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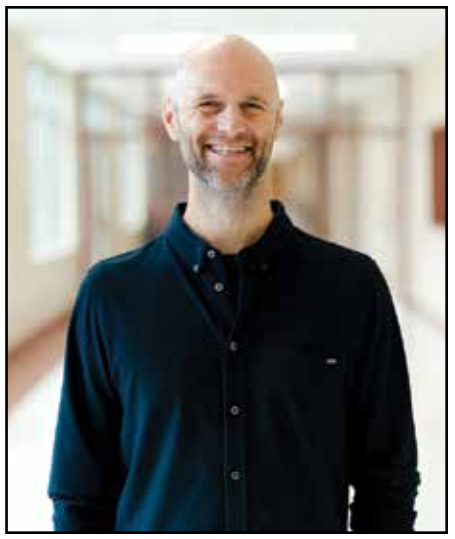
Fall 2026

MANUFACTURING TODAY

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Sun Prairie East's Joel Coyne Recognized Among Nation's Top Educators



Sun Prairie Area School District

The 2026 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year is one of 43 educators nationwide selected for the 2027 Travelers Awards for Teaching Excellence.

It's been quite a year for Joel Coyne.

The Sun Prairie East High School business and marketing education teacher, already recognized as one of Wisconsin's 2026 Teachers of the Year, has another achievement to celebrate. Coyne is one of just 43 educators nationwide selected to receive the 2027 Travelers Awards for Teaching Excellence.

But ask Coyne about the recognition, and he's quick to turn the attention to the people around him.

"Sun Prairie is full of unsung heroes who tirelessly and passionately dedicate their expertise to their students," Coyne said. "This award really isn't about one person. It's about recognizing educators across the board, because when we spotlight one teacher, we are celebrating the entire profession."

For Coyne, that sense of shared purpose is part of what makes teaching in Sun Prairie so meaningful.

"The old saying that it takes a village to raise a child is as true today as ever," he shared. "The work I do is never done in isolation. We have amazing students in Sun Prairie, and every day I get to work alongside incredible teachers and community partners."

And while the awards are certainly worth celebrating, it's the everyday moments in the classroom that continue to fuel his passion for teaching.

"Every day, I have the opportunity to make a difference in a student's life," Coyne said. "Being a teacher means we get to spark passion, develop skills, and help guide young people through these formative years."

As a business and marketing teacher, Coyne wants his students to leave with more than technical knowledge. He hopes they discover their own leadership styles, learn to work with others and gain confidence in who they are and what they can accomplish.

"Most of all, I want them to know that someone believed in them, challenged them, and truly cared about their growth."

Some of Coyne's favorite reminders of

Continued on Page 22

Advanced Manufacturing Pathway at Beloit Memorial



Brian Michels, Career Academy Coach
School District of Beloit

Beloit Memorial High School is on the cutting edge of bringing real-world applications and career opportunities directly into the classroom. Through The Academies of Beloit, students have access to hands-on learning experiences that connect their education to the skills, knowledge, and expectations of today's workforce. One area where this commitment is especially evident is within the PACMES Academy (Public Service, Automotive, Construction, Manufacturing, Engineering, and Science), where students have opportunities to explore careers in advanced manufacturing and develop valuable industry skills while still in high school.

The advanced manufacturing pathway at Beloit Memorial offers students a robust curriculum designed to prepare them for the next generation of manufacturing careers. Students have the opportunity to work with state-of-the-art Haas CNC machines, gaining hands-on experience with the technology and equipment used in today's manufacturing industry. These experiences go beyond simply learning how to operate machinery. Students develop an understanding of the manufacturing process, technical problem-solving, precision, and the importance of producing quality work that meets industry standards.

A key component of the program is the opportunity for students to earn an industry-

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR: Renee Feight
EDITOR: Andria Reinke
PAGE COMPOSITION: Andrew Clausen
WEBMASTER: Scott Bayerl
SPECIAL ASSISTANT: Allie Zacharias

Please direct articles, advertising, questions or comments to:

Teaching Today WI™
PO Box 1704
Eau Claire,WI 54702
Phone/Fax 715-839-7074
www.teachingtodaywi.com

Please direct all inquiries to:
renee@teachingtodaywi.com

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Building Skills, Building Community: Menasha Students Put Learning to Work



Greater Fox Cities Habitat for Humanity

This year, Menasha High School construction students are putting classroom learning to work, while helping create a safe, affordable home for a local family in Menasha, Wisconsin. Through the Greater Fox Cities Area Habitat for Humanity Youth Build Program, students in Bryan Arnold's construction class are gaining hands on experience rehabilitating a Menasha home.

This year's project is the rehabilitation of an existing home, including the construction of a new detached two-car garage, demolition and reconstruction of a sunroom addition, and extensive interior renovations. Throughout the school year, students will work alongside Habitat's construction team, experienced crew members, and skilled trades professionals, gaining valuable real-world construction experience.

The project provides meaningful opportunities for students to apply classroom concepts in an active job site setting. During the first weeks of construction, students framed and built walls for the new garage, transforming building plans into a tangible structure. As the project progressed, students observed the installation of garage roof trusses, hands-on instruction in siding installation techniques, and began learning proper window installation practices. This past week, they received an on-the-ground demonstration of roofing installation techniques and products.

In the weeks to come, students will continue demolition work and will learn how to install flooring, while also helping with the rebuild of the sunroom. Each task allows them to develop practical construction skills while gaining a deeper understanding of the many trades involved in residential construction.

Bryan A. – Tech Ed Teacher: "This year's Youth Build has been a much different experience for our students. Over the past several school years, our construction students have had the opportunity to participate in building a house from the ground up for a local family. This year, our focus has shifted to a home rehab project, along with building a new detached garage. This has given our students a new perspective on the course, as it presents a different set of challenges and requires new skills to successfully complete the job.

This project comes at a time of great need for our students and the Menasha community. As you may know, over the summer, our community was struck by an EF3 tornado that devastated thousands of lives throughout the area. While this devastation has brought many challenges, it has also created an opportunity for regrowth and rebuilding. This project has given our students the opportunity to play an integral role in helping rebuild their community and restore the place they call home.

As always, thank you to Habitat for Humanity and all of the supervisors, volunteers, and businesses that make this build possible!"

Ryan H. – "Working with the students in the Youth Build Program has been incredibly rewarding. Their willingness to participate, learn new things, and grow has been rewarding to watch as we've worked together. The Youth Build Program provides more than job training; it gives young people confidence, opportunity, and a path toward a successful future."

Continued on Page 11

Bridges Construction & Renovation Students Improve the Green Bay Community



Green Bay Area Public School District

The Bridges Construction & Renovation Program provides high school students with a community-based, hands-on learning experience in the construction and renovation industries. Designed for students in their junior and senior years, Bridges is a year-long class offered in a two-hour session each school day, allowing students from all Green Bay Area Public School District high schools to participate. The course has grown in popularity, allowing the District to have a morning and afternoon session.

Each school year, Bridges students work on building a house from the ground up in partnership with NeighborWorks® Green Bay. Students work alongside professional contractors to learn about structural design, building safety, blueprint reading, rough and finish construction, modern design, and home improvements. Students also explore the application of carpentry, masonry, home wiring, plumbing, and architectural design. Bridges students have the opportunity to earn both high school and college credit while enrolled in the program.

This school year, Bridges students are working on a new home at 143 Cleveland Street in Green Bay. Previously a vacant lot, the new home will be a three-bedroom, two-bath single-family residence. Students will also build a 24' × 24' detached garage. Throughout the project, students will work on flooring, walls, framing, siding, roofing, and finish carpentry. Because this house has a smaller footprint, students will have the opportunity to complete more roof framing, most of the drywall installation, and much of the finish carpentry work.



The Bridges Program allows students to develop valuable employability skills, earn college credit, and explore future career opportunities while helping address community housing needs through the construction of affordable homes. Graduates from the program often receive apprenticeship or employment offers from local contractors.

The annual home-building project benefits not only participating students but also the greater Green Bay community. By transforming vacant properties into quality housing, the partnership between the District and NeighborWorks® Green Bay helps strengthen neighborhoods while providing students with an authentic learning environment. Unlike traditional classroom projects, Bridges students are able to see the direct results of their efforts as a house progresses from an empty lot to a completed home ready for a family.

"Bridges gives students the opportunity to learn by doing," said Ziegler. "They gain real-world construction experience, work alongside industry professionals, and see firsthand the impact their work has on our community. Whether they pursue a career in the skilled trades or choose a different path, they leave the program with practical skills, confidence, and a strong understanding of what it takes to complete a major project from start to finish."

The District offers many hands-on learning programs like Bridges, giving students opportunities to explore career pathways and earn college credit while still in high school. Visit gbaps.org/aboutgbaps/district-programs for more information.

www.gbaps.org



Central Wisconsin Students Build Career Skills—and Homes for Local Families



Tiffany Arnold, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity of Wausau

Most school projects go home in a backpack. This one requires a moving crew.

At three Central Wisconsin high schools, students are working on something that will eventually leave school grounds and become part of a neighborhood. The walls they frame will surround a family's dinner table. The roof they help construct will shelter children as they grow. Their work will remain in the community long after graduation.

This school year, Habitat for Humanity of Wausau is partnering with DC Everest Senior High School, Mosinee High School, and Merrill Senior High School to build three homes. Each project connects classroom learning with a tangible purpose: helping a local family achieve affordable homeownership.

For students considering their futures, that connection can make a powerful difference.

Habitat Wausau's investment in trades education began in 1998 through a partnership with a local technical college. Over time, the program evolved to bring residential construction directly to high school campuses.

The model brings together the strengths of schools and Habitat. Schools provide class time, instructors, and a build platform on school grounds. Habitat provides building plans and materials, serves as the certified dwelling contractor, and covers the cost of moving the home to its permanent location.

Throughout the school year, students gain experience with layout, framing, roofing, drywall installation, safety practices, and other foundational construction skills. The project also gives students an opportunity to develop leadership skills, learning how to work together as a team and meet construction deadlines. Their contribution becomes part of a home another person will purchase, maintain, and depend on.

For educators and career counselors, a construction course offers students an opportunity to explore their interests before choosing their next step.

Some may discover an enthusiasm for framing or an interest in a specialty such as electrical work or plumbing. Others may find that they enjoy coordinating tasks, solving practical problems, or working toward a shared goal.

The experience can help students make more informed choices about employment, apprenticeships, or technical education. It also allows them to develop skills that matter across career paths: showing up prepared, listening to instructions, adapting when something changes, and following through on a responsibility.

Confidence grows alongside those skills. Students can look at a wall, a room, or a roofline and identify their own contribution. Over the course of a school year, individual tasks become something substantial.

"I built that" takes on a different meaning when "that" is someone's future home.

The benefits extend beyond career preparation. Through Habitat's partnership, students contribute to affordable housing in their own region. They see how their time and developing abilities can help address a community need.

That connection gives service a practical form. Students do not have to wait until they are established in a career to contribute. They already have something valuable to offer, and their skills will become more useful with practice.

For Habitat, the partnership expands what we can accomplish with schools, volunteers, donors, and community supporters. For families, it helps create an opportunity for homeownership. For students, it provides a lasting connection between learning and the place they call home.

For Wisconsin schools exploring ways to strengthen career and technical education, this partnership offers a starting point: identify a community need and consider how students can help meet it through meaningful, well-supported work.



Successful projects require planning, clear responsibilities, committed instructors, and partners who understand both the educational goals and the construction process.

The return reaches well beyond a completed house.

One school year can help a student discover a career direction, help a family move toward homeownership, and give a community a visible example of what collaboration can accomplish.

Eventually, the house leaves campus. Students leave with hands-on experience across construction trades, connections to local subcontractors, and skills that can open doors throughout their working lives—many with job offers already in hand and a career path ready to pursue.

habitatwausau.org

From West High Graduate to District Architect: Meet Caleb Janus



Madison Metropolitan School District

When Caleb Janus walks the halls of West High School, it brings back vivid memories of his own time as a student there in 1989. Now, as MMSD's new district architect, he is tasked with adapting these familiar learning spaces to meet the evolving needs of today's students.

Janus, a graduate of West High School, returned to MMSD in January. With 28 years of registered architectural experience ranging from large-scale construction in Sarasota, Fla. to working on high-tech facilities in New York, Janus is providing the district with new design perspectives from several sectors.

He views this role through a human lens, viewing school architecture as a tool for equity for the expanding city.

Whether he is designing spaces for children with different sensory needs or ensuring schools have dedicated room for food pantries, Janus wants to design facilities that serve as a staple for the whole community. His goal goes beyond blueprints, it is ensuring that every student, regardless of ability or background, feels that their school was built for them.

"I wanted to do something that actually had an impact on people," Janus said. "I grew up here, I have deep roots in this community, and I want to give back."

Janus is meeting with principals to assess their facility goals firsthand. From there, he will take on the architectural planning and permitting internally before passing the baton to MMSD's carpenters, plumbers and electricians to see projects carried out.

A big focus is designing secure welcome centers across several schools to strengthen staff and student safety. By creatively reconfiguring existing office layouts to redirect foot traffic to the front desk, Janus aims to upgrade the welcome centers without compromising the space's hospitable atmosphere. For some facilities, Janus says this can be done by adding an additional set of doors to the office while other locations require different approaches.

Recognizing that technology and the job market are constantly shifting, he wants to ensure that new technical education classrooms, makerspaces and general learning environments can easily adapt as technology and workforce needs evolve in the coming decades.

"If there's one thing I can do as an architect, it is to try to design buildings that encourage children to feel that it's their space and that they can go and be heard, seen and educated," Janus said.

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District Youth Apprentices Help Build New Middle School



Mukwonago Area School District

With each passing week, visible progress continues on new construction and remodeling at Park View Middle School (PVMS). Assisting in the work are recent graduates from Mukwonago High School (MHS) and the Youth Apprenticeship (YA) program.

As an MHS grad, it's pretty awesome to be a part of a project in the school I attended," said Brendan Skwor, MHS 2020 graduate and former YA. "The same halls I'm tearing apart I was walking through 10 years ago." Skwor is a carpenter journeyman with the company (JP) working on the project.

He's also one of more than 100 MHS students who have participated in the YA program each year, where students get hands-on training in potential pathways of interest.

"Students are employed by a local business and receive one or two years of on-the-job training from industry professionals while earning high school credit," said Christine Perkins, MASD college and career readiness coordinator. "Along the way, they develop technical skills, workplace professionalism, and valuable industry connections."

2026 MHS graduate Owen Blank is a first-year apprentice carpenter with JP. He says the YA program was invaluable in preparing him for a career in the trades after high school.

"The YA program got me a jump start on a carpentry career," he said. "A lot of the stuff I know right now I learned as an apprentice. MHS prepared me with great classes like Building Trades, which encompassed a lot of trade jobs like electrical and carpentry."

"For students who choose to enter the workforce after high school, YA provides a significant head start, allowing them to graduate with real-world experience that sets them apart from their peers," Perkins said.

Graduates from MHS are highly sought after by local companies, demonstrating the quality of their preparation in school.

"During some of the career fairs in Mukwonago, we found some outstanding students that we wanted to bring in," said Jerry Woznicki, JP senior superintendent. Woznicki lives in Mukwonago and is also the site superintendent for the PVMS project. "The YA program gets kids ready for the construction industry and helps them find not only what trade they want but what role."

Perkins said both employers and students benefit from the YA program: "YA can really help create a pipeline to fill employers' needs within the community."

YA is more than a work release program. Interested students must register for it and are responsible for finding their own job. Students successfully complete the program with more than 450 hours on the job site in the yearlong program while completing high school coursework related to their focus area.

