SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

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Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Honors Outstanding Wisconsin Educators With 2025 Awards

The Herb Kohl Educational Foundation proudly announces the 114 Wisconsin teachers and administrators selected as recipients of its 2025 Teacher Fellowship and Principal Leadership awards. These distinguished educators are being recognized for their exceptional leadership, dedication to students, and commitment to educational excellence.

This year, 100 teachers will receive Teacher Fellowship awards of $6,000 in honor of their ability to inspire a love of learning, motivate students, and lead both inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, 14 principals will be honored with Principal Leadership awards of $6,000 for their efforts in setting high standards for instruction, achievement, and character while fostering a positive and impactful school environment. Each recipient's school will also receive a matching grant of $6,000 to further support student learning and school initiatives.

"Part of Herb Kohl's lasting legacy is his unwavering support for the profession that makes all others possible—education," said JoAnne Anton, President & CEO of Herb Kohl Philanthropies. "He challenged us to continue celebrating and investing in educators who shape the future. By recognizing their hard work, achievements, and service, we hope to honor their impact, elevate their contributions within their communities, and inspire future generations to follow in their footsteps."

Award recipients are selected by a statewide committee composed of civic leaders and representatives of education-related associations and the program's co-sponsors: The Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, regional Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA), and the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators.

The Kohl Foundation award program was established by Herb Kohl, former U.S. senator, philanthropist, and businessman who died December 27, 2023. Since 1990, the foundation has awarded over $40 million to Wisconsin educators, principals, students, and schools.

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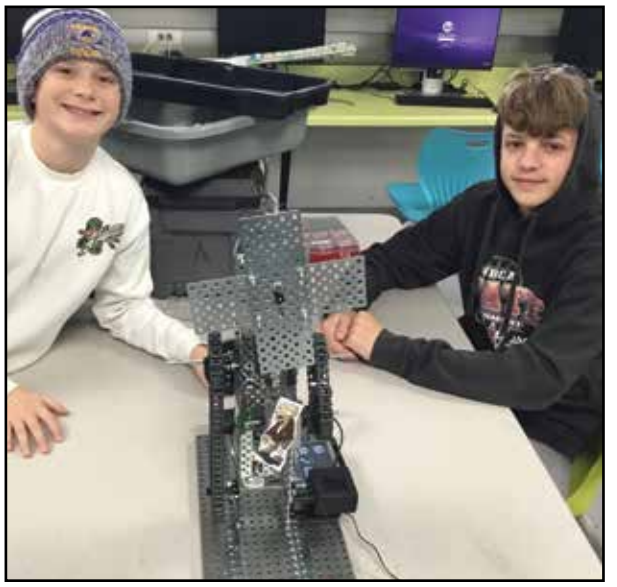
DeForest Area School District Expands Fab Lab with State Grant

DeForest Area School District



The Governor and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) have announced a significant investment in DeForest Area School District's (DASD) fabrication laboratory (fab lab) facilities. This initiative, funded by a $25,000 state grant, aims to enhance educational opportunities for students by integrating advanced technology into the curriculum.

The grant will primarily be used to upgrade DASD's existing Fab Lab, located at DeForest Middle School, with state-of-the-art equipment tailored to meet growing student demand and foster interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. Plans include the acquisition of additional CNC machines, a laser engraver, scroll saws, and 3D printers, which will significantly expand the lab's capacity to accommodate hands-on learning experiences.

In addition to equipment upgrades, the grant will support the expansion of Robotics resources within the school district. This includes procuring another set of V5 equipment for a second Robotics class and providing additional V5 brains and remote controls for the Robotics Club. These enhancements will not only bolster the Robotics program but also encourage student participation and innovation in autonomous systems and engineering challenges.

One of the innovative features funded by the grant is the acquisition of digital signage. These displays will be strategically placed throughout the school hallways to showcase student STEM projects and achievements, thereby promoting a culture of excellence and celebrating student success.

Danielle Stieber, STEM teacher at DeForest Area Middle School and the educator who applied for and oversees the program, shared her excitement about the grant's impact:

"Our Fab Lab has become a space where students develop real-world problem-solving and technical skills. With this grant, we can

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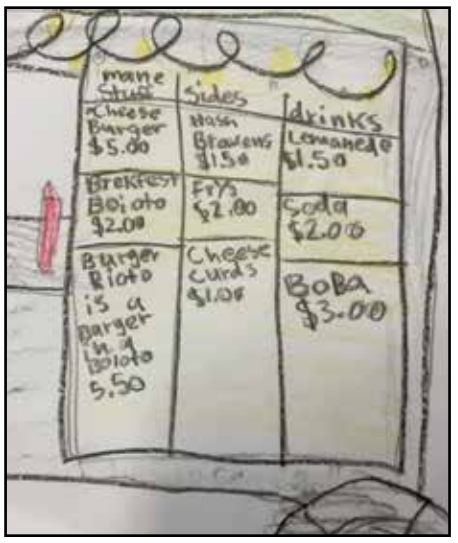
Fifth-Grade Food Truck Project Brings Math to Life



School District of La Crosse

In a fun twist on traditional math class, fifth-grade students at Emerson Elementary School in Lisa Stundahl's classroom recently dove into a hands-on project that fused real-world skills with mathematical learning. The "Food Truck Project," designed by student teacher Verena Hayes, was inspired by project-based learning principles and aimed to take math outside the usual routine.

"Watching how excited the kids have been has been the best part," said Hayes. "They've been creating their own menus and making up fun specials. And they keep asking, 'Do we get to work on our menus today?' It's been amazing to see their creativity shine."

The project began with students designing their own food truck concepts, complete with unique menus featuring at least three main dishes, sides, and drinks—all with prices set by the students. From there, Hayes guided the students through practical exercises, such as calculating menu item combinations within budget constraints, and determining the best deal for a customer looking to spend a set amount of money. These exercises were crafted to help students practice adding and subtracting decimals in a practical context, showing them how math plays into real-life decisions.

"Math can be exciting, especially when it's something that's real-world," added Hayes. "Our kids are seeing how the math they learn today applies to life outside of school—maybe even to running their own food trucks one day!"

The fun didn't stop there. When students suggested making commercials to promote their food trucks, Hayes embraced the idea, letting their creativity and collaboration skills continue to build. The project wrapped up with students presenting their food truck menus and commercials to classmates, showcasing their unique ideas and applying their math skills in action.

This interactive, imaginative project deepened students' understanding of decimals and showed them how math can be a tool for pursuing future dreams. Whether they were imagining a Chinese Food Truck, an Ice Cream Truck, or even the quirky "Two Kids Kitchen" (with a playful food poisoning warning), students left each math session inspired, and ready to learn more.

See these students' commercials at: www.lacrosseschools.org/fifth-grade-food-truck-project-brings-math-to-life

lacrosseschools.org

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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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In this Issue

Mauston School District Goes FULL STEAM AHEAD

In the heart of the Mauston School District, a revolution in education is taking place. Through innovative programs and a commitment to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) the district is transforming the way students learn and engage with the world around them. By fostering and creating student-centered environments, the school district of Mauston fosters creativity, critical thinking, and real-world problem solving.

Education is more than just acquiring knowledge; it's about helping students develop the skills and mindset needed to navigate an ever-changing world. Students are not just learning about STEAM – they are living it every day in ways that are meaningful, engaging, and transformative.

The Lemonweir Academy tailors learning plans to students' individual strengths, interests, and goals. This approach ensures students are active participants in their educational journey. Lemonweir Academy collaborates with Outdoors Forever to provide students with hands-on environmental education and conservative experiences.

Through projects like maple syrup production, invasive species removal, and habitat maintenance, students learn about local ecosystems and the importance of environmental stewardship. These opportunities foster a deep connection to nature and prepare students to be informed and active citizens.

At **iLead Charter School**, the hands-on approach is central to their educational philosophy. Students engage in project-based learning, where they tackle real-world problems through collaborative projects that integrate multiple disciplines. By working on these hands-on projects, students not only deepen their understanding of academic concepts, but also develop skills like teamwork, communication, and active discovery, preparing them for future success.

iLead Charter students use VEX Robotics to problem solve to find a solution to an identified challenge.

The high school Supermileage team works on several designs to create a fuel efficient vehicle that can go 500+ miles on one gallon of gas.

Mauston High School's CTE program provides students with opportunities to gain industry-recognized certifications and participate in internships and apprenticeships. A key component of the CTE program is Eagle Enterprises, a student-run business initiative. Here, students gain experience in entrepreneurship, learning essential skills like marketing, finance, customer service, and management. Working with local businesses and community members, students have been involved with many different opportunities, like creating outdoor signage, processing beef and deer meat, and creating promotional materials. This gives students practical skills and valuable experience.

Olson Middle School's Makerspace lab encourages students to tackle challenges and solve problems independently. Olson's Makerspace gives students access to tools that they need to make their ideas happen and allows teachers to meet curriculum standards in a way that fosters a love of learning and creativity.

The Mauston School District's commitment to STEAM education ensures that students are not only prepared for future careers but also inspired to become lifelong learners and innovators. Together, these programs create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that places students at the center of their education. By integrating personalized learning, project-based approaches, and real-world experiences, the district is cultivating a generation of critical thinkers and problem solvers who are ready to tackle the challenges of tomorrow.

Courtesy of the DPI

maustonschools.org

Mr. Hoehn, Technology Education teacher at Olson Middle School, helping students explore the different types of circuits using SNAP Circuits.

How to Become an Electrician in Wisconsin

If you're looking into the skilled trades for your first career or for a career change, you may have looked at becoming an electrician. This is a high-demand career with growth at eight percent, a faster than average job growth. It's also a job that pays well because it requires special skills and several years of education and training.

Most professionals, about two-thirds, work for electrical contractors or are the owners of those contracting companies. These skilled tradespeople offer a variety of electrical services, including installation of wiring in new buildings, and maintenance and repairs of existing electrical systems. They may be residential, commercial or both. Residential electricians work in homes, while commercial electricians work in larger, commercial buildings.

With special training, an electrician may also work as a line installer or repairer. These workers install and repair the power systems and telecommunication cables that run outside homes and businesses. They do most of their work outside, often high off the ground in cherry pickers or by climbing telephone poles.

A career as an electrician is a great option if you live in Wisconsin and are looking for great job opportunities and security. The growth in careers for electricians in the state is set to rise by over 11 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is a career that allows you to earn while you train and then, when licensed, to earn a great living working with your hands and helping people.

Requirements for Becoming an Electrician in Wisconsin

Licenses are issued for journeyman, master and contractor electricians in Wisconsin through the Department of Safety and Professional Services. The department also registers apprentices. The first step in becoming an electrician in the state is to go through the training required to qualify for the exam to become a licensed journeyman electrician.

There are a few different options for getting the training needed to become a journeyman electrician. The first is to enroll in and complete an apprenticeship program, most of which are run through local union chapters. Another option is to complete a two-year degree program in electrical technology as well as an apprenticeship for at least three years. Finally, you can find an electrician willing to take on an apprentice and work in that role for four years to qualify. You can also get licensed as an industrial electrician, which requires five years of work experience with 1,000 hours of industrial work.

After working as a licensed journeyman in Wisconsin for a year you can take the exam and apply to be licensed as a master electrician. Alternatively, if you were never licensed as a journeyman, 10,000 hours of work experience can be used for qualification. As a master electrician you may choose to register as an electrical contractor, which allows you to offer services to customers and hire other licensed professionals.

Electrician Apprenticeship Programs in Wisconsin

One of the simplest ways to ensure you meet all the requirements for licensing in the state is to enroll in and complete an approved apprenticeship program. Working as an apprentice has a lot of advantages, be they union or non-union. For one, apprentices earn while they learn. In fact, according to payscale.com, the average apprentice makes around $15.40 per hour while gaining electrical training. This will be better for people not suited hours of classroom instruction. Another advantage of this option is the proximity to journeypersons, master electricians and electrical contractor companies.

Local chapters of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) (http://www.ibew.org) run Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committees (JATCs or JACs) to provide all the learning and training apprentices need to qualify for journeyman licensing. All of these programs have similar requirements for being accepted. These include having a high school diploma or GED, being at least 18 years old, having a driver's license, having passed an algebra course, and taking and passing a basic skills and aptitude test.

Outlook and Salary Expectations

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that the outlook for anyone training to be an electrician in Wisconsin right now is positive. Growth in the industry is strong, with 12,700 employed electricians in 2020. That number is expected to grow to 14,130 by 2030. This is a growth of over 11 percent and an increase of 1,520 more jobs for qualified and licensed electricians.

