunities within the available resources by supporting Gloucester High School programs, and, subject to the availability of resources, participation in the proposed new regional technical high school district.
- d) To avoid unnecessary duplication of programs.
- e) To ensure that regional and GHS programs are cost effective.
- f) To work with Cape Ann employers and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure support for internships and GHS programs, and relate programming to employers' needs and expectations.

- g) To attract Cape Ann students to GHS programs.
- h) To ensure that GHS has the leadership capacity to support a quality program.
- i) To recruit and retain experienced and effective staff by keeping under review the relationship between compensation paid to general education teachers and vocational education teachers and providing appropriate opportunities for professional development.
- j) To secure appropriate facilities and equipment for the programs offered.
- k) To support the effective marketing of GHS programs, and offer scholarships to encourage Gloucester students to choose to take courses in Gloucester.

5. The Immediate Question Of Participation In The New Regional technical High School District

- 5.1 The availability of \$100m in state funds in support of a \$133m state of the art building project, the proposed expansion by 500 student places, and the widening of the program opportunities at the newly merged school, are very attractive.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that there will be a differential as between resident and non-resident tuition costs associated with the merged school. The current differential is \$1,928 **(It should be noted that previous reports cited the current resident rate as \$17,542 rather than \$16,794 – an error attributable to the NSTHS providing inaccurate data)**. This means that were the Gloucester enrollment in the merged school to remain at 62 and the city not be in membership of the new regional district tuition costs would increase by almost \$120,000.
- 5.3 It is understood that the debt service costs will be added to the tuition. The NTSHS-EATHS estimates of the additional costs amount to a little over 2,900 per student in the early years.
- 5.4 The opportunity falls at a time when all communities are facing serious financial challenges. Additionally Gloucester faces the prospect of a reduction in state aid of up to \$1.9m in FY14 consequent upon the establishment of the charter school, the same year that debt services costs of the new technical high school building are estimated at \$223,000.
- 5.5 Section 4 of the draft legislation that would establish the new regional technical high school district provides that “additional elections (to be in membership of the new district) may be made subsequent to the date of certification, but before the July 1 preceding the opening of the Essex North Shore agricultural and technical school.”
- 5.6 The Superintendent of the North Shore Technical High School believes that there will be sufficient support from municipalities outside Gloucester to satisfy the MSBA requirement that a commitment to the new building be made by mid-December. That being the case, Gloucester could choose to defer making a decision to join the new district until the financial future is clearer.

6. Budgetary Responsibility For Out-Of-District Vocational Education Tuition

The Mayor has suggested in her report to the meeting of the School Committee held on October 14, 2009 that that the funding to meet the tuition costs of students who attend technical high schools outside the district be transferred, along with the responsibility for meeting them, from the City Council operating budget to the School Committee's operating budget. Placing funding responsibility with programmatic responsibility is good practice, and should ensure that more attention is paid to out-of-district tuition costs, and should be supported.

The monitoring of technical high school costs is the responsibility of a representative to the technical high school committee nominated by the Mayor. Under the proposed arrangements it would make sense for the Mayor to request the School Committee to nominate through the Mayor.

Given that the financial implications of such a transfer will be impacted by the City Council's decision regarding membership of the new regional technical high school district **it is recommended that** adoption of the transfer proposal be conditioned by an understanding that the level of funds transferred will be reviewed at the time of the City Council's decision on membership.

It is further recommended that the costs of debt service and the associated increase in tuition fees consequent upon the city's joining the new regional district be the subject of a separate discussion and agreement.

7. Conclusion

The committee is requested to consider the report, and endorse the recommendations set out in Section 2 of the report.

Christopher Farmer
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Chapter 74 programs are organized with as series of “clusters” as follows:

- * Standardized Frameworks Strands (Strands 1,4,5 & 6 – for all courses)
 - * Strand 1: Safety and Health Knowledge and Skills
 - * Strand 2: Technical Knowledge and Skills
 - * Strand 3: Embedded Academic Knowledge and Skills
 - * Strand 4: Employability Knowledge and Skills
 - * Strand 5: Management and Entrepreneurship Knowledge and Skills
 - * Strand 6: Technological Knowledge and Skills
- * Agriculture and Natural Resources Cluster
- * Arts and Communication Services Cluster
- * Business and Consumer Services Cluster
- * Construction Cluster
- * Education Cluster
- * Health Services Cluster
- * Hospitality and Tourism Cluster
- * Information Technology Services Cluster
- * Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology
- * Transportation Cluster

Chapter 74 Course Approval Criteria

- A Vocational Education position established at GHS to lead program
- Documented labor market demand
- Program advisory committee established
- Facilities and equipment validated by technical experts
- Facilities meet relevant codes
- Program complies with OSHA requirements
- Program aligned with state and national approval standards
- Program integrates technical and academic education
- Program articulates with post secondary ed and training
- Program includes internship
- Teachers have state voc.ed. accreditation
- Non-discriminatory enrollment
- District financial resources available to meet safety standards

Note: The responsibilities of the Director of Voc Ed include organizing classes, keeping all statistical and financial records; reporting to local and state offices; recommending budgets (expenditures); preparing competency-based curriculum including courses of study and schedules for vocational technical education programs; preparing instructional material and recommending equipment; allocating space; conducting faculty meetings; recommending qualified teachers to the Principal; admitting students; supervising teachers, supervising instruction of students; investigating and recommending approval of cooperative employments; attending educational conferences and meetings; placing and following up students graduating from or leaving school; providing, in compliance with the law, information regarding students to employers and others requesting such information; and disseminating information regarding vocational technical education.