"Whether students continue to college, an apprenticeship, the military, or directly into a career, the skills and experiences they gain in YA prepare them for long-term success," Perkins said.

For Skwor, the early opportunity to experience the trades in MHS classes provided future direction. The YA program then gave him the chance to put those skills into practice.

"I took a construction class and just fell in love with construction," Skwor said. "I took some trades classes, got my feet wet, and then participated in YA so I could try it out and get paid."

Both Skwor and Blank are excited for the opportunity to translate their experiences into such a meaningful project in their community.

"It feels good to be involved in such an

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Groundbreaking for 29th Student-Built House

Sheboygan Area School District

North and South High School students, staff, and guests attended a Groundbreaking Ceremony for House Construction Project 2026 on Tuesday, September 8 at the construction site in the Stonebrook Crossing Subdivision on the south side of Sheboygan. Project 2026 is the 29th home that will be built by SASD students enrolled in Career & Technical Education classes from Sheboygan North and Sheboygan South High Schools.

North High School graduate Madeline Gilson designed the house that will be built. Her design was selected last spring from the plans drawn by all students enrolled in our Project Lead the Way Civil Engineering and Architecture class.

This is the eleventh home built under the direction of instructor and project manager Ted Schermetzler and the sixth student-built home in the Stonebrook Crossing subdivision.

Each year, students from North and





South High Schools design, build and sell a home. Students do as much of the work as possible under the direction of our program advisor, and also work alongside our project partners. Students from each high school spend about two class periods on the job site during the school day. The house design is selected each spring from the plans drawn by students enrolled in the Project Lead the Way Civil Engineering and Architecture class.

The Sheboygan Area School District began its house construction program in 1998, and since that time, hundreds of students have participated in authentic, real-world, hands-on learning of building a house from the ground up.

Proceeds from the home sale go toward scholarships, tools, and equipment, as well as purchasing land for future construction projects.

sheboygan.k12.wi.us

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Construction Program Helps Students Build Home Foundations and Future Careers



Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District

A new class within Middleton High School's Technology and Engineering Education program is giving students hands-on experience in home construction that educators and community partners say will serve them well beyond high school.

16 juniors and seniors are enrolled in Mr. Dan Biddick's class as part of the new Home Construction program at MHS, in partnership with an area builders' association (MABA) foundation and a local home construction business (EH). The students are building a ranch-style home in a new Middleton subdivision under the guidance of experienced contractors and are learning several aspects of residential construction.

"This incredible opportunity would not be possible without the support of our outstanding community partners," Biddick said. "Their willingness to work alongside our students and share their expertise is an invaluable part of this experience."

Construction partners dug the foundation for the home in August 2026, and students began working on the project – also called The Foundation Build – during the first week of the 2026-27 school year. They had the option to sign up for one semester or the full year based on course availability, and all 16 students made the year-long commitment.

"It's an amazing class," said Emmanuel, an MHS junior. "I'm thankful to EH for taking the time to help students out and give us experience."

"I'm having a great time and love being able to be outside of the classroom and work with my hands while still learning very important things," added Elliot, an MHS junior.

In addition to funds for the home build, MABA is contributing resources such as power tools and essential equipment, a work trailer, and the home build lot itself. Leaders from the MABA Foundation and Encore Homes said MHS students are taking active roles in bringing the project to life.

"The students have been very engaged and willing to learn," said Ed Hoksbergen, Vice President of Production at EH. "They have been working each day they are on site."

"We've found MHS students to be genuinely interested in opportunities within residential construction," added Chad Lawler, Executive Director at MABA. "While the build has just begun, we are excited to continue working with MHS students."

The class is new this school year, but planning began in Fall 2021 after meetings between educators, District leaders, and the MABA Skilled Trades Committee about ways to engage young adults with industry careers and opportunities. A different general contractor will be named annually based on an available offsite home build lot in the Middleton-Cross Plains area, with Encore Homes being the contractor for 2026-27.



Career and Technical Education Coordinator Dave Thomas said the partnership and the class were both designed "to be sustainable as a course offering every year." Lawler also said that MCPASD leaders and staff "are

Continued on Page 11



What is a Boilermaker?

Abe Inghram, Apprentice Coordinator
Boilermakers #107

One of the more common responses we get is, "Don't they play for Purdue?" Truth is that many people have never heard of a Boilermaker.

What we really do is industrial construction across the country. We build and repair power plants, refineries, chemical plants, paper mills, steel mills, shipyards, mines, and a variety of other industrial facilities. To work in these facilities, we develop skills in welding, rigging, cutting, layout, fit up, blueprint reading, planning, and many more. A group of Boilermakers will be able to know how to take a 100,000-pound component, hook it up to a crane, safely move it into place with precision, make x-ray quality welds, and do it all with pride.

The Boilermakers started their history by making steam locomotives. We continue our history by making today's latest nuclear plants, advanced naval ships, and adding vital infrastructure to this country.

Boilermakers don't have your typical work lifestyle. We are busy during the spring and fall months, stay steady during the winter months, and then work slows during the summer. This equates to about a 9-month work year that includes a healthy salary. We travel for work, usually being at a work site for about 2-4 weeks. We can travel across the country, but most Boilermakers stay within the state.

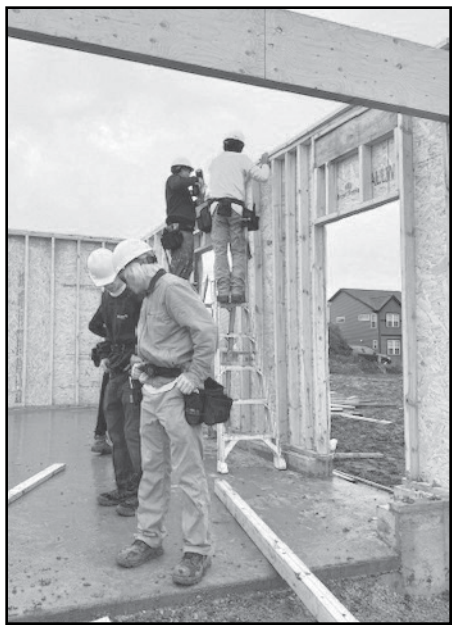
My 2 favorite things about being a Boilermaker are having my summers off (Wisconsin summers are great) and the amount of change in my work setting. I'll be on a job for 2-4 weeks, then go to a different site that has different co-workers, different bosses, and different work. I wouldn't last long in a work setting that doesn't change. Another plus is that as a journeyman Boilermaker you will always have a choice to work as much as you please. You can work a lot and travel the country or only work a couple jobs a year that are close to home. It all depends on how much money you want to make.

The career has its negatives also. The places we work aren't meant for humans. We'll work at heights, in the cold, in the heat, in tight spots, in dirty spots. Some jobs are a challenge (maybe not a negative).

All in all, Boilermakers are skilled in their trade, needed across our country, and are proud of what they do.

Construction Program Helps Students Build Home Foundations and Future Careers

Continued from Page 10



open to all ideas and willing to put in the time and effort needed to form long-term, effective partnerships."

Across the nation, the construction industry is facing a substantial need for skilled labor and will need an estimated 1.2 million people to join in the next two years to meet housing demands. Lawler said while these educational opportunities can support students who want to pursue a career in construction, it's "not just filling a need for labor."

"It's really about providing students and their families with the opportunity to learn lifelong skills that will benefit them while offering a pathway to a high-paying, in-demand career," Lawler said.

Educators also shared why more students should consider enrolling in the Technology and Engineering Education program. In addition to the new Home Construction opportunity, other classes including woodworking, engineering, and metal and fabrication offer opportunities for students to create and see the impact of real-world projects.





"It is more than just taking a class," Biddick said. "It is about building skills, creating things, solving real problems, working with professionals, and discovering what you are capable of doing."

"We also hope to increase the number of juniors who successfully transition into a youth apprenticeship opportunity in their senior year," Thomas added, "and hope that all seniors in this course who are seeking employment opportunities after high school are able to get an offer in their skilled trades area of interest prior to graduation."

Community members can follow along with The Foundation Build's progress on the MHS website https://www.mcpasd.k12.wi.us/o/mhs throughout the year. Employers who are interested in hiring a Youth Apprenticeship student may contact Dave Thomas, Career and Technical Education Coordinator, at dthomas2@mcpasd.k12.wi.us or call 608-829-9858.

www.mcpasd.k12.wi.us

District Youth Apprentices Help Build New Middle School

Continued from Page 8

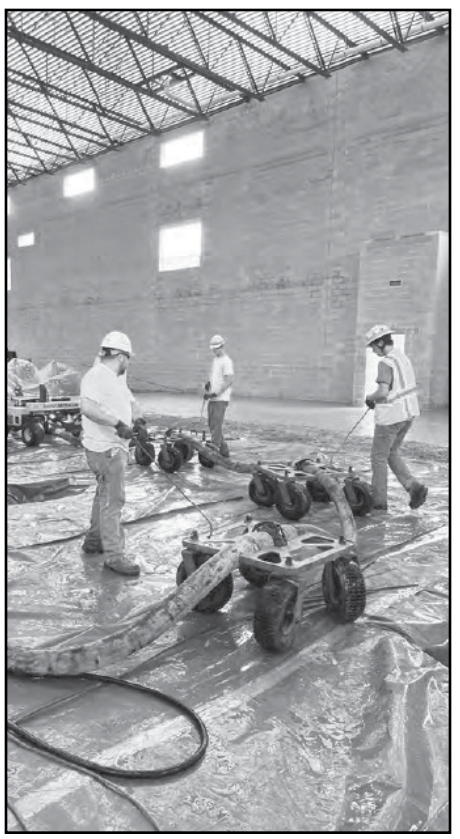
important project," Blank said. "I've lived here my entire life. Not many can say that they've been involved in rebuilding the school they attended. It's really a cool and unique experience for me."

"I feel a huge sense of pride driving past a project and seeing what I'm building," Skwor said. "I started last fall with the footings and the walls and have done work every step of the way — from a hole in the ground to what it is now. It's going to be an awesome feeling when it's all done!"

MHS students who participate in YA have opportunities beyond construction. This year, 104 students — nearly 1 in 15 MHS students — are participating in a variety of pathways, including health sciences, marketing, hospitality and tourism, architecture and construction, manufacturing, education and training, transportation, distribution and logistics, food, natural resources, business management and administration, and agriculture.

Reprinted from The Fall 2026 Triad, Mukwonago Area School District

www.masd.k12.wi.us



Menasha Students Put Learning to Work

Continued from Page 4

Cameron T. – "The Habitat Youth Build has created a foundation for the younger generation to learn different types of construction trades. Being able to be a part of this has been special through the years. If the leaders of today's trades don't pass the knowledge on to the younger generation, then we have failed as leaders. The interaction with the students, and seeing the way their minds work absorbing the fresh knowledge is incredible. I appreciate all the program offers. Every time the students pass the project they constructed, they will carry a little more pride on their shoulders saying "I built that."

Mike E. shares: '"We had a great time working with the kids and helping them get a feel for what roofing is all about! It was fun seeing them get hands on and try something new, that they may not have ever had the chance to do before. We're happy to share what we do and would love to see more young people interested in the trades!"

For Menasha students, the Youth Build Program, connects career exploration with giving back to the community. As they develop construction skills, practice jobsite safety and work alongside trades professionals, they also see how their learning can help create a safe affordable home for a local family, also impacted by the tornado.

As Wisconsin continues to face a growing demand for skilled trades professionals, partnerships between schools, community organizations, and industry professionals play a critical role in preparing the next generation workforce.

For more information go to https://www.foxcitieshabitat.org

www.mjsd.k12.wi.us

East High's Ben Dutcher Brings Creativity and Craftsmanship to His Next Chapter



Madison Metropolitan School District

At Madison East High School, former senior, Ben Dutcher found his rhythm — both in music and in the trades.

This fall, Dutcher plans to begin a five-year electrician apprenticeship with International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) after discovering a passion for hands-on work through East's woodworking classes and career exploration opportunities.

"I decided early on that I didn't want to go to college and wanted to do trades instead," he said. "I researched different opportunities in the Madison area and learned about how much each trade makes. Becoming an electrician felt like the best balance between personal interest and pay."

Dutcher's career interest only deepened after meeting with staff from the The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, better known as WRTP | BIG STEP, an organization that works with schools and helps students get into careers in the trades.

"I highly recommend students go to the BIG STEP meetings advertised by East's learning coordinator Ms. Potter if they aren't sure if they want to go to college, or if they just want to learn about more options," he said. "Everyone who works with BIG STEP is incredible and supportive."

Outside the classroom, Dutcher immersed himself in East's music community. As a member of Cypher, a student music club, he learned valuable lessons in collaboration, leadership and time management while performing with fellow students and touring elementary schools each spring.

"Cypher is one of the best things I've ever done," Dutcher said. "At the end of every April, we play music and tour the elementary schools. It was amazing."

Dutcher is especially proud of how far he's come as a musician.

"I'm proud of my progress in music, being a multi-instrumentalist and having shows with my bands," he said.

His accomplishments extend beyond music. Earlier this year, Dutcher competed in the SkillsUSA competition, earning bronze and silver medals in team events.

When reflecting on the educators who shaped his journey, Dutcher said it's difficult to choose just one.

Still, he gave special recognition to his eighth grade English teacher, Mr. McMillan, for encouraging him to challenge himself and stay motivated.

Dutcher hopes younger students remember that growth takes time.

"You're still a kid, so keep that in mind," he said. "It's okay to make mistakes or not have perfect grades, but you're also going to be an adult soon. Teachers can and will treat you like one. Be patient, keep trying and the rest will sort itself out."

www.madison.k12.wi.us

PHS Woodshop Unveils Significant Remodel



Plymouth School District

Thanks to a couple's generosity and the efforts of the technical education teachers, Plymouth High School students returned from summer break to a thoroughly remodeled woodshop.

"The new layout of the shop makes day-to-day work more efficient and safer," said tech ed teacher Jake Sherman. "The last time any major changes were made in there was when the school was built in the 1960s."

The project is expected to have a significant impact on student learning. "Every change in this remodel was made with students in mind: a safe, organized, modern woodshop built for hands-on learning, where students are able to develop the skills industry expects," according to the final report.

The woodshop received nine new machines and — perhaps just as importantly — extensive facility upgrades. "The facility improvements are important to the Tech Ed Department," Mr. Sherman said. "Even if tools wear out, the infrastructure will last."

The remodeling was funded largely by a significant donation by Jerry and Pat Moriarity.

The Moriaritys, who for many years have funded scholarships for their alma mater, UW-Milwaukee, recently created the Moriarity Trades Scholarship after noticing that it has become harder and harder to find an electrician, plumber, etc.

Two members of the PHS Class of 2026 received $2,500 scholarships to attend technical school, and the Moriaritys have pledged to continue the scholarship for the next 10 years.

"We feel very blessed the way our lives turned out," Mr. Moriarity recently told Board of Education members as they toured the renovated woodshop.

But they wanted to do more, and asked the tech ed team if they could help with some project. The teachers quickly thought of an update to the woodshop, which most needed modern improvements.

Technology Education and Engineering instructors Beau Biller, Greg Gritt, Ken Odekirk, and Jake Sherman spent the past year planning the project, then shepherded the work over the summer. They expressed their appreciation to school administrators, Business Manager Amy Williams, and school custodians James Gatz and Jason Schilling for supporting the project.

The tech ed team also thanked the Moriaritys for both the scholarships and the remodeled woodshop. "The facility improvements will have an impact on current students, while the scholarships will have a long-term impact for graduates, changing their lives by providing opportunities they might never have had," Mr. Sherman said. "We're going to be seeing a ripple effect of their generosity."

