

# Next Up From Fresno: High School for Overlooked 'Kids in the Middle'

James Fallows

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Public schools often end up concentrating on students with obvious promise at the very top, and with obvious problems at the bottom. Here is one designed to foster opportunities for everyone else.



After the Vietnam War, the Fresno area was a major relocation site for Hmong refugees and immigrants. A statue honoring their service is near the county courthouse. Fresno is a heavily "majority minority" community training a diverse population for the future. (James Fallows)

We kicked off our new season of [American Futures reports](#) this week with a look at [the people trying to remake](#) the much-in-need-of-remaking city of Fresno, California.

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Today Deb Fallows has [the next installment](#), on an innovative high school called CART, or the Center for Advanced Research and Technology. It's a public charter high school that students attend for half of each school day, spending the other half at their regular high school. While at CART they get an immersion in a variety of career skills. You can read more in Deb's



[report here](#).

As Deb points out in this item, innovations in "career technical education" have been a recurring and positive theme through our travels around the country. This is the field that was once dismissively called "vocational ed" or even "trade school." Now it seems increasingly promising as a way to connect students not immediately bound for four-year colleges—because they can't afford it, because of family obligations, whatever reason—with the higher-skilled, higher-wage technical jobs today's economy is opening up, and that are vastly better than the minimum-wage retail/food-service alternative.

Here are some examples from [Georgia](#), [northern California](#), and [Mississippi](#) to go alongside this one in Fresno. And as I'll discuss further in our next installment, these developments are a natural complement to the [Opportunity@Work initiative](#) that the New America Foundation announced yesterday. (For the record: I've been involved with New America from its start, originally as its board chairman.)