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A STUDY OF THE RESULTS OF
GENERAL TRADE PREPARATION
vs.
SPECIFIC TRADE PREPARATION

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A STUDY OF THE RESULTS OF
GENERAL TRADE PREPARATION
vs.
SPECIFIC TRADE PREPARATION

Donald R. Miller

Problem submitted for degree of Master of Science
Massachusetts State College, Amherst.
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A STUDY OF THE RESULTS OF

GENERAL TRADE PREPARATION

VS.

SPECIFIC TRADE PREPARATION

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Comparison of results to students in:

- a. Wages
- b. Terms of employment
- c. Chances for employment, etc.

Statement of the status of the two plans in
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II. Research

What has been done in this section of United
States.

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covering:

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We are told that vocational education includes all forms of specialized education, the controlling purposes of which are to fit for useful occupations.

The object is to relate education and employment so that young people may be properly trained and opportunities found to give them a decent start in life.

Governor Saltonstall, in a recent address, said, "Massachusetts is the only state in the union that has directed its efforts, not simply to the school period, but also to the young people on the brink of life and ready to start work". Many jobs are going begging now for lack of experienced workers. One important feature of the program through which we are trying to make jobs is a system of short vocational training courses to fit workers for actual vacancies requiring special skill. This becomes immensely important when we realize that preliminary surveys made in Salem and Springfield reveal the number of unemployed below 25 years of age as almost 40 per cent of all registrants; and with those under 35 years of age they total over 60 per cent of all registrants. This serves to emphasize why the education and the career of our children are a major subject of concern.

There are two distinct types of Trade Schools in Massachusetts. One is the General Trade School in which a general training is given in several different trades with a small amount of academic and related work. The other is the school in which the Specific Course is given. This is a well defined course covering a period of three or four years of special training in one particular trade plus a large amount of academic and related work. The General Course is not as well founded as the Specific, nor are there as many schools teaching the General Course.

Wages Wages average about the same in both courses, the starting point being approximately \$14.50 a week.

Terms of Employment The terms of employment are about the same, with a slightly larger turnover for those completing the Specific Course.

Chances for Employment Chances for employment for those who attend or complete a General Course are much better than for those trained in one particular trade. For instance, a boy completing a Specific Course may not be able to obtain work because many of these courses cover more or less seasonable occupations, as in the automotive or painting and paper hanging trades. Those completing the General Course are trained in more than one trade and therefore have more opportunity to become employed.

Future Outlook Massachusetts is planning, according to state records, to increase, within the next few years, the number of schools where the General Course will be in operation by at least several hundred per cent.

The schools now giving the Specific Courses will be continued and, in some instances, additional courses will be added as the demand for skilled workers in that line increases. However, these courses will not be added until a thorough investigation of conditions is made.

II Research There has been little, if any, work done in the northeastern section of the United States in the line of giving a General Vocational Course. The Specific Course is more or less firmly established in this section. New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and New Hampshire all have well established Specific Courses in their Vocational Schools but they have no schools giving a General Course.

Trade Schools in Massachusetts Masachusetts has twenty-two full time and eight part time schools where Specific Courses are taught, while there are only two schools, at the present time, giving the General Course. One of these schools

has made a much greater success of it than the other because it is situated in a locality where there is a greater diversification of labor.

The material for this comparison is very limited due to the fact that the system is more or less in an embryo state in Massachusetts because it has been in operation only a comparatively short time.

The program of specific vocational education in Massachusetts is well organized. The entrance requirements are established by law and are as follows:

Program of
Massachusetts
Vocational
Education

A-Specific

- a. Pupils must be at least fourteen years of age.
- b. Pupils must have completed the eighth grade.

There is a required course of study for each Specific Course that must be completed before the student is eligible for graduation or to go out and work.

The method of procedure is to equip the pupil with all possible skill and knowledge of the certain trade in which he is interested.

At the present time only the pupils who can profit by specific training are the ones who are trained while those who need the work must go to work without proper training.

B-General

The requirements for entrance into the General Course are somewhat broader. It is not required that a person complete the eighth grade but may enter from the age of thirteen. In this course there is also a specified curriculum that the student must follow. This differs from the Specific in that the students are prepared, as soon as possible, to take a job after they have reached the age of sixteen and are properly trained. They are not required to complete the course before they go to work, but, if they desire, may remain until the course is completed or until they are fitted for some Specific Course and are allowed to transfer to that particular trade.