Bob Travis, Board of Education president, also thanked the Moriaritys. "You've transformed this area, and it's going to pay off," he told them. "This will help our mission to provide a comprehensive education."

The Moriaritys – along with the others in the room – are looking forward to the return on their investment. "I hope the students answer the phone in the future when we need an electrician or plumber or HVAC technician," Mrs. Moriarity said, drawing laughter.

About the project

New equipment:

- SawTrax Professional Panel Saw
- SawStop Table Saw with dado capability
- Powermatic 37" Surface Sander
- Powermatic Planer
- Powermatic Drill Presses (2)
- Router Table
- Bosch Miter Saws (2)
- Milwaukee battery-powered tools
- Milwaukee hand tools and toolbox

Other improvements

- New work tables and countertops
- Improved storage
- New sink and eyewash station
- Display case to showcase student projects
- Dedicated finishing room for gluing and staining away from dust
- Roll-up style garage door (that allows a forklift to bring in supplies)
- Painting of interior walls and surfaces
- Cleaning and painting of the ceiling
- Updated LED lighting
- Updated electricity for all equipment
- Updated air lines
- Updated dust collection system
- New hose reels and electrical reels
- New water fountain with bottle filler in a nearby hallway to replace the shop water fountain

www.plymouth.k12.wi.us

WPS Sparks Curiosity, Creates Connections for Local Students at Energy Career Fair

Wisconsin Public Service

Shouts of excitement, moments of intense focus and cheers of satisfaction rang out on a fall afternoon in Green Bay. But they weren't for the green and gold — these sounds came from dozens of local students learning how they could become pros in the energy industry.

Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) connected more than 100 area high school students with energy experts at a career fair in September. Co-hosted by the UWGB, the event helped students learn more about the people, tools and technologies that keep the lights on, homes warm and businesses running around the clock.

"Seeing the energy and enthusiasm the students brought to our career fair made it a really fun experience," said Travis Orlando, senior electric operations supervisor — WPS. "Our industry is evolving in real time, from how we produce energy to using advanced technology to serve our customers. It was exciting to show the students the many career options they can consider to serve their communities every day."

Hands-on experience with high-tech equipment

Students took part in several interactive stations, working with high-tech equipment like high-voltage tools and thermal imaging drones. WPS employees hosted one of the stations, using an electric wiring display to teach students how they deliver safe and reliable electricity. They also gave students the chance to try out the tools firsthand.

"While students may understand how electricity and natural gas are used in their daily lives, our station provided hands-on learning experiences that helped them gain a deeper appreciation for the careers, technical skills and essential work that make everyday conveniences, such as charging their phones or staying warm in the winter, possible," said Charles Bauer, electric operations supervisor — WPS.

The career fair also gave students a look at jobs that help residents and businesses improve their energy efficiency. Focus on Energy professionals guided students on measuring a building's energy use, while home weatherization experts helped students explore careers in heating and cooling homes efficiently. Outdoors, students steered thermal imaging drones above the UW-Green Bay campus to check for air leaks around the outside of buildings.

Interactive lessons on energy innovations

The WPS energy career fair also gave students fun experiences with new technologies that create power, including renewable energy. Students built miniature wind turbines



and competed against each other to see which design could lift the most washers at one time. Other stations gave students interactive experiences building hydroelectric generators and exploring how electric vehicles are powered and built.

"With this, it's a lot more engaging and interesting . . . because you're actually working your way through it with struggle and finding out what actually works better through your own actions instead of learning on pen and paper," said Donovan Bebeau, a Green Bay West High School student who attended the career fair.

Preparing students for future success

WPS hosted the energy career fair as part of its focus on supporting students and raising awareness about careers in the energy industry. Each year, the company works with technical colleges on energy industry career programs, meets with students at high school and college

Continued on Page 15



WISCONSIN ENERGY WORKFORCE CONSORTIUM | get into energy

THEIR ENERGY CAREER COULD START IN YOUR PARKING LOT

The award-winning WEWC Mobile Learning Lab unfolds into a 20' × 40' hands-on classroom, connecting your tech ed students to Wisconsin's Energy & Natural Resources career pathway.

1 · SEE IT
Meet utility pros on site

2 · TRY IT
Electric & gas distribution, hands on

3 · PURSUE IT
getintoenergy.org/student-pathways

BRING THE LAB TO YOUR SCHOOL
wi-energyworkforce.org/WEWC-Mobile-Learning-Lab

“I love my job . . . I would not do anything else”



Dan Bader
School District of South Milwaukee

Electricity is the family business — and Josh Pitzo is doing exactly what he wants to be doing.

His father is an electrician, and so is his uncle. As a third-year apprentice at Pewaukee-based energy solution company (FT), Pitzo is very close to taking the Journeyman’s exam and becoming licensed himself.

The 2023 South Milwaukee graduate actually started his career in 2022 as a Youth Apprentice through the high school’s Career and Technical Education Program. The Youth Apprentice program is a Wisconsin initiative that pairs students with careers that offer good pay and are in high demand in the state. It was as a junior that Pitzo interviewed with FT and was hired. He worked over the summer of 2022 and part-time during his senior year, learning his trade while finishing his classes to graduate.

He stayed as a Youth Apprentice — notable for the orange and blue helmets they wear on the worksite — with other new hires.

“They give you six months to learn about whether you want to be an electrician,” Pitzo said.

Any new hire wears a blue hard hat for the first six months to denote their experience level, before graduating to a white hard hat, like the one Pitzo wears now.

“(After graduation) I finished the job site I was on and started to travel for work,” he said.

That included a turkey processing facility in Barron, Wisconsin, which was installing all new equipment and needed new electric service run to the machinery.

“In between all of this, we went to weekly classes,” Pitzo said while on a break from one of those classes.

The class he’s in now deals with electric motors, but all of the classes come back to the electric code in preparation for apprentices to become journeymen.

Looking back, Pitzo said his Youth Apprenticeship was exceptional because he had the opportunity to work on large projects, such as installing charging stations for a shipping company’s new electric fleet.

As a third-year apprentice, Pitzo is the head of a three-person team, one of whom is a Youth Apprentice from Muskego.

“I didn’t think I would be trying to teach anyone myself yet, here I am,” Pitzo said. The team spends its day installing various types of electrical conduit piping in industrial buildings. Pitzo has learned that there are many different types and sizes of pipe or conduit, depending on the kind of wire and the environment in which the electricity will be used. It must be cut and bent to fit where the wire needs to go.

“There’s a lot more than my Youth Apprentice mind thought,” Pitzo said.

After he passes the journeyman exam, he’ll be done with classes for the most part. After that, it’s college if he wants to work in project management or become an electrical engineer.

The 20-year-old doesn’t know if that’s for him, but he knows FT will help pay for college if he does choose to pursue a degree. For now, he’s content.

“I love my job. I would not do anything else. I was right to do what I did, and I love it every day,” he said.

www.sdsm.k12.wi.us



Problem Solving Super Learners: K–12 STEM Programs Prepare Students for Careers in Industries Now and in the Future



Dan Bader
School District of South Milwaukee

Programming, designing, collaborating, prototyping, and redesigning — that's what happens in labs and design studios in the tech industry. It's also happening in South Milwaukee's STEM labs. An acronym for science, technology, engineering, and math, STEM is a hands-on way to look at the world that combines all those disciplines.

Programming, designing, collaborating, prototyping, and redesigning — that's what happens in labs and design studios in the tech industry. It's also happening in South Milwaukee's STEM labs.

An acronym for science, technology, engineering, and math, STEM is a hands-on way to look at the world that combines all those disciplines.

"I think STEM is the future," said Julie Barnett, the Middle School STEM teacher. "By allowing our students into STEM and getting them exposed to the vocabulary, the productive struggles, and other pieces of just what we do in STEM class, we're opening them up to the possibility of things that they can do in their future."



Thinking about the future is what the School District of South Milwaukee is doing with its STEM program — something made possible in part by the Safe, Supported, Successful referendum, which was overwhelmingly passed by voters in 2024.

"A number of years ago, we had the opportunity to think about how we wanted to expand programming, and we had a number of our high school and middle school students interested in pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and math, which we call STEM in schools," Superintendent Deidre Roemer said. "And every one of our students experiences high levels of skill development in varying ways, from K–4 all the way up through 12th grade."

There are three elementary STEM teachers serving the district's four schools. Similar to library, physical education, and music class, students now attend STEM class.

"In a lot of ways, what's great about elementary STEM is that students can shine in ways that they can't necessarily in the regular classroom. STEM is very hands-on. First of all, they are building and constructing, and it's also often connected to some kind of tech," elementary STEM teacher Jennifer Haynor said.

"We've been doing some hands-on building activities and really watching them when what they're trying to build is not successful and coming together with their partner or their group to try and problem solve that," added Rawson STEM teacher Katy Casleton.

That cooperation and team troubleshooting is a skill in and of itself that job seekers need to be successful in their adult lives.

"The younger students are where I notice the biggest impact," agreed Jolene Wasilewski. She teaches STEM at both Blakewood and E. W. Luther schools. "They come in with the mindset of like 'I'm going to need your help.' But then something happens between winter and spring, and they start to kind of blossom. And next thing you know, you just kind of look around the room, and they're no longer asking you for help. Just that hum in the classroom of like, kids critically thinking and working together."

In high school, students start realizing how those skills translate into what they might want to do with their lives.

"One of my favorite things about teaching at the high school is that I am reaching learners who are really starting to think about what the rest of their life looks like," High School STEM teacher Karen Matthews said. "Students really have a chance to get in and practice the skills that they may potentially use later on in their careers."



For students, learning about what someone wants to do, or doesn't want to do with their lives, is part of a public education, Roemer said.

"Right now, for our youngest learners, we're preparing them for careers that don't yet exist," she said.

www.sdsm.k12.wi.us

WPS Creates Connections for Local Students at Energy Career Fair Continued from Page 13



job fairs, and supports educational and energy workforce development organizations. WPS also offers youth apprenticeships to area high school students interested in working toward careers in natural gas field operations.

"Events like this can be important experiences that shape the careers students consider or decide to work toward," said Kurt Sheedy, lead natural gas distribution mechanic — WPS. "Whether it's a position working in the field, designing power generation facilities or providing outstanding service to customers, there are nearly unlimited options for a rewarding career in the energy industry."

WPS hosted its energy career fair in partnership with Focus on Energy, UWGB, Slipstream, Wisconsin K–12 Energy Education Program, Wisconsin Clean Cities and the Wisconsin Energy Workforce Consortium.

Courtesy of Wisconsin Public Service

Building Successful Futures in Healthcare at OCHS



Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District

For students at Oak Creek High School (OCHS), the path to a career in healthcare can begin even before they graduate. Through the Nursing Assistant class, students gain valuable skills and acquire real-life experience while taking their first steps toward a rewarding career in healthcare.

"It's rewarding," shares Kamryn B., a junior at OCHS. "You see people in their most vulnerable state, and knowing that I have the education and experience to take care of them and build relationships with patients is really meaningful."

Through a partnership with the local technical college, the Nursing Assistant class at OCHS introduces students to essential nursing skills, creating a strong foundation for future opportunities in healthcare. Students who complete the class can also earn a technical diploma from the college, giving them an additional industry credential as they prepare to enter the healthcare workforce or continue their education.

"Learning the basics, like proper PPE [personal protective equipment], patient care, medical terminology, and how to record vital signs, are things I will use throughout the rest of my career," shares Kamryn.

After completing the class, which includes fifty-nine hours of theory and skills practice and demonstration in the lab, and sixteen hours of clinical instruction, students have the opportunity to take the state certification exam to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). To earn their certification, students must pass a knowledge exam and a hands-on clinical skills exam. Once certified, students are added to the Wisconsin Nurse Aide Registry and are eligible to begin working as CNAs.

Kamryn earned her CNA certification in July and has already put that education into practice, beginning work as a Certified Nursing Assistant for a home health company.

"It's a great opportunity to have your CNA certification at such a young age. I work hard and want to advance my career," says Kamryn, who hopes to one day become an orthopedic oncologist.

Students can also take their learning a step further by participating in either a one- or two-year-long Health Science Youth Apprenticeship program. Through the apprenticeship program, students work in the healthcare field, earn money, and receive high school credit while continuing to gain experience.

"Oak Creek High School is advanced in helping students find careers and future pathways," shares Katherine S., a junior at OCHS and president of the OCHS chapter of HOSA-Future Health Professionals. "With my CNA license, I will be able to work in my field while continuing my education."

Katherine plans to attend college and pursue a career as an emergency medicine physician.

Through hands-on learning, certification opportunities, and real-world experiences, Oak Creek High School is helping students turn their interest in healthcare into meaningful career pathways, all before they cross the graduation stage.

Oak Creek High School is part of the Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District. Through strong partnerships with our community, the dedication of our staff, and the support of our families, we work together to engage, challenge, and inspire every student every day.

www.ocfsd.k12.wi.us



From Classroom to Career: Milton High School Opens New Healthcare Sciences Lab





Kari Klebba
Communications and Safety Coordinator
School District of Milton

For years, the School District of Milton has been leading the way in school-to-career education, connecting classroom learning with real world career opportunities. Through its "Career Pathways" program, Milton High School offers students a personalized approach to their education with 16 unique career pathways that allow students to explore their passions and select courses that align with their future goals.

Through innovative programming and more than 100 local industry partnerships, students have been able to explore their interests and gain invaluable skills that prepare them for their post-graduation plans.

Among the school's fastest growing and most in demand pathways is healthcare sciences. To meet increasing student interest and support the growing need for qualified healthcare professionals throughout southern Wisconsin, Milton High School converted several classrooms into a state-of-the-art Healthcare Sciences Lab.

Completed in August, just ahead of the 2026–27 school year, the new lab creates a dedicated space for students to develop skills in an environment that simulates real healthcare settings.

In 2020, the high school created an EMT certification course that would allow students to earn their certification while still in high school. The program's immediate popularity quickly presented challenges. When first established, the course was operating out of two classrooms in the school's lower level. The space limitations made it difficult to accommodate the growing number of students interested in participating.

By repurposing previously unused classroom space on the school's main level, adjacent to their STEM wing, the new lab now offers four hospital beds, patient mannequins, a patient lift, and a simulated hospital room with a two way observation mirror that allows instructors to observe students as they practice patient care independently.

A hospital-style bathroom, complete with an accessible shower and toilet facilities, gives students opportunities to practice patient care skills in a realistic setting. The facility also includes a dedicated space for a future phlebotomy class, a planned addition to the program's offerings in the years ahead.

An important component of the program's success is the District's ongoing partnership with a non-profit regional health care system that provides instructors for the EMT and CNA courses.

Whether students plan to enter the workforce immediately after graduation or pursue a degree in healthcare, Milton High School's healthcare sciences programming gives them an invaluable head start.

www.milton.k12.wi.us

Explore Healthcare Careers at Bellin College Summer Camps



Open to high school students entering their junior or senior year (and at least 16 years old) in Fall 2027 with a minimum 2.75 GPA:

Join us for a day camp and explore the fields of nursing or allied health by getting hands-on experience in our simulation labs and at a local hospital! Camps include a camp t-shirt, lunch or dinner, supplies and fun giveaways!

Nursing Camp

Students must be entering their junior or senior year in Fall 2027, and are at least 16 years old. Sponsored by Bellin Health.

Explore nursing at Bellin College!

Get a firsthand look at the nursing profession during this two-day, hands-on camp at Bellin College. Explore different areas of nursing, practice clinical skills and discover what a future in healthcare could look like.

