

## The Opportunity To Explore Different Career Paths

by *Connie C. Smithson, President,  
Association for Career and  
Technical Education*

(NAPSA)—Parents, educators and legislators want to give students the highest-quality educational foundation possible and today's career and technical education programs can play a key role in assuring educational excellence for many students.

Career and technical courses give students the opportunity to explore different career paths, to find out if the jobs involved are appealing and to discover which opportunities are best suited to their individual talents.

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) wants to ensure that students and their parents are aware of the value of career and technical programs.

These programs can be a student's first exposure to the real-world aspects of a career field. They allow a student to build the strong skills that every employer considers essential: the ability to communicate well, an understanding of time management and promptness, problem-solving skills, and the ability to function as part of a team.

Careers in hotel management, food service, engineering, biotechnology, agriscience, recreation, nursing, and graphic design represent challenging, high-paying jobs, and the demand for skilled workers has never been greater.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that average annual salaries of technicians in some medical fields are more than \$44,000 a year, while dental hygienists can earn more than



**Career and technical programs provide students with hands-on experience and reinforce the skills that an employer prizes.**

\$58,000. Annual incomes of chefs and bakers reach \$40,000. Motorcycle technicians earn more than \$29,000. Engineering technicians can earn more than \$40,000 and biological science technicians can earn more than \$38,000.

What's more, a number of career and technical programs include internships, apprenticeships or co-op employment, which combines work and classroom study as part of the curriculum. Thus, students can get hands-on experience, have a chance to earn while learning and, best of all, gain a foot in the door of a potential future employer.

Career and technical education is an essential aspect of high school education, one that enhances academic achievement and provides the skills needed for success beyond high school. These courses prepare students for college and the workplace. To learn more, visit [www.getcareerskills.com](http://www.getcareerskills.com).