The General Course prepares a student in more than one line of work. He is given a general knowledge of different trades so that if the trade at which he is working becomes slack he will not be forced to do work for which he has no training or knowledge, thereby becoming a failure. In most cases boys taking this course are the ones who must find employment early in life.

Location of
Work Done

The program of Vocational Education in Massachusetts up to the present time (with two exceptions) is to educate the pupil along specific lines of training in some twenty schools maintained for that purpose. Newton gives a General Course separated from the Specific Course. In Westfield both courses are given in the same building.

The following map shows where the schools giving the two courses are located.

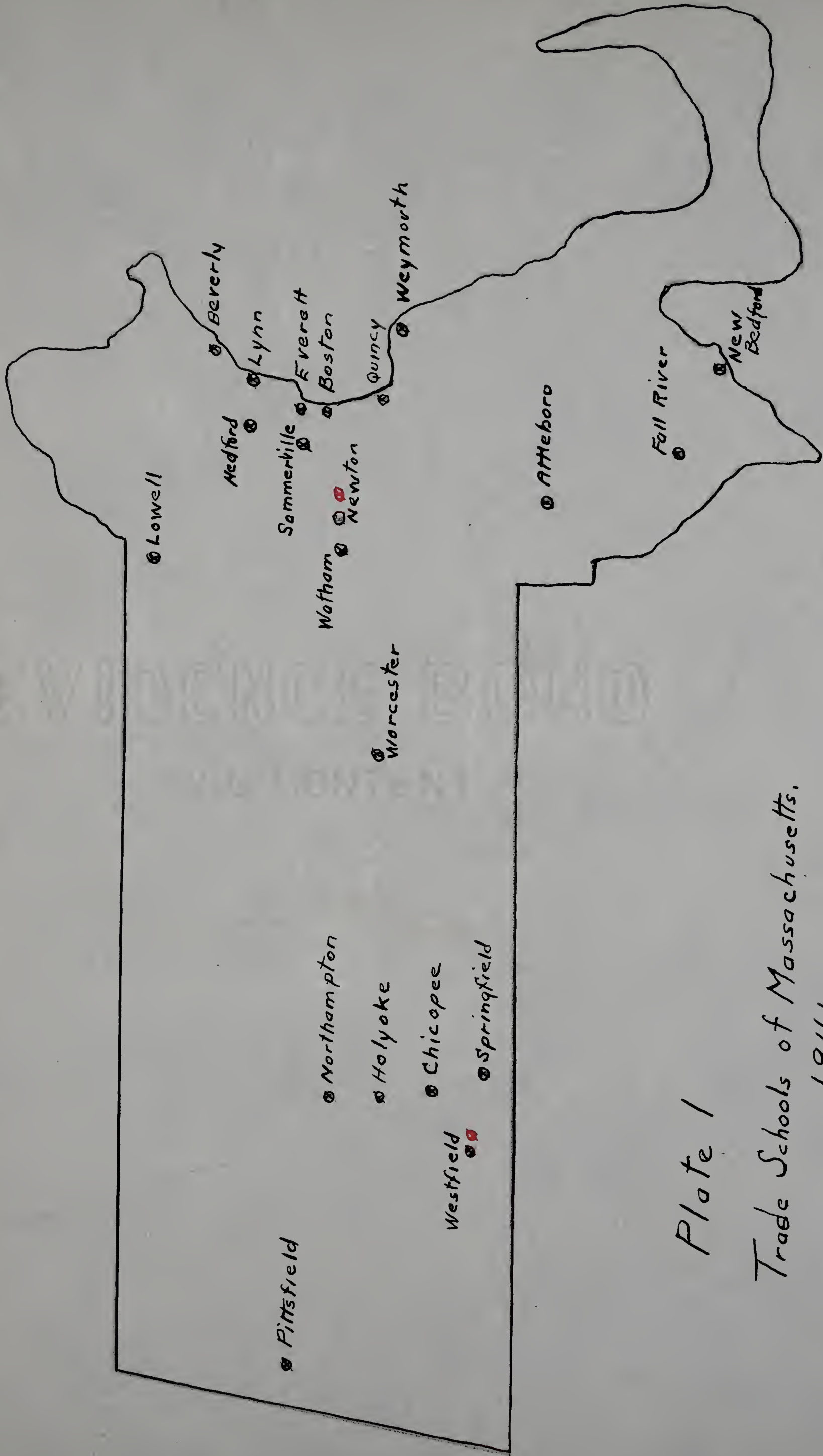


Plate 1
Trade Schools of Massachusetts,
1941

Specific • Black,
General • Red.