On day one, you'll take part in hands-on activities in our simulation labs, including IV starts, virtual reality simulations and experiences in areas such as labor and delivery and geriatric care. You'll also hear from current Bellin College students, learn about the nursing program and admissions process, tour Bellin Hospital's Surgery Center and practice emergency response skills through a Stop the Bleed presentation.

On day two, you'll shadow a nurse at a local hospital to see what the profession looks like in practice.

2027 Camp Dates: June 29–30 and July 20–21

Time: 8:00 am to 3:30 pm

Deadline to Apply: We will take applications until camp is filled.

Cost per participant: $110

Camp includes: Camp t-shirt, lunch, supplies and fun giveaways!

Allied Health Day Camp

Students must be entering their junior or senior year in Fall 2027, and are at least 16 years old.

Discover the many career paths in healthcare during this one-day, hands-on camp at Bellin College. Meet program directors, connect with current students and explore a variety of healthcare professions.

You'll rotate through interactive activities in Surgical Assisting, Radiology, Sonography and Radiation Therapy, then get a behind-the-scenes look at local hospital departments, including Radiation Therapy, MRI and CT. Along the way, you'll learn about different professions, the technology used in patient care and what a future in healthcare could look like.



2027 Camp Date: June 7

Time: 10:30 am to 6:00 pm (subject to change)

Deadline to Apply: We will take applications until camp is filled.

Cost per participant: $110

Camp includes: Camp t-shirt, dinner, supplies and fun giveaways!

Information and registration at

www.bellincollege.edu/admissions/visit/summer-camps

WEA Member Benefits Outstanding Educators

WEA Member Benefits is a proud partner of Wisconsin Athletics, and we're excited to honor the exceptional contributions of Wisconsin public school educators and support staff through our Outstanding Educator program.

In partnership with the UW Badgers, WEA Member Benefits is proud to celebrate and recognize the dedication and impact of educators across Wisconsin!

Our outstanding educator program seeks to amplify the voices of those shaping the future of Wisconsin's students by highlighting educators and support staff who go above and beyond in their roles.



Brittany Vanderbilt

School District of Wisconsin Dells

Inspired by her mom, also a teacher, Brittany Vanderbilt knew from an early age that she wanted to become a teacher too. The only question was what she would teach. A high school Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) teacher encouraged her to consider FCS, and it turned out to be the perfect fit, combining her love of cooking, sewing, and teaching life skills.

Now in her 19th year of teaching, Brittany teaches FCS to students in grades 7–12, focusing on culinary arts, sewing, and child development.

For Brittany, building relationships is one of the most important parts of teaching. She works to create a classroom where students feel safe, welcome, and comfortable being themselves. Sometimes it's the little things, like offering a student a cup of tea or taking a few minutes to ask about their day. She also loves hands-on activities that let students be creative, work together, and have fun while learning.

One of the most rewarding parts of Brittany's career has been working with aspiring educators. She loves hearing from former students after graduation and getting updates about their own classrooms. Seeing them follow their passion for education and knowing she got to be a small part of their journey is especially meaningful.

Even after nearly two decades in the classroom, Brittany believes there is always something new to learn. She enjoys professional development, especially summer culinary workshops, and connecting with other FCS teachers to share ideas and resources. She's also learned that when she's excited about what she's teaching, her students pick up on that energy, making learning more enjoyable for everyone.

As a mom, Brittany often thinks about the school experience she wants for her own daughter and strives to provide that for her students: a place where they feel valued, supported, and cared for.

That mindset also shapes how Brittany defines student success. It isn't always about getting the highest grade or being the best at something. Sometimes it's the "aha!" moment in the culinary lab when something finally clicks, the excitement of figuring out how to use a sewing machine, or simply finding the confidence to try something new.

Brittany is proud of the relationships she has built with students and of creating a classroom that can be both calm and exciting. She hopes her students leave FCS with practical skills, confidence to try new things, and positive memories.

Outside the classroom, Brittany is the Fashion Club advisor and co-advisor for the Junior Class. She also coached volleyball for 15 years and Forensics for 10 years. When she's not at school, she loves traveling, gardening, and spending time with her daughter, Delilah, and her husband and high school sweetheart, Jesse. And one more important thing to know about Brittany: she is a HUGE Gilmore Girls fan!

www.sdwd.k12.wi.us



Mary Kate Riley

Verona Area School District

For Mary Kate Riley, the path to special education started early. At 14, she began volunteering with Toni's Camp in her home state of Georgia, working with individuals with disabilities. The experience sparked something in her, and she knew she would pursue a degree in special education. After attending college, a summer as a camp counselor at Easter Seals Wisconsin inspired her to make Wisconsin home.

Now in her eighth year of teaching, Mary Kate works at Verona Area High School, primarily with students with intellectual disabilities and more profound needs. She values having the opportunity to work with students throughout all four years of high school, allowing her to get to know them and their families, understand their goals for life after high school, and see their confidence and independence grow.

Creating meaningful, real-world opportunities is at the heart of Mary Kate's work. One of her favorites is Brewrona, the student-led coffee shop she started at the high school. Students sell drinks and snacks to teachers while gaining hands-on experience with grocery shopping, price analysis, money, and social skills. The program has become a favorite among teachers, who are always asking when the next Brewrona sale will be.

Mary Kate is always looking for new opportunities, resources, and programming to help her students grow. She's quick to credit the educators around her, especially her co-teacher, Ashley Ruck. Together, they're the "dynamic duo, Mary Kate and Ashley." Mary Kate says leaning on Ashley and other educators in her building continues to make her a better teacher.

Beyond the classroom, Mary Kate serves as head coach for Adapted Sports soccer and wiffle ball and as the advisor for Verona Buddies. Across all these roles, what motivates her is the same: giving students opportunities they may not otherwise have and helping them become more independent and confident.

For Mary Kate, student success looks different for everyone. For one student, it might be using a communication device to express a need for the first time. For another, it could be getting a first job in the community. There is no single definition of success, and Mary Kate believes each accomplishment deserves to be celebrated.

When Mary Kate learned she had been selected as an Outstanding Educator, the celebration took her completely by surprise. Walking into the atrium to cheering students, music and supportive coworkers left her overwhelmed with gratitude. "To be celebrated like that in that way was crazy, but in the best way. I am truly grateful for this."

Above all, Mary Kate hopes students leave her classroom knowing how much she cares about them and wants them to succeed in their own way. She hopes they leave with more independence, confidence and responsibility, knowing they can accomplish their goals, even if it takes a little longer or looks a little different.

www.verona.k12.wi.us



Kari Adams

Mukwonago Area School District

Growing up in a family of educators, Kari always felt like teaching was a calling. She loved learning and genuinely can't remember a time when she wanted to do anything else. Now in her 27th year as an educator, Kari serves as a library technology specialist for 7th and 8th grade students.

For Kari, the library is more than a place to find a good book. She works to make it a welcoming space where students want to be and can find whatever kind of support they need. On any given day, that might mean helping a student find a book, troubleshoot technology issues, get academic support, or try something new through 3D printing, coding, or video editing.

One of Kari's favorite parts of teaching is helping students become creators rather than just consumers of information. Through project-based learning, she encourages students to take what they're learning and turn it into something of their own, whether that's a podcast, movie, interactive display, or another creative project. Along the way, students build practical technology skills while deepening their understanding of what they're learning.

Working in library technology means Kari is constantly learning, too. As curriculum changes and new tools emerge, she makes it a priority to learn new technologies so she can help both students and colleagues use them successfully. That same curiosity is something she hopes to pass along to her students.

Kari is motivated by the responsibility she has, to help prepare students with the skills they'll need in the future. One of her favorite parts of being an educator is running into former students and hearing about where life has taken them. She's especially proud of creating a library where students and staff feel supported and valued.

To Kari, student success doesn't look the same for everyone. It might be academic

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Hamilton Teacher Katie Venturini: 'Nothing Short of Inspiring'



Madison Metropolitan School District

When 8th-grade science teacher Katie Venturini steps out of her classroom, you can usually find her organizing study materials, running labs and mentoring students through complex engineering projects and scientific concepts.

That dedication is why she was recognized as MMSD's October People, Purpose, Pride Award winner.

Venturini's colleague, fellow Hamilton science teacher, Justin Kruger nominated her for advancing educational excellence by breaking down barriers and highlighting MMSD's top-tier academic opportunities through her work with the Science Olympiad program.

"Katie is the absolute heart of our program," Kruger said. "Her tireless commitment to students and school is nothing short of inspiring."

Venturini serves as the head coach of the program, which under her leadership has expanded to over 90 students at Hamilton Middle —the largest team in the school's history–plus an additional 60 students at West High School.

"What makes Katie so special isn't just the time she puts in, but how she teaches," Kruger shared. "She creates a welcoming environment where students take total ownership of their learning, tackle hands-on problem solving, and build confidence across biology, physics, chemistry, and engineering."

With Venturini's guidance, last year, both middle school and high school Science Olympiad teams achieved some of their highest-ever finishes at competition. West secured 4th place at the 2026 National Science Olympiad tournament.

"She's really passionate about what she does," said West High School student Kaia. "I'm really grateful for her and how much she's put in. She's really helpful. She's really nice and an amazing person."

At the state level, West won first place at the 2026 Wisconsin Science Olympiad State Tournament for the high school division and Hamilton also earned the championship title for the middle school division.

"Her knowledge that she has over the years that she's been a coach is unmatched," said Science Olympiad parent and volunteer coach Maria Duncan. "She's so supportive of the kids and makes sure they have what they need to be successful."

The People. Purpose. Pride. Awards celebrate outstanding students and staff who embody the values that make MMSD strong and have a lasting impact on our schools and community.

Venturini was awarded in the category of Purpose, which focuses on honoring those who inspire student success through innovation, leadership and a commitment to educational excellence.

"The dedication for me is because of the kids and their families. It's such a great community," Venturini said. "These kids are great, amazing and hard-working, and it's so awesome to see them push themselves."

www.madison.k12.wi.us

Hamilton School District Educator Receives Outstanding Professional Award



Hamilton School District

Hamilton School District Educational Support Special Services paraprofessional Cindy Dow has received the Circles of Life Outstanding Professional Award for providing exceptional support to children with disabilities and their families. Dow was nominated by parents and students. She was presented the award on May 14 at the Family Voices of Wisconsin Circles of Life Conference in Stevens Point.

"Cindy is full of love, patience, compassion, creativity and just exactly the type of person you would want to care for your child or young adult with special needs. She has absolutely everything it takes and we just adore her," shares Sharri Hust, whose son Brandon is currently enrolled in Hamilton's Beyond 18 Transition Program. Hust is one of the parents who nominated Dow for the award.

The Circles of Life Conference is a Wisconsin-based event for families of children with disabilities. The Outstanding Professional Award is one of only three honors presented during the annual conference.

"Mrs. Dow is always happy to see me," shares Hamilton High School senior Liam Heyn, one of the students who nominated Dow. "She always listens to what I say and cares. Mrs. Dow takes me to so many fun places; museums, ice cream shops, sports events and the zoo. She talks to me and tells me about things that matter," Heyn adds.

"Cindy truly is outstanding and we are so lucky to have her as part of our team," adds Hamilton High School Cross-Categorical Special Education Teacher Megan Rauter.

Family Voices of Wisconsin aims to advance comprehensive healthcare and community support for youth with special healthcare needs or disabilities. The organization designs, implements and delivers family-centered support services throughout the state.

www.hamilton.k12.wi.us

WEA Member Benefits Outstanding Educators

Continued from Page 18

growth, social growth, or a student discovering confidence they didn't have before. What matters is the progress each student makes from where they started.

That belief carries into what she hopes students remember long after they leave her library: stay curious. Keep wondering, trying new things, and learning how to do something new. She wants students to know it's good to push themselves because they're capable of more than they may think.

Being named an Outstanding Educator left Kari feeling both surprised and humbled. She sees the recognition as a reflection of more than her own work. It represents the important work happening throughout her school and the students and colleagues who make the library program what it is every day.

Outside of the library, Kari also serves as a Student Government advisor, working alongside student leaders who build school spirit while giving their time and resources to local charities and community organizations.

www.masd.k12.wi.us

Courtesy of WEA Member Benefits

Middleton High School Teacher Qin Tian Named Among Wisconsin's Most Influential Asian American Leaders



Carrie Brooker, Public Relations Specialist
Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District

Middleton High School Mandarin teacher Qin Tian has been named to Madison365's list of Wisconsin's 22 Most Influential Asian American Leaders for 2026. The list shines a spotlight on the dedicated leaders of Wisconsin's Asian and Asian American communities.

The honor is the latest in a series of accolades she has earned, including several for excellence in teaching. Tian earned the 2026 Heartland Chinese Teacher Award, which recognizes educators for excellence in Chinese language teaching.

Her earlier recognition for her dedication to her students includes the 2024 Wisconsin Chinese Language Teacher of the Year award from the Wisconsin Association of Chinese Language Teachers. In addition, she was a finalist for the 2025 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Teacher Fellowship.

Tian is known for hosting extensive immersive cultural experiences outside of the classroom. Earlier this summer, she led a student trip to Taiwan for 34 students. Students participated in cultural, historical, and educational experiences, including an exchange with a Taiwanese high school.

She also organized a field trip to Chicago Chinatown for 84 students in April. Students explored ancient artwork at the Heritage Museum of Asian Art, took part in an interactive calligraphy workshop, and enjoyed sampling authentic food at Asian restaurants.

Each year, she helps coordinate a community-wide Lunar New Year celebration with MCPASD's Chinese Program. This year's event featured dragon performances; Chinese calligraphy, painting, and paper-cutting demonstrations; and activities including face painting, Chinese chess, lantern riddles and more.

"Qin is a strong leader at our school and within our community, and we're thrilled to see her leadership recognized at the state level," said Middleton High School Principal Bobbie Reinhart. "We have the privilege of seeing firsthand the meaningful impact she makes on her students. Her style of teaching and the programs she hosts are models for schools looking for ways to foster cultural connections and bring together students and staff with the larger community."

Congratulations to Ms. Tian on being named one of Wisconsin's Most Influential Asian American Leaders!

www.mcpasd.k12.wi.us

Middleton High School Mandarin Teacher Qin Tian Honored With the 2026 Heartland Chinese Teacher Award

Middleton High School Mandarin Teacher Qin Tian was honored with the 2026 Heartland Chinese Teacher Award from the U.S. Heartland China Association (USHCA).

The award recognizes educators for excellence in Chinese language teaching in 21 states across America's heartland. Selection criteria includes creativity and effectiveness of the class curriculum, the positive impact on students, and contributions to Chinese language learning and culture in the wider community.

"Receiving this award means a lot to me as a Chinese teacher," Tian said. "It reflects not only my own efforts, but also the curiosity, dedication, and growth I see in my students every day. Teaching Chinese is more than just language instruction; it's about sharing culture, building connections, and helping students see the world from a broader perspective. I feel incredibly grateful to be part of a community that values language learning and cultural understanding. This recognition encourages me to continue supporting my students and creating meaningful learning experiences for them."

Lindert Earns Educator of the Year Award



Pardeeville Area School District

Pardeeville High School social studies teacher Chris Lindert has been recognized for his dedication to civic education and student engagement, earning the Wisconsin American Legion's Denise H. Rohan Educator of the Year Award for the 2nd District. The district includes Columbia, Dodge, Jefferson, Ozaukee, Sheboygan and Washington counties. Lindert accepted the award during the Pardeeville Post 215 meeting at Veteran's Memorial Park in Pardeeville on May 5.

The award honors an outstanding educator who has made significant contributions to promoting the American Legion's Americanism and Youth Programs, while fostering civic engagement, patriotism and leadership development among students.

