

Expanding Opportunities for our Students

By Rachel Watson, Cosmetology Instructor at the Worcester Career and Technology Center



Worcester County Public Schools believes in building futures for all students. In the fall of 2008, the new state-of-the-art Worcester Technical High School – which will replace our current Career and Technology Center – will open its doors, offering high school students from Pocomoke, Snow Hill, and Stephen Decatur High Schools new, improved, and expanded programs and services.

With experienced instructors and diverse programs, our school specializes in providing students with academic subject matter taught with relevance to the real world; employable skills, job related skills, and workplace ethics; and education pathways that help explore students' interests as they progress through high school. Our students continue on to post secondary education such as college or a specialized training school, or they choose to enter into the work force directly after graduation.

For those career and technology students who wish to enter the job market after graduation, they find themselves empowered by their career education which has given them distinct advantages in the competitive job market. We prepare our students for a bright future by helping them apply key skills that are in demand. Successful completion of our programs provides portable credentials that advance a student's readiness for immediate employment at higher than entry-level positions. The more skilled a student is, the greater the employment outcome!

High school students in Grades 10 through 12 may select a half day or full day of specialized instruction that will prepare them for a career or post-secondary training. Students successfully completing course requirements for a program such as cosmetology will receive a certificate of program completion. College credit is available through articulation agreements. Currently, our school articulates with Wor-Wic Community College, Delaware Technical College, the Community College of Baltimore County, and the University of Northwestern Ohio.

As teachers working in our school's Cosmetology Program, Cosmetology Instructor Anita Odell and I inspire our students to achieve to their fullest potential. Our strong relationship with industry ensures that our instruction reflects the latest techniques. This, in turn, equips our students with the skills and expertise they need to transition into challenging and rewarding salons. A senior cosmetology student, for example, will complete an internship and actually work in a salon. This practical experience is invaluable to our students.

In order to stay current within our industry, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and our school system proudly continue to support high quality instructor professional development in order to support Career and Technology Programs such as Careers in Cosmetology. Cosmetology teachers, for example, have the opportunity to partner with other cosmetology instructors, industry leaders, and salon owners to discuss techniques and standards to prepare our students. Through an ongoing commitment, teachers form lasting partnerships with salons to improve teaching environments. Employers also collaborate with us to help identify the academic and technical skills that will make our students successful in the real world.

Our students make positive contributions in our community by sharing their talents with others. Our Cosmetology students support the Women Supporting Women Program by styling wigs for female cancer patients. In addition, each month, our class travels to Worcester Adult Medical Day Services, The Arbor at Ocean Pines, and the Mac Center to provide various cosmetology services to patients with the hope of bolstering their self-esteem. Our students also participate in providing free services to patients at our Snow Hill and Berlin nursing homes, as well as the Lakeside Assisted Living Center in Salisbury, Maryland. Instilling this sense of community service is as important as teaching academics. We are proud of our students and their willingness to serve their community. We are directly influencing our students and teaching them skills beyond the four walls of a classroom. We are teaching life lessons.

As teachers, we often reflect on the rewards of our efforts. Rewards can be as simple and meaningful as knowing that we have helped students develop a positive work ethic and realize their abilities and unlimited potential. We also feel rewarded when a student seeks our advice and counsel because we have built an environment of trust in our classrooms. For me, the biggest joy in teaching comes when I look into the face of a student and watch confusion turn

into concentration, then concentration to surprise, and finally, surprise into the pride of accomplishment.

Watching parents at their child's graduation – at their proudest moment – is also rewarding. Teachers are gratified in knowing that they have helped students – through the application of learned skills – obtain greater financial opportunities. We see the results of our labor as we watch our students succeed by entering their profession and becoming contributing members of our community. This is the greatest achievement, the highest compliment.

As construction of our new school continues toward completion, the excitement builds. The new school will enhance our school's programs. For example, in Cosmetology, we will be able to accommodate even more interested students. We will have a larger state-of-the-art facility that will house twenty styling stations, ten shampoo stations, ten dryer stations, two pedicure spas, and a nail drying station. Our classrooms will be separated and will incorporate a larger salon-based atmosphere. We will enjoy a beautiful reception area where clients can sit comfortably and wait for their professional services as our students cater to them.

If you have any questions about our Cosmetology Program, you may call me at school at 410-632-5058. If you have questions regarding our new school and its program offerings, please contact Principal and Career and Technology Education Supervisor Dr. Jane Pruitt at 410-632-5058.