

A SYFR PARTNER:

I Support Learning

by Richard Erdmann, CEO and Founder, Syfr Corporation

While preparing for the 2006 retreat on Secondary School Reform, I looked for a speaker advocating career-technical education as a successful approach to improving high school graduation rates. I found someone to discuss career education, but I found no one to discuss technical and vocational education. As the retreat approached, but after the agenda was set, I encountered a paper by John Bishop, an economist at Cornell University, and Ferran Mañe, A Spanish economist, entitled "The Impacts of Career-Technical Education on High School Completion and Labor Market Success." The paper addressed two issues:

1. Does giving students the option of choosing CTE courses help retain some students in high school and raise high school graduation rates, and
2. Are students who prepare for an occupation in high school more successful in the labor market in both the short and long run?

While the answers are considerably more complex than just saying yes, essentially the answer is yes in both cases.

After reading the paper I began to look for companies and non-profits specializing in CTE programs. While preparing for a Kansas City conference I was referred to a small company in the Kansas City area, I Support Learning. The course being used by the Kansas City Public School District was a video game development course for middle school. I was intrigued because not only was it consistent with the research on computer technical courses, it also seemed to have an appeal to boys that exceeded most other programs.

The I Support Learning classroom simulates a corporate environment in which the student is employed to develop a game. The student learns design, programming and collaborative skills to develop the game. Courses offered by I Support Learning are related to the fields of gaming, music, landscape and environmental science, personal and financial management, artificial intelligence and robotics.

Several years ago Dr. Rosa Smith spoke at a Syfr retreat about the crisis with boys in our schools. I Support Learning offers considerable promise in

improving the academic performance of our boys and keeping them in school.

To learn more about I Support Learning contact:
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