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October 2, 2011 in City

More schools innovating with job experiences for students

Jody Lawrence-Turner The Spokesman-Review

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Jesse Myers, 18, hangs clothes at the Seconds Anyone? Thrift Store in Sandpoint on Sept. 23.
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Spencer Enquist knows working in Shadle Park High School's student-run espresso shop could give him an edge over other applicants at Starbucks.

At Bagpipers Bistro, the 17-year-old has learned the importance of customer service; how to operate a computerized cash register and handle money; how to work an espresso machine and make coffee drinks; and the necessity of cleanliness.

DECA students have long had the opportunity for hands-on work, operating school commissaries where they sell prepackaged drinks and snacks during lunch periods. Now, high schools throughout the Inland Northwest are coming up with new ways to help teens gain work experience and/or prepare for postsecondary certification or education through Career and Technical Education classes.

"Not everybody goes to college, but everybody gets a job," said Gordy Nelson, a Career and Technical Education teacher at Shadle.

The Association for Career and Technical Education calls it "a proven strategy that educates students in the context of careers and prepares students to succeed in post-secondary and the workforce."

Sue Chapin, Spokane Public Schools board president, said the opportunities being offered to high school students are "good for kids who don't know what they want to do."

Some examples:

- Spokane Public Schools has coffee shops in four of five high schools with this fall's addition of Bagpipers Bistro. Rogers High School will open one next year.
- North Central's Dreams Inflate is a student-run balloon shop for teens with learning disabilities. It teaches the skills necessary to run a business – such as counting and maintaining inventory, taking and filling orders and reporting financial information to district auditors – while providing a service to the school and community.

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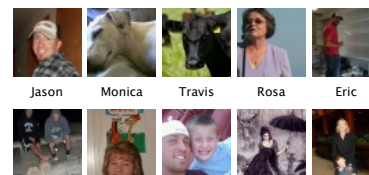
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- Central Valley School District has launched a new course, A+ Computer Repair Certification, where students learn computer maintenance and repair skills that can lead to certification as a PC repair technician.

- Pend Oreille Alternative School in Sandpoint obtained a grant two years ago to buy a thrift store where at-risk students can learn purchasing, merchandising, accounting, advertising, bookkeeping, janitorial, construction and maintenance, and landscaping.

- Coeur d'Alene School District's alternative school offers a food production and management program that teaches students skills in commercial food service by working with the school lunch program to make breakfast and lunch. The school's kitchen also does all the catering for the district.

Many of these programs are duplicated in schools throughout the Inland Northwest.

Pend Oreille Alternative School's program, however, is unique.

Jesse Myers, 18, is a senior who works in the school-owned thrift store. "I didn't know how to work a cash register," he said of the skills he's gained. In addition, the experience has "really helped with some social skills. Otherwise you aren't talking to people."

Students learn and practice recycling, and the business has a partnership with senior citizens in the community.

"Classrooms aid in recycling by culling buttons and making quilts and cloth shopping bags from non-sellable clothing and material," said Colleen Ross, a school counselor who wrote the grant to start the Seconds Anyone? Thrift Store, a nonprofit. "Ripped clothing is sent to the Green Cross in Coeur d'Alene, which shreds the clothing for materials to be used in Third World countries," she said.

Additionally, senior citizens in the community "provide mentoring opportunities for the students (while volunteering at the thrift store) and the students aid the community by working in the store, which raises money for local scholarships, educational materials and supplies for the school, and by helping provide money for the expenses involved with running the senior citizen center," Ross said.

This year, the program was awarded the Idaho Professional-Technical Education Exemplary Short-Term Training Program of the Year.

Lisa White, Spokane Public Schools director of Career and Technical Education, said the district sometimes partners with businesses to offer students hands-on experiences.

"We do a Business in Fashion conference – students interested in fashion, design and costuming spend the whole day talking with people in the industry about those opportunities," White said. Students "then have the opportunity to do internships at places like Fringe, Macy's or Lolo Boutique."

Another example is the Teaching Academy conference. Students are paired with teachers to talk about the career and then they get to work in a classroom for a semester.

Said White, "What I'm hearing from kids is 'I want to see it, experience it and touch it, that's what will make it more meaningful to me.'"

While such hands-on opportunities can prepare students for the workforce, White said, "I believe in order for these kids to succeed they will also need a postsecondary degree or certification."

She adds: "Most of the kids I meet say, 'I don't want to be the coffee person, I want to own the coffee shop.'"

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[misjustice on October 02 at 10:20 a.m.](#)

Yeah, welcome to the service driven jobs that will be your future, kids; minimum wage job slaves. Would you like fries with that?

And given the current state of our economy, good luck competing with middle aged folks that have been downsized into poverty.

Heck, our high school where I grew up (back East) had the same type of programs and that was years ago; this is nothing new...or innovative. Sorry.

I do like the idea of the Teaching Academy conference but given the constant attacks on teachers in this country, it won't be long until those jobs are also minimum wage; especially in states that manage to destroy collective bargaining rights.

We are in a global jobs auction, a race to the bottom, where our workers are pitted against folks in other nations that are forced to work for pennies a day and bowl of rice. That, kiddos, is the true reality of "work"...

Just sayin'...



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The Seer on October 02 at 2:04 p.m.

Well stated, my Peep!

This is just another instance of our school system using your children for free labor. The endless "fund runs," bake sales, candy/magazine /entertainment book beg- fests are a disgrace to our schools and instead of my fellow educators supporting slavery they should be organizing and marching to demand full funding for public education.

The Teaching Academy programs I've seen are mainly glorified TA positions where students end up doing the grunt work of grading papers rather than behind the desks helping out younger students. When asked to respond truthfully most of those who participate have zero plans for pursuing a career in public education and admit the class is just for easy credit.



Orange on October 02 at 3:06 p.m.

Free labor like "Interns" in college? Good experiance. Oh wait, no college educated I see here. You wouldn't know.



The Seer on October 02 at 4:56 p.m.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

Let's compare resumes sometime, Orange. Did you really mean "experience." I just love morons who call out others for being uneducated with a post that is filled with grammar/usage/spelling errors! I got paid for my internship and only suckers work for free.



Pigrobin on October 02 at 5:21 p.m.

Seer: I call. Nevermind, I really don't care what your resume says. It's time for some football!!



Orange on October 02 at 7:09 p.m.

" a last gasp frantic death thro. No worries here."

Oops, someone spelled something wrong on another post. LOL.

It happens seer. Wouldn't boast your resume too much either. Never know with whom you're speaking too on this thing.

Football sucks today

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