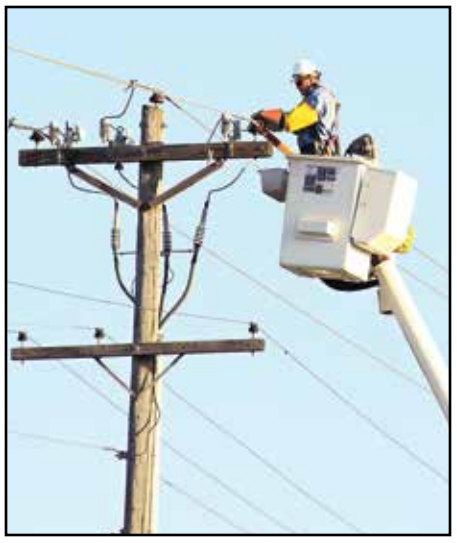
The BLS also states that salaries for electricians in Wisconsin are strong. In 2020, the average licensed electrician made $74,660 per year. There is much more room for growth in income in this field, though. In the same year the average top-earning electricians made over $97,920.

Working as an Electrician in Wisconsin

As careers and job opportunities for electricians continue to grow, people training now can expect to have a choice of first jobs as journeymen. These electricians are often hired by electrical contractors, but they may also work for companies that need electricians, like industrial manufacturers, power plants, government agencies or building companies. With just a few years of paid training, you could have your pick of jobs in Wisconsin.

Source: https://electricalschool.org

The Outlook for Energy Careers Remains Strong



Traditional Energy Careers

Traditional energy careers remain robust in 2025, with strong demand in oil, gas, and nuclear, despite coal's decline, supporting approximately 33 million jobs globally. These careers support the reliable energy supply critical for hybrid energy systems, integrating with renewables and biofuels to ensure grid stability and meet demand. Total traditional energy jobs are projected to remain stable through 2030.

Careers in Biofuels

Biofuels technology involves the development, production, and application of fuels derived from organic materials, such as plants, algae, or animal waste. These fuels are used primarily for transportation, heating, or power generation The field intersects with agriculture, chemistry, engineering, and environmental science, creating roles for various skill levels and educational backgrounds. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that biofuels supported ~2 million jobs globally in 2023, with growth projected as demand triples by 2030 to meet net-zero goals. Careers are particularly strong in regions like the U.S., Brazil, the EU, and India, where biofuel production is scaling up.

Solar Energy Careers

The solar energy sector is experiencing rapid advancements in 2025, driven by technological breakthroughs, policy support, and increasing global demand for renewable energy. Solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity grew by 25% in 2023, with 2024 seeing 41 GW of utility-scale installations in the U.S. alone, accounting for 66% of new electric capacity. The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects solar could become the world's leading electricity source by 2035, with global capacity exceeding 5,000 GW.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects solar photovoltaic installer jobs to grow 22% from 2022 to 2032, among the fastest-growing occupations, with median earnings of $48,090 in 2024.

Wind Energy Careers

Wind energy careers are dynamic and in-demand, with 29% growth for technicians and strong prospects for engineers, managers, and R&D roles.

Wind energy careers encompass designing, manufacturing, installing, operating, maintaining, and optimizing wind turbines and associated infrastructure, such as grid connections and storage systems. These roles are vital for scaling wind capacity, which grew by 12% globally in 2023, and ensuring seamless integration with solar and traditional energy in hybrid systems. The sector supports millions of jobs, with wind accounting for a significant share of the 13.7 million renewable energy jobs worldwide in 2023, and is projected to reach 42 million by 2050.

Modernizing Electrical Substations

Aging infrastructure and the integration of renewables require advanced substations with smart grid capabilities.

Electric power substations are hubs where high-voltage electricity from power plants (including solar farms) is stepped down for distribution to homes and businesses or stepped up for long-distance transmission. Careers in this field involve designing, constructing, operating, maintaining, and upgrading substation equipment like transformers, circuit breakers, relays, and smart grid technologies. These roles are essential for integrating intermittent renewable energy sources, such as solar, into the grid while ensuring compatibility with traditional energy systems.

The outlook for careers in the energy sector in 2025 and beyond is promising, driven by global demand, technological advancements, and the ongoing transition to cleaner energy sources. The energy sector encompasses traditional sources (oil, gas, coal, nuclear) and renewables (solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, hydrogen), offering diverse opportunities across engineering, technical, analytical, and management roles.

Careers in Energy

Energy careers span traditional, renewable, and emerging technologies, focusing on the production, distribution, and management of energy.

Power Plant Operators, Technicians, and Engineers

Operators: Monitor and control equipment in power plants (coal, natural gas, nuclear, hydroelectric, wind, or solar). They ensure stable electricity generation and troubleshoot issues.

Technicians: Maintain and repair electrical equipment, such as turbines, generators, or transformers. Roles include electrical, instrumentation, or control technicians.

Engineers: Design, optimize, and manage power generation systems. Specializations include electrical, mechanical, or renewable energy engineering.

Salary Range (US, 2025):

Operators: $50,000–$90,000
Technicians: $60,000–$100,000
Engineers: $80,000–$130,000+
(Varies by experience and location).

Transmission and Distribution Technicians:

Lineworkers: Install, repair, and maintain high-voltage transmission lines and distribution networks. This physically demanding role often involves working at heights or in adverse weather.

Substation Technicians: Maintain and troubleshoot equipment in substations that regulate voltage and distribute power.

Salary Range:

Lineworkers: $65,000–$110,000
Substation Technicians: $70,000–$105,000.

Renewable Energy Specialists:

Focus on solar, wind, or hydroelectric systems. Roles include solar panel installers, wind turbine technicians, or renewable energy project managers.

Wind turbine technicians are among the fastest-growing occupations due to the global push for clean energy.

Salary Range:

Solar Installers: $45,000–$75,000;
Wind Technicians: $55,000–$85,000;
Project Managers: $90,000–$140,000.

Smart Grid and Automation Specialists:

Work on advanced grid technologies, integrating IoT, AI, and automation for efficient power distribution. Roles include smart grid engineers or data analysts.

Salary Range: $80,000–$120,000+.

Energy Efficiency and Management:

Energy auditors or consultants assess power usage and recommend efficiency improvements for buildings or industrial systems.

Salary Range: $60,000–$100,000.

Energy Efficiency and Management

Energy Auditor: Assesses energy use in buildings and recommends efficiency upgrades.

Energy Consultant: Designs strategies for businesses to reduce energy costs and emissions.

Salary Range: $55,000–$100,000.

Nuclear Energy Careers

Nuclear Technician: Monitors radiation levels and maintains reactor equipment.

Nuclear Engineer: Designs and oversees nuclear power plant operations.

Salary Range:

Technicians: $60,000–$95,000;
Engineers: $90,000–$130,000.

Emerging Energy Technologies

Battery Storage Technician: Maintains energy storage systems for grid or renewable integration.
Smart Grid Specialist: Develops and manages advanced grid technologies using IoT and automation.
Salary Range: $70,000–$120,000.

Ag Career Days for 7th and 8th Grade Students a Success!

Ben Nelson, Executive Director, Kewaunee County Economic Development Corporation

Ag Career Days, created by the Kewaunee County Economic Development Corporation, offers a farm career-exploration experience for all seventh and eighth grade students that took place in late April at the Ebert Enterprises dairy farm in Algoma.

A fleet of eleven school buses pulled into the large paved farmyard at the farm along with a small army of volunteers welcoming 450 students eager to participate in Ag Career Days.

The students that attended came from Algoma, Kewaunee, Luxemburg-Casco, Denmark, and Southern Door school districts as well as area parochial and home-schooled students.

The students received an overall tour of the large dairy and cropping farm that milks around 6,000 cows three times a day on an 80-stall rotary parlor and harvests around 12,000 acres.

The seventh- and eighth-grade students divided up into small groups and visited eight stations featuring agronomy, cropping, horticulture, animals, animal nutrition, milk testing, cheese-making, agriculture-support services and technology.

They received hands-on opportunities to learn more about the various aspects of agriculture, allowing them to tailor their high-school coursework towards a planned career path.

The Kewaunee County Economic Development Corporation launched Ag Career Days in 2012 as a way for students to identify how their interests could transfer to a potential career in the agriculture industry.

Established as a biennial event, it was help in 2014, 2016 and 2018, and after a pause during the pandemic the event made a successful return in 2023.

It is becoming recognized as one of Wisconsin's largest farm career-exploration gathering in Wisconsin.

For more information contact: Ben Nelson, Executive Director at ben.nelson@kcedc.org

Healthy Eating and Academic Growth Take Root, Together, at River Trail School of Agricultural Science

Milwaukee Public Schools

There's something about home-grown veggies that even picky eaters can't resist. When students produce their own produce, says award-winning MPS educator Joshua Gonzalez, they're more likely to eat their veggies—and like them.

Just before winter break, Mr. Gonzalez's 2nd-grade students harvested lettuce from the hydroponic towers at River Trail School of Agricultural Science. With a bottle of ranch dressing and some words of encouragement, Mr. Gonzalez persuaded 20 2nd graders to sample their school-grown greens. Then students bagged up the leftovers to share with families.

"Even kids who don't eat a lot of veggies love eating our lettuce," he says. "They're surprised by how good it is."

"Mr. Gonzalez understands how to connect real-world experiences for his students," says MPS climate education coach Kimberly Talarico. "He does an outstanding job integrating urban agriculture practices into his curriculum through a variety of lessons throughout the year."

Building a schoolyard chicken coop and teaching Milwaukee youth to grow pumpkins and pears is a plot twist for Mr. Gonzalez, who now chairs River Trail's agriculture committee. Raised and educated in Milwaukee from K5 to college, Mr. Gonzalez had no background in agriculture education when he arrived at the traditional K–8 school in 2006.

In 2015, River Trail received a grant from the American Heart Association to install raised-bed gardens, and the agriculture education program grew like a beanstalk. Students and staff now maintain a food forest of 110 chestnut, hazelnut, and pear trees; a chicken coop; composting operation; two outdoor greenhouses; and other agricultural amenities. Beehive Café, open twice a month, is staffed by educators and special education students who use school produce to make and sell soups, salsa, salads, and other dishes.

Gonzalez credits River Trail colleagues for launching the school's agriculture committee less than a decade ago. The Milwaukee Board of School Directors designated River Trail a citywide urban agriculture specialty school in 2022. Three miles away is Harold S. Vincent School of Agricultural Science for high school students. high school students.

Gonzalez collaborates with the high school to ensure River Trail graduates are prepared for advanced lessons and agriculture responsibilities as Vincent freshmen. The schools are among America's only public, urban, K–12 agriculture education programs. "River Trail is the junior varsity," Mr. Gonzalez says. "We are absolutely preparing kids for varsity agriculture and even ag careers. By the time our kids head to Vincent, they're not afraid of dirt, tools, and chickens."

After nearly two decades at River Trail, the only thing that scares Mr. Gonzalez is food insecurity. For him, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a deeper connection to sustainable urban food systems.

"Seeing empty shelves in our grocery stores was startling," he remembers. "We all ought to be able to grow our own food, be self-reliant. Teaching agricultural literacy empowers students to be more self-sufficient and embrace healthier lifestyles."

Mr. Gonzalez and River Trail colleagues divide their 400 students into multigrade units and assign agricultural duties that reinforce academic standards in STEM, social studies, and other subjects. Fifth graders learn about soil and climate science while tending to the food forest and mentoring K5 students who plot and plant corn, peppers, and tomatoes.

The "light bulb" moments—for instance, when students build a hydroponics tower and learn about photosynthesis—inspire Mr. Gonzalez.

"We're not saying 'open your book to page 38,' " he says. "We're showing students how to use tools responsibly. They're gathering pears from the food forest and eggs from our chicken coop to make custard. Fun, tangible experiences are so important for learning."

Planting season is several weeks away, and new ideas are cropping up. Second graders just built a fourth hydroponics tower. Families will be asked to share recipes for the collard greens that students plant, tend, and harvest.

Pecans are not native to Wisconsin and Mr. Gonzalez is working on a solution so River Trail can grow their own. He's consulting with an arborist to graft pecan branches onto hickory tree roots to grow the pecanlike "hican." Check back in four years to see how it's going.

mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us

2024 Outstanding Educator of the Year

Wisconsin Agriculture in the Classroom recently named Mr. Gonzalez its 2024 Outstanding Educator of the Year. The nonprofit cited his leadership in securing funding, building resources, and his enthusiastic teaching, which embed agricultural literacy into River Trail's K–8 curriculum and culture.

Colleagues describe Gonzalez as "the heart" of River Trail's agriculture program, praising his relentless commitment to securing funding, building resources, and motivating others. "I love that my science lessons don't always need a textbook," Gonzalez said. "Seeing students grow, literally and figuratively, reminds me why I became a teacher."

