

SCHOOL TALK

By Dr. Marshall C. Darnell

Occupational Education: A Key To Success

At the recent town hall meeting, organized and chaired by school Trustee Yvonne Atkinson, an opportunity was provided citizens of District C to obtain information about the operation of the Clark County School District. After a series of presentations, members from the audience posed questions for District representatives and this exchange of views no doubt has established an open communication channel between the school District and those who took time to participate in this excellent forum.

As the meeting progressed, I suddenly took heart to discover that there were others in this audience who were as interested in vocational education as I have been over the years. It was difficult for some of us not to stand and agree with Mr. Leonard Mason's stated importance of vocational education; however, the time would not have been available for this type of presentation. Several days later, I had the occasion to speak with Col. Ed Brown, editor and publisher of the Las Vegas SENTINEL-VOICE. In our conversation, I suggested to him that someone should take time to offer a plain talk column in the SENTINEL-VOICE about vocational education. So, here I am, writing a news column for a weekly newspaper. Col. Brown has been courageous to trust this space to a novice. Those with whom I work in the school District have been quietly humored by this new effort, maybe because they believe that if I spend my time writing about vocational education, I will stop talking to them about this educational program. In any event, this is the quick story of how one can become a guest columnist without trying too hard.

For the next few weeks, to fulfill my obligation to Col. Ed Brown, this space will be devoted to providing information about our schools, unique programs, teachers, and most importantly, the students we serve. Vocational education will be emphasized, and an effort will be made to highlight the more than 20 different occupational programs which are

currently sponsored by the Clark County School District. We have data processing, diesel mechanics, gerontology, airframe and power mechanics, and office occupation classes, and this is only the beginning of a long list of career options for our students. As we look at these occupational programs, I am reminded of a comment from one of my colleagues. He stated to a group of seniors a few years back that students who successfully complete a vocational program have a skill that can never be taken away. He went on to inform these students that as they graduate from high school with a job skill, a different world would open up to them. I was so impressed with his comments that I have remembered them through the years and they hold just as much truth today as they did in 1969 when I first heard them. You don't have to ask about the status of an electrician, a mason, or a plumber. All you need do is ask the cost of their services and you can quickly appreciate their importance. Those students who leave the Clark County School District with a job entry level skill can immediately enter the work force or use this skill as a method for advancement along their chosen career ladder.

Having just made a position for occupational education, I would encourage every parent to

discuss these options with their students. Labor statistics from the past decade have suggested that over 80 percent of the jobs in this country for future years will be required through a community college program, but the initial job entry level skills can be acquired during the high school years.

Parents, if your junior or senior high school students are interested in a vocational program, please inform them that the road to success in this educational endeavor is built on a strong basic educational foundation. Your students must successfully complete a program of reading, writing, and arithmetic before accepting the challenge in secretarial science, or one of the other job preparation classes. The old adage that if you can't do anything else in life, you can be a craftsman is long since past. The demands placed upon our students in these sophisticated vocational programs dictates that students prepare themselves well in the basics. This has been the case for almost 12,000 secondary students this past year, and of this number, the enrollment of black students reached 12.1 percent, or 1,406 young people. To obtain additional information about the special vocational schools or the occupational programs in the junior and senior high schools, students will need to contact their school counselors. So that I don't

have 100 telephone calls, I would encourage the students to wait a few days as our counselors are busy right now preparing class schedules and enrolling students for this new year; but, by the middle of September, if you are interested in one of these programs, students should make an appointment to discuss their future career options with a school counselor.

People To Know

The Clark County School District is one of the largest employers of the state. For those of us who have been in Clark County a few years, it is hard to realize we now have 113 schools which have opened for class on September 3, 1985. Thirty-five of these schools are designated as secondary schools, and comprise all of the junior and senior high schools, and special vocational schools. Those who are charged with supervising the programs are people to know. These include:

Ralph Cadwallader, Associate Superintendent of Secondary Schools; Paul

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Lizzie R. Hatcher, Esq.

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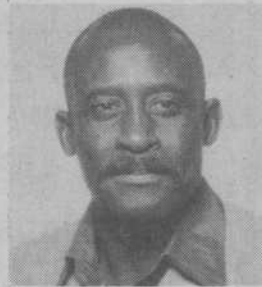
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