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## **Central County Occupational Center (CCOC) Provides Relevance for High School Students**

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The California Department of Education has reported that one in four students who start high school will drop out. While this is not new information; it is a more accurate method of counting the numbers, and validates what educators have known through various independent studies and anecdotal observations.

Now that we have more accurate numbers, there has been an increase in the public “hand-wringing” about the dropout problem, and the disproportionate impact on young people in “at-risk” categories. So, what do we do now?

### ***The Problem of Relevance***

A study released in March 2006 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (“The Silent Epidemic”) reported that 47% of former students who dropped out of school said that classes were not interesting, while 81% called for more real world learning opportunities. 88% of those students had passing grades when they dropped out and 70% said they could have graduated if they had tried.

A major recommendation from this study is that, “Instead of the usual ‘one size fits all’ school, districts should develop options for students; including a curriculum that connects what they are learning in the classroom with real life experiences and with work.”

### ***Support what already works***

There’s much that can be accomplished without throwing a whole lot of new tax dollars at the problem. There are high schools that have been highly successful in keeping their students engaged and in school. We should emulate what they do. There are also programs that have a proven track-record for helping students become successful. We should build on these programs.

Santa Clara County is fortunate to have the Central County Occupational Center (CCOC), one of the premier Regional Occupational Centers and Programs (ROCPs) in California. CCOC provides state-of-the industry career technical education (CTE) for Central Santa Clara County high school students.

CCOC's programs provide students relevant and rigorous hands-on experience not provided in the traditional high school academic curriculum. CCOC engages students while helping them create a clear career pathway to well-paid employment, post-secondary education or both.

Research studies show that students who take ROCP classes have lower dropout rates, earn higher wages than comparison peer groups, enroll in post-secondary education in large numbers and have a better understanding of the value and relevance of educational opportunities.

CCOC offers 33 individual programs in 12 career sectors. The Center serves 1600 high school students from 32 schools within six school districts in Santa Clara County – all at ONE central location! The facilities, equipment and instructors at CCOC are on a scale which would not be economically feasible to replicate as 33 separate programs on each of the high school campuses.

All of CCOC's courses are articulated with local community colleges; meaning students can receive up to 15 community college credits when they complete their CCOC course with an A or B. Over 50% of CCOC's students go on to postsecondary education.

CCOC is free for high school students, and transportation is provided to and from the Center for students from their home high schools.

Santa Clara County high schools have part of the solution to both the dropout problem, and the achievement gap, in their own back yard. The Central County Occupational Center has served as a successful model for career technical education student success in California for 40 years.

For more Information about CCOC, Santa Clara County's premier career technical education center, go to [www.metroed.net](http://www.metroed.net), or call CCOC at 408-723-6400. High school students may also contact their high school counselors to register.