Congratulations Mr. Gonzalez!

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Bellin College Healthcare Academy Provides Students With Career Exploration and a Head Start Towards Healthcare Career

Luxemburg-Casco School District

Most kids want to play doctor or nurse at some point in their childhood. For some, it's a passing interest. For others, it becomes a career path they're interested in pursuing.

But few of us know where to start or how to understand the myriad opportunities available within the healthcare field.

That's where the Bellin College Healthcare Academy comes in, now in its third year of engaging Luxemburg-Casco High School students in exploration of careers in the healthcare field. The program additionally offers a head start on obtaining related college credits at a reduced rate, thereby mitigating future student loan debt.

Pair that with quality practical experience in a work-based healthcare environment, and you have a winner for L-C students.

"Students tell me that the Healthcare Academy has been an amazing experience for them," says Mike Snowberry, director of learning services for the Luxemburg-Casco School District. "It is important for them to explore all of the available careers within a healthcare system – they just don't know. The hands-on aspect of it really has helped them in making their career choices.

"More than anything, it can help students to figure out their passion."

Beyond the traditional healthcare jobs of doctor and nurse, the field includes high-demand careers in diagnostic medical sonography — which include Imaging, radiologic sciences and radiation therapy — along with surgical assisting.

The Bellin College Healthcare Academy (HCA) began in the 2022-23 school year with 34 students from three area high schools, among them 18 students from Luxemburg-Casco. L-C subsequently had 26 students participate in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years, according to High School Counselor Kurt Wolske.

This year, 17 Northeast Wisconsin high schools, representing more than 200 students, are taking courses through the HCA.

"We have seen growth in the number of schools wanting to participate in the HCA because of strong student interest in healthcare," says Dr. Chad Dall, director of outreach and engagement for Bellin College.

Health Occupations, a career-exploration course, is offered to freshman and sophomore students at L-C. A very popular class with 2-3 sections each year, it provides an initial gauge for students of their interest level in participating in the Healthcare Academy.

The students who choose to continue on to the Healthcare Academy can earn up to 42 college credits while in high school by taking advantage of every course available through Bellin College.

Core Healthcare Career courses include Introduction to Healthcare, Customer Service in Healthcare, Medical Terminology, and Nursing Assistant. These classes are offered as asynchronous online or hybrid.

Among the Supplemental Healthcare Career courses offered to students, online, in the fall semester, are 20th Century American History and its Impact on Health, Statistics, Diversity Issues in Healthcare, College Algebra, Developmental Psychology, and Medical Terminology. Spring semester offerings include Health Communication, Medical Ethics, Healthcare Economics, The Immigrant Experience in Modern America and its Implications for Healthcare, and World Religions.

L-C students participating in the Healthcare Academy curriculum are given the flexibility within their personal schedules to complete their online courses during study halls, according to Snowberry.

Three Science courses – Anatomy and Physiology I, Anatomy and Physiology II, and General Chemistry – must be taken in person at Bellin College. The college works with the district on the placement of those classes in student schedules.

HCA courses are transferable to most Wisconsin colleges and universities should a student later decide not to attend Bellin College or to pursue a degree outside of the healthcare field.

A key component of Healthcare Academy participation, Snowberry says, is the opportunity for job-shadow experiences. These offer the chance for career exploration and provide students with a better idea of which classes they would like to take.

Many Healthcare Academy students apply and interview for healthcare-related internship opportunities through the district's youth-apprenticeship program, securing high-level practical experience.

According to Jolyn Helgeson, youth apprenticeship coach based in LCHS, students this year have filled positions including nursing assistant, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), surgical CNA, occupational assistant and resident aide. Their roles are at healthcare and therapy facilities, along with senior- and assisted-living facilities.

"The Healthcare Academy and youth apprenticeship students interested in career pathways that align with our organizational needs have been super beneficial," says Katie Bartell, senior talent acquisition specialist for Emplify Health by Bellin/Gundersen. "We are identifying kids with a passion for helping people live their healthiest lives, and it's helping us fill important roles across the organization.

"We have found a home for more than 150 students in the last three years. We onboard them and encourage them to learn and grow with us into the future."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average salary for a registered nurse in Wisconsin is $76,560 per year. Along with having two years less of

Continued on Page 13

Bellin College Healthcare Academy Continued from Page 12

college debt, Snowberry says that students who take part in the Healthcare Academy also can enter the healthcare workforce 2-3 years earlier than their peers, resulting in additional career earnings between $150K and $230K in total.

A prime example of this is Lily Derenne, a May 2024 graduate of Luxemburg-Casco High School who this year is continuing her studies at Bellin College. Between Healthcare Academy courses and dual-credit classes through Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, she had over 50 college credits at the time of her high school graduation.

Derenne expects to graduate from Bellin with a bachelor's degree at age 20, and says that the Healthcare Academy experience for her cannot be understated.

"I think it truly has set me up for life," says Derenne. "My whole experience was great. I feel so fortunate to have gotten this head start on my career and my life. I expect to become one of the youngest nurses ever to graduate from Bellin College."

Along with her coursework, Derenne also received substantial practical experience while still in high school. She was employed as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at Bellin Hospital, working on every floor as a member of the "float team," along with obtaining her phlebotomist credentials.

Her CNA work responsibilities included a variety of patient-focused duties assigned by the registered nurses.

"The nursing staff will pull you into a room to show you things," Derenne adds, sharing the further benefit of mentorship encompassed in her in-person healthcare work.

She also received a scholarship through work that pays for a sizable portion of her tuition at Bellin College.

The YA work experience in healthcare is a win-win, providing benefits to both the students and their employers.

"The students are very productive employees," Snowberry shares of the feedback he and other L-C administrators have received. "They want to learn, and they also want to do a really good job in the field they are in. The organizations who have employed our students have been very happy."

Bellin College also collaborates with area clinical agencies to enable students to shadow professionals in different healthcare fields, in addition to providing many career-focused exposure events each year.

It just goes to prove that Luxemburg-Casco students not only can dream of playing doctor or nurse, they can start on a path to doing it through participation in the Bellin College Healthcare Academy.

luxcasco.k12.wi.us

Megan Sipiorski Named 2025 Wisconsin High School Social Studies Teacher of the Year

Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District

Congratulations to Middleton High School teacher Megan Sipiorski on being honored as the 2025 Wisconsin High School Social Studies Teacher of the Year by the Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies (WCSS)!

Ms. Sipiorski is being recognized for her exceptional work in social studies education, particularly with her innovative approach to simulation-based experiential learning through the Legislative Semester program. Through the program, Ms. Sipiorski immerses her students in the legislative process, allowing them to experience firsthand how government operates and the critical role citizens play in shaping public policy.

In addition to teaching social studies, Ms. Sipiorski serves as the advisor for Middleton High School's Model United Nations club.

"Megan's passion for education and dedication to her students is inspiring," said Middleton High School Principal Peg Shoemaker. "I'm thrilled she has earned this prestigious recognition to highlight the impact she's making at Middleton High School. This honor also enables educators and students beyond our District to learn from her wonderful work."

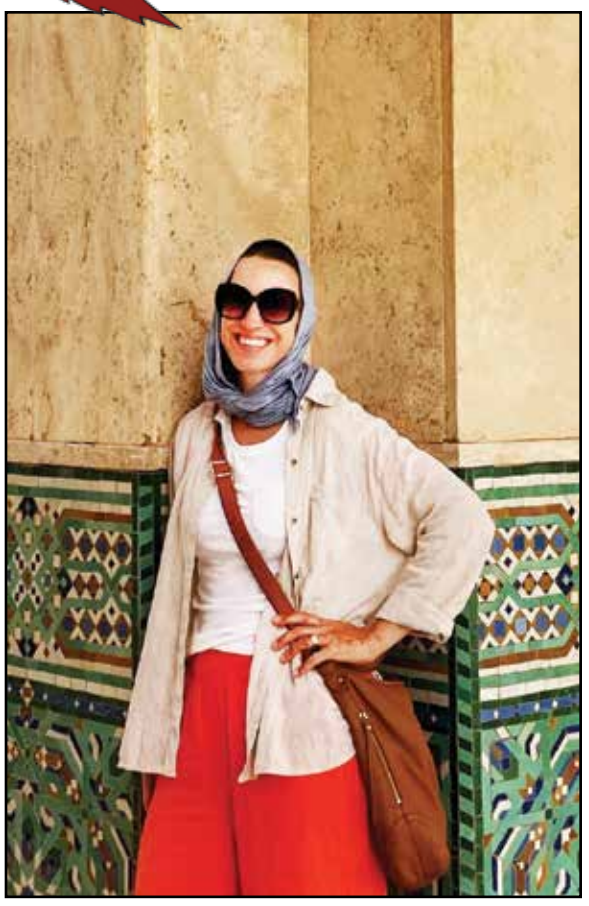
"What sets Ms. Sipiorski apart is her ability to create an environment where civil discourse flourishes," said Sarah Kopplin, WCSS president. "She teaches her students not only the importance of disagreement in democracy, but also the tools to navigate these disagreements with respect and understanding. In her classroom, students are encouraged to engage in thoughtful dialogue, listen to diverse perspectives, and debate ideas in a manner that promotes mutual respect, even when opinions differ. This approach fosters a culture of inclusivity and openness, ensuring that every student feels valued and heard."

The Teacher of the Year award is presented annually to a full-time high school social studies educator who demonstrates excellence in the classroom and is recognized by colleagues for their outstanding teaching. It honors educators who foster inquiry, inspire student engagement, and continuously seek to improve their knowledge and skills in social studies instruction.

The Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies is committed to enhancing social studies education at the K-12 level by offering resources, networking opportunities, and recognitions like the Teacher of the Year award.

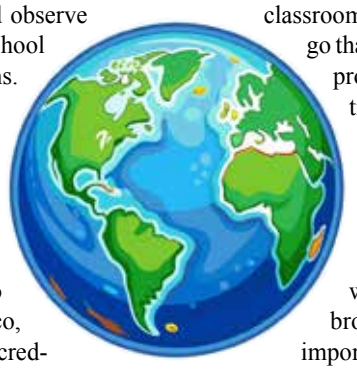
www.mcpasd.k12.wi.us

Global Educator of the Year Travels to Morocco; Inspires Students



2023 Wisconsin Global Educator of the Year, Jodi Resch Brownell on her visit to the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, Morocco. Photo: Jodi Resch Brownell.

This year, for the first time, the study abroad company CIEE invited the Wisconsin Global Educator of the Year award winner to go and observe one of their high school study abroad programs. Jodi Resch Brownell, Spanish educator and 2023–2024 Global Educator of the Year from School District of Crandon, was thrilled to be able to travel to Rabat, Morocco, to see two of CIEE's incredible programs in action. "We were able to learn a lot about Moroccan culture, including a visit to the Hassan II Mosque, an Ashura celebration, a home visit, and plenty of interactions with the students in the program. I was so impressed with their program that I am now trying to encourage my own students to do a summer study abroad," Resch Brownell said.



Resch Brownell was nominated for the award by former Global Educator of the Year, Danielle Chaussee. Resch Brownell reflected on the nomination and how it has informed her teaching. "As teachers, we need to do better at lifting up others and nominating colleagues for such awards. However, self-nomination is also an option so teachers who are making great efforts to bring globally-focused teaching to their classrooms and schools can also go that route. The application process is very self-reflective and makes you realize all of the ways your teaching connects kids to the world."

The Global Scholars program, which Resch Brownell brought to Crandon, is an important vehicle for Wisconsin schools to help students reach the four internationally recognized dimensions of global competence:

1. Knowledge of local, global, and intercultural issues
2. Respect for diverse perspectives and worldviews
3. Effective intercultural interaction and communication
4. Actions to improve conditions and collective well-being

Crandon is the smallest school thus far participating in the Global Scholars program, and Resch Brownell thinks it's important that, "our students... [get] to see that people from rural areas can win statewide awards like this and it makes them have more confidence in what they can accomplish."

One way to measure that impact? Student success. This year, four of Resch Brownell's Global Scholars students received the statewide recognition of the DPI's Certificate of Global Competence. This year, statewide the DPI issued 241 certificates, awarded in 40 districts.

And Resch Brownell continues to develop her and her students' global competencies. Working with several university professors, she is trying to bring more international and intercultural virtual exchanges to classrooms through the COIL Rural CommuniTIES project. "If more classrooms engage in these no-cost experiences for students, it will build global bridges for kids of all ages and they will grow up knowing so much more about other countries and cultures," she said. She is also part of the inaugural cohort of the Stevens Initiative's Global Champions, a group that is promoting virtual exchange worldwide.

