

Career and Technical Education reveals pathway to promising future*Cascade High School seniors inspired by career options in manufacturing*

What if high school courses and experiences could propel students toward a career they didn't even know existed? What if high school students had opportunities to work with and be mentored by industry professionals working in cutting edge jobs in real companies?



Birch (L) and Hinojo (R) collaborate on manufacturing project

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in Everett Public Schools turn those “what ifs” into reality by emphasizing academics and real-world skills and introducing students to regional careers in high demand.

CTE courses answer the question “when am I ever going to use this,” shared Breanna Youngberg, Cascade High School manufacturing, finance and economics teacher. Youngberg finds that students taking CTE courses “see the connection to their future careers and know that any work they put in now directly relates to something they will be doing after high school.”

We recently visited with Cascade High School seniors Maria Hinojo and Annesha Birch to learn more about their experiences with CTE and the impact it has made on their post-high school plans. Both students take Foundations of Manufacturing and Digital Photography this year and previously took courses in Nutrition, Graphic Design, Physics and Microeconomics – all selections from the extensive CTE course catalog.

These classes are just a sampling of the more than 60 CTE-focused options offered in six high school career pathways across the district including: Aerospace & Advanced Manufacturing, Business & Professional Services, Education Careers, Energy & Sustainability, Information & Communication Technology and Medical & Health Careers. Designed in partnership with economic analysts and community and government leaders, the pathways align with both industry and academic standards.

Both Hinojo and Birch enjoy the hands-on aspect of Foundations of Manufacturing where they are learning to weld, rivet and solder while applying lean manufacturing, physics and industry math to simulate real-world work scenarios.

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Hinojo (L) and Birch (R) with the shop welding machine

Prior to taking CTE courses, neither Hinojo nor Birch thought that college was in their future. They said they would have simply entered the workforce after high school. Now, they have solid plans for next year as first-generation college students.

Birch plans to attend college next fall and major in Mechanical Engineering with a minor Asian studies or Computer Science. She credits CTE courses with “awakening her curiosity” to “know how things are made” and for opening her eyes to the extended opportunities in STEM fields.

For Hinojo it was visits from industry professionals and field trips to local businesses and STEM-industry events that exposed her to “the many job opportunities in aerospace and engineering” in the region. As an example, a group of Boeing and Microsoft employees visit Cascade High once a month to work on a project with students using both Fusion360 and Python Coding.

Hinojo is considering Central Washington University’s Aviation program or Edmonds Community College’s Aerospace and Manufacturing Technology programs. She hopes one of these paths will prepare her for a future career at Boeing or another local aerospace manufacturing company.

The goal of CTE programs in Everett Public Schools is to create graduates who are college, career and life ready. These cutting-edge, practical programs allow students to “experience various careers within high school instead of investing time and money trying to figure out a path after high school,” adds Youngberg. Diverse Career Pathways offer all students an opportunity to learn about careers, explore aspects of those careers and prepare to successfully transition to college, post-secondary training or employment after high school.

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For more information:

[Kathy Reeves](#), Director of Communications, 425-385-4040