

Experience paves road for future job security

By Diane Gale
staff writer

Many students in the Farmington Public Schools' vocational education program are confident about their futures as they easily ramble off a carefully planned itinerary for at least the next five years of their lives.

"They teach you everything in this class, it's so great," according to North Farmington senior Joanne Schwartz. After gaining experience with computers in the secretarial office procedures class, Schwartz plans to go to a business school and work in word processing.

Andy Waters, a 12th grader at Farmington, said the skills he's learning in a printing course are necessary to prepare him for many years to come.

"I plan to be a printer for the rest of my life, and this will help me get a

start," Waters said. "I've been in this class for three years, and I'm learning new things all the time."

SCHWARTZ AND Waters represent a growing number of students who see the benefits of vocational courses as a buffer against the sometimes shocking blow of entering the job market after graduation.

In recognition of the program, Feb. 12-18 has been designated Vocational Education Week.

Students in the program do exceptionally well in landing their first jobs after graduation, according to statistics provided by Earl Baumunk, director of vocational and career education. Only 1.2 percent of the 563 district students who took at least one vocational class was unemployed nine months after graduating from high school in 1982. Many of the students in

the vocational education classes also are getting paid at a job through the district's co-op program.

"Less and less students are graduating and saying, 'I don't know what I'm going to do,'" said June Kilmer, marketing and distribution co-op coordinator.

"They don't have to sign in blood with one career, but at least they can see what the jobs are like, and possibly eliminate some," Kilmer said. "This is a way of bringing the real world to the students."

The 21 vocational classes are divided into four categories: office applications, marketing and distribution, health occupation and trade and industries. Kilmer and the three other co-op coordinators work to place interested students in a job that relates to the vocational courses they are taking in school.

"THE CLASSES and job experience has given me an overall view of what nursing is like," said Debbie Fairchild, a Farmington student. Fairchild is taking nursing courses at school in the morning, and in the afternoon she works as a medical office assistant at a dermatologist's office.

"I plan to be a medical nurse and go to Michigan State University or Wayne State University," Fairchild said.

Mario Hall, a 11th grader at Farmington, is enrolled in a nursing assistant course at Southwest Oakland Vocational Education Center (SVOVEC), which houses some of the job training courses that are offered through the district. SVOVEC provides equipment for classes that are offered by a number of districts in Oakland County.

Hall said the program has enabled her to decide "what I'm going to be when I get older, and I know what college I'm going to, too."

Scott Wolfe, a Farmington student, is just as sure about what he'll do in the

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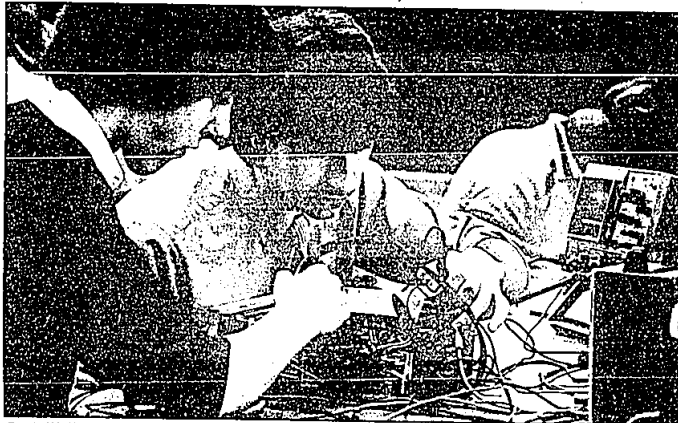


A large garage at North Farmington High School houses the auto maintenance classes.

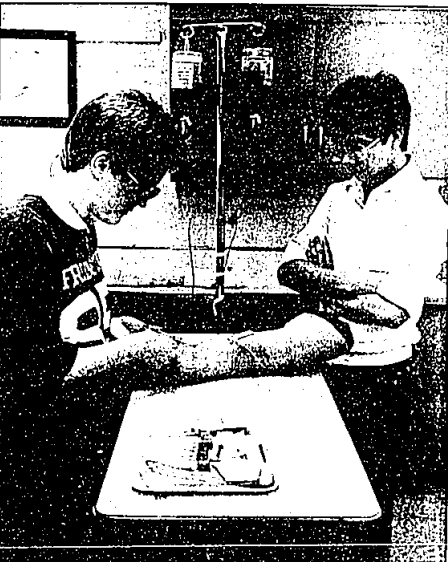


photos by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Max Kiehl, a senior at Farmington High School, uses a computer to design a house in architectural drafting class.



Scott Wolfe (left) and Mike Gerulis trouble-shoot a stereo in the electronics lab at Farmington High School.



A venipuncture demonstration is performed by student Mario Hall (left) while Narlito Porcella watches.



Rialto is the name of a student operated store at North Farmington High School.

Jennifer Dougekos (left) and Beth Monson go over the inventory sheets.



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