The Global Educator of the Year Award isn't just an accolade or a prize. For Resch Brownell, it's a confirmation of the importance of global education for all students. "I hope that they travel to new places and are good ambassa-

Continued on Page 17

Liz Nelson Named National Middle Level Associate Principal of the Year

Elmbrook Schools

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) announced that Elizabeth "Liz" Nelson, Associate Principal of Pilgrim Park Middle School in Elm Grove, WI, is the 2025 NASSP National Assistant Principal of the Year for Middle Level Schools, in the award's inaugural year! This marks a momentous milestone for the Elmbrook Schools and Wisconsin educational leadership.

"Liz exemplifies outstanding leadership and dedication in her role as Associate Principal at Pilgrim Park Middle School," stated Principal Kelly Szesterniak. "Her commitment to building a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment has made a significant impact on both students and staff. This award is a testament to her commitment, hard work, integrity, and dedication to excellence."

"Assistant principals are the unsung heroes of education, working tirelessly behind the scenes to create safe, supportive environments where students can thrive," said NASSP CEO Ronn Nozoe. "Liz Nelson exemplifies what it means to lead with innovation and heart, transforming her school into a student-centered community of learning. At NASSP, we are proud to celebrate her achievements and remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting school leaders nationwide."

During Liz Nelson's five-year tenure at Pilgrim Park Middle School, she has helped lead a school culture grounded in inclusivity, accountability, and growth. Under her leadership, the school offers 35 student-driven clubs and activities, fostering a strong sense of connection and belonging. Her implementation of a student support system focused on early intervention has helped decrease behavior referrals by 40% and contributed to a 12% increase in student-reported belonging. The school has consistently earned a "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" rating on the Wisconsin state report card.

"On behalf of Pilgrim Park Middle School and our entire school district, I would like to express our appreciation to NASSP for recognizing Liz Nelson with this honor," said Dr. Mark Hansen, Superintendent of the School District of Elmbrook. "We have exceptionally talented leaders in our schools, and we are thrilled to be able to acknowledge their contributions."

Nelson received state recognition in November as the Wisconsin Associate Principal of the Year from the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA), which sponsored her national nomination. "Liz is an exceptional leader who reflects the strength and promise of the next generation of school leadership," said Jim Lynch, Executive Director of AWSA. "She models excellence, collaboration, and care in every aspect of her work. We proudly join the NASSP in celebrating her success."

The announcement came during NASSP's National Education Leadership Awards gala in Washington, D.C., which brought together State Assistant Principals of the Year, student scholarship winners, and national education leaders.

For the NASSP Assistant Principal of the Year program, each state selects one outstanding middle level or high school assistant principal to represent them. These individuals are chosen based on exemplary contributions to student learning, instructional leadership, and school culture. From this group, one middle level and one high school assistant principal are named national honorees.

elmbrookschools.org

Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Honors Outstanding Wisconsin Educators With 2025 Awards

Continued from Page 1

2025 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Teacher Fellows

CESA 1

Mark Anderson, *Waukesha West High School*, Waukesha

Grace Barr, *Franklin High School*, Franklin

Barbara Christofferson, *Indian Community School*, Franklin

JoEllen Dickert-Sturt, *Kettle Moraine Middle School*, Dousman

Stephanie Diedrich, Catholic Memorial High School, Waukesha

Megan Dixon, *Glenwood Elementary*, Greenfield

Noelia Enriquez, *ALBA*, Milwaukee

Ashley Fahey, *Reagan High School*, Milwaukee

Toni Fink, *Milwaukee Spanish Immersion*, Milwaukee

Jennifer Luna, *Saint Eugene School*, Fox Point

Patrick McCarty, *Milwaukee High School*, South Milwaukee

Caitlin McGaffick, *Divine Redeemer Lutheran School*, Hartland

Taylor Molitor, *New Berlin West Middle/High School*, New Berlin

Jane Picciolo, *Lutheran Schools*, Hales Corners

Kelli Rado, *Elmwood Elementary*, New Berlin

Jennifer Ruditys, *Muskego Lakes Middle School*, Muskego

Alek Shumaker, *Pilgrim Park Middle School*, Elm Grove

Baognia Stoeckler, *Saint Augustine Preparatory Academy*, Milwaukee

Rebecca Foster, *Pius XI Catholic High*, Milwaukee

Carrie Sullivan, *Milwaukee Parkside School*, Milwaukee

Patrick Gain, *Franklin High School*, Franklin

Alethea Sumbry-Cetnarowski, *Ninety-Fifth Street Elementary*, Milwaukee

Hannah Guth, *Brookfield East High School*, Brookfield

Alison Taxis, *Eisenhower Middle/High School*, New Berlin

Elizabeth Hartwig, *Saint Mary Parish School*, Menomonee Falls

Mitchell Thomas, *Frank Elementary*, Kenosha

Lauren Jagemann, *Golda Meir School*, Milwaukee

Ashley Van Galen, *Pilgrim Park Middle School*, Elm Grove

Curtis Kadow, *Kosciuszko Elementary*, Cudahy

Jennifer Vena, *Phoenix Project*, Kenosha

Matt Kotowicz, *Elmwood Elementary*, New Berlin

Shelly Weber, *Kettle Moraine Middle School*, Dousman

Kellie Krawczyk, *Fernwood Montessori*, Milwaukee

Lauren Wiske, *Asa Clark Middle School*, Pewaukee

Andy Levin, *Franklin High School*, Franklin

Julie Wollenberg, *Saint Augustine Preparatory Academy*, Milwaukee

CESA 2

Joel Coyne, *Sun Prairie East High School*, Sun Prairie

Julie Merow, *Indian Mound Middle School*, McFarland

Mary Jo Froden, *Conrad Elvehjem Primary*, McFarland

Katie Miller, *Indian Mound Middle School*, McFarland

Lumei Huang, *Verona Area International School*, Fitchburg

Andrea Schmidt, *Conrad Elvehjem Primary*, McFarland

Allison Jaeger, *Oregon High School*, Oregon

Emily Sonnemann, *Madison East High School*, Madison

Jennifer Magee, *Middleton Northside Elementary*, Middleton

Rod Stoughton, *Nettie E Karcher School*, Burlington

Jillian Malkow, *Brodhead High School*, Brodhead

Emily Wellentin, *Waubesa Intermediate*, McFarland

Liz Mehls, *Madison West High School*, Madison

CESA 3

Mark Acherman, *Darlington Elementary/Middle School*, Darlington

Lisa Bowen, *Highland Community Elementary*, Highland

CESA 4

Kelly Rueckheim, *West Salem High School*, West Salem

Kimberly Severson, *Arcadia High School*, Arcadia

Ev Wick, *Prairie View Elementary*, De Soto

CESA 5

Todd Breunig, *Sauk Prairie High School*, Prairie du Sac

Jenna McCann, *Merrimac Community*, Merrimac

Sarah Cahalane, *Lodi Primary*, Lodi

Emily Rennicke, *Sauk Prairie Middle School*, Sauk City

Kelli Fritz, *Westfield Area High School*, Westfield

Whitney Robarge, *Lodi High School*, Lodi

Luke Heath, *Mauston High School*, Mauston

Madelaine Trewin, *Westfield Area High School*, Westfield

Kirsten Johnson, *Sauk Prairie High School*, Prairie du Sac

Mary Walz, *Sauk Prairie High School*, Prairie du Sac

CESA 6

Aimee Knaus, *Gerritts Middle School*, Kimberly

Adrienne Rice, *Weyauwega High School*, Weyauwega

Jenny Matney, *4K Center for Literacy*, Kimberly

Kathy Zobel, *Haen Elementary*, Kaukauna

CESA 7

Tina Canadeo-Van Camp, *Westwood Elementary*, De Pere

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Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Honors Outstanding Wisconsin Educators With 2025 Awards

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Laurie Probst, *Sheboygan Falls Middle School*, Sheboygan Falls

Stacy Dippel, *Saint John Lutheran School*, Plymouth

Elizabeth Rodriguez, *Chilton Area Catholic School*, Chilton

Jamie Glandt, *Mishicot Middle School*, Mishicot

Brian Sommersberger, *Sheboygan South High School*, Sheboygan

Brian Hammar, *Mishicot Middle School*, Mishicot

Lisa Van Hefty, *Schultz Elementary*, Mishicot

Heidi Hintz, *Sturgeon Bay High School*, Sturgeon Bay

Morgan Vande Hey-Boldt, *Westwood Elementary*, De Pere

Dave Landers, *Pulaski Community Middle School*, Pulaski

CESA 8

Tammy Dantoin, *Gillett Elementary*, Gillett

Cara Shepherd, *Crandon Middle School*, Crandon

Mallory Nieft, *Wabeno Elementary*, Wabeno

CESA 9

Peter Aerts, *Northland Pines High School*, Eagle River

Scott McKenzie, *Northland Pines Elementary*, Eagle River

Robert Hughes, *NTC Alternative High School*, Wausau

Steven Miller, *Northland Pines High School*, Eagle River

Katherine Janssen, *Northland Pines High School*, Eagle River

Patricia Rickman, *Northland Pines Montessori*, Saint Germain

CESA 10

Rebecca Beaufeaux, *Holy Ghost Grade School*, Chippewa Falls

Morgan Mueller, *Owen-Withee High School*, Owen

Chuck Catt, *Augusta High School*, Augusta

Shelbie Walker, *Saint Charles Borromeo School*, Chippewa Falls

Kristine Dix, *Medford Elementary*, Medford

CESA 11

Stacie Hoff, *Dresser Elementary*, Saint Croix Falls

Melissa Sladky, *Saint Croix Falls Elementary*, Saint Croix Falls

Heather Keane, *iForward*, Grantsburg

Michelle Taylor, *Grantsburg High School*, Grantsburg

Tracy Metz, *Willow River Elementary*, Hudson

CESA 12

Elizabeth Bodin, *Bayfield Elementary*, Bayfield

Mary Smith, *Bayfield High School*, Bayfield

2025 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Principal Leaders

CESA 1

Amy Levek, *Whitefish Bay High School*, Whitefish Bay

Bonnie Scholz, *Catholic Memorial High School*, Waukesha

Jason Schreiber, *Meadow View Elementary*, Oconomowoc

Luke Spielman, *Park View Middle School*, Mukwonago

Charles Tollefsen, *Whitnall High School*, Greenfield

CESA 2

Brian Cox, *Verona Area High School*, Verona

Samuel Karns, *Todd Elementary*, Beloit

Kelsey Schmit, *Belleville Elementary*, Belleville

Nkaujnou Vang-Vue, *Lake View Elementary*, Madison

CESA 5

Mark Becker, *Necedah Middle/High School*, Necedah

Stephen Considine, *Baraboo High School*, Baraboo

CESA 6

Brandon Krause, *Prairie View Elementary*, Beaver Dam

Becky Schneider, *Allenton Elementary*, Allenton

CESA 11

Michael Kosmalski, *Prescott Intermediate School*, Prescott

Global Educator of the Year Travels to Morocco; Inspires Students

Continued from Page 14

The 2024 Crandon High School Global Scholars who earned their DPI Certificate of Global Competency: Bryce Marshall, Madison Thurow, Alexis Schallock, and Samara Kane

dors of America. I want them to be curious about other places and cultures and not be afraid to leave their comfort zones," she said, "And I definitely want them to consider the profession of teaching where they can have amazing travel experiences like I have had and use them as teaching tools for their own students."

The Global Educator of the Year Award recognizes outstanding educators at all levels. The program annually honors those who have succeeded in providing high-quality learning opportunities for students as well as demonstrating exemplary contributions to the profession specifically related to global education.

Courtesy of the WI DPI

www.sdofcrandon.com

Wisconsin's 2025 Principals of the Year — *Congratulations!*

Supported by the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation, the Principal of the Year award recognizes school leaders who have helped drive student learning, foster instructional collaboration, and create safe and positive school environments. Recipients are selected based on their dedication to professional excellence, leadership skills and service to their communities.

2025 Wisconsin Elementary School Principal of the Year Samuel Karns

The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators has named Samuel Karns as the 2025 Elementary School Principal of the Year.

Karns serves as principal of Todd Elementary School, a 4K-5th grade building in the School District of Beloit. In just three years, he has guided the school from a "fails to meet expectations" rating to "meets expectations" on the State Report Card. His leadership style centers on service and shared accountability, creating a culture where all staff, students, and families are empowered to succeed together.

