

2) Over the last decade or more, many educational programs have been cut from our schools, including foreign languages, opportunities in the arts, and even some higher-level science courses in certain schools. What programs would you be interested in restoring first, if any, and how do you see yourself going about that?

Shannon Haskett: I feel the main purpose of a school board is to be proactive in seeking ways to improve the education of all kids. It is our job to support teachers and equip them with all the necessary tools to mentor and prepare our children. I would first ask the teachers what programs they feel need to be included or removed. I would ask higher level educators what we can do to improve education. I would then ask local employers and graduates themselves what we can do to better prepare students for life experiences. I had the fortunate experience to partner with (district administrator) Marion Lawson a few years ago. The objective was to take a group of students around the city of Pickens and share with them post education life experience. The day was scheduled with activities I thought would be most beneficial. We visited the unemployment office, and they learned what jobs are available in the market place and how to apply for them. We visited a manager at a local restaurant. She shared her pay stub so we could talk about budgeting and items that are taken out of paychecks. We used that information and set up a budget and subsequently went to rent an apartment. We also went to a local bank, and they learned how to open up a checking and savings account. While on the bus traveling, I shared with them the importance of credit and how it works for you or against you. I believe most students want to succeed, but they need believable avenues of success and encouraging mentors to follow. We have an amazing community and many successful people in our area that would be so blessed to share their experiences in life. Let's learn from those who have gone before us.

Alex Saitta: You stated there was a cut back in fine arts. I don't see that so to be sure I asked the Curriculum Director and she didn't either. We've expanded AP Science courses. At the Career Center offerings have exploded mostly in high tech areas. STEM is now an integrated K-12 program, so its course offering is expanding. Our high schools offer Spanish, French and German. My daughter is in 9th grade at PHS and is taking Spanish and she can do that for four years if she wants.

Forty years ago, our high school grads went to college or got a good paying job in the textile plants.

As manufacturers closed down, the solution was prepare all our high schoolers for college. The thinking was all this education worked for me, it should work for everyone.

Over time the education leaders realized not everyone was cut out for college, and realized only $\frac{1}{4}$ of trades need a 4-year degree.

First there was an explosion in technical colleges like Tri-County Tech. Second, high schools/ Career Centers shifted their focus to technical high tech. There are less French courses being offered, and there has been a shift toward course offerings in subjects that will help students get jobs and earn a living wage.

For example, a student starts in the cutting edge electrical program, companies come in a hire all our graduating seniors and give the 11th graders summer interns.

Years ago we educated students in a wide array of course work and then they decided what they wanted to do in 11th or 12 grade.

Today it is the other way around. We introduce careers early on, they pick an interest and then take specific courses in 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th to start them down that path.