

from our readers

Reader questions emphasis put on career planning

Editor: I was distressed to read the Nov. 24 article entitled "Career Planning Wins Allies."

Granted, the article was brief and undoubtedly didn't do justice to Farmington's career education programs. I fervently hope that my fears about the direction of these programs are unjustified.

I graduated from the Farmington Public School system in 1973 and have always been proud of and grateful for the fine education I received. The Farmington schools, while forward-

looking, have managed to avoid being "trendy." Let us hope that they don't become so in their new emphasis on career education.

It is important to prepare children to enter the job market. We must take care, however, not to rob them of the sheer joy of learning in our concern for their "marketability."

Technological advances are hurdling this world in new directions daily. Occupations that are in demand now may not exist when today's elementary students become high school graduates.

Are we educating them as to the re-

pidity with which the job market changes? Are we encouraging them to develop maximum flexibility in their career planning?

Too many children decide far too early what their life's work will be. How many children have known, from their earliest years, that they will be, must be, a doctor or lawyer - only to have their worlds fall apart when they aren't admitted to the "professional school of choice?"

The persons most ill-prepared for the career world are those who lack the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Setting career goals too early and too immutably may destroy that adaptability.

I cringe at the thought of English teachers replacing vocabulary lists with "career-related words." Today's children will adopt and use professional jargon all too soon and all too exclusively.

Those over-used career-related words are at best used sloppily and inappropriately and at worst used to conceal more than they reveal.

Anyone can write a letter, memorandum or proposal with all the right buzzwords after two weeks on the job. Few, however, have sufficient command over the English language to convince, persuade and ultimately have an impact.

Professional jargon changes as fast

as does technology. Better to stick to that "tired old vocabulary."

I question the wisdom of asking elementary school children to examine their personalities and determine their strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Do they understand, at this point, that their strengths, weaknesses and preferences are only now being molded?

Or will they lock themselves into a self-conception that is erroneous because it fails to account for the tremendous personality changes that take place between the ages of 5 and 18?

The thought of students giving speeches concerning "the job I'd least like to do" troubles me deeply.

Suppose a student relates the "horrors" of garbage collection? Does anyone give any consideration to the child who goes home in tears because his or her father or mother is employed in that field? A curriculum that even unintentionally encourages pejorative classifications of occupations runs the risk of demoralizing and humiliating many students.

Is such a negative approach to career exploration really necessary?

Let us hope that our educators remember they are shaping tomorrow's leaders - they are more, far more, than employment counselors.

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