Additionally, Karns has embedded a continuous improvement cycle into the school's leadership structure, using 100-day plans and data-informed decision making to identify needs and drive change. His efforts have expanded tiered supports for social-emotional learning, increased student engagement, and raised attendance by 2.7 percent year over year.

"As a principal, Mr. Karns leads with heart, purpose, and an unwavering belief in the potential of every student," said Superintendent Dr. Willie E. Garrison II. "His commitment to educational equity, community partnership, and continuous improvement has transformed Todd Elementary into a thriving, student-centered school. Mr. Karns is a model for what strong, servant leadership looks like in action."

Karns has been an active member of the NAACP, AWSA, HEAR (Health Equity Alliance of Rock County), and the Beloit Back to School CommUNITY Health Fair Planning Committee.

"On behalf of AWSA, we would like to congratulate Samuel Karns on earning the 2025 Wisconsin Elementary Principal of the Year award," said AWSA Executive Director Jim Lynch. "His vision, collaborative approach, and commitment exemplify the work of elementary school leaders across the state. This is a well-deserved honor for a truly dedicated school leader."

2025 Wisconsin Middle School Principal of the Year Luke Spielman

The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators has named Luke Spielman as its 2025 Middle School Principal of the Year.

Spielman serves as principal of Park View Middle School in the Mukwonago Area School District (MASD). There, he has focused on fostering a culture of continuous improvement, collaboration, and empowerment, while prioritizing relationship building and trust. He has led strategic efforts to restructure the school schedule, extend instructional time, and create protected collaboration periods for teachers, which have directly improved student outcomes.

Under Spielman's leadership, Park View has implemented inclusive, data-driven practices that close achievement gaps and promote college and career readiness. Proficiency among students with disabilities has improved significantly in both math and English Language Arts. Park View's DPI Growth Priority Score also rose from the 11th to the 75th percentile in just two years.

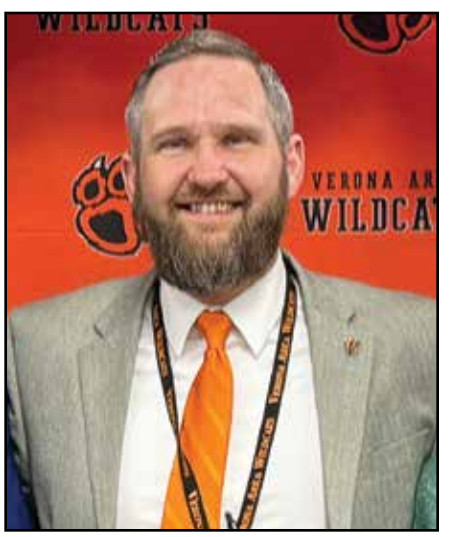
"Mr. Spielman is the kind of principal every community hopes for—thoughtful, strategic, and relentlessly student focused," said MASD Superintendent Dr. Joe Koch. "Under his leadership, Park View Middle School has become a place where students are challenged, supported, and inspired to grow. The impact of his leadership is visible not just in data, but also in the culture he has cultivated at the school."

Spielman cultivates leadership among staff and students, establishing structures like the Guiding Coalition and student government. He also extends his impact regionally, facilitating a professional network of 44 area middle school principals and teaching graduate-level education courses.

Before becoming Park View's principal in 2018, Spielman served as an associate principal in the Watertown Unified School District, and he began his career in education as a social studies teacher.

"On behalf of AWSA, I am thrilled to congratulate Luke Spielman on being named the 2025 Wisconsin Middle School Principal of the Year," said AWSA Executive Director Jim Lynch. "He leads with heart and vision, empowering staff and students alike to reach their full potential. He exemplifies the work that school leaders do every day."

2025 Wisconsin High School Principal of the Year Dr. Brian Cox



The Association of Wisconsin School Administrators has named Dr. Brian Cox as its 2025 High School Principal of the Year.

Dr. Cox is the principal of Verona Area High School. Known for transparency, servant leadership, and a commitment to equity, he has impacted the school by developing coherent systems that support all learners—especially those traditionally underserved.

Under Dr. Cox's leadership, VAHS has supported efforts like the Hope Team, Wildcat Academy, and schoolwide AVID implementation. These programs have contributed to measurable gains when it comes to student perceptions of safety, reduced disciplinary incidents, and expanded access to advanced coursework through Equal Opportunity Schools and AP enrollment. This has helped the school earn an AP Silver recognition.

"We are thrilled that Dr. Cox has been honored with the 2025 Principal of the Year award," said Superintendent Dr. Tremayne Clardy. "In his time at VAHS, he has proven himself a truly dedicated and dynamic leader, with a style that empowers students, staff, and families. This award is an enormous point of pride for our entire school community, and a well-deserved honor for a highly skilled educational leader who always acts in the best interests of the students he serves."

At VAHS, Dr. Cox has established advisory councils and restructured leadership teams into collaborative, data-driven units focused on continuous improvement. His advocacy extends beyond the building, as he has become a national voice for education policy through his work with NASSP and advocacy efforts at the federal level.

Prior to his time at VAHS, Dr. Cox was principal of Johnson Junior High School in Laramie, Wyoming. He also has experience as an assistant principal and associate principal. He began his career in education as a high school science teacher.

"On behalf of AWSA, I would like to congratulate Dr. Brian Cox for his selection as the 2025 High School Principal of the Year," said AWSA Executive Director Jim Lynch. "He is a great representative of the extraordinary work school leaders do every day throughout our state."

Courtesy of the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators

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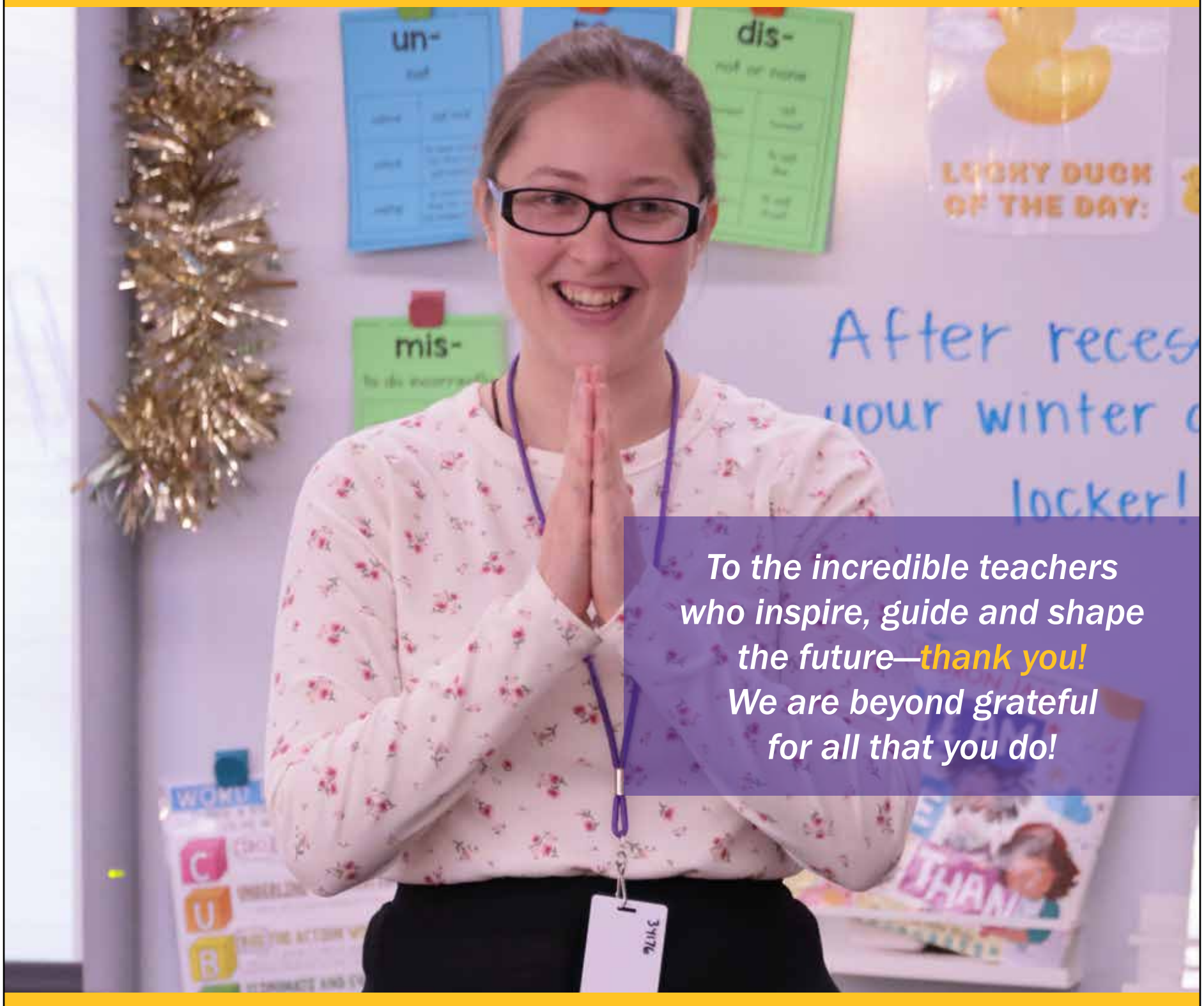

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SPRING 2025

Nearly a Half Million in Fab Lab Grants Awarded to 20 Wisconsin Schools

On May 1st the state announced that nearly $500,000 in Fab Lab grants will be awarded to 20 Wisconsin school districts to train students in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) skills and prepare them for careers using advanced technologies through establishing or expanding local fabrication laboratory (fab lab) facilities.

How It Works

The Fabrication Laboratory (Fab Lab) program is designed to support hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) education by assisting public school districts with equipment purchases used for instructional and educational purposes in fabrication laboratories in Wisconsin schools. The open Fab Lab environment enables students to learn the skills necessary to thrive in the 21st Century global economy. Fab Labs may also serve as a local economic development tool, providing a resource for entrepreneurs, businesses, and inventors through community access.

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) will provide grants of up to $25,000 to eligible Wisconsin public school districts, or up to $50,000 to consortiums of two or more public school districts, for the creation and/or expansion of fabrication laboratories within the school district(s). The minimum grant amount available is $10,000.

Applicants must supply matching funds equal to at least 50% of the grant amount provided by WEDC. Prior purchases of equipment may not be counted for grant reimbursement or the match amount.

Applicants may only be awarded one grant per fiscal year, with a lifetime limit of three grants (with exemptions to this limit for Milwaukee Public Schools.

"WEDC has invested over $5.5 million over the past ten years to provide 133 schools across the state with the equipment necessary to help students learn high-demand skills, including technology, manufacturing, and engineering," said WEDC Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes. "Fab Labs benefit not only the students themselves with important technology and career skills, but they also benefit Wisconsin employers, who will be able to find workers with the right skills to allow their companies to grow and thrive."

The following school districts were awarded Fab Lab Grants:

- *Elkhorn Area School District:* **$25,000**
- *School District of Nekoosa:* **$24,847**
- *DeForest Area School District:* **$25,000**
- *Albany School District:* **$25,000**
- *School District of Belleville:* **$14,824**
- *Nicolet Union High School District:* **$25,000**
- *Joint School District 1/Benton School District:* **$16,936**
- *School District of Arcadia:* **$25,000**
- *Alma Area Schools:* **$25,000**
- *CESA 3 (consortium):* **$49,872**
- *North Crawford School District:* **$24,856**
- *Weyauwega-Fremont School District:* **$20,000**
- *Luck School District:* **$25,000**
- *Muskego-Norway Schools:* **$21,688**
- *Whitnall School District:* **$25,000**
- *Tri-County Area School District:* $25,000
- *School District of Monroe:* **$25,000**
- *Ellsworth Community School District:* **$25,000**
- *Westosha Central High School District:* **$25,000**
- *Pewaukee School District:* **$24,176**

WEDC received 29 total applications for Fab Lab Grants. The grants were awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, with applications evaluated based on readiness and long-range planning, curriculum, business and community partnerships, financial need, and previous awards.

For more information on the Fab Lab grants, including resources for teachers, and to apply visit wedc.org/fablabs

For more information about the schools receiving the grants visit pages 24–34 of this publication.

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR: Renee Feight
EDITORIAL: Andria Reinke
PAGE COMPOSITION: Andrew Clausen
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Please direct articles, advertising, questions or comments to:
Manufacturing Today WI ™
PO Box 1704
Eau Claire,WI 54702
Phone/Fax 715-839-7074
www.manufacturingtodaywi.com

Please direct all inquiries to:
renee@teachingtodaywi.com

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IN THIS ISSUE OF MANUFACTURING TODAY WI™

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Nicolet Union High School Receives $25,000 Fab Lab Grant to Improve Innovation Arts Programming

Jeff Pruefer, Director of Business Services
Adam Thiel, CTE Instructor and FEAR Robotics Leader
Nicolet Union High School

Nicolet Union High School District encompasses the northeast Milwaukee County suburbs of Bayside, Fox Point, Glendale, and River Hills. Covering a 16-square-mile area, Nicolet is a four-year public high school with approximately 1,100 students. Nicolet ranks among Wisconsin's highest in per-pupil expenditures (financial investment in its school), serving a multicultural community. While many Nicolet graduates pursue post-secondary education, the school equally emphasizes a robust school-to-work curriculum.

In 2020, a district-wide facility study led to a community-approved $77.4M capital referendum to update Nicolet's facilities. A substantial portion of this investment was directed towards the Innovation Arts Department. The Innovation Arts Department was recently developed to integrate career and technology education into a more cohesive model. The Innovation Arts Department includes Business, Technology & Engineering, Visual Arts, and Family & Consumer Science. This new structure encourages cross-disciplinary collaboration among students and teachers, fostering connections and enhancing learning outcomes.

A comprehensive Fab Lab is a component of Innovation Arts, integrating courses such as Introductory 2D Art, Entrepreneurship, Woods and Metal Fabrication, Engineering and Robotics, Production Graphics, and AP Art Installations. Projects blending design, business, and fabrication allow students to experience the entire product lifecycle, from concept to market. The recent Fab Lab expansion supports increasing student demand and the need for hands-on, interdisciplinary learning.

The Nicolet High School Fab Lab is designed for contemporary Technology and Engineering practices, focusing on flexibility and adaptability. Students learn additive and subtractive machining using equipment like tabletop CNC routers and 3D printers. This equipment introduces students to industry-aligned processes and essential skills. The Fab Lab also includes professional-grade equipment, such as CNC mills, lathes, plasma cutters, and advanced finishing tools for wood and metalwork. Powder coating, airbrushing, and advanced graphic applications enhance students' hands-on experiences, helping them develop industry-standard skills and craftsmanship.

Nicolet's Fab Lab project is supported by several industry partners. These partnerships offer students mentorship, materials, and access to industry-standard practices, enriching the educational experience and better preparing them for future careers. Adam Thiel (instructor and FEAR Robotics Team Leader) is instrumental in leading the District's engineering and manufacturing coursework. Utilizing his talent and knowledge in CNC and manufacturing processes, Adam has developed training modules to support staff and build student skills.

The $25,000 Fab Lab grant that the District recently received was utilized to purchase precision measurement tools. These tools equip students with high-demand skills for both the workforce and post-secondary education. District staff are currently being trained on the recently purchased equipment with full integration into courses planned for the fall of 2025. The incorporation of precision measurement tools will allow students to gain additional industry certification and will further prepare them for the modern workforce.

If you have any questions surrounding the Nicolet FAB Lab, please reach out to Adam Thiel at adam.thiel@nicolet.us. If you have any questions surrounding seeking financial resources as it relates to CTE programming, please reach out to Jeff Pruefer at jeffrey.pruefer@nicolet.us.

www.nicolet.k12.wi.us

Building Futures: Green Bay Youth Apprenticeship Program

Green Bay Packaging is an integrated, full-service manufacturer that produces custom corrugated packaging, folding cartons, and coated label products throughout its 40+ nationwide locations. Our operations also include a forestry division, lumber mill, and paper mills that use innovative sustainability processes to supply eco-friendly paper to the industry. Within our manufacturing facilities, we always seek ways to engage with and develop the next generation of employees through programs like the youth apprentice program.

Youth apprentices working in the manufacturing industry gain valuable technical and interpersonal skills that prepare them for successful careers, whether they seek employment right after high school or continue their education. Safety is paramount at all GBP manufacturing locations. Apprentices learn how to work with machinery and equipment in a manner that prioritizes their well-being and that of their colleagues. They are trained to identify and mitigate potential hazards, use personal protective equipment, and adhere to safety protocols to ensure a secure working environment.

GBP offers two types of youth apprenticeships, one in manufacturing and one in maintenance. A *manufacturing youth apprentice* works with a wide variety of equipment and manufacturing processes where they gain exposure to equipment and processes, including robotics and automation used to move and store products, perform material handling tasks within the facility, and even help sort and ship products coming off the lines. A *maintenance youth apprentice* works in a hands-on learning environment, assisting tenured technicians with preventive maintenance, troubleshooting and equipment installation including electrical, pneumatic, hydraulic, mechanical, server, and PC systems as well as general building maintenance.

At GBP, we work with high school students to ensure a good fit between their interests, skills and the roles available. As noted by Kristyn Johanek, Human Resources Manager, Folding Carton Division, "most apprentices are initially hired for the manufacturing role because many high school students are unsure about their career path and this role allows them to explore various tasks and jobs." For example, a mechanically inclined student may be placed in the maintenance department and a student interested in printing or graphics may be placed in the printing department. At the end of the apprenticeship, students can transition to full-time employment or continue working while earning their degree.

With our headquarters in Green Bay and ten manufacturing locations throughout Wisconsin, Green Bay Packaging offers an unparalleled platform for youth apprentices to explore and discover the vast career opportunities available in modern manufacturing. The skills, knowledge, and experiences gained during their apprenticeship set them up for success within the manufacturing industry and equip them with transferable skills beneficial across various sectors.

Green Bay Packaging is dedicated to sustainability, community engagement, and talent development in the manufacturing industry. Through initiatives like the youth apprentice program, the company is not only contributing to the immediate needs of the industry but is also investing in the long-term development of its workforce and the broader community.

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Weyauwega-Fremont High School Enhances Fab Lab with Major CNC Router Upgrade

Weyauwega-Fremont School District

With the Fab Lab Grant, Weyauwega-Fremont High School is excited to purchase a 4' x 8' Industrial CNC Router with a Rotary Axis and Vacuum Hold Down system. This is a major upgrade from our current 24" CNC router and will greatly expand the opportunities available to students in our Industrial Arts program. With this new equipment, students will be able to take on much larger and more complex projects, using precision tools and technology that align with current industry standards.

This enhancement transforms our Fab Lab from a small-scale, introductory workspace into a professional-grade learning environment. The larger CNC router allows students to design and fabricate projects such as full-size furniture, detailed signage, and intricate woodworking pieces. The rotary axis adds the ability to create three-dimensional carvings and cylindrical work, while the vacuum hold down system provides safer, more efficient operation for large-scale materials.

Our Industrial Arts program has long emphasized hands-on, real-world learning. Students engage in a range of design and construction projects, focusing on woodworking, furniture building, cabinetry, and custom signage. The program helps students develop technical skills, craftsmanship, and problem-solving abilities that are essential in skilled trades and manufacturing careers. With this new upgrade, we can push the boundaries of creativity and capability, offering students a deeper understanding of digital fabrication and modern design techniques.

This investment is not only about equipment—it's about giving students access to cutting-edge tools that prepare them for the future. As technology continues to transform the workforce, our goal is to ensure students graduate with practical experience and confidence in using tools they are likely to encounter in post-secondary programs or in the skilled trades. Whether students are planning to enter a technical college, pursue engineering, or explore entrepreneurship, the Fab Lab experience helps them build a solid foundation.

In addition, the expanded capabilities of our Fab Lab open the door to new community and cross-curricular opportunities. We envision collaborations with local businesses on real-world projects, student-led fabrication of school or community signage, and even interdisciplinary projects that combine art, design, and technology. The lab serves as both an educational and creative space, fostering innovation and collaboration among students and staff.

This grant represents a meaningful step forward for Weyauwega-Fremont High School's commitment to career and technical education. Our Industrial Arts department continues to evolve with the needs of students and the demands of today's economy. By providing access to professional-grade tools and experiences, we empower students to take pride in their work, explore their interests, and build skills that matter.

With our upgraded Fab Lab, the future is full of possibilities—for our students, our school, and our wider community.

We believe that when students are given access to the right tools and opportunities, they can exceed expectations and unlock their full potential. This investment in our Fab Lab is more than just a purchase—it's a commitment to student growth, innovation, and career readiness. We're excited to watch our students take ownership of their learning, think like designers and engineers, and create work they can be proud of.

As we look ahead, Weyauwega-Fremont High School remains dedicated to providing a modern, hands-on education that not only prepares students for the workforce but also inspires them to dream bigger, build better, and lead the way into the future.

wegafremont.k12.wi.us

School District of Luck Awarded $25,000 Fab Lab Grant

School District of Luck

On May 1st, Wisconsin's governor and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) announced that the School District of Luck is a recipient of a $25,000 state grant to fund new equipment and learning opportunities for their fabrication laboratory (fab lab). WEDC's Fab Labs Grant Program is designed to support hands-on learning in the subjects of science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) by assisting public school districts with equipment purchases such as 3D printers, laser engravers, computer numerical control routers, and plasma cutters for instructional and educational purposes.

Luck's current fab lab is centrally located within the 4K–12th grade school building, ensuring accessibility for all students. Its design encourages integration across grade levels, allowing students to explore hands-on learning opportunities regardless of their age or subject focus. With the WEDC grant, the district will be able to continue growing their fab lab, adding new equipment like a UV Printer, expanding the curriculum, and offering more learning opportunities that tie classroom knowledge to real world applications. For students, this grant will open doors to STEAM related skills and experiences that are vital in today's workforce, while also fostering a deeper connection to the community.

The district's goal is to have the fab lab accessible to all students, faculty, and even community members. They envision the lab being used for various purposes, including educational workshops, community events, and as a resource for local entrepreneurs. Community access will be facilitated through an online reservation system, and training courses will be offered to ensure that individuals are comfortable using the equipment. They anticipate that the lab will be used for a wide range of activities, such as personal projects, professional development, and collaborative community initiatives. Additionally, the student Fab Lab team will play a key role in assisting community users, helping to foster a greater sense of connection between students and the broader community.

In 2020, Custom Cardinal Creations was developed to give high school students real world experience in starting and running a small business. The fab lab has allowed these students to create apparel for sports teams, staff shirts, and personalized gift items. This past fall, Custom Cardinal Creations developed an online store to make it easier for the community to support their student-led business. These grant funds will not only allow the students to expand their business by being able to carry a wider variety of items, but it will also continue to provide students real world experiences that they can carry with them for years after high school.

As a small rural district, Luck faces unique challenges that include limited resources and fewer opportunities for hands-on learning and innovation.

However, they view these challenges as opportunities to bridge the gap between education and the community, turning their fab lab into a critical resource that can serve as a hub for creativity, collaboration, and skill-building. The WEDC funding is vital to the continued success and growth of the Luck fab lab and will make a profound impact on the educational and economic future of the School District of Luck and the surrounding area.

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Fab Labs Build Student Competencies in Belleville Schools

Late Teacher Planted Seeds Of Success

The fabrication laboratory (fab lab) at Belleville High School is more than a collection of high-tech machines used to propel discovery and critical thinking. That's a tribute to the commitment of Ed Neumann, a dynamic and award-winning tech education and trades teacher who championed the idea and set Belleville schools on the path to fab-lab learning.

Neumann died unexpectedly on Christmas Day in 2022, at age 46, during a deer-hunting trip. Today, the legacy of the man who advocated for the lab and engineered two of the district's three WEDC Fab Labs grants—for a combined $44,600—is being carried forward by enthusiastic faculty and administrators as Belleville was awarded another $14,824 in the latest round of grants.

"Ed will be remembered for his dedication to and belief in his students," says Belleville Superintendent of Schools Nate Perry. "Ed would always learn along with his students. He'd try to learn the machines before his students, but often he'd refer questions to a 16-year-old, because they were the expert."

Fab labs open new frontiers

Today, Nico Berthelon, Neumann's energetic successor, advances that legacy, connecting trades to academics, entrepreneurship, and success in life.

"Even if our kids don't go into this field, the fab lab helps build an understanding of math and an appreciation for problem-solving and troubleshooting," Berthelon says. "It opens their minds to new ways of doing things."

Fab labs are generally outfitted with high-tech 3D printers, computerized routers, laser cutters, robotic gear, and computer-aided design software. Using these tools, students gain real-world tech skills and build their critical thinking capacities.

In addition to using the equipment in trades classes, the high school has created a Wildcat Manufacturing class. In the class, students take engineering and trades concepts and manufacture items that are sold in the community, with proceeds helping to fund trades education. They've produced Christmas ornaments, Adirondack chairs, campfire log grabbers, planter boxes, and custom orders for signs and trophies.

"There's a lot of value in getting them career-ready," says Erik Farrar, the district's business manager. "It's an opportunity to be creative, be able to make mistakes, learn from that, and move forward to plan bigger projects."