Reports on
Trade Schools

Graduate
Placements

The following comparison of the Specific and the General Courses shows the results of the two schools in regard to graduates and placements over a five year period.

SPECIFIC

Newton	- 215 Graduates	- Placed in Trade	100	- 46%
Westfield	- 209	" " " "	67	- 32%

GENERAL

Newton	- 211 Graduates	- Placed in Trade	168	- 80%
Westfield	- 105	" " " "	49	- 47%

The **principal** reason for difference in percentage of placements in the General Course is that Newton is situated in a part of the state where there is a greater amount of wealth and manufacturing. It is also a center of population. This causes a greater demand for graduates of the General Course. The same is true of the Specific Course although the difference in percentages is not as great.

Effectiveness

The Specific Course is well established in the state of Massachusetts, with some new courses being added as the demand for skilled labor is needed. The students are thoroughly trained and are in a position to earn a good wage when the course is completed. They are in great demand by the different trades and, in many instances, the demand is greater than the supply. In many trades boys graduating from Trade Schools are not considered as apprentices as they are able to do much better work than the apprentice and are, therefore, able to demand a higher wage and be of more service to their employers.

The General Course is in its infancy compared to the Specific, having come into existence only a few years ago. This course will continue to grow as it becomes better known and the demand for it increases as the trades taught in the locality require more workmen. In the two

schools where it is in operation there have been very few graduates as industry calls them to work before the completion of the course. During slack times many of these boys return and continue training until again called to work.

Suggestions

A Summary of suggestions follows:

1. The need for protection of our long term unit trade opportunities for those who can best be served through them.
2. The need for an organization of more General Vocational Courses for those who need vocational guidance and help but who are unable to take time or cannot profitably pursue a long term course of training. Many minors must be helped this way if helped at all.
3. The need for helping to minimize the uncertainty of securing employment in narrowing fields of specialized unit trades.
4. The need for a program for beginners who may go no further than the General Course or may move to unit trades if desirous of so doing and are able to meet certain established prerequisites.
5. The need for training on odd job levels where certain minors enter employment. At this level there is considerable shifting. This should be changed from aimless shifting to planned preparation for, entrance to, and advancement in, em-

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ployment. When these minors get out of work they should turn to the school for help, advice, and training.

Reports from
C. C. C.

Information received from Directors of C. C. C. Camps and from boys in the camps of western Massachusetts have furnished the following data:

Many of these boys were trained in a Specific Course while others were forced from school for various reasons and compelled to go to work at some trade for which they had had no previous training. Consequently they were unable to hold their jobs and were thrown out of work following the depression. If these boys had received a general knowledge of different trades the outcome might have been far better.

The various C. C. C. Camps are trying to do this work, as far as possible with their limited time and equipment. Courses are being given in Forestry, Landscaping, Road Construction, Painting, Truck Driving, Automobile Repairing, Testing and Repairing Radios, Mechanical Drawing, Carpentry, Plumbing, Typewriting, Masonry, and Clerical Work.

If it is possible to do this work in C. C. C. Camps why is it not possible for the school system to do the same?

These camps are not only training the boys with a general education but are teaching them clean living and are directing their spare time activities. This will have a great bearing on their future life. They will be better qualified to earn a livelihood, create a home, and take their place in the community. Also their leisure time will be more or less patterned by what they learned while in camp.

If the schools had been equipped to give a General Course of study most of these boys would, in all probability, not have been forced to enlist in these camps for lack of training in the trades.

Talks with Vocational Heads

In interviewing different heads of Vocational Schools it was found many were in favor of a General Course. One or two specific instances cited by the Principal of a large trade school are as follows:

If we had not broadened out, in this school, with a more or less General Course, while also carrying the Specific Course, we would have been unable to assist as many people as under the present conditions. We have what we call "a short unit" course instead of a General Course.

An example of this was given in the case of a forty-seven year old woman who had been on relief but found she could get work if able to acquire the skill of winding and soldering armatures. She enrolled in one of the short unit courses and is now off relief and earning a good weekly wage.

