

Fast track careers

Area high schools
offering hands-on
technical education

By **LOUISE WREGG**
HP Staff Writer

“Vocational” classes are no longer just for students who aren’t planning to go to college.

Today, students who take career and technical education (CTE) classes open up for themselves choices, including going to college or starting a good-paying career right out of high school, according to Pam Dudley, CTE director at Benton Harbor Area Schools.

“We want all CTE kids to have entry-level skills so they can get a job right out of high school,” she said.

Some students use those jobs to put themselves through college, she said.

Almost every high school in Berrien County offers CTE courses. If students want to take a CTE course not offered in their school district, they can travel to another district that does offer the desired course.

She said students are graduating from high school as certified nursing assistants and licensed cosmetologists. Others will enter apprenticeship programs in agriculture or construction.

Dudley said students in the Allied Health CTE program at Benton Harbor High School can become certified nursing assistants (CNAs) at the end of the class by taking a state exam.

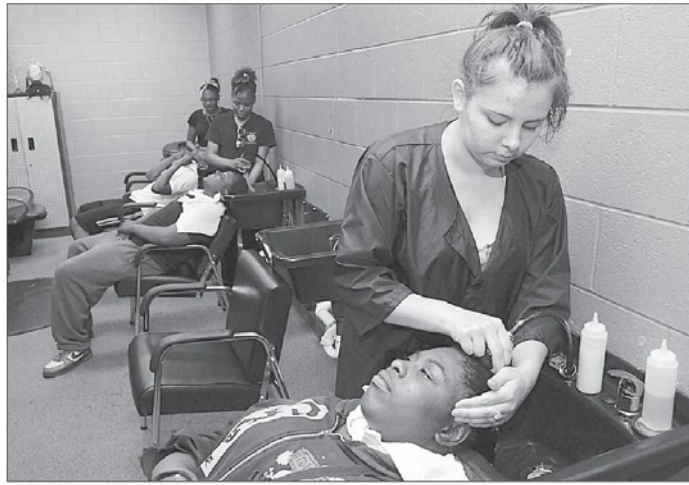
“With a CNA certificate, they can get a job for \$12 to \$15 an hour to start with,” she said.

Some students work as CNAs while attending college to receive a nursing degree, she said. Other students decide to stay as CNAs.

Kelli Parker, the registered nurse in charge of the Allied Health program, said even if her students decide not to take the CNA test, they can work as a nurse’s aide at a hospital.

Parker said students from all over northern Berrien County can attend her program at Benton Harbor High School.

See CTE, page A4



Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff
Benton Harbor High School student Ariel Martin washes Mercedes Foster's hair during a cosmetology class June 3. The class is part of the school's Career and Technical Education program.

CTE

From page A1

She said the room at Benton Harbor High School was remodeled in the summer of 2013 to be an actual lab the students can work in. It includes three mannequins.

"They can actually do a real-life lab, including changing a bed while someone is in it," she said.

The students also get hands-on experience at Pine Ridge Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Stevensville. She said they work alongside nurses and CNAs for three eight-hour days during her class so they understand what the job really means.

The students are in her class two hours during the school day while taking classes at their home high schools the rest of the day.

The same is true of students who take Cisco, a class about computer networking, said Eric Jackson, Cisco and digital media instructor.

He said students in his class can take the exam for their Certified Cisco Network Academy certification. They can use that certification to get entry-level jobs either as their career or while they attend college for more advanced computer-related degrees.

Opting in or out

Parker said it's important that her students graduate with a job skill, but it is also important some students discover they don't like the medical field before they spend thousands of dollars on college classes.

"At some colleges, (nursing) students don't get hands-on (training) until their junior year," she said.

She said that's a lot of time and money to spend in college before students discover they don't like nursing.

She said students from across Berrien County take Professional Health Career Academy at Lakeland Regional Medical Center, St.



Students work on their manicure skills during a cosmetology class in the Benton Harbor High School Career and Technical Education program.

Joseph. There, the students participate in three-week rotations in which they can explore surgery, nursing, dentistry and even veterinary science.

She said the students take biology and learn medical terminology at the college level.

Benton Harbor High School CTE instructor of media and communications Hosea Turner said he had a student take his class and discover he didn't like the television broadcasting field.

"He ended up going into the medical field," he said.

He said the school built a television studio in 2004.

To keep the students connected with people who work in the industry, he said the program has an advisory board with several retired media people on it.

In May, he said, the school completed construction of a working radio station - WBHC-LP 96.5.

"We wanted to develop a full-fledged TV and radio program," he said. "It's been an ongoing dream."

Busy place

There's a lot happening in the CTE program at Benton Harbor High School.

Elenor Gavin, CTE business management instruc-

tor, said her students are going to start their own online clothing store this fall. She said the students will decide everything - from the name of the business to what items of clothing to offer.

She said the school's annual Peace Day celebration on the last day of school is going to be the focal point of the business.

CTE cosmetology instructor Cathy Cohn said that during 2014-15 her students will start cutting, styling and braiding hair for money. She said it has taken two years to build the program up to this point.

"We hope to have the program open and running for the public by Christmas," she said.

Dudley said the cosmetology students will punch in and punch out every day just like professional cosmetologists.

"We hope to have the program open and running for the public by Christmas," she said.

Dudley said the cosmetology students will punch in and punch out every day just like professional cosmetologists.

Dudley said Benton Harbor High School will further offer electronics, agriculture and hospitality programs in the fall.

He said construction is also a job people can fall back on if their career doesn't work out.

Dudley said Benton Harbor High School will further offer electronics, agriculture and hospitality programs in the fall.

Contact: lwraga@TheHP.com, 932-0261, Twitter: @HPWraga



BARNES

being paired with a geometry teacher to help bring geometry to life.

"My kids have learned there's a lot of math in the construction trades," he said. "To pour a concrete slab, you need to know how many cubic squares of concrete you need."

Barnes said he is in his second year of teaching construction trades but has been a contractor for many years. He said he hopes next year to have his students start rehabilitating houses.

Even if his students don't want to go into construction as a career, he said everyone can benefit from knowing how to work in construction.

"One day, you're going to be a homeowner," he said he tells his students. "You can learn to do some things yourself or you can tell if a contractor is taking advantage of you. CTE and construction trades can benefit everyone."

He said construction is also a job people can fall back on if their career doesn't work out.

Dudley said Benton Harbor High School will further offer electronics, agriculture and hospitality programs in the fall.

He said construction is also a job people can fall back on if their career doesn't work out.

Contact: lwraga@TheHP.com, 932-0261, Twitter: @HPWraga

Doing the math

Dillon Barnes, CTE instructor of construction trades at the high school, said his students have gotten jobs in construction using the skills he taught them. He said one of his students went to college to be an architect.

In the fall, he said he is