

EDITORIAL: Where is Fresno's state-of-the-art trade school?



Kevin Gallyer of Harris Construction works on a lion viewing area in the new African Adventure area at the Fresno Chaffee Zoo, Friday, Feb. 20, 2015.

CRAIG KOHLRUSS — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

Every trustee on the Fresno Unified School District board has said publicly that he or she supports Career Technical Education.

Our question is, why hasn't this support resulted in the construction of a CTE high school that aims to be the most innovative and the very best in the nation?

Everyone knows Fresno's story of high unemployment, violence, drug addiction and gang membership. One of the best ways to overcome these challenges is by keeping youngsters in school where they can learn and be inspired by dedicated, caring teachers.

And yet Fresno Unified appears bound and determined to invest as little as possible in CTE, or what old-timers called "vocational ed."

The district is partners with Clovis Unified School District in CART, a project-based public research and technology school that has been widely acclaimed. The district is building a \$12 million school that eventually will be home to 400 budding entrepreneurs in grades 10 through 12.

Students at Roosevelt High School can choose pathways that lead to careers in business, health, teaching, fashion design and the arts. Edison High's Computech program offers challenging academic curriculum, as does the International Baccalaureate program at Fresno High. Sunnyside High has a Doctors Academy for students who aspire to be doctors, nurses, dentists and other health professionals.

But where is the school for teenagers who want to weld, build custom cabinets, install plumbing, repair heating and air conditioning units, or work on today's high-tech automobiles?

Where is the high school that offers an avenue to a trade and an honest alternative to the kid whose relatives primarily are multigeneration gang members?

Recent economic forecasts say that construction will be Fresno County's fastest-growing employment sector into the early 2020s. High-speed rail will bring thousands of construction and service jobs to Fresno — and could trigger an explosion of urban and suburban development. Local business leaders have long cited the lack of skilled labor as an impediment to greater success. The green-energy industry is growing and is strongly supported by state funding.

At some point, you would think that Fresno Unified's leaders, including Superintendent Michael Hanson, would understand that they are failing Fresno's youth and the city at large by failing to adequately invest in CTE. In doing so they are also failing to help curtail the gang and drug cultures poisoning our city.

Funding shouldn't be an excuse. Gov. Jerry Brown's Local Control Funding Formula allows school districts to come up with their own programs to educate and train students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The trustees overwhelmingly have been content to ride the train piloted by Hanson for the past decade. It's time for them to take off their blinders, remove their ear plugs and start listening to community leaders, parents and students.

Fresno needs a CTE high school. One that is the best in the country.

No more excuses.

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