

# Two-year colleges popular

By **DANIELLE NADLER**  
The Winchester Star

**WINCHESTER** — Less than three months out of high school, about 79 percent of recent area graduates plan to swing backpacks over their shoulders and head to class — again.

The percentage of local college-bound high school graduates is down slightly — by 1 percentage point — over the 2009 graduating class.

Data released by the high schools in Frederick and Clarke counties and the City of Winchester show fewer students attending four-year colleges and universities and more pursuing studies at community colleges.

Each spring, the schools ask seniors about their post-graduation plans.

This is how the 1,381 graduates of the Class of 2010 answered that survey:

At Handley High School, Winchester's only high school, 80 percent of graduates said they plan to further their education in some way, up from 75 percent the previous year. Handley graduated 245 students this year.

In Frederick County, 79.3 percent of graduates from James Wood High School plan to further their education, up from 76 percent in 2009. The 2010 class at James Wood had 312 students.

See **Graduates**, Page **A12**

## Class of 2010 Post-Graduate Plans

High School	4-Year College	2-Year College	Other Education	Military	Employment	No Plans/Undecided	Total
James Wood	178 (60%)	37 (12.3%)	21 (7%)	23 (7.7%)	39 (13%)	1 (.3%)	299
Sherando	254 (69.8%)	25 (6.9%)	19 (5.2%)	18 (4.9%)	47 (12.9%)	1 (.3%)	364
Millbrook	197 (71.6%)	17 (6.2%)	12 (4.4%)	16 (5.8%)	30 (10.9%)	3 (1.1%)	275
Clarke County	92 (46.4%)	43 (21.7%)	10 (5.1%)	3 (1.5%)	50 (25.3%)	0 (0%)	198
Handley	105 (43%)	76 (31%)	15 (6%)	5 (2%)	24 (10%)	20 (8%)	245

SOURCE: Frederick County, Clarke County and Winchester public schools

# Graduates

from Page A1

But at the county's two other high schools — Sherando and Millbrook — the number of students continuing their education slipped slightly.

At Sherando, 81.9 percent of graduates plan to attend a four-year college or university, community college, or other educational program, down from 82 percent the year before.

Sherando graduated 370 students.

At Millbrook, 82.2 percent plan to continue their education, a dip from 84 percent from the Class of 2009.

Millbrook graduated 280 students.

Meanwhile, 73.2 percent of graduates from the Class of 2010 at Clarke County High School are going on to higher learning, down from 77 percent.

Clarke graduated 193 students.

The shift from four-year colleges and universities to other means of education was most notable at Clarke County High School, where the percentage of students who plan to attend a four-year college or university slumped from 50.3 last year to 46.4 this year.

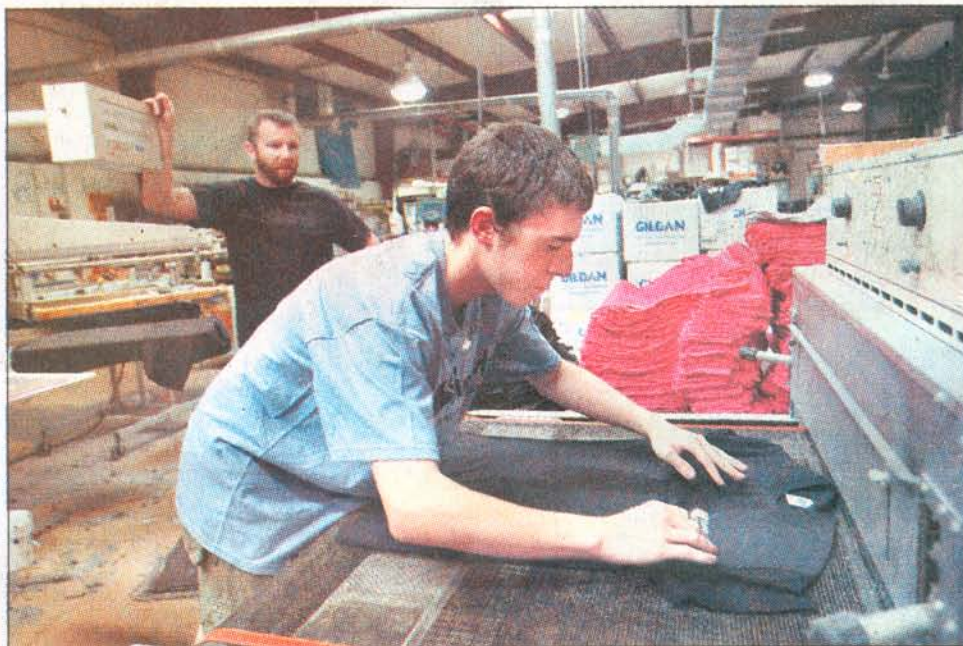
But the number of local graduates attending community college continues to rise.

This is the third year in a row Handley High School saw an increase in students attending two-year colleges, from 29.5 percent to 31 percent.

A local spike in non-university options reflects a statewide trend.

Virginia's community colleges have added 44,000 additional students, according to Jeffrey Kraus, assistant vice chancellor of public relations for Virginia's community colleges.

"That's dramatic," he said.



RICK FOSTER/The Winchester Star

James Wood High School graduate Dillon Kerns landed a job at Signet Screen Printing after high school. Behind him is A.J. Helsley, a job supervisor at the company.

Community colleges now offer more workforce industry certificates that provide training for professions such as truck drivers, mechanics, and welders.

Plus, they cost about a third of what university tuition cost.

"When you realize that you can start and finish the first two years of school at that price break, that's pretty significant for families," Kraus said.

Clarke County graduate Chris Youngs considered starting a small farm right out of high school, but eventually decided to earn an associate degree in agriculture sciences at Lord Fairfax Community College in Midletown.

"I want to get a well-rounded education," Youngs said. "I want to become an ag teacher."

More Frederick County students are obtaining industry certifications before they

graduate from high school.

Although fewer students in that county indicated they planned to jump straight into the workforce as compared to last year, more students have earned industry credentials.

During the 2009-10 school year, Frederick County students earned 949 industry credentials — up from 570 the previous year.

"So many more of these students are getting job experience while they're still in high school," said Missy McDonald, agriculture teacher at James Wood High School. "I think it's great."

Dillon Kerns is one recent James Wood graduate who was able to get a taste of the nine-to-five work world as a senior through a work-study business course.

He worked a few hours a week at Signet Screen Printing through his final semester. He did so well, the Winchester company of-

fered the 18-year-old a full-time job upon graduation.

"I didn't mind checking the 'work box,'" he said, referring to the survey. "I'm enjoying this, and I'll probably stay here for awhile."

Vaughan Kusko, a guidance counselor at Handley High School, does less "guiding" of students and does more "informing" them of their options.

If they're college-bound, she shows them how to fill out an application and seek financial aid.

If they're eager to hit the career path, she encourages them to take courses in line with their interests and help them search for job opportunities.

"We help them consider all of the options," Kusko said. "We try to give them the resources to explore whatever their goal might be."

— Contact Danielle Nadler at [dnadler@winchesterstar.com](mailto:dnadler@winchesterstar.com).