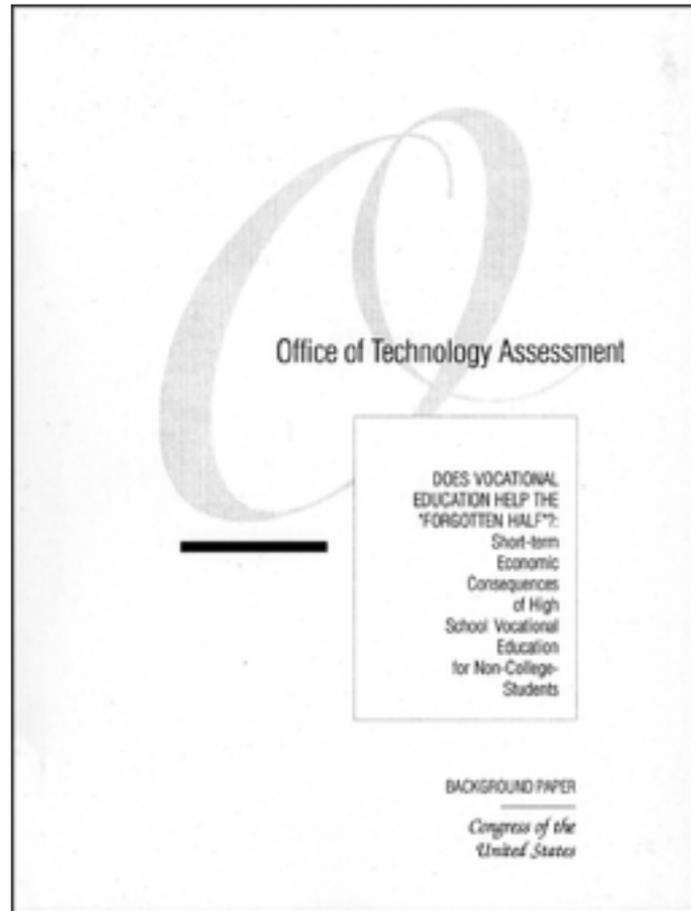


*Does Vocational Education Help the
"Forgotten Half"?: Short-term Economic
Consequences of High School Vocational
Education for Non-College Students*

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Foreword

High-school-level vocational education—which is supported to a small degree by federal funds—is perennially subject to scrutiny. Given the changing nature of employers' demands, one important question is whether those young men and women who take vocational education courses in high school and go to work rather than to college or other postsecondary education are better off economically if they take some types of vocational courses instead of others. This background paper uses very recent data to address that question for individuals just one year out of high school. The background paper was requested by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee (Senator Edward M. Kennedy, then-Chairman of the Committee, now Ranking Minority Member).

For young males who took vocational education courses in high school, worked for pay and were not enrolled in postsecondary education in 1993, three kinds of courses are related to entry-level earnings that were higher than average for their vocational education counterparts: marketing; technical communications; and consumer home economics. For young females who took vocational education courses in high school, worked for pay and were not enrolled in postsecondary education in 1993, only vocational coursework in the health area was related to higher than average entry level earnings. This background paper also presents data on the types of occupations that these young people engage in, and rough statistical correlations between those occupations and types of high-school-level vocational coursework. More than half the young people in this sample engaged in clerical, services, and laborer type entry-level jobs immediately after high school. Finally, females in this sample earned considerably less than their male counterparts, both hourly and annually.

Does Vocational Education Help the "Forgotten Half"?: Short-Term Economic Consequences of High School Vocational Education for Non-College Students was prepared under contract to the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) by Kenneth Rasinski, Bernard Dugoni, and Robert Meyer of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) and the University of Chicago. OTA thanks the contractors and the individuals who reviewed early drafts of the background paper, but accepts full responsibility for the background paper.

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