Lindert was nominated by the Harry D. Jerred American Legion Post 215 in Pardeeville. He has spent the past 25 years teaching social studies in the Pardeeville Area School District. His connection to military service runs deep, as the grandson of a WWII Army Air Corps pilot and the brother of a Vietnam veteran. His family's service also includes a sister who retired as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army and another brother who served in post-Vietnam Germany.

In the classroom, Lindert incorporates the Congressional Medal of Honor Character Development Program into his ninth grade curriculum, helping students learn the six core values associated with the Medal of Honor. Beyond the classroom, he plays a key role in coordinating the annual 8th grade trip to Washington, D.C., where students visit historic landmarks along with sites such as the National Marine Corps Museum, the National Army Museum and the U.S. Naval Academy. His planning and leadership are essential to making the experience possible each year.

Each year, Lindert leads Pardeeville's eighth grade trip to the nation's capital — an experience that Pardeeville High School Principal David Bell had the opportunity to attend in 2025 with his daughter.

"It was remarkable to witness (Lindert's) passion for teaching history outside the classroom," Bell said. "The trip allows students to experience history firsthand as they visit many of our nation's most significant museums and landmarks. … Watching him guide students through these powerful historical sites and help them connect what they see to what they have learned in class is truly inspiring."

"Under Chris's leadership, this trip has evolved into a masterclass in American history, sacrifice and citizenship," added Pardeeville Middle School Principal Amber Denure.

Lindert has also been a dedicated volunteer with the Badger Honor Flight for the past 15 years. His involvement has included selling raffle tickets at Madison Mallards games, presenting at local VFWs and now serving as a bus captain for trips to Washington, D.C.

www.pasdwi.org

Laura Koebel Receives Fulbright Teacher Award for 2026–27



Plymouth School District

Laura Koebel, an educator at Plymouth High School, has received a Fulbright Teacher Exchange award for the 2026–2027 cycle from the U.S. Department of State.

She is among the approximately 2,500 U.S. citizens who will teach, study, and conduct research abroad for the 2026–2027 academic year through the Fulbright Program. Fulbrighters engage in cutting-edge research and expand their professional networks, often continuing research collaborations started abroad and laying the groundwork for forging future partnerships between institutions.

Laura Koebel is a Spanish and Facilitated Language Studies teacher at Plymouth High School. She holds a bachelor's degree in Spanish and Latin American Studies from UW-Madison and a Master's Degree in Spanish Translation from UW-Milwaukee.

For more than 25 years, in addition to teaching Spanish, Ms. Koebel has been a passionate leader for global education and service in her school community through her roles as the Global Scholar Program advisor, exchange student teacher liaison, WeACT advisor, and community service coordinator.

Her contributions to international education earned her the prestigious title of Wisconsin Global Educator of the Year for 2019–20.

Believing that cultural understanding is the bridge to peace, Ms. Koebel is dedicated to finding ways to bring the world to her classroom and her students into the world. She helps organize school trips abroad along with innovative virtual exchanges.

Ms. Koebel is grateful to the district for supporting student trips to Costa Rica and Germany for the last 35 years. She and her colleagues see first-hand how lives change through travel and perspective building.

She also values the robust AFS program cultivated in Plymouth for the past 75+ years and appreciates how having so many exchange students at our school is such a unique opportunity for PHS students to learn about the world. She thanked the coordinators and all of the host families who welcome students each year.

Ms. Koebel is honored to have been chosen as a participant in the Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms program and looks forward to collaborating with other educators from around the world to learn global teaching strategies and gain cultural insights to share with her students and community.

She already has begun work on a 10-week Teaching and Leading for Global Education course in preparation for a 2- to 3-week international field experience next year. She will learn the dates and the destination in December, then will travel to Washington, D.C., in February to meet with others going on the trip with her.

Her objective is to gain tools and partnerships to help integrate global perspectives into more classrooms, so that culture is not just a standalone unit. "Global education begins with appreciating the diversity within our own communities and recognizing the connections that unite us across the world. By understanding our interconnectedness, we discover the power we each have to make a positive difference, both locally and globally," she said.

Fulbright provides opportunities for exceptional Americans and participants from 160 countries and locations to study, teach, and conduct research abroad. For eight decades, Fulbrighters have been leaders at the forefront of discovery and innovation, conducting cutting edge research, advancing critical industries, and preparing future generations with new skills and perspectives.

More than 2,500 U.S. Fulbrighters — teachers, artists, and professionals from all backgrounds — teach, study, or conduct research overseas through the Fulbright Program annually. Learn more about Fulbright Teacher Exchanges at fulbrightteacherexchanges.org. For more information about the Fulbright Program, visit fulbrightprogram.org.

www.plymouth.k12.wi.us

Eight Wisconsin Schools Earn Blue Ribbon Honors

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF Public Instruction

Students, educators and staff at eight Wisconsin schools are earning statewide recognition for their outstanding work. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction recently announced the 2026 Wisconsin Blue Ribbon Schools, celebrating them for exceptional academic performance and progress in closing achievement gaps.

The schools are recognized in two categories: Exemplary High Performing Schools, which rank among the state's highest performing schools, determined by student assessment scores, and Exemplary Gap Closing Schools, which demonstrate success in narrowing performance disparities between student subgroups and the overall student body.

Congratulations to all eight schools, their staff, students, and communities on this well-deserved honor!

2026 Honorees:

Exemplary High Performing Schools

- **Dunwiddie Elementary School** — Port Washington-Saukville School District
- **Hillcrest Elementary School** — School District of Waukesha
- **Grantsburg Elementary School** — Grantsburg School District

Exemplary Gap Closing Schools

- **Oostburg High School** — Oostburg School District
- **Fall Creek High School** — Fall Creek School District

Recognized in Both Categories

- **Wauzeka Elementary School** — Wauzeka-Steuben School District
- **Prairie View Elementary School** — Beaver Dam Unified School District
- **Little Chute Middle School** — Little Chute Area School District

This is the DPI's second year naming Blue Ribbon Schools at the state level. In 2025, the U.S. Department of Education ended the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, which had been in place since 1982. The Wisconsin Blue Ribbon Schools program will continue celebrating the exceptional work of educators and students across the state.



More information on the Wisconsin Blue Ribbon Schools program can be found on the DPI's website. https://dpi.wi.gov/blue-ribbon-schools

Joel Coyne Recognized Among Nation's Top Educators

Continued from Page 1

why he chose teaching come long after students have left his classroom.

He still keeps in touch with several former students. Sometimes they'll run into each other around town. Other times, they'll meet for coffee or a bite to eat and catch up on life. Hearing about their careers, experiences and plans for the future is something he treasures.

"They are grown adults living their lives, and when they share what they are doing today and their plans for the future, it fills me with pride and admiration to know that in some small way, I was able to make a positive difference in their lives."

Those connections, along with the small breakthroughs and everyday successes he witnesses in the classroom, remind Coyne that the impact of a teacher isn't always something you can measure right away.

"As educators, we play the long game," Coyne reflected. "We may not always see the fruits of our labor, but we trust that in the long run, our efforts were worth it."

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- Applications for the scholarship become available once admitted to the UW–Madison Wisconsin Idea Principal Preparation program
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Preparing Students for the Future: Lakeview Technology Academy in Kenosha Brings Robotics to the Classroom

Eric Sutkay
Technology & Engineering Education & Youth Apprenticeship Specialist
Kenosha Unified School District,
LakeView Technology Academy

As automation and advanced manufacturing continue to reshape today's workforce, the demand for employees with practical robotics skills is growing rapidly. Recognizing this trend and listening to the needs of local industry, Lakeview Technology Academy has taken an exciting step toward preparing students for the future by incorporating Dobot MG400 robotic arms into its introductory robotics program.

The decision to develop and implement a more comprehensive introductory robotics course came from conversations and feedback from Lakeview's local Youth Apprenticeship employer partners. Area businesses are relying on robotic automation, programmable equipment, and advanced manufacturing processes to improve efficiency, productivity, and quality. As a result, employers are looking for young employees who enter the workforce with more than just a basic understanding of technology. These employers have been excited to see the hands-on experience the students have working with the equipment and processes they may encounter on the job.

Lakeview recognized an opportunity to bridge that gap between classroom learning and workforce expectations. By introducing Dobot robotic arms into the curriculum, students can gain valuable hands-on experience while developing the technical knowledge and problem-solving abilities needed in today's manufacturing and automation industries. Gabby, a freshman said, "in the beginning it was stressful to write the programs, but when the robots performed the tasks it was really cool!"

The new robotics curriculum focuses on introducing students to the fundamental concepts of industrial robotics and automation. Rather than simply learning about robots through demonstrations or computer simulations, students



work directly with robotic equipment, exploring how programmable robotic systems operate and how they can be integrated into automated processes.

One of the primary applications students explore is pick and place automation. This process involves programming a robotic arm to identify, grasp, move, and position an object from one location to another. Although it may sound simple, pick and place operations introduce students to several important robotics concepts, including coordinate systems, positioning accuracy, movement speed, programming sequences, and repeatability. Students have been working through the process of playing a game of chess with two robots programmed by different students. Students learn how a robot can be programmed to perform the same task consistently, a critical requirement in modern production environments.

Students also explore palletizing, an essential process in manufacturing and distribution facilities. Palletizing involves arranging products in a specific pattern or sequence for storage, shipping, or further production. Using the Dobot robotic arms, students built miniature pallets and a "fork" design to move pallets and load them with product. Students program different movement paths and stacking patterns while learning how robotic automation can reduce repetitive manual labor and improve workplace efficiency. Gabby is a freshman at Lakeview and said, "In the beginning it was stressful to understand the sequence in the coding, but once it was complete it was very fun to see it run!" These activities introduce the types of automated material-handling systems commonly found in industrial facilities.

Another important component of the course is end effector design. An end effector is the device attached to the end of a robotic arm that allows it to interact with objects or perform specific tasks. Depending on the application, an end effector might use mechanical gripping fingers, suction cups, or other specialized tools. Students investigate how the design of an end effector affects a robot's ability to handle different materials, shapes, sizes, and weights. Students at Lakeview are working to design and implement a multifunctional end effector that will operate successfully in their "automated coffee shop" build. The students are working diligently to design an effector that will load a k-cup or pod, place a cup under the maker, select a brew setting and deliver the finished cup to the customer. This encourages students to think like engineers by considering how tooling, functionality, and application requirements

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Manufacturing Today WI ™
PO Box 1704
Eau Claire,WI 54702
Phone/Fax 715-839-7074
www.manufacturingtodaywi.com

Please direct all inquiries to:
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Preparing Wisconsin Students for Careers in Tool & Die



By Laura Gustafson, Tool, Die & Machining Association of Wisconsin Executive Director

Wisconsin's manufacturing industry continues to depend on skilled workers in tool & die, precision machining, mold making, and advanced manufacturing. For middle and high school students, now is the perfect time to begin exploring these rewarding careers that combine technology, creativity, problem solving, and hands-on work.

Students interested in tool & die careers should focus on building strong foundations in classes such as geometry, algebra, engineering, robotics, CAD (computer-aided design), welding, machining, and manufacturing technology. These classes can help students develop valuable skills that employers are looking for. Participation in STEM clubs, robotics competitions, technical education programs, and school shop classes also provide practical experience and exposure to modern manufacturing environments.

Equally important are workplace skills such as communication, teamwork, reliability, and critical thinking. Today's tool & die industry uses advanced CNC equipment, automation, and digital technologies, making adaptability and continuous learning key for long-term success. When students are able to demonstrate these skills, employers are often willing to take a chance and train candidates in the more technical aspects required to do the job.

Students are also encouraged to explore apprenticeship opportunities, plant tours, job shadowing programs, and internships to better understand career pathways in manufacturing. More often than not, if you reach out to a tool & die shop in your area, they will be more than willing to invite you to stop by and take a tour. Wisconsin offers many excellent technical college programs and apprenticeship tracks that allow students to earn while they learn and build strong careers without taking on significant college debt. Contact your local Wisconsin Technical College to learn more about this.

The Tool, Die & Machining Association of Wisconsin (TDMAW) plays an important role in helping students, parents, and educators connect with these opportunities. Through industry partnerships, educational outreach, scholarships, networking events, and career awareness programs, TDMAW helps students discover the wide range of careers available in Wisconsin manufacturing. The organization also works closely with member companies to promote apprenticeships, technical education, and workforce development initiatives across the state. TDMAW offers student memberships for $15 per year. Visit our website, TDMAW.org, for more information!

By taking advantage of these resources early, Wisconsin students can position themselves for stable, high paying, and skilled careers in one of the state's most important industries. Between 16% and 18% of Wisconsin residents work in manufacturing, with Wisconsin consistently ranking among the top states in the nation for manufacturing employment as a percentage of its workforce. That strong manufacturing base is one reason careers in tool & die, automation, and precision manufacturing remain so important across Wisconsin. We encourage students to talk to their instructors and parents to learn more about opportunities in this important & vibrant industry!

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Building Skills for Life: Inside the Campbellsport High School Technology Education Program



Campbellsport School District

The Technology Education (Tech Ed) program at Campbellsport High School, led by Kevin Hein, Kieth Kohls and Tim Zedler, is doing much more than teaching students how to use tools and build projects. It is preparing students for the future by providing hands-on experiences, practical life skills, industry-based training, and opportunities to explore careers while still in high school. Through a wide variety of courses, students develop the knowledge, confidence, and problem-solving abilities needed to succeed in today's workforce and everyday life.

Through woodworking and home construction courses, students develop practical skills that will benefit them long after graduation. They learn how to safely operate tools and equipment, build projects, and understand the fundamentals of home construction, including framing, flooring, roofing, and finishing. Students also gain exposure to basic plumbing and electrical concepts. These experiences help students become more independent and self-sufficient, giving them the confidence to tackle everyday projects and repairs in their own homes. Along the way, they learn to read plans, take accurate measurements, calculate material needs, estimate project costs, and solve problems when things do not go according to plan.

The program also provides students with opportunities to explore the skilled trades through its welding courses. Campbellsport High School students can experience several welding and metalworking processes, including Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW), Gas Metal Arc Welding (GMAW), and Gas Tungsten Arc Welding (GTAW), along with plasma arc cutting, oxy-fuel cutting, and brazing. These courses combine classroom instruction with extensive hands-on practice. Students learn proper terminology, welding techniques, and the mechanics behind producing quality welds.

Using Miller OpenBook, an interactive online learning platform aligned with the local technical college's (MP) welding curriculum, students can work through the theory at their own pace. Even more exciting, the welding program offers bona fide dual-credit opportunities through MP, allowing students to begin earning college credits as early as their sophomore year. With individual welding stations and extensive practice time, students have the opportunity to develop real skills and confidence, even if they enter the class with no previous welding experience.

Technology and innovation are also important parts of the Campbellsport Tech Ed program. Students can explore design and engineering through three levels of 3D modeling using SolidWorks. These courses introduce students to industry-standard design software while providing opportunities to prepare for SolidWorks industry certification exams and earn college-level credit. In the CNC courses, students use Mastercam software to design parts and create toolpaths that are then used to manufacture components on Haas CNC mills and lathes.

Students interested in automation and technology can enroll in Robotics, where they learn to program Fanuc industrial robots. Additional courses introduce students to laser engraving and cutting using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, giving them opportunities to combine creativity, computer skills, and modern manufacturing technology.

While technical knowledge is a major focus, the program also emphasizes the skills employers look for in every industry. Through individual and group projects, students develop communication, teamwork, leadership, and accountability. They learn to manage their time, follow safety procedures, maintain an organized workspace, and take pride in the quality of their work. They also develop creativity, patience, attention to detail, and the ability to think critically when faced with challenges. Understanding material costs, budgeting, and project planning further prepares students to make responsible financial decisions as future employees, consumers, and homeowners.

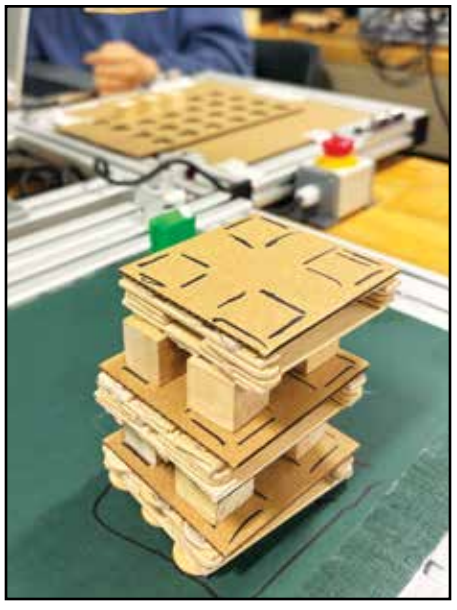


Ultimately, the goal of the Campbellsport High School Technology Education program is to prepare students for more than just a job. It is about preparing them for life. Whether students choose to pursue a career in the skilled trades, continue their education, enter engineering or manufacturing, start a business, or simply become capable homeowners, the skills they develop in Tech Ed will continue to benefit them. By combining traditional hands-on craftsmanship with modern technology, industry partnerships, and real-world problem-solving, Campbellsport High School is giving students valuable opportunities to discover their interests, develop their abilities, and build a foundation for a successful future.

www.csd.k12.wi.us

Lakeview Technology Academy in Kenosha Brings Robotics to the Classroom

Continued from Page 25



influence the overall design of an automated system.

Beyond movement and object handling, students are introduced to the electrical and control systems that make robotics possible. They explore the implementation of digital inputs and outputs, learning how a robot can communicate with external devices and respond to information from its surroundings. Sensors play an important role in this process. Students investigate how proximity sensors, object detection sensors, and other input devices can be used to identify objects, verify positions, and trigger specific actions within an automated sequence.

The course also introduces students to different types of controls and automation logic. Students begin developing an understanding of how controllers, programmed instructions, input signals, and output devices work together to coordinate robotic operations. Concepts such as sequencing, conditional logic, feedback, and system integration help students understand that a robot is not simply an independent machine, but one component of a larger automated manufacturing system.

Perhaps most importantly, these experiences encourage students to approach problems through experimentation, troubleshooting, and critical thinking. When a robot fails to pick up an object, misses a programmed position, or does not respond to a sensor input, students must evaluate the system, identify the problem, and make adjustments. These are the same types of skills valued by employers working with automated equipment every day. Gabby said, "It is interesting to see the robots perform tasks that I have assigned it, and to see the practical application of how my programming relates to what it would look like in manufacturing."

Lakeview Technology Academy's investment in introductory robotics represents a commitment to maintaining strong connections with local industry and ensuring that students graduate with relevant, practical skills. Lakeview is helping create a stronger connection between education and the evolving needs of the regional workforce. As robotics and automation continue to expand across industries, students who understand programming, robotic operation, sensors, controls, and automated processes will have a valuable advantage. Lakeview is giving students an opportunity to explore these technologies first-hand while building the foundation for future careers in advanced manufacturing, engineering, and automation.

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From Screen to Machine: Empowering the Next Generation of Makers at Whitnall High School



Whitnall School District

At Whitnall High School, technology education transcends reading textbooks and taking notes. It is about getting hands-on and turning digital blueprints into tangible reality. Step inside the school's Manufacturing and Fab Lab programs, and you won't find passive learners sitting in rows. Instead, you'll see students stepping directly into the shoes of designers, engineers, and fabricators, using industry-grade tools to bring their ideas to life.

The journey starts in the Exploring Technical Pathways course, where beginners get their first taste of digital creation. Using Autodesk Fusion 360, students learn Computer-Aided Design (CAD) by modeling custom, personalized name tags. Once the design is ready, they prep their files in Bambu Lab Slicer and send them to a fleet of Bambu Lab A1 3D printers. There's a distinct spark of magic when a student watches their digital file materialize layer by plastic layer, a moment that builds instant excitement and early confidence in technical design.

Creating things is only half the story, though. True technical mastery means knowing how to take care of the machinery behind the magic. Students don't just call a technician when something breaks; they become the technicians. When a 3D printer suffers a clogged nozzle, a bed-leveling error, or a loose belt, students dig in to troubleshoot the issue systematically. Learning how to diagnose and fix mechanical hiccups gives them real-world problem-solving skills that directly translate to modern industrial careers.

As students progress, they trade plastic filament for high-powered lasers and vibrant heat presses. Using XTool software and the XTool P2S Laser, they engrave custom Whitnall branded coasters while mastering laser optics, material settings, and alignment. Nearby, another group dives into graphic design using Adobe Illustrator. They design custom vector graphics for keychains and apply heat-transfer processes to yield custom ceramic mugs. Through these projects, students explore color theory and quality control, discovering how a digital illustration becomes a marketable consumer product.

For advanced students, fabrication scales up to an industrial level. Operating a Crossfire CNC plasma cutter, these makers run full-scale manufacturing cycles to construct custom metal products for the surrounding Whitnall community. The process is demanding: students model parts in Fusion 360, generate custom toolpaths and G-code using Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM), and feed the data into FireControl machine software. From there, they take raw steel sheets, cut them with precision plasma, weld the components together, and apply professional finishes.

There's an exciting entrepreneurial twist, too. Revenue generated from selling these handcrafted metal goods goes right back into the Fab Lab program. This keeps the shop stocked with raw materials and directly funds future student projects, giving students a front-row seat to the economic cycle of product development.



From freshman 3D prints to senior-level metal fabrication, Whitnall High School's Fab Lab equips students with a complete design-to-production skill set. By tackling CAD/CAM software, rapid prototyping, machine maintenance, laser cutting, and CNC fabrication, these young makers aren't just earning class credit; they are acquiring the practical capabilities, problem-solving mindset, and creative confidence needed to thrive in Wisconsin's modern workforce.

www.whitnall.com

A New Perspective for the DT Fab Lab



Dawn Disch, Dodgeland High School
Tech Ed/Fab Lab/Graphics Teacher

Dodgeland High School is located in Juneau, WI — a small rural school district offering new opportunities for its students. With the support of the community, the high school underwent construction and completed a new Tech Ed addition in 2021. The expansion added three classrooms, a collaboration space, a computer lab, and specialized labs for woodworking and metal fabrication. Most of the components for a fab lab were present, but the equipment was scattered throughout the space. In 2024, we transformed one classroom into a designated space for the Fab Lab — our clean space. However, we were still missing a few pieces of equipment to make it a fully functioning fab lab and sign shop.

With the help of a Rural Grant, we purchased a 54" Roland TrueVIS printer. Perkins Grant funding helped us update our heat press and buy a grommet press. Next, we needed a commercial-grade laminator, which was purchased through another grant. The final piece of equipment was a 24" vinyl cutter, which is where we got creative. We sought out a business partner, UE, who would support our vision. They offered to purchase the equipment in exchange for vinyl products. We worked on quoting out jobs and producing samples to see if we could become one of their suppliers. UE of Clyman became our first business partner. Since then, we have continued to produce vehicle graphics and have even added installation services. These experiences offer valuable hands-on learning for our students.

To continue to support students' learning, we offer a year-long DT Fab Lab class for juniors and seniors. The goal is for

Continued on Page 42

Advanced Manufacturing Pathway at Beloit Memorial Continued from Page 1



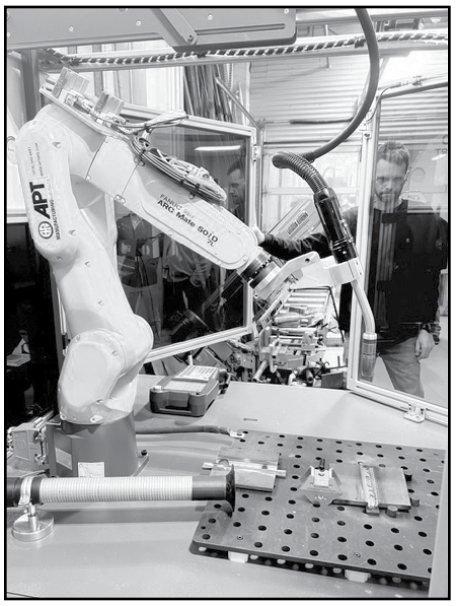
recognized Haas Entry-Level Technician certification. This certification provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills while building credentials that can help them stand out as they pursue employment, additional training, or postsecondary education. By incorporating industry certifications into the curriculum, Beloit Memorial is helping students turn classroom learning into meaningful qualifications that have value beyond graduation.

As students progress through the advanced manufacturing pathway, their experiences expand beyond operating CNC equipment. They also have opportunities to work with 3D modeling software, allowing them to develop the skills needed to design, create, and prepare projects for production. Combining digital design with hands-on machining gives students a better understanding of how ideas move from a computer screen to a finished product. This combination of technical knowledge, creativity, and practical application helps students build a strong foundation for careers in manufacturing, engineering, and other technical fields.

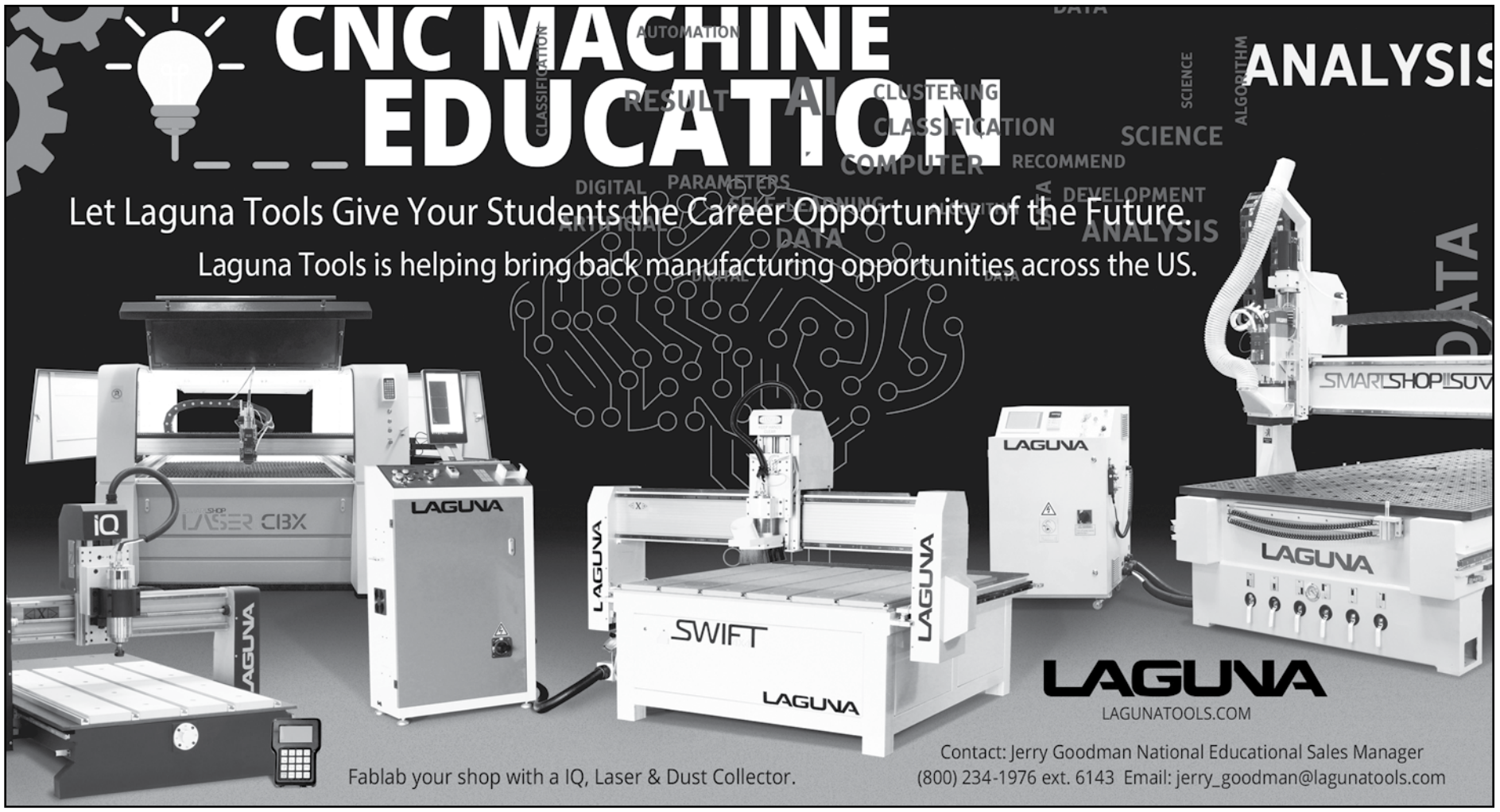
What makes the program even more valuable is the strong connection between Beloit Memorial and the local business and manufacturing community. Area industry and business partners play an important role in helping students see how their classroom experiences translate into real-world careers. Through partnerships, students have opportunities to participate in job shadows, Youth Apprenticeships, workplace experiences, and other career exploration activities. These connections allow students to interact with professionals, learn about local employment opportunities, and begin developing relationships with potential future employers.

The success of the advanced manufacturing pathway is a reflection of the larger mission of The Academies of Beloit: ensuring that every student graduates College and Career Ready. By connecting classroom instruction with industry equipment, recognized certifications, and meaningful business partnerships, Beloit Memorial is creating opportunities for students to explore their interests, develop in-demand skills, and make informed decisions about their futures.

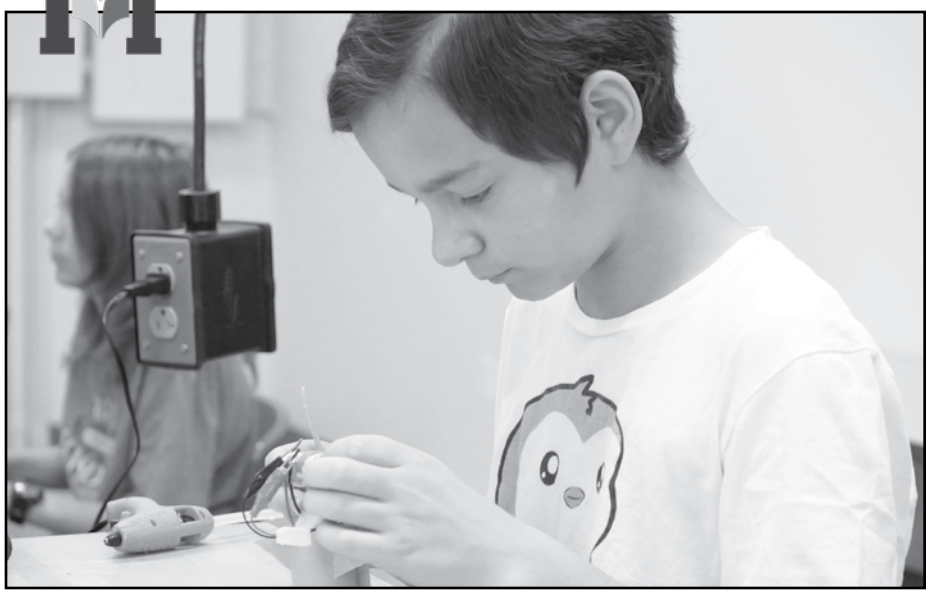
At Beloit Memorial, career preparation is not something students have to wait until graduation to experience. Through the PACMES Academy and its advanced manufacturing pathway, students are already gaining the knowledge, credentials, and hands-on experience that can open doors to their future. The goal is simple: prepare students not just for their next step after high school, but for success in the careers and opportunities that await them.



www.sdb.k12.wi.us



Middle Schoolers Build Real-World Robots at CTE Summer Camp



Madison Metropolitan School District

Equipped with cardboard, hot glue and Micro:bits, middle school students took over a La Follette High School classroom this summer to build everything from motorized castle gates to dual-motor boats.

This is the MMSD Career and Technical Education Summer Discovery Program: Coding and Robotics, where sixth through eighth graders had the opportunity to spend four intense days transforming raw components into programmable devices.

Students learn everything from coding to how electric vehicles are built to the math required to calculate acceleration and speed. By the end of the week they're able to use everything they learned during the week to build a unique robot of their own.

"There's a lot of interest for students learning how to code, so we intentionally chose hands-on projects for this summer program because that's where we see the most engagement," Sherman Middle School CTE teacher Anna Toman, who runs the Coding and Robotics Summer Discovery Program said. "The four-day summer program gives students an introduction to things that they may not be familiar with."

Their first project tasked them to build a mini electric car that could reach five meters as fast as possible using servomotors — which are tiny motors designed for remote controlled cars or robots.

While the task seems simple enough on the surface, students quickly learned that when you blend engineering and construction, things don't always work as well in practice as they do on paper.

"I've had to change the gears on my car a few times, because the gears that I had chosen at first were too small to mesh together," James, a rising eighth grader from O'Keefe Middle School said. "So I had to go back and look at what we learned to figure out how I can build this car to go as fast as possible every time I turn it on."

By giving students the freedom to build, fail and iterate over the summer, they're able to build technical confidence and problem-solving skills that will carry into their academic routines when the new school year begins.

That's especially important for students like rising sixth graders who just graduated from elementary school.

"A lot of them are just trying a CTE class for the first time," Toman said. "So they get an introduction to robotics to see if they're interested in pursuing this further in school or beyond."

For rising eighth-grader Alfred, that spark of interest came when he was set free to make a robot out of cardboard and motors.

Using his own custom programming and a couple of controllers he built a miniature retractable ramp neatly housed between two towers. When you press the "B" button the ramp would lower and then raise back up once you press "A."

"I just really like physical engineering that actually has uses in real life," Alfred said while still tinkering with his ramp. "I thought of the idea to make a ramp, decided to roll with it and I'm really happy with how this works now."

His project is exactly what makes the four-day camp so exciting — students can walk in with little to no experience and leave with a robot they can call their own.

"My favorite part of the class is seeing the kids' faces when something clicks for them, especially when they get excited coming up with new ideas," Toman said. "If you like to work with your hands and create new things, this is the perfect summer program for you."

www.madison.k12.wi.us

Riverside Middle School Awarded Doosan Bobcat Grant, Acquires New Laser Engraver



Watertown Unified School District

Riverside Middle School is proud to announce it has been awarded the prestigious Doosan Bobcat (DB) Discovery Grant, providing the school with the opportunity to purchase a state-of-the-art Epilog Laser Engraver. This cutting-edge technology is already transforming student learning and expanding opportunities in design and pre-engineering/advanced manufacturing skills.

DB offers grants to schools to support STEM Education in communities where it has operating plants or offices. The company states, "We proudly support classroom projects focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) because we firmly believe in the communities we serve and know that STEM fields are vital to the future of our company."

To celebrate this exciting addition, Riverside Middle School hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony with representatives from DB, staff, and students. During the event, students demonstrated their newly developed skills by showcasing a variety of laser-engraved projects, highlighting both their creativity and technical growth in a short period of time.

The introduction of laser engraving technology at the middle school level provides students with early exposure to real-world manufacturing processes and career pathways. Through hands-on experiences, students learn how to design using digital tools, understand material properties, and operate precision equipment safely and effectively. These experiences not only build technical skills but also foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity — essential competencies for future careers in skilled trades, engineering, and design.

"The impact of this grant has been immediate and profound," said Anna Vitale, Riverside Middle School Technology Education teacher. "The scope of what our students have been able to design and create, in just the short time we have had the laser engraver, has expanded exponentially. Students are more engaged than ever, taking ownership of their learning and pushing the boundaries of what they can accomplish."

RMS Interim Co-Principal Michael Cunningham agreed, and praised Mrs. Vitale for her work with this project. "This grant has created an incredible opportunity for our students to engage with advanced technology in meaningful, hands-on ways," said Mr. Cunningham. "Anna Vitale's leadership and passion for innovation have been instrumental in bringing these experiences to life, and we are grateful to DB for investing in the future of our students and our community."

watertown.k12.wi.us

Equipping the Next Generation of Our Workforce with High-Tech Skills

Mosinee School District

As educators, we share the same imperative as our local manufacturers: to equip the next generation of our workforce with the high-tech skills needed for an increasingly automated workforce. At Mosinee High School, we're meeting that challenge with an ambitious plan where students don't just study modern manufacturing; they design, engineer, and fabricate commercial products for real-world clients.

Driven by community- and business-led discussions around the Portrait of a Graduate, a student-run enterprise, major facility expansions funded by a local community referendum, state grant support, and industrial automation technology, Mosinee High School is preparing students to succeed in Central Wisconsin's manufacturing environment.



At the heart of Mosinee's technical education initiative is a hands-on learning environment that replicates modern industry operations. Through Mosinee Manufacturing and the district's Fab Lab, students operate a functioning business enterprise. They manage production from initial client contact through final quality inspection: taking custom orders, estimating material costs, generating computer-aided design (CAD) models, and operating precision machinery.

Whether fabricating custom industrial metal furniture, rocket stoves, producing precision weldments, or creating laser-etched products, students gain direct experience in workflow scheduling, quality assurance, and customer communication. By adhering to commercial production standards, Mosinee graduates transition into post-secondary technical programs, apprenticeships, or the regional workforce with practical, resume-ready capabilities.

To ensure students train on state-of-the-art technology that mirrors modern smart factories, Mosinee High School successfully secured two Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Fast Forward Grants. These competitive state equipment grants have upgraded the program's technical infrastructure, placing modern industrial machinery directly into students' hands.

A standout highlight of this technological expansion is the integration of two FANUC Robotic Arms, introducing students directly to Industry 4.0 automation. Mosinee purchased a FANUC Material Handler, giving students hands-on experience in automated loading, pick-and-place routines, and robotic work-cell integration. The second FANUC arm serves as a precision robotic welder, enabling students to program, calibrate, and execute automated welding sequences identical to those utilized in advanced industrial manufacturing. Students can earn a FANUC credential, an Industry Recognized Credential (IRC) in Wisconsin, and dual (college) credit. The school was also able to obtain virtual reality and augmented reality welders, a new CNC plasma cutter, and a Creaform 3D area scanner to reverse engineer products.

Coupled with CNC machinery and modern diagnostic software, these robotic

Continued on Page 36



Spartan Manufacturing Collaborates With City on Major Garbage Can Project



Beau Mickelson, Darren Porter, Dillon Koenen
Superior High School

Spartan Manufacturing has been working on a class garbage can project to be put in the Superior Business Improvement District. The Superior BID is the largest business improvement district in the state of Wisconsin, covering 89 blocks and featuring over 300 companies placed along Belknap and Tower avenues. The students plan to finish the project by the end of the school year.

Spartan Manufacturing is a student-led manufacturing class at Superior High School that focuses on creativity, skills such as wood working and metal welding skills, and collaboration with other students as they work on multiple projects that vary from the woodshop to the welding shop. From small Christmas ornaments, to large steel garbage cans, Spartan Manufacturing is constantly working to achieve their goals and ideas on time. The students are currently working on garbage cans for the City of Superior.

These garbage cans are what they are most focused on in their class periods, as they take time and patience to make. The production includes welding, grinding, plasma cutting, collecting materials, getting their stock rolled, and most importantly powder coating. The city paid $15,000 ahead of the $26,000 for 26 garbage cans, which Spartan Manufacturing took advantage of, as it helped them pay for their new powder coater. (A powder coater is an industrial tool used for spraying dry polymer or resin powder onto grounded metal surfaces.)

"It's making them all fit together and making sure that the body lines are all looking good, and they don't wobble," senior Zach Johnson said.

This class is driven by students. There are two instructors in Spartan Manufacturing: Spike Gralewski and Adam Kuhlman. Gralewski has a background with CNC milling and welding work. Kuhlman specializes in woodworking, and he spends a lot of time outside of school continuing to work on his skills.

Kuhlman has praised his students for their hard work and time spent on the project in and out of class.

"I think they've done lots of things well so far because it took a lot of raw material over the last few years. We've had to figure out a process to put things together, so they've had to build jigs and special tooling to get things cut to the right size," Kuhlman said.

Gralewski also commended his students' efforts every day during class and how it will help them reach their goal deadline.

"We have all the students in Spartan Manufacturing focusing their time and efforts on completing this project," Gralewki said.

Students also have been working on the project outside of class and even after school hours to keep within their time goal.



Spartan Manufacturing students are planning on transitioning to Christmas related projects next such as ornaments for the big tree by the Superior Public Library and cutting boards to be sold for Christmas through the school's store, the Spartan Shack.

Beau Mickelson, Darren Porter, and Dillon Koenen are student reporters for Superior High School's student-led award-winning newspaper the Spartan Spin.

www.superior.k12.wi.us

Filling the Skills Gap, One Student at a Time



Cardinal Manufacturing, located in the School District of Eleva-Strum, is a year-long, two-credit class that offers more than standard classroom instruction. Students in this class gain the real-world experiences of problem solving, running a business, and working in professional career roles. The application process includes creating and submitting a resume, cover letter, project portfolio, a letter of recommendation, future career plan write-up, and an interview with instructors.

The following article is an excerpt from their book, DREAM BIG. HAVE FUN. Cardinal Manufacturing is a wildly successful, student-run business, and this book explains how it's done.

Expand Your Students' Horizons with a Student Run Business

Experienced teachers who have worked in a successful student run business model will tell you that it is the most fun and rewarding way to teach. While it requires dedication and focus to get started, the investment of extra effort at the beginning pays off with many rewards.

Exposure to New Opportunities

One of the main goals of the student run business is to expose students to new opportunities and encourage big dreams. Having high school students from a small rural town participate in a big city industry trade show is a regular example. For many of the students all aspects of this type of event are new and somewhat uncomfortable for them the first time around. Dressing professionally, introducing themselves and conversing with industry professionals, and having the opportunity to meet with representatives from large manufacturers of products they admire is an eye-opening experience and confidence builder. Cardinal Manufacturing students have been featured in national magazines and on national television shows. The program has received awards at the state and national levels and students have participated in all these significant events.

Scholarships

Students who plan to pursue additional training after school as part of an apprenticeship, technical college, or university likely have costs associated with the education and will find they are eligible for more scholarships because of their participation in the student run business.

Learning to Pay it Forward

Community connections are a natural outgrowth of a student run business. Community connections can lead to after-school jobs, references on college or job applications, friendships, scholarships, or connections to other resources or individuals. Student run businesses may do volunteer projects for the community such as clean up in a park, repair of a railing, or some other service. Taking pride in the community and feeling connected to individuals in the community is good for everyone.

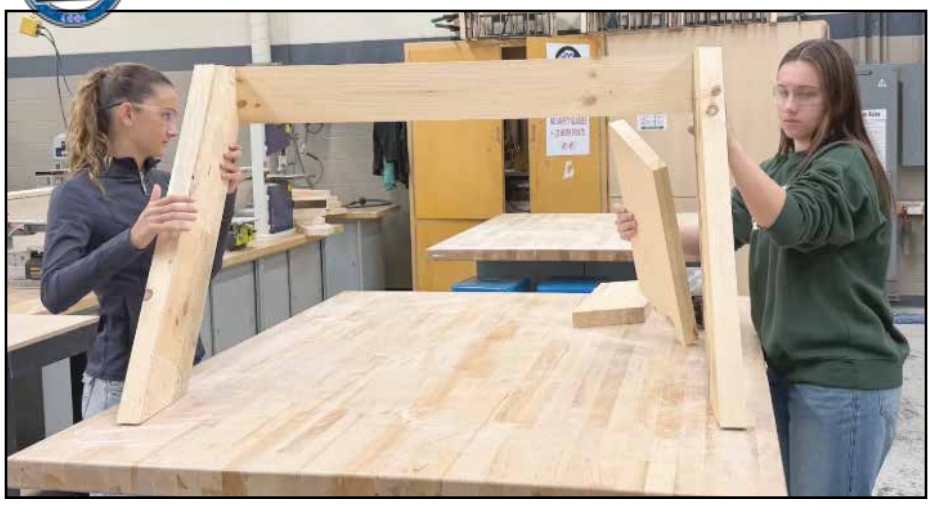
Encouraging Entrepreneurial Mindset

The best employees of any operation have the best interest of the organization as a priority and see the work from an owner's perspective. In a student run business teamwork is a priority and learning about all aspects of the business and the importance of each individual role supporting the overall goal is reinforced. Students are always learning about how to serve each other and the customers. That hands-on experience instills a sense of ownership and thoughtfulness that is beneficial whether the student goes on to work, education, trades, the military, or to start their own business.

A free download of the book is available on the Cardinal Manufacturing website https://www.cardinalmanufacturing.org.

www.esschools.k12.wi.us

Blue Devil Manufacturing: Students Turn Ideas into Products in Lodi



School District of Lodi

At Lodi High School, students are learning what it takes to turn an idea into a finished product through Blue Devil Manufacturing, a student-run business that combines fabrication, design, and business education.

Blue Devil Manufacturing operates through Lodi's Fabrication Lab (FabLab), where students produce a variety of stock and customized products, with a special focus on Lodi Blue Devil gear. From the initial customer request and quote to prototypes, billing, and final production, students manage the process and gain experience with the many moving parts of running a business.

The program brings together students' technical and creative skills with real-world learning opportunities. Students explore product design, manufacturing, problem-solving, and customer service while developing an understanding of business operations and entrepreneurship. Through hands-on work with fabrication equipment and digital design tools, students learn to take projects from concept to completion.

One special project taking place this year connects Blue Devil Manufacturing directly to another important Lodi learning space: our school forest. Manufacturing students are building benches that will be placed along the school forest trails using lumber from a recent timber harvest sponsored by the School Forest Committee. Once completed, the benches will provide places for students to stop, sit, and engage with the outdoor learning environment as they use the forest for classroom activities and exploration. It is a great example of students using their manufacturing skills to create something that will benefit other students and the broader school community.

Blue Devil Manufacturing also reinvests in its future. Profits and donations support the purchase of materials, equipment upgrades, and new tools, helping sustain and grow the program.

By connecting classroom learning with authentic customer projects, Blue Devil Manufacturing gives Lodi students the opportunity to build practical skills, take ownership of their work, and experience the rewards and responsibilities of running a business. It is an example of how career and technical education can prepare students for future opportunities while creating products that serve their school and community.





www.lodi.k12.wi.us



Building the Future of Manufacturing at Portage High School

Hands-On Learning, Industry Expertise, and Real-World Opportunities Prepare Students for Careers in the Skilled Trades



Portage Community School District

At Portage High School, the future of manufacturing is taking shape one project, one skill, and one student at a time. Through the school's Manufacturing and Fabrication Lab programs, students are gaining valuable hands-on experience with industry equipment while developing the technical knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and confidence needed to succeed in today's manufacturing workforce.

