



Don't Call a Lawyer...Call a Plumber!

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We often take for granted positive things taking place right in front of us. While **Delaware** rightfully lays claim to the best Chancery Court system in the country, we are overlooking an opportunity to tout having one of the best **educational** models in the country. "How could that be," you say? "I've read so much about **Delaware** being behind the curve," you say. "Aren't we still overcoming the problems with bussing," you say?



I'm here to tell you that in addition to producing world class law, **Delaware** is producing world class plumbers, carpenters, brick layers, automobile technicians, CAD operators, nursing technicians, auto body specialists, electricians, and the list goes on...

While many states still operate an old and outdated model of "shared time" **vocational education**, **Delaware** enjoys a "full time" model that integrates superior academics alongside a **technical career** track. The shared time model is one where the student attends their local high school, boards a bus at noon, and is shipped out to a **technical school** or **co-op employer**. By providing **vocational**, or "**vo-tech**" **students** an educational experience under one roof through the full time model, as we do in **Delaware**, we are removing the burden and wasted time of transporting students from school to school, providing several extra hours a week of training.



There is a common misunderstanding that we are placing too much emphasis on **academics** for students who are headed for a **technical career**. I have never really understood that line of



reasoning. Shouldn't we want the aerospace **technician** to understand the impact of airplanes on history? Shouldn't we want our law clerks to be reading "Twelve Angry Men?" Shouldn't we be asking our computer **technicians** to become familiar with how businesses operate, and give our cosmetology students a basis of chemistry (I have seen the hair of women whose hairdresser missed that class!)? I think the concern really comes from those who are surprised that a significant number of **Delaware vocational students** continue on to post secondary institutions. Some in academia and some in the legislature think we therefore should have kept those students in traditional schools. But let's face it, our society is challenged to find a variety of modalities that inspire learning. If creating a robot helps a young woman with math, and if building a fireplace out of stone helps a young man with physics, and if practicing courtroom dynamics helps a young minority student gain confidence, then so be it. Let's agree that our vo-tech schools can serve two purposes, to allow students to discover their talents for technical proficiency and to allow technical proficiency to inspire **academic** excellence.



New Castle County Vo-Tech, POLYTECH and Sussex Tech School Districts all enjoy stunning results from this investment. All three districts enjoy the top three graduation rates in the state with 94.7%, 95%, and 95% respectively. The state average is 86.7%, with a low of 70.5%. Made up of highly diverse populations, these districts also enjoy excellent rankings with standardized test scores. In many cases, these **technical students** outperform their **traditional school** peers. And while U.S. Secretary of Education has warned many states that their **vocational districts** were in trouble, **Delaware** continues to be a model for replication.

So I have good news **Delaware**. The next time your water stops working and you want it fixed by the best and brightest, you don't need to call your lawyer....call a plumber!