
wood shop

2 messages

Olson, Kristi <olsonk@woodlandschools.org>

Wed, May 22, 2013 at 12:08 PM

To: WSD School Board <wsdschoolboard@woodlandschools.org>

I have heard from a couple of disappointed students in the district that wood shop classes will not be offered at the new high school and possibly as of next year in our old facility. I'm sure this isn't true, but I felt the need to inquire.

I hope this is just a rumor, or misunderstanding, as I believe the importance of classes like this are invaluable. My older two students graduated from WHS and wood shop and metal shop/mechanics (as well for Kody) were favorite classes. They both have used the skills learned in these classes regularly. Kody has gone on to a profession where he is welding and working on big engines daily. They both are confident enough to work on their own homes doing woodwork project without having to hire others to come in and do the work for them. Most important, Kody only truly grasped important math concepts when they were applied in woodshop and other elective classes. I will never forget the day he came home and said that he now understood math because of Mr. Charlie Farnell. My father was a woodshop teacher for many years, and he still has students that thank him for the things they learned in his class.

Please tell me this is not true and WHS still values the shop programs that have kept many kids interested in school when the regular classes just didn't do it for them. Thank you in advance for your response to this. Kristi Olson

Green, Michael <greenm@woodlandschools.org>

Wed, May 22, 2013 at 12:42 PM

To: "Olson, Kristi" <olsonk@woodlandschools.org>

Cc: WSD School Board <wsdschoolboard@woodlandschools.org>, WSD Ed Leadership Team <wsdedleadershipteam@woodlandschools.org>

Kristi,

Direct answer: It is true.

I agree with you that wood shop class is one place that some kids have the opportunity to engage differently than in many areas of the curriculum. It is a loss to see the fading of a tradition in our schools. Please allow me to explain.

Background: When you and I were in high school traditional vocational education courses, such as wood shop, metals, small engines, etc were vibrant and in high demand. There are a few issues that have impacted the vibrancy of and demand for these classes.

1) The emergence of the Skills Center... In the 1980's Washington established skills centers, such as the Clark County Skills Center, that serve students who are interested in vocations in much greater depth. As an example, if a student is interested in construction trades they can take one or two years of hand's on coursework in the construction trades and walk out with a skill level that is much higher, many times with industry certifications so they are job or apprenticeship ready.

2) Increasing Credit Requirements. When I was in High School I was able to graduate with 1 math credit, 2 English credits, etc. This left lots of room in my schedule for electives. As a high school student I took: Metals

(2 credits), Woods (2 credits), Small Engines, Printing, Home Econ., (and probably a few other "vocational" classes) Today kids have many fewer electives than there used to be.

3) Expansion of options for Vocational Education. Over the last twenty years the options for Career and Tech Ed have exploded. Kids today can take a great breadth of courses (not all offered at our school) "Web Design", "Health Occupations", "Video game design", Videography, Computer Repair, etc. This expansion into newer and STEM related offerings has also led to a decrease in demand for traditional courses, such as wood shop.

These issues are not unique to Woodland, they exist in nearly every high school in the state of Washington and beyond.

ten years ago it was not difficult to fill the schedule of Two Vocational Ag. Teachers and a Vocational Wood shop teacher. Over time, as demand has decreased it has become increasingly difficult to fill all of these schedules. Three or four years ago we made the decision to expand the teaching assignments of these three teachers (Ken, Mary Ellen, and (at the time) Charlie) to include Middle School Students. This we saw as serving two purposes... 1) fill teacher schedules, and 2) try to build interest in trades on the part of students early.

For the coming year we did not have enough interest on the part of High School Students to support even one full section of wood shop. It makes no sense to offer courses that only a few students have interest in taking; we are then in the position of forcing students into those classes and not offering courses that they are interested in.

In the design of the new H.S. the decision has been made to design a shop that has the flexibility to accommodate a wide variety of machines and equipment. This space can be flexed, as needed to change program as needs change.

I hope this answered your questions.

Michael

[Quoted text hidden]

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