The district is also part of Project Lead the Way, a program that aligns with Next Generation Science standards. Rebecca Johnson, the district's director of teaching and learning, said the K–12 program exposes students to engineering and science concepts.

"Our discovery teacher at the elementary school uses Project Lead the Way plus the fab lab to get our students started in coding, engineering, and building to try to boost the interest," she says. "So, as they continue through our system, we have continued excitement in our fab lab."

Hands-on experience in the real world

Access to the high-tech gear enables students to grow their skills and deploy them into the workforce. Three Belleville High School students have youth apprenticeships at Kelsch Machine Corp., applying the skills they've gained in the lab.

"Businesspeople know that these students have a supervisor at school who's always checking on them, and they know what they're getting as a youth apprentice in terms of work ethic and attitude," Perry says. "And students can decide if this is something they want to do as a career."

Courtesy of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

belleville.k12.wi.us

DeForest Area School District Expands Fab Lab with State Grant Continued from Page 1

expand our capabilities and give even more students access to experiences that inspire creativity, innovation, and confidence in their abilities. It's amazing to watch them discover what they're capable of."

Dr. Rebecca Toetz, Superintendent of DASD, emphasized the grant's significance, stating, "We are grateful to receive this Fab Lab grant which will allow DASD to integrate advanced tools and technology into our classrooms and build real-world skills in the areas of technology, engineering, and design. This opportunity not only enhances student learning but also helps prepare them with skills needed for the changing workforce."

Overview of CTE and Industrial Arts Programs

At DeForest Middle School, students in grades 7th and 8th have access to a variety of engineering and manufacturing classes through the Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Industrial Arts programs. These classes include STEM Robotics, STEM Architecture, STEM Challenges, and STEM Fabrication, providing students with hands-on experiences that cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.

The expansion of the Fab Lab aligns with DASD's commitment to preparing students for success in the 21st-century economy. By investing in these resources, the district aims to equip students with career-ready skills and inspire them to pursue future pathways in STEM fields, thereby fostering a skilled workforce and contributing to economic growth within the community.

With this grant, DASD continues to lead in educational innovation, ensuring that students have the tools and opportunities they need to thrive in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. The future looks promising

as the district continues to empower students to become tomorrow's leaders and innovators in STEM.

www.deforest.k12.wi.us

Fab Lab Grant Assists in Preparing Students for 21st-Century Careers

North Crawford School District

North Crawford is a small, rural district located between Soldiers Grove and Gays Mills in the heart of Wisconsin's Driftless Region. The K–12 campus serves about 400 students in a single building, with approximately 62.5% qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Despite economic and geographic challenges, participation in the district's CTE programs has grown significantly in recent years.

North Crawford School District is taking a major step toward preparing students for 21st-century careers with the help of a $25,000 state grant to establish a fabrication laboratory, or "fab lab." The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) awarded the grant as part of a statewide initiative to expand access to high-tech education. North Crawford is also contributing a local match of $12,500, bringing the total investment in the new lab to $37,500.

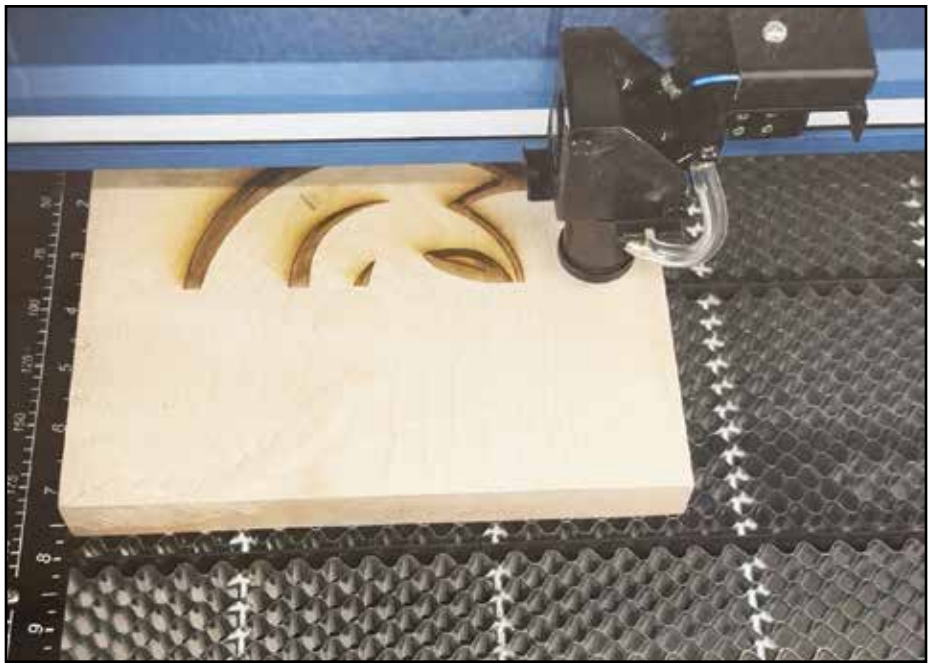
Fab labs are educational makerspaces that equip students with access to modern technology, providing hands-on learning in science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM). North Crawford's fab lab will feature equipment such as 3D printers, laser engravers, and CNC machines, allowing students to explore STEAM concepts through real-world, creative projects.

The district's Career and Technical Education (CTE) team will collaborate with teachers across multiple disciplines to create cross-curricular projects that integrate design, engineering, digital art, and fabrication. Students will engage in tasks such as drafting and 3D-printing prototypes, creating digital artwork using modeling software, and developing problem-solving skills through practical applications.

"I am absolutely thrilled to announce that North Crawford has been awarded the FAB Lab grant! This is a game-changing opportunity for our students, giving them access to cutting-edge technology and hands-on experiences in STEM, manufacturing, and design. It will elevate our curriculum and prepare students with the skills and innovation mindset needed for success in the modern workforce. Mr. Keenlance has an outstanding vision for integrating this technology into our classrooms, and I have no doubt it will ignite creativity, curiosity, and career exploration across grade levels. This is a major step forward for our district, and I couldn't be more excited for what's ahead!"

— Dr. Robert Sailer (6–12 Principal)

North Crawford's approach to Technology Education emphasizes real-world applications of academic concepts and promotes collaboration among students of all backgrounds and abilities. Every 7th and 8th-grade student is required to take a Technology Education course, and the district plans to continue expanding access to these resources across all grade levels.



With the launch of the fab lab, North Crawford aims to serve as a model for how rural schools can overcome barriers to provide cutting-edge educational opportunities. The combined investment from the state and local community represents a shared commitment to ensuring students are prepared for the evolving demands of the global workforce

northcrawford.com

Albany School District Fab Lab

Kurt Soderberg, Superintendent
Albany School District

The Albany School District is committed to providing our students with a modern design and production experience. To maximize that opportunity and minimize the financial impact, we applied for a Fab Lab grant through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to support technology upgrades in our program.

Building a foundation of excellence in technical education requires a strong base of knowledge and skills. This space will serve our 6-12 students through middle school exploratory classes and high school technology and computer courses. Every middle school student will be able to experience the wide-ranging tools provided. We recently added a large-format printer, enabling students to produce stickers, banners, posters, and many other products on materials up to 54 inches wide. This upgrade offers hands-on experience allowing students to develop essential design and production skills to help them prepare for future career opportunities.

We also repurposed our desktop computers and moved to a more powerful and flexible laptop platform. This allows students to change their workspace to meet the unique needs or location of a project. Our 6-12 students will be introduced to Adobe Illustrator and Versaworks beginning in middle school and will continue to hone their skills throughout high school resulting in the creation of high-quality printable designs to promote our school and community.

We will modernize our classroom space to allow a better collaborative production experience. Our focus is on equipping our students with modern skills to match modern challenges as we continue to build our program.

In recent years, we added video production software, 3D printers, and a plasma cutter to our array of modern tools. Students are regularly engaged in projects that serve our school and community. Many of these things wouldn't be possible without the support of our WEDC partners.

We are grateful to the WEDC for providing this opportunity!"

www.albany.k12.wi.us

Shaping Workforce Training Across the Midwest with Wolter and Virtual Forklift

Wolter is working together with schools and businesses to change how forklift training happens across the Midwest. It all started at Osseo-Fairchild High School in western Wisconsin, where students are learning to operate forklifts using virtual reality. Now, that momentum is spreading fast.

By teaming up with Virtual Forklift, Wolter is bridging the gap between schools, businesses, and communities. Together, they are addressing key workforce challenges—such as preparing students for in-demand careers, modernizing outdated training programs, and creating clear pathways from education to employment.

This isn't just new, it's better. Virtual forklift training combines classroom lessons, VR simulations, and real-time feedback to teach real-world skills faster and safer than ever before.

Bringing Industry and Education Together

Manufacturers across the Midwest are rethinking how they train new hires. Traditional methods are slow, expensive, and often unsafe. That's where Wolter comes in, offering training programs and tools for companies, schools, technical colleges, and training centers. When these entities come together, custom programs can be developed that make sense for everyone involved. Students get valuable training. Employers get job-ready candidates. It's a win-win.

Here's how it works:

- **Schools** don't need expensive equipment or warehouse space, just a VR simulator.
- **Students** learn skills like fork controls, maneuvers, & how real warehouses operate.
- **Businesses** gain access to a pool of trained workers who are ready to go.

As the first and Midwest exclusive dealer for Virtual Forklift, Wolter provides the tools, setup, and support needed to make these programs successful. These aren't video games, they're realistic, hands-on training systems designed by expert forklift trainers like Wolter's own Tony Parsons. The common hazards that cause incidents in the real world are in the VR environment. Students become accustomed to proper operational procedures initially and are reminded when they stray from the standard with lower scores instead of injuries or damage to property and product. Each system comes with realistic controls, training dashboards, and support so instructors can run classes with confidence—no tech background required.

Why This Matters Now

Manufacturing, like many other industries, is facing a shortage of skilled forklift operators. Older workers are retiring, and younger ones aren't filling the gap fast enough as the tribal knowledge leaves the workplace. VR is allowing the retention to be higher with minimal risk while employees, and employers, look to increase the skills available to move up and advance careers.

That's why smarter training matters. Trained forklift drivers have great confidence and are less likely to cause accidents or leave the job early. With Virtual Forklift and Wolter's support, companies and schools can train better—and faster.

Whether you're using a full-featured VR system or a multi-user classroom setup, you'll be able to:

- Teach turning, stacking, loading & unloading
- Simulate real warehouse layouts & challenges

Wolter works with each customer to match the right simulator and training modules to their facility's specific needs—so every skill taught has a purpose.

Real Success, Real Impact

Recently, Wolter partnered with a local school and a major automotive manufacturer to create a full training-to-employment pipeline. Students started by learning forklift skills through virtual reality simulations in the classroom, then transitioned to hands-on experience at the employer's site. By the time they graduate, they were prepared to step directly into the workforce with real-world skills.

It's the kind of alignment more businesses are looking for—and Wolter can help make it happen.

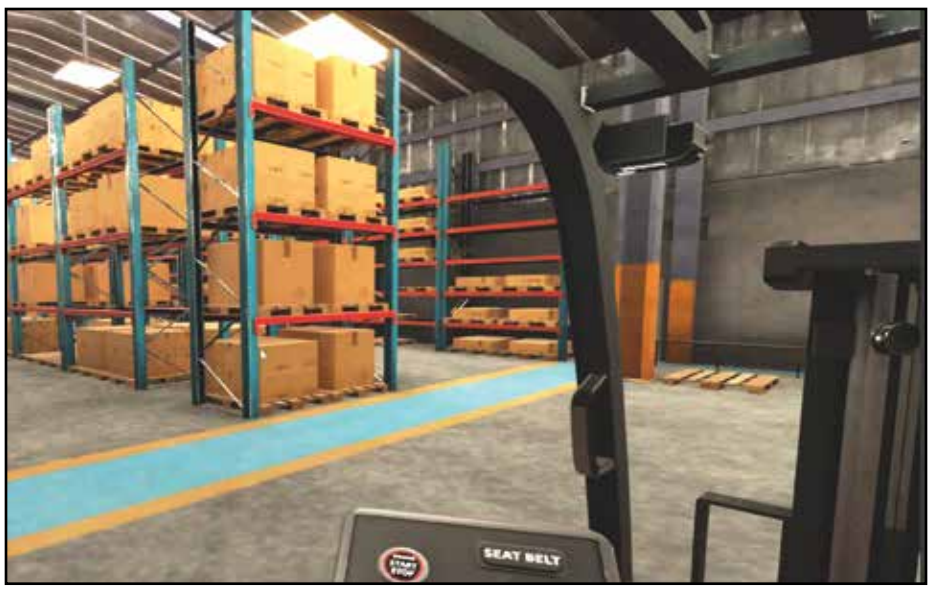
We support every step:

- Helping schools and businesses find the right setup
- Training instructors to use the system
- Customizing programs for your goals

Choose Between Individual Progress or Live Remote Training

At Wolter, we understand that every training environment is different. That's why we offer two distinct Virtual Forklift systems to fit your needs—whether you're focused on individual development or collaborative remote learning.

