

Vo-ag scheduling becomes more complicated

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10th through 12th grades attended vo-tech schools on a half-day basis. Under the new programs, which will be phased in over a three-year period, only seniors will be eligible for vocational instruction and they will attend the vo-tech school for full days.

Peter Uhlig, director of Lebanon County Vo-Tech, says their move to a 12th-year program can be partially attributed to Chapter 5. Chapter 5 has cut down on the time allowable for vocational education and one way to make more time, is a 12th year program, he said. One big savings is in the time spent transporting students from one school to another.

York County Vo-Tech has had fewer adjustments to make, director Garland Gingrich reports. "We haven't been affected by Chapters 5 and 6 as much as the part-time schools," he said.

Because York Vo-Tech is full-time school offering a three-year vocational program, students there have more scheduling flexibility than their Lancaster and Lebanon counterparts. "We are not looking at having to make any

changes for next fall," Gingrich said. However, he continued, "We might have to make some in '87-'88."

But while the program in the school remains the same, Gingrich said the entrance requirements have increased to assure that students will have enough credits to meet graduation requirements. Before this year, students had only to pass 9th grade to gain entrance, but this year, in addition to that requirement, they must have three credits in major subjects like math, English, science, or arts and humanities.

But unlike Graver and Kerr, he doesn't see the change decreasing enrollment. "I don't believe that's going to offset our enrollment," he said. Dale Gerber, vo-ag instructor at Warwick High School, says Chapters 5 and 6 have not hurt enrollment in Warwick's vocational program either. "There hasn't been a dramatic dropoff or scheduling problems," he said.

However, they have made one concession to help vocational students meet their academic requirements. For the first time, students can obtain a science

credit for the animal and plant science portions of the ag program.

Ron Althoff, vo-ag instructor at Solanco High School, says they haven't had to make any changes yet either. But, he said, while the graduation requirements allow enough space for the vo-ag program, it doesn't allow time to make up for even a single course a student fails. If a student fails a course, he must give up an elective to meet his requirements, and "that's where our concern is," Althoff said.

The vocational program is directed at the non-academic student and many of the kids enrolled in the program have to struggle to make it through the required courses. Forcing that student out of the vocational program because he failed an academic course, is making it more tempting for him to drop out of school entirely.

To give the students a bit more flexibility, Solanco is starting a program next year that will allow a student who fails a course to take an independent study course to make up the failed course while

remaining in the vocational program.

The problems Chapters 5 and 6 have created for the vocational programs have not gone unnoticed by area legislators. Rep. Jess Stairs of Westmoreland County has introduced legislation that will allow vocational students to be exempt from two credits of arts and humanities. His bill, House Bill 740, was amended in the appropriations committee to exempt vocational students from two additional credits.

The bill, Stairs said, will allow students to substitute courses. For example, carpentry, a vocational course, requires knowledge of certain kinds of math, and could be considered a math credit. "It will be up to the local districts to decide on substitutions," he said.

Stairs said he was concerned over the effect Chapters 5 and 6 had on the vocational program. The curriculum requirements were detrimental to vocational program to the extent that they would phase it out of existence, he said. "It's an either or type of thing," he said, noting that students have the choice of

meeting graduation requirements or taking vocational courses.

"What I'm trying to do is re-emphasize vocational education and take away the stigma of making it an elective," he said.

Rep. John Barley of Lancaster County, also supports House Bill 740. "We're going to lock their options out by requiring these academic courses," he warned. "We must give the same emphasis to the student who wants to train to be a plumber or farmer," as to the student who chooses to go to college, he said.

Barley urges citizens concerned about the vocational program to ask their congressmen to support House Bill 740. He noted that the Pennsylvania State Education Association supports the bill, which should come to a vote in Congress next week.

HARRISBURG - The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement, county treasurers and authorized agents issued nearly one million licenses during the 1985 calendar year, according to state Agriculture Secretary Richard E. Grubb.

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