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SHOULD SCHOOLS HAVE A VOCATIONAL TRACK?

Word Generation - Unit 3.13

Focus Words

vocational | inherent | exceed | equivalent | focus



Weekly Passage

Jimmy is in the vocational track at his school. This means all his classes are geared toward preparing him to get a job after high school. In English class, he learns how to give a convincing job interview. His math class focuses on ways businesses manage money. Jimmy wants to be a mechanic. His favorite class is auto shop. In auto shop, students fix cars and learn how to work with tools.

Jimmy attends a comprehensive high school. The school offers different programs for different types of students. Some students are preparing for college. Others, like Jimmy, learn about different kinds of jobs such as hair styling, child care, wood working, and cooking. Graduates like Jimmy can get jobs in their field right out of high school. Previous graduates are working as hairstylists, plumbers, electricians, or medical technicians. These jobs do not require a college education, but they may require high-level math, reading, and writing.

Some people think comprehensive schools are inherently better than college-preparatory schools. They think high schools should prepare students for whatever they want to do. People who support comprehensive schools point out that not everybody goes to college. These people believe that

students who want to work right after they graduate might be more motivated if they can take classes that will help them learn job skills. Vocational classes also let students experience different careers. Then students can decide what is right for them.

Other people think high schools should prepare all students for college. They worry that students in vocational classes are getting a watered-down education and won't be able to get into college if their career goals change. People who support college preparatory schools believe that all students should have an equivalent education and that the risks of having a vocational track exceed the benefits.

In addition, supporters of college preparatory schools remind us that vocational classes often require expensive equipment. High costs for equipment means there is less money to pay teachers or buy textbooks for other subjects, like English or math. Supporters say that perhaps students who want vocational training should take special classes after high school to prepare for the jobs they want.

Should high schools prepare everybody for college? Or should students be able to enroll in a vocational track?

Unit 3.13 - Should schools have a vocational track?

Focus Word Chart

Word	Meaning	Forms	Examples of Use	Notes
vocational	(adj.) - involved in training for a skill or trade			
focus	(n.) - center of activity or interest			
inherently	(adv.) - built-in, belonging by nature			
exceed	(v.) - to be greater than			
equivalent	(adj.) - alike or equal			

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Problem of the Week



Option 1: Blue Hills Regional Technical School is a **vocational** high school. Vocational education is **inherently** practical. Students **focus** on job training in programs like car repair or education of young children. They earn a degree **equivalent** to a high school diploma. The table below shows the credit requirements at Blue Hills. Students must meet or **exceed** the requirement in each subject to graduate.

How many credits in math, English, science, and social studies do students need to graduate?

- A) 24
- B) 65
- C) 20
- D) 104

Subject	Credits
English	8
Math	8
Science	5
Social Studies	3
Physical Education	3
Vocational Training	32
Other	3

Option 2: Ms. Wilson agrees that **vocational** schools should focus on skills that students will use in the workplace. However, she also thinks that academic classes like math and English are **inherently** valuable. She thinks that the number of required academic credits should at least be **equivalent** to, or even **exceed**, the number of vocational credits.

Blue Hills Regional Technical School. (n/d). Program of studies. Retrieved on August 20, 2008 from <http://www.bluehills.org/visitor/view/blue-hills-program.html>

If v = the number of vocational credits, and a = the number of academic credits, write an inequality that shows the proper relationship, according to Ms. Wilson, between academic and vocational credits.

(Hint: You will use one of these four symbols: $>$, \geq , $<$, or \leq)

Math Discussion Question: Some people think that English and math are **inherently** more important than science and social studies. High-stakes tests across the country **focus** on English and math. And some people feel that **vocational** students have even less need of science and social studies than traditional students. After all, how will learning about China or plant cells help students fix cars or teach preschool? At Blue Hills, the required credits in English and math **exceed** the required credits for science and social studies by 100%. Do you agree with this focus on math and English? Why don't science and social studies get **equivalent** respect?

Should schools have a vocational track?

Debating the Issue



I. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A All high schools should offer a vocational and a college-preparatory track. This means all students can choose to focus on what is most important to them.

B All high schools should prepare students for college. Offering vocational classes exceeds the schools' responsibilities. Students who want jobs can enroll in special classes after graduation.

C High schools should prepare all students for college, but should offer vocational classes as electives. Students who take these electives can learn about a job as they prepare for college.

D There should be different high schools for students who want to go to college and for students who want immediate employment after graduation.

E _____

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

...because...

I disagree with part of that...

An example might help convince me. Can you give me an example?

What part of the passage makes you think that?

2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

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Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

Hearing ability can be damaged by frequently listening to noises that are too loud. MP3 players with earbuds are a popular way to listen to music. But if the volume **exceeds** safe levels, listeners can do long-term damage to their hearing.

Earbuds are **inherently** more dangerous because the sound is **focused** directly at the inner ear. **Equivalent** volume may have different effects on hearing loss when different kinds of headphones are used. Hearing loss can take many years to show up, so long-term studies are needed to understand the problem.

Question:

How does listening with speakers, using earbuds, or using headphones affect hearing when the decibel level is the same? (Decibel is a unit of measurement for how loud or soft a noise is. 60 db is the loudness of a normal conversation, an alarm clock is about 80 db, and 110 db is about how loud a rock concert is).

Hypothesis:

Earbuds will damage hearing more than headphones. Listening through speakers will damage hearing least.

Materials:

- ▶ Hearing test room
- ▶ Survey

Procedure:

Middle school students were asked to keep a record of every time they listened to music using earbuds, headphones, or speakers. They also wrote down the volume setting. Their hearing was tested every year for 10 years. Students were 13 when the study began and 23 when the study was completed.

Data:

These are the (fictitious) data for students who listened to music at least 1-2 hours daily. They usually listened at a decibel level between 85-110db using either earbuds, headphones, or no listening device.

	After 1 year	After 3 years	After 6 years	After 10 years
Earbuds	No hearing loss	No hearing loss	Very mild hearing loss	Mild-moderate hearing loss
Headphones	No hearing loss	No hearing loss	No hearing loss	Mild hearing loss
Speakers	No hearing loss	No hearing loss	No hearing loss	No hearing loss

For more information about hearing loss and earbuds: <http://www.listentoyourbuds.org/kids.php>

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

What evidence supports your conclusion?

How would you make this a better experiment?



Focus Words

	Exemplary
	<input type="checkbox"/> Stated my own position clearly
	<input type="checkbox"/> Included 1-2 arguments
	<input type="checkbox"/> Included 1 counterargument
	<input type="checkbox"/> Used 2-5 focus words

Check off what you accomplished:

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.