NEXUS is a solo training system that pairs a high-end VR headset with a powerful gaming computer, offering over 20 modules with realistic attachments like fork extensions, clamps, and rotators. Trainees can practice placing and removing loads of all sizes in dynamic warehouse scenarios, with visual and audio feedback guiding their performance. Progress is tracked and saved for trainers and students to review together and plan next steps.



LIVE takes things further with a shared virtual environment. Trainers, students, and observers can all interact in real time—no matter where they're located. From walking around a forklift for a pre-shift inspection to managing cones and load placement, this system supports full class sessions with multi-media learning and immersive coaching.

Both systems are designed to sharpen skills, correct bad habits, and prepare your team for real-world performance.

Why Wolter Makes Sense for Your Business

When you bring VR-integrated training to your facility, you're doing more than just modernizing—you're making a smart investment in your people and operations. Wolter helps you get the most out of your training program by offering:

- **Readiness** – New hires show up prepared with added skills
- **Retention** – Confident, skilled workers stick around longer when they enjoy training
- **Funding Opportunities** – Grants & workforce programs may be available
- **Stronger Communities** – Supporting education builds long-term trust
- **Growth** – Training programs that grow as you grow with more modules & features
- **Safety** – Fewer accidents and lower costs while having more production time

Whether you're retraining current employees, bringing new talent up to speed, or improving communication between operators and pedestrians, Wolter's VR forklift simulators give your team the tools they need to succeed—safely and efficiently.

Take the Next Step

This is about more than just technology. It's about strengthening today's workforce and preparing the next generation of skilled workers. Virtual forklift training shows students that there are real job opportunities available now—with long-term potential in industries like food & beverage, manufacturing, and warehousing & distribution.

If you're in education or business leadership, don't wait. Reach out to Wolter to schedule a demo and see how Virtual Reality forklift training can fit into your program.

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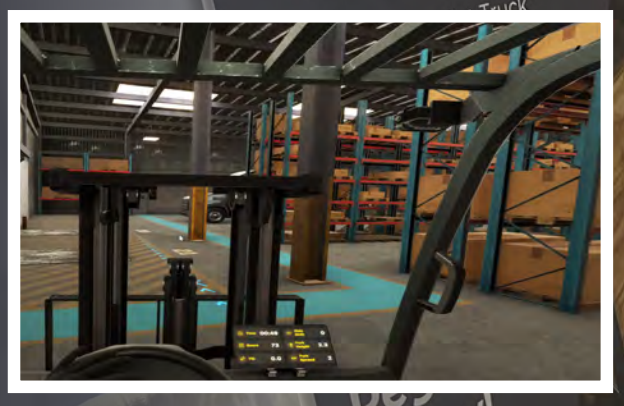

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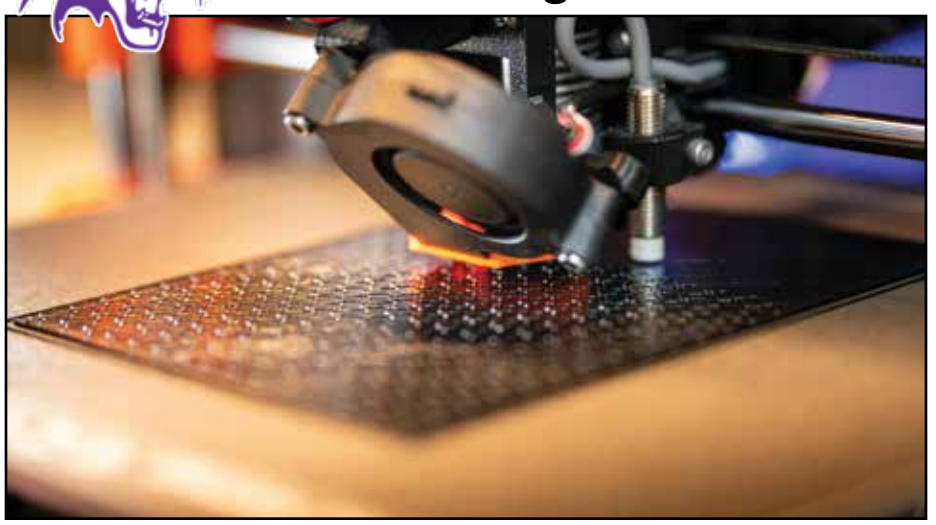
Ellsworth High School Awarded Fab Lab Grant



Ellsworth High School has been awarded a $25,000 Fab Lab Grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), a significant boost to the school's efforts to modernize and expand its manufacturing and technical education facilities. The funding will support the purchase of new manufacturing equipment, allowing for immediate enhancements rather than phased upgrades over several years.

This grant comes on the heels of a major investment by the Ellsworth Community School District. In the spring of 2024, district voters approved a building referendum exceeding $25 million. The funds are earmarked for substantial renovations to both the middle and high schools, with a strong emphasis on upgrading the Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs at Ellsworth High School.

The district's commitment to CTE is evident in the comprehensive upgrades planned across multiple departments. In Family and Consumer Science, the school will install a fully remodeled kitchen area, which includes an industrial kitchen and a coffee roaster—adding both instructional versatility and real-world experience for students. These updates are designed to reflect modern industry standards and better prepare students for careers in hospitality and culinary arts.

The Agriculture department is also undergoing a transformation. Plans include the addition of a fully operational greenhouse and a new laboratory area. These upgrades will offer students hands-on experience in plant science, horticulture, and agricultural technology—fields that continue to grow in importance and innovation.

Perhaps the most dramatic transformation will take place in the Tech Ed department. A 6,000 square foot addition will dramatically expand opportunities in manufacturing, welding, and construction trades. The welding program, for example, will grow from just four booths to 14, greatly increasing student access and capacity. New state-of-the-art equipment, including CNC mills and lathes, will be introduced, providing students with the tools and training found in modern industrial settings. The expansion will also offer more room and resources for small engines and construction classes, supporting a broader range of technical skills.

The Fab Lab Grant plays a critical role in accelerating these improvements. By providing funding up front, the district can make key equipment purchases during the first year of operation in the new facility rather than spreading them out over time. This jumpstart ensures students will benefit immediately from the district's investment in advanced technical education.

Construction is scheduled to be completed in time for the start of the 2025-2026 school year. In celebration of the new and improved facilities, Ellsworth High School is planning an open house event in September 2025. The event will showcase the new equipment, expanded spaces, and highlight the district's dedication to providing students with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in today's workforce.

This initiative marks a bold step forward for the Ellsworth Community School District, reinforcing its commitment to hands-on learning, innovation, and preparing students for high-demand careers in technical fields. The combination of local support, state funding, and visionary planning ensures that Ellsworth High School will remain a leader in Career and Technical Education for years to come.

ellsworth.k12.wi.us

Fab Lab Grant Brings State-of-the-Art Equipment to Monroe High School

Cara Carper, Student Occupation & Academic Readiness (SOAR) Coordinator Monroe School District

Monroe High School is delighted to join the school districts across Wisconsin that have received Wisconsin Fab Lab grants from the state. The $25,000 Fab Lab grant will allow the Monroe School District to replace old, outdated equipment with new, state-of-the-art equipment that will advance architecture, engineering, and construction studies with computer design and physical prototyping.

The equipment in the Fab Lab will also be integrated into other classes at Monroe High School, including the LAUNCH program—a collaborative classroom experience featuring project-based learning to solve real-world problems in the community—and other computer and technology education classes.

The district is currently building a new high school, which is expected to open for the 2026-2027 school year. The new building will include specialized learning areas for the equipment, but staff will work to set up the equipment over the summer so that students will begin to learn on the new equipment this fall.

We asked Chuck Lynch, technology and engineering teacher at Monroe High School, about the impact of this grant.

What was your reaction to learning the Monroe School District was awarded a $25,000 Fab Lab Grant?

The construction of our new high school is going great, but we also quietly wondered how we were going to be able to maximize the benefits of our new facility with outdated and inadequate equipment. Receiving this Fab Lab grant turned our quiet concerns into ecstatic cheers! Because of this grant, we will have state-of-the-art equipment that will make our new facility exemplary in every measurable way!

Why are Fab Labs important for student learning?

Traditionally, Tech. Ed. programs offer exploration and experience primarily in woodworking, metal working, and perhaps engines and automobiles. Fab Labs provide opportunities for students to go beyond traditional programs by offering the latest technologies that can advance architecture, engineering, and construction studies with computer design and physical prototyping. By increasing the "technology" in Technology Education, Fab Labs offer students new opportunities to creatively develop solutions for real-world problems from concept to prototype. Furthermore, students can be introduced to more career and vocation choices for their futures.

How will the Fab Lab help Monroe High School students?

Here at Monroe High School, this new equipment will enable our students to become more proficient in computer-aided design and development while learning the industry-standard software programs that we teach. Students will also be able to create physical prototypes of their design solutions, using a variety of materials and methods, in order to better evaluate and improve their designs. These benefits will especially take our C.A.D.D. and Project-Lead-The-Way pre-engineering classes to the next level of learning and opportunity.

*B*What excites me most about our new Fab Lab facility and equipment is how it will remove many of our current barriers to learning. We will no longer be hindered by outdated and inadequate equipment, which makes learning more limited and difficult. It is also our hope that the success of our programs will provide inspiration and motivation for other schools in our county to join us in expanding their programs for the sake of their students!

monroeschools.com

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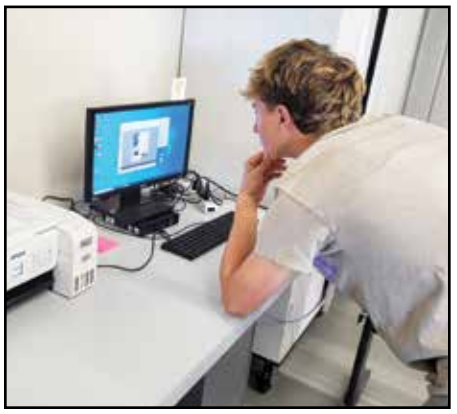
Grant Significantly Enhances Capacity and Impact of Whitnall's Fab Lab



Whitnall School District

In 2018, the Whitnall School District took a major step forward by passing a referendum that provided essential funding to upgrade its technical education facilities. This investment laid the groundwork for the school's first Fab Lab—an innovative, hands-on learning space designed to enhance Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Equipped with a few 3D printers, vinyl cutters, and a laser engraver, the original Fab Lab brought a new level of engagement and creativity to the classroom. Since its inception, it has served as a hub for project-based learning, helping students build critical thinking and problem-solving skills while exploring pathways in STEAM.

Whitnall's CTE program is committed to providing students with meaningful, career-aligned learning opportunities from middle school through high school. Anchored in three primary pathways—Health Sciences, Computer Science & IT, and Manufacturing & Engineering, the program offers a progression of skills-based experiences beginning in sixth grade. Students explore coding, design, robotics, and engineering through courses and enrichment opportunities, including the middle school Makerspace and the MADE program. At the high school level, students can earn industry certifications, enroll in dual-credit courses, participate in Youth Apprenticeships, and engage in internships and service learning. The CTE program supports Whitnall's mission to deliver comprehensive, purpose-driven learning while helping students build personalized learner profiles that prepare them for postsecondary success.

Thanks to the recent Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Fab Labs grant, Whitnall High School will expand its existing Fab Lab to include advanced fabrication tools such as CNC routers, additional laser engravers, upgraded 3D printers, and enhanced collaborative workspaces. This expansion will significantly enhance the Lab's capacity and impact—providing students with greater access to high-tech tools and the ability to take on more complex, interdisciplinary projects.

The expanded Fab Lab will directly benefit students by increasing access to industry-standard equipment, reducing wait times, and allowing for more equitable participation across courses and extracurricular activities like robotics and design clubs. It will also enable the district to offer industry-recognized certifications in areas such as CNC operation, 3D modeling, and laser engraving, with a target of 50 certifications completed annually. These credentials will empower students to demonstrate real-world technical proficiency and gain a competitive edge in college admissions and workforce entry.

Moreover, the Fab Lab's expansion will support cross-curricular integration. Engineering students will design and fabricate