

My name is Rex Spaulding, President of the New Castle School of Trades, located in New Castle Pa. Lawrence County. Our school currently serves 575 students in Electrical, HVAC, Machinist, Welding, Industrial Maintenance, Construction, Heavy Equipment Operations and Truck Driving. In early 2012, we will be offering Diesel Technology with Power Generation and Heavy Equipment Field Service Repair. In late 2012 we will be offering a Wind Technology program followed by other green programs and agriculture programs. Our training programs range from six weeks to two years. Our advisory committee consists of 42 local employers.

First and foremost, our employers are asking for five key areas from our students:

Attitude

Attendance

Academics

Appearance

Accountability

These are our guiding principles from day one. Our “Strategies for Success” class centers around these principles and includes goal setting through affirmations and self esteem building. These beliefs may sound elementary but are truly lacking in far too many students and workers. These values must start at home, into grade school, secondary school, and to post secondary school. Our “Job Search” class then teaches students to apply these critical requirements into their job search, interviewing and career.

Secondly, our current training related job placement rate as reported to our accrediting commission is 82%. In a county of 8.4% unemployment, we consider this a huge success. With an ongoing need for skilled trades people and now the demand brought on by the Marcellus Shale project, we see the need for training as important as ever. Current placements into the Marcellus Shale include electrical/electronic technicians, welding, heavy equipment operations, well maintenance, laborers and commercial truck driving. We have been told there are currently over 500 openings for Class A CDL drivers within the Marcellus shale project. Outside of Marcellus we cannot produce enough Machinists to fill the job requests.

The biggest obstacle facing those seeking training.... is funding. Though schools such as NCST, offer state and federal grants and student loans, many students simply don't qualify or under qualify. Workforce training dollars and qualifying factors have tightened. The local WIB's have either decreased their funding ceiling or cut funds for services such as textbooks, tools and fees.

Our area needs training dollars geared toward the high demand occupations such as those currently required by the Marcellus Drilling companies. With reports indicating nearly 500,000 jobs being created by 2020 as a result of Marcellus, It would be a shame to lose out on these opportunities because we don't have trained workers.

I would suggest a special allocation of training funds to those qualifying to work in Marcellus. The training providers would have to offer Marcellus related occupations that are practical and intense. In addition, because 87% of the core and ancillary occupations of Marcellus require two years of training or less, these programs should be limited to two years. Additional funds could be made available for classroom size training. Most schools are prohibited from discounting tuition on an individual basis but may do so on a separate classroom size.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts.