

(2/7/24 District Administrator's Corner Article)

As this month is Career and Technology Education (CTE) Month, we will feature the three CTE areas during February to raise awareness of the role they have in preparing students for college and career success. The River Valley School District is very proud of the diverse courses we offer and the incredible staff in this department.

When students are involved with CTE in high school, it improves graduation rates, engagement, and employability skills for them to enter our community. Approximately two-thirds of all Wisconsin high school students have taken one course in the CTE field. CTE provides our students pathways to new opportunities.

This week we are highlighting **Engineering/Technology Education**. This area is categorized into three different concentrations: Engineering and Woods Shop; Welding and Metals Shop; and Robotics and Auto Shop.

Consider young women and men that hope to join a career in high-skilled manufacturing, welding, carpentry, automobile technology, or design—we offer courses to build a strong foundation and expand their knowledge. Courses offered next year include: Architectural Design, Building Construction, Auto Technology, Auto Mechanics for the Non-Mechanic, Digital Manufacturing, Welding I and 2, Basic Shielded Metal Arc Welding, Basic Gas Metal Arc Welding, Fabrication Technology, Electronics, Exploring Aviation and Aerospace, Launch in Aviation, Manufacturing 1 and 2, Mechatronics 1 and 2, Principles of Engineering, Robotics Technology, Transportation, and Woodworking.

It is rare for a district our size to maintain these diverse offerings. These opportunities come with established relationships with local employers and years of experience with our staff. Carla Carmody, Robby Jacobson, and TJ Wunnicke are creative and engaging and have worked very hard to build on the site experiences and Youth Apprenticeship opportunities for our students.

However, one barrier has been having the necessary equipment for these diverse offerings. For example, although we have added incredible simulators in the welding area, Ms. Carmody's welding booths are original to the building. And although we have just secured some new equipment for high-skilled manufacturing skills through an incredible Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Fab Lab Grant, training for Mr. Jacobson and future materials will be needed for us to continue to remain current in this area. Furthermore, one of the spaces that needs the most renovation is our Engineering/Woods Shop. Mr. Wunnicke has developed an incredible list of courses but is limited in the hands-on activities due to the age of the equipment.

Part of the referendum funding we are seeking in April is for transitioning to a new Engineering and Woods Shop in our high school and for renovating other technology education spaces. Investing in our students in this way can only be done with support from our community.

Technical workers in manufacturing, welding, construction, automobiles, and robotics are in extremely high demand, with more jobs than people to fill them. Students who pursue a CTE focus in high school are making an incredibly wise investment for their future, no matter their career pathway. The State of Wisconsin's motto is "Forward," reflecting our state's drive to be a national leader. The River Valley School District is proud of this important work and hopes to continue to be a leader in our region.

Sincerely,

Loren Glasbrenner, District Administrator
River Valley School District