Jimmy is in the vocational track at his school. This means all his classes are geared toward preparing him to get a job after high school. In English class, he learns how to give a convincing job interview. His math class focuses on the ways businesses manage money. Jimmy wants to be a mechanic. His favorite class is auto shop. In auto shop, students fix cars and learn how to work with tools.

Jimmy attends a comprehensive high school. The school offers different programs for different types of students. Some students are preparing for college. Others, like Jimmy, learn about different kinds of jobs such as hair styling, child care, woodworking, and cooking. Graduates like Jimmy can get jobs in their field right out of high school. Previous graduates are working as hairstylists, plumbers, electricians, or medical technicians. These jobs do not require a college education, but they may require high-level math, reading, and writing.

Some people think comprehensive schools are inherently better than college preparatory schools. They think high schools should prepare students for whatever they want to do. People who support comprehensive schools point out that not everybody goes to college. These people believe that students who want to work right after they graduate might be more motivated to exceed expectations in school if they can take classes that will help them learn job skills. Vocational classes also let students experience different careers. Then students can decide what is right for them.

Other people think high schools should prepare all students for college. They worry that students in vocational classes are getting a watered-down education and won’t be able to get into college if their career goals change. People who support college preparatory schools believe that all students should have an equivalent education.

In addition, supporters of college preparatory schools say that vocational classes often require expensive equipment. They point out that high costs for equipment means there is less money to pay teachers or buy textbooks for other subjects, like English or math. They suggest that perhaps students who want vocational training should take special classes after high school to prepare for the jobs they want.

Should high schools prepare everybody for college? Or should students be able to enroll in a vocational track?
USE THE FOCUS WORDS *and alternate parts of speech

**vocational (adjective)** related to a skill, trade, or occupation

*Sample Sentence:* Jimmy is in the vocational track at his school, so all his classes are geared toward preparing him to get a job after high school.

**Inherently (adverb)** naturally, belonging to the basic nature of something

*Sample Sentence:* Some people think comprehensive schools are inherently better than college preparatory schools.

**Exceed (verb)** to be greater than; to go beyond

*Sample Sentence:* People who support college preparatory schools believe that the value of an academic-focused education exceeds the value of job-focused training for high school students.

**Equivalent (adjective)** alike or equal

*Sample Sentence:* School segregation ended when lawyers proved that schools serving black and white students were not providing students with equivalent educations.

**Focus (noun)** center of activity or interest

*Sample Sentence:* The focus of his math class is the way that businesses manage money.

**Focus (verb)** to direct attention to

*Sample Sentence:* Simeon decided to focus on studying instead playing video games so that he could improve his grades.

**Turn and Talk:** What kind of vocational program would interest you most: child care, auto repair, woodworking, hair styling, or plumbing?

**Turn and Talk:** Do you think people are inherently selfish? Explain.

**Turn and Talk:** Which musical artists or sports teams exceeded the expectations of their fans this year?

**Turn and Talk:** Which TV show does the best job of giving equivalent representation to people of different races?

**Turn and Talk:** Do you think schools need to change their focus from academics to real-world skills?

**Turn and Talk:** Do parents focus too much, or not enough, on manners? Explain your answer.
DO THE MATH

Option 1: Blue Hills Regional Technical School is a vocational high school. Vocational education is inherently practical. Students focus on job training in programs like auto repair or education of young children. They earn a degree equivalent to a high school diploma. The table below shows the credit requirements at Blue Hills according to their website. Students must meet or exceed the requirement in each subject to graduate.

How many credits in math, English, science, and social studies do students need to graduate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Training</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. 20  
B. 26  
C. 65  
D. 104

Option 2: Ms. Wilson agrees that vocational schools should focus on job-related training for skills that students will use in the workplace. However, she also thinks that academic classes like math and English are inherently valuable, even though they do not always focus on direct connections to a career. She thinks that the number of required academic credits should be equivalent to, or even exceed, the number of vocational credits.

If \( v \) = the number of vocational credits, and \( a \) = the number of academic credits, write an inequality that shows the proper relationship, according to Ms. Wilson, between academic and vocational credits.

(Hint: You will use one of these four symbols: >, ≥, <, or ≤)

\[ a \geq v \text{ or } a \leq v \]

Discussion Question: Some people think that English and math are inherently more important than science and social studies. High-stakes tests across the country focus on English and math. And some people feel that vocational students need science and social studies even less than traditional students. After all, how will learning about China or plant cells help students fix cars or style hair? At Blue Hills, the required credits in English and math exceed the required credits for science and social studies by 60%. Do you agree with this focus on math and English? Why don’t science and social studies get equivalent respect?
THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

The students in Ms. Kahn's class were talking about how education inherently affects job opportunities. “I think it makes sense to focus on job skills I’ll be able to use right out of high school,” said Daylen.

“Preparing for college is more important,” said Tamara. “Having a college degree gives you an inherent advantage in looking for good jobs later on. Vocational high schools only prepare students for low-paying jobs, like flipping burgers. Anyway, there aren’t enough jobs for everyone with less than a college education.”

“I disagree,” answered Daylen. “There aren’t enough workers for many types of jobs in the U.S. With just a high school diploma or equivalent, like a GED, you can make a salary that exceeds fast food wages.”

“Could the two of you research the questions you’ve raised?” asked Ms. Kahn. “Are there enough jobs for America’s high school graduates? Are they well paid? What fields of work are in the greatest demand in the United States?”

Tamara and Daylen shared their findings based on data gathered in 2011 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In 2011:
- About 370,000 American students dropped out of high school.
- About 3,100,000 Americans graduated from high school. Of these high school graduates:
  - about 32% (or 990,000) did not go to college.
  - about 27% (or 840,000) enrolled in a 2-year college.
  - about 41% (or 1,270,000) enrolled in a 4-year college.

What are the fastest growing jobs in America that require a high school diploma?
- Information clerks, etc.

What evidence supports Tamara’s hypothesis that there aren’t enough well-paying jobs for students who only have a high school diploma?
- Based on 2011, there will be more graduates than jobs in the next 8 years.

What additional information may be required to fully answer the question of how important a high school diploma is for job seekers?
- Answers will vary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Typical minimum education level</th>
<th>New jobs projected in next 8 years</th>
<th>Median salary for experienced workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home health aides and personal care workers</td>
<td>High School dropout</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
<td>$20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food service workers</td>
<td>High School dropout</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>$20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement workers</td>
<td>High School dropout</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>High School dropout</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,750,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$20,000.00</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information clerks</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>725,000</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment operators, mechanics, and truck drivers</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>375,000</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service workers</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>340,000</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookkeepers</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>260,000</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales representatives</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and welders</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>230,000</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical secretaries and assistants</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches and trainers</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail sales workers</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>$20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy technicians</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>$30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police officers</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>$45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>High School</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,000,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>$20,000.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SHOULD SCHOOLS HAVE A VOCATIONAL TRACK?

vocational  |  inherently  |  exceed  |  equivalent  |  focus

DEBATE THE ISSUE

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A

☐ High schools should prepare all students for college.

OR

B

☐ High schools should provide vocational training for students who know they do not want to go to college.

OR

CREATE YOUR OWN

☐ __________________________

Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

___________________________________________________

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Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

“Can you show me evidence in the text that…”

“I believe that…”

“You make a good point, but have you considered…”

“I agree with you, but…”
TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

vocational | inherently | exceed | equivalent | focus

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