Under the leadership of Technical Education instructor Mr. Lonnie Cohee, students are experiencing firsthand what it takes to turn raw materials into precision-made products. From operating lathes and milling machines to developing essential hand bench skills, students are learning the fundamentals of machining, fabrication, and manufacturing processes in an environment that emphasizes safety, accuracy, and craftsmanship.

Industry Experience in the Classroom

One of the greatest strengths of Portage High School's manufacturing program is the expertise of its instructor. Mr. Cohee brings valuable real-world industry experience into the classroom, having transitioned from a career in industry to teaching technical education. Since joining the Portage High School Technical Education Department, he has earned his Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction teaching license, combining his professional manufacturing background with the instructional skills needed to prepare the next generation of skilled workers.

His industry experience provides students with an authentic understanding of workplace expectations, manufacturing processes, and the importance of precision and quality. Rather than simply learning about manufacturing from a textbook, students apply their knowledge through hands-on projects that require critical thinking, technical skills, and attention to detail.

Students learn to operate equipment such as metal lathes and milling machines while developing foundational skills in measuring, layout, hand tools, and bench work. These experiences help students understand how individual manufacturing processes contribute to producing finished components and products.

Connecting Students with Industry Professionals

Partnerships with industry professionals further strengthen the learning experience. Recently, Portage High School welcomed Mason Higgins from the steamfitters union, who demonstrated pipe welding and highlighted the skills and techniques used in the skilled trades.

During the visit, students had the opportunity to observe professional practices, ask questions, and connect what they are learning in the classroom to applications in the workforce. Experiences like these expose students to career possibilities while reinforcing the importance of technical education and the opportunities available through apprenticeships and skilled trades careers.

Investing in the Future of Skilled Trades

Portage High School is also looking toward the future through its ACE Academy initiative, an effort to expand career and technical education opportunities in construction, manufacturing, engineering, and related skilled trades. The proposed facility will provide additional instructional and laboratory space, helping students gain access to expanded hands-on learning experiences and industry-aligned training.

The ACE Academy reflects the district's commitment to connecting education with workforce needs and strengthening partnerships between schools, businesses, and industry professionals.

Developing Tomorrow's Workforce

The talent and dedication of Portage High School's students are evident in the work they produce and the skills they continue to develop. With the guidance of Mr. Cohee and the support of industry partners, students are discovering that manufacturing offers meaningful, challenging, and rewarding career opportunities.

This commitment extends throughout the entire Portage High School Technical Education Department, where Mr. Ben King teaches Engineering, Mr. Josh Krueger leads Construction, and Mr. Dustan Garrigan teaches Consumer Auto Maintenance and Automotive Technology. Together with Mr. Cohee, these dedicated instructors provide students with valuable hands-on experiences, industry knowledge, and opportunities to explore a variety of career pathways in the skilled trades.



At Portage High School, technical education is about more than learning to operate machines. It is about developing confidence, building career-ready skills, and preparing students to become the next generation of innovators, problem-solvers, and skilled professionals who will help shape Wisconsin's future.

www.portage.k12.wi.us







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Renovated Tech Ed Spaces Celebrated at Algoma High School



Algoma School District

Technology Education has a new home at Algoma High School. After months of planning, and an extensive renovation, both the woodworking and metals shops have been completely transformed. The shop spaces and classroom are now all interconnected, and many upgrades have been made already, with more coming soon.

A large, open area was once the metal shop, but the floorspace was not being properly utilized. After the renovation, it has been split into two smaller areas with one becoming the new woodshop. The metal shop was moved to a space in between the classroom and woodshop, that better utilizes available floorspace. Not only did this allow for better layout and spacing of the equipment but also better workflow and an increase in the capacity of the shops.

In the metal shop, several major upgrades took place. Proper ventilation was installed to pull welding fumes and smoke out of the space, which provides a safer space for students to refine their skills. The welding side of the shop has been fully updated with six new multi-process machines. This allows students to learn and practice MIG, TIG and SMAW processes. Additionally, with the new welding equipment, students now have the opportunity to earn dual credits in both SMAW and MIG welding through a nearby technical college and opportunities to earn several Miller Welding certifications. The old welding helmets were replaced with quality Miller, auto-darkening helmets. The new layout also allowed the plasma cutting equipment to be moved into a separate area from the rest of the shop.



The woodshop was not to be outdone. The most significant improvement was replacing the old, worn out dust collection system. The new system removes almost all of the sawdust and chips created when students are machining their projects, improving machine life and safety of the shop. Over time, equipment is being upgraded and replaced. The biggest includes the new 25-inch planer, giving students the ability to plane wider projects inhouse and be more accurate and precise with the digital adjustment functions. Other additions and upgrades include replacing worn out stationary sanders and replacing our power tools such as drills, drivers, and orbital sanders.

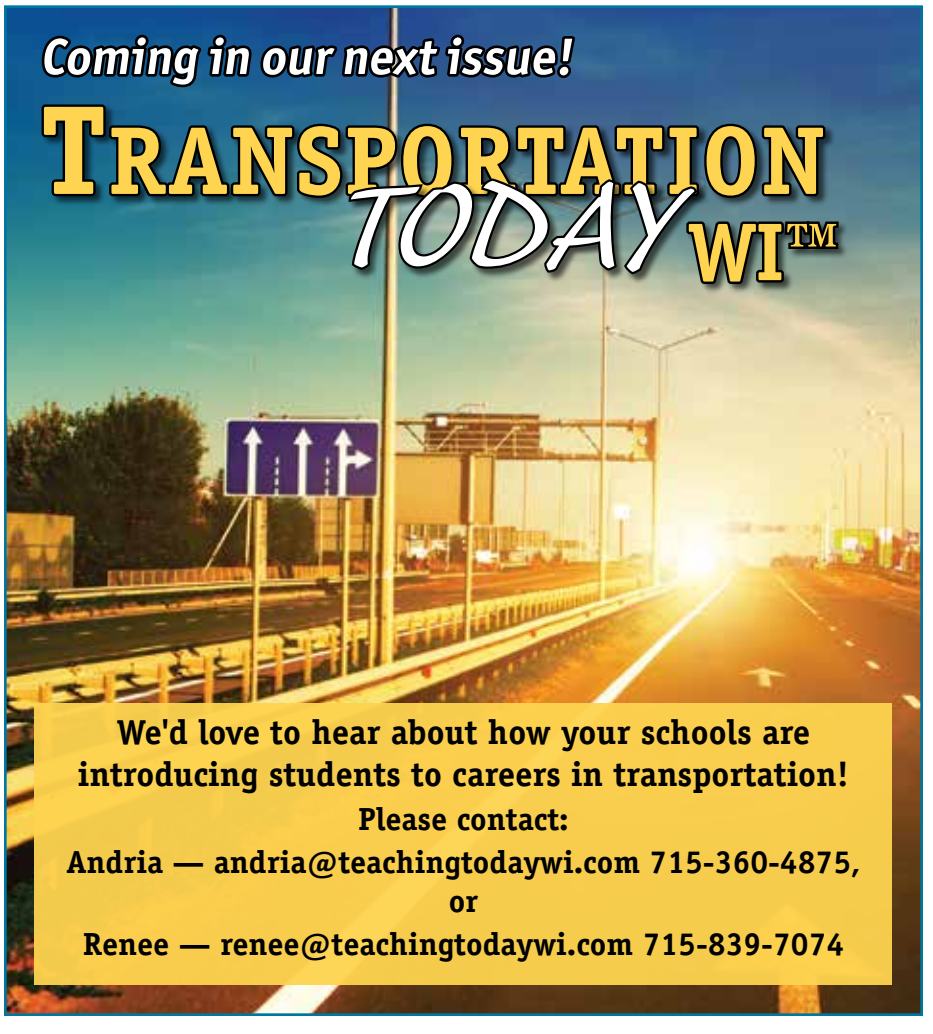
Future plans include updating and replacing outdated equipment in both areas, adding duplicate equipment to reduce bottlenecks and increase productivity, and adding a machining course to teach students the basics of milling and lathe work as well as introducing them to CNC machining. Adding tool storage to the woodshop is also on the list. Additionally, welding students will help construct new, dedicated welding booths.

Here at Algoma we offer a diverse range of courses across the tech ed spectrum. Starting in middle school, students are able to take introductory woodworking and metals classes where they learn the foundations of safety, measurement, and tools to build basic projects. Middle schoolers also have the option to take Manufacturing where they decide on a class project and then work that project through the design and manufacturing process. They learn about building jigs and fixtures, tolerances, and how a product moves from concept to finished.

After moving to the high school level, they have even more options. Students can take two different woodworking classes that build on previous skills and procedures while adding new skills and techniques to their arsenal. In Woods 1, students design and build cutting boards utilizing scrap wood and then move to build an end table, which shows them several different joinery techniques including miter splines and pocket holes. If they continue with Woods 2, students learn about cabinet construction techniques and put those into practice by building a cabinet style nightstand. On the metalworking side, students are able to take Welding and Fabrication in which they learn how to weld using SMAW, GMAW and GTAW processes. They also have the opportunity to create projects that utilize the skills they have learned. Past projects have included adjustable campfire grills and portable firepits. Students can also take a 3D Design course where they are introduced to CAD software and then are able to create projects using their designs and a CNC router, laser cutter/ engraver and plasma table.

All of this would not be possible without the support of the local community. We cannot thank them enough for stepping up when we needed them. The community voted to pass a large referendum that kicked off the renovations and upgrading of the shop spaces among other projects in the district. In addition to this referendum, community members also made generous contributions to the program. The most significant of which allowed us to purchase the six new multi-process welding machines. We look forward to continuing to work with the Algoma community through new community partnerships and continued support for the program.

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The Classroom Skills That Translate Into Machining

Kelly Read
Metal Craft & Riverside

One of the best things educators can do is help students see how what they're learning in school connects to real-world careers.

Students sometimes wonder when they'll ever use certain math or science concepts. In manufacturing, we use those skills every day.

Mathematics: More Than Numbers on a Page

Math is a big part of CNC machining. Machinists regularly work with fractions, decimals, measurements, angles, geometry, and basic algebra.

Some practical examples include:

- Converting between fractions and decimals.
- Calculating dimensions and hole locations.
- Understanding angles and geometric relationships.
- Working with tolerances and coordinate systems.
- Using ratios and percentages.
- Solving for unknown dimensions.

Imagine a machinist measuring a part that needs to be accurate within a few thousandths of an inch. Understanding decimals and measurement isn't just helpful; it's essential.

The more comfortable students become with these concepts, the more confident they'll be when applying them in a manufacturing environment.

Manufacturing and Engineering: Understanding How Things Are Made

Students who have an opportunity to explore manufacturing and engineering concepts gain a valuable head start.

Understanding technical drawings, materials, design principles, and manufacturing processes helps students see the bigger picture. It's one thing to look at a finished part. It's another to understand how that part was designed, how it will be manufactured, and how it fits into a larger assembly.

Exposure to CAD, or Computer-Aided Design, and CAM, or Computer-Aided Manufacturing, is especially valuable. These technologies help connect the design process to the actual machining operation.

When students understand how a part moves from an idea to a drawing and eventually to a finished product, they begin developing the kind of thinking that makes a good machinist.

Science and Physics: Why Materials Behave the Way They Do

Machining is also a great example of science in action.

Heat, friction, force, motion, and material properties all affect how a part is manufactured. Different metals respond differently to cutting tools, and understanding those differences helps machinists make better decisions.

Why does one material require different cutting conditions than another? Why does heat build up during machining? What causes a cutting tool to wear?

Students who explore these questions begin building a foundation for troubleshooting and improving machining processes.

Computer Skills and Technology: Connecting Instructions to Actions

Today's manufacturing environment relies heavily on computers and digital technology.

CNC machinists may work with machine controls, digital drawings, programming software, production documents, and CAD/CAM systems throughout the day.

Students don't need to be computer experts, but basic computer skills, logical thinking, file management, and an interest in technology are valuable. Basic programming and CNC simulation can also help students understand how computer instructions translate into physical machine movements.

The important takeaway is that manufacturing combines hands-on work with technology.

Questions to Bring Into the Classroom

These connections can become discussion topics or short activities:

- Two students measure the same object and get different results. What should they check before deciding which measurement is correct?
- A finished project does not match the drawing. How would students identify, document, and explain the difference?
- A dimension must fall within a specified tolerance. What measurements would be acceptable, and which would not?
- A project didn't turn out as expected. What did students try, what did they learn, and what would they change?
- How did math, science, planning, or communication affect the outcome of a recent hands-on project?

These activities reinforce more than technical knowledge. They give students practice explaining their reasoning and responding constructively when something goes wrong.

To learn more about careers at Metal Craft and Riverside, please visit: https://mcandrs.com/careers.

This is part of a larger (and excellent) article *"Building the Next Generation of CNC Machinists: What Employers Want Teachers and Counselors to Know"* by Kelly Read of Metal Craft & Riverside

To read the full article, please click on the link above or go to our website http://www.manufacturingtodaywi.com

A New Perspective for the DT Fab Lab

Continued from Page 32

students to build the skills needed to become true assets to our student-run business. The class is structured much like a real company. Students complete paperwork detailing their skill sets, goals, reasons for joining, and willingness to learn new things. Collaboration is crucial to our success, and everyone must be ready to step up to meet deadlines.

Students have access to a production schedule that assigns specific tasks to each person. They also complete weekly timesheets detailing the jobs they worked on and daily task descriptions. Students are allowed six sick days per semester; if they exceed this limit, they must make up for their missed time during our resource time. Overall, this approach has been very successful and is the best way we have found to emulate a real-world workplace.

Our jobs vary as much as our customers. Locally, we have worked with the Juneau Police Department and our Chamber of Commerce, providing banners for community events. Providing products and services for our own school district is also deeply important to us. By producing items in-house, we help the district save money on everything from stickers, banners, and signage to window graphics, custom stairs, and even a new podium for special school events.

Fab Labs look different in every school district depending on the community and the teaching staff. At Dodgeland, we have centered our curriculum around the different pieces of equipment we have. All of our classes build a pathway to the Fab Lab. If a Fab Lab can fill a genuine need in the community, success will follow. While business partnerships are an indicator of achievement, the primary key to long-term success is having a clear vision. What impact does your Fab Lab want to make? Our tagline is "Learning that connects students and community." Everything we do serves as a bridge to our community, creating a mutually beneficial relationship where students always win. And after all, isn't that the whole point?

dodgeland.k12.wi.us

Equipping the Next Generation of Our Workforce with High-Tech Skills

Continued from Page 35

systems ensure students master both foundational craftsmanship and automated manufacturing technology.

Advanced equipment and industrial robotics require physical space designed for safe, collaborative, and scalable workflows. Recognizing this need, the Mosinee community overwhelmingly backed a local school facility referendum that included a dedicated Career and Technical Education (CTE) addition at Mosinee High School.

This referendum-funded expansion significantly increases the physical footprint of the high school's manufacturing and wood shop floors, establishes a flexible Engineering space that can expand as new technologies emerge, and increased the size of its Fab Lab. The modernized layout features optimized safety zones, dedicated engineering design stations, and expanded assembly space needed to operate large CNC machinery, welding bays, and robotic cells efficiently.

By pairing voter-supported facility additions with state-funded equipment grants and a market-driven curriculum, Mosinee High School is delivering a workforce pipeline tailored to regional industrial demand. Local manufacturers gain access to motivated graduates who understand shop safety, lean production, CAD/CAM workflows, and robotic automation before stepping off the graduation stage.

Mosinee's CTE model demonstrates how strategic community investment, state partnerships, and forward-thinking instruction can transform a high school facility into an economic engine for Wisconsin's manufacturing future.

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