

## WHAT DOES "GO TO COLLEGE" MEAN?

From the desk of Dr. Richard Ledington, PTE Research Director

For high school students, parents, and others, this phrase typically conjures the idea of a 4-year college degree. In addition to the 4-year degree, many postsecondary options are available for students to continue their education and training beyond high school. These include technical and associate degrees, short-term training, and apprenticeships. Read on for information on how some of these opportunities can help your students continue their education beyond high school.

## APPRENTICESHIPS: EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

From the desk of Dr. Richard Ledington, PTE Research Director

For years, carpenters, electricians, masons, plumbers and other trades people have learned their skills under the watchful eye of a patient, experienced trades person. Times have changed, but the value of apprenticeship has not. Students who enroll in apprenticeship programs master a trade as full-time, paid employees under the direct supervision of a qualified journeyman. Students participate in on-the-job training ranging from one year (2,000 hours) to four years (8,000 hours) in the trade if their choice. In addition to the on-the-job hours, students participate in classroom instruction for a minimum of 144 hours per year.

A company, employer, union, or a combination of employers may sponsor students enrolling in an apprenticeship program. Many employers hire apprentices and some pay students' fees. Generally, students may begin the classroom instruction without being employed as apprentices. But, in order to become a fully licensed or certificated journey worker in the State of Idaho, the job training portion is required.

For information on registered apprenticeship sponsors in your county go to <http://oa.doleta.gov/bat.cfm>. You can also contact the Workforce Training Center at your local technical college.

## TODAY'S ASSOCIATE DEGREE: NOT YOUR FATHER'S DEGREE

by David Hirning, Seattle, Washington

Once upon a time, community colleges and other career schools were way stations for students who couldn't get into or afford a four-year school. Today, many students are bypassing the four-year degree to enter the workforce straight out of career schools. Jobs in some of the most vibrant and growing fields today, such as many healthcare disciplines, are available to those possessing a two-year Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree.

According to data from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), two occupations requiring only an associate degree—physical therapist assistant and dental hygienist—are projected to be among the top ten fastest-growing jobs in the next decade. The demand for both jobs is expected to rise more than 40 percent by 2014, and both are highly rated in terms of annual compensation. Dental hygienists typically make at least \$43,600 per year, according to the BLS, while physical therapist assistants make between \$28,580 and \$43,590 annually. Other in-demand healthcare jobs that graduates are targeting include surgical technologist, respiratory care therapist, optician, and even forensic scientist (think *CSI*).

That focus seems to be paying off for many students. According to an Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) study, students graduating from an A.A.S. or certification program had a better chance of finding a job (75 percent employment rate as compared to 65 percent) and earned a higher hourly wage (\$14.82 versus \$11.51) than those receiving a traditional transfer degree (A.A. or A.S.). Career-oriented schools are also a great option for students to explore growing fields besides healthcare that don't require a four-year degree.

(see entire article at <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/Departments/careertraining/?article=todaysassociatedegree>).

### Reference:

Ledington, Richard (2007, November 16). What Does "Go To College" Mean?. *The Counselor Connection, Idaho Professional-Technical Education Newsletter*.