The Principal also cited the case of a fifty-two year old man who had been a machinist but had lost his job during the Depression. He took the only job available, that of a truck driver. Sometime later he found a place open for him in his own trade that would pay him twice as much as he was receiving, if he could regain his old skill and learn to handle the newer machines. He enrolled in a short unit course and has now gone back to his own trade.

The Director of another school giving a General Course including Printing, Sheet Metal Work, Woodworking, and Janitorial Service stated that the only students taking the course were boys classified as "misfits" and the work they were doing was of such a nature they were not sure of

success even after completing the prescribed course. Also the course was not popular and some of the boys, after being enrolled, spent some time in the General Course and found they did not belong there and requested to be placed in the Specific Courses being taught in the school. This Director also said he would not have installed the course if he had known the conditions and objections that had arisen in the installation and carrying out the work connected with such a course. He felt it might possibly work out in a satisfactory manner if installed in a Vocational School in a larger city but, in that certain city, as far as he could see, it was unsatisfactory. His objection to the General Course was what he called the "janitorial part" where the student spent a certain amount of time in school and an equal amount working somewhere in the city. He felt this could be worked out to a much better advantage in a larger city where many more janitors were needed than in the city where it was tried.

As the Director also stated, if we could get students for the General Course from the "upper half" it would not be such a hardship to carry them through to completion but as most of the students come from the "lower half" it is a most unsatisfactory condition and in no way is he sure of the success of the addition of this course to the school or of being able to secure positions for the students at the completion of their training.

In the study of the results of the General Trade preparation vs, Specific training the following items should be considered.

1. Wages
2. Terms of Employment
3. Chances of Employment

Data from
Massachusetts

The average initial wages, over a five year period, of those entering the trades where Specific Courses are in operation were \$16.70 per week, while those trained in the General Course received \$15.50.

The terms of employment are nearly the same for both courses. Most of the boys stay on the job in which they were placed. The chances for employment in the Specific are more or less seasonable while those of the General are slightly less so.

A large number of employers, when able to get a Vocational School graduate to work for them, are so pleased with their work they retain them in preference to those not trained in the school and promote them over older employees. When they need additional help they apply to the school first. This condition is becoming more prevalent every year as more and more employers are finding them to be better workmen.

One employer, in looking over a group of five young men, picked a certain one and later asked him if he knew why he had been chosen. To the boy's negative reply he said, "I picked you because I felt a boy who had attended a Trade School would know what a day's work was and I think you will make us a better workman than a fellow who has not had this experience".

It would be possible to cite many more such cases as they are common.

Boys who have attended Trade Schools, completed the work, and have gone out on a job, find they are better qualified to fill the position (as the school gives them as nearly as possible, working conditions in the trade and relation to hours of work each day, etc.), making it less difficult for them to step from school shop into a work shop. This condition exists among all honest graduates from Trade Schools.

Summary

There are twenty Vocational Schools in the state of Massachusetts where the Specific Courses are taught while there are but three where the General Courses are followed. Twenty-one different trades are taught in these twenty Specific Vocational Schools and twelve trades are taught to the students taking the General or Short Unit Courses.

The beginning wage for both courses is about the same, approximately \$15.00 a week. Turnover in the Specific is slightly greater than in the General Courses. Enrollment in schools used in this comparison is larger in the Specific than in the General as are the number of graduates. The placement of graduates, and those forced to leave school and go to work favor those in the General Course.

Suggestions

1. More schools should install the General Course to take care of a certain number of boys and girls who, at that age, have not decided what vocation to follow or who may not be adapted to any Specific Course. This group is larger than the other and, at the present time, only two localities are doing anything to take care of them.

2. The old Continuation School work should be revived but called the General Vocational School. It should not be handled in connection with the Specific but as a separate unit. This school should be built up gradually as the demand for this kind of education arises.

3. New courses should be added to those already taught in the Specific schools as the demand arises for skilled workers. For example, Airplane Mechanics, Air Conditioning, Television, etc.

4. There is a need for protecting the long term unit trades for those who can be best served through them.

5. There is need for an organization of General Vocational Courses for those who need vocational guidance and help but are unable to take time or cannot profitably pursue a long term course of training.

There is also a need for training on odd job levels where many minors enter employment. When these same boys get out of work they should return to the school for more advice, help, and training.

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Department of Education - New Jersey
Pennsylvania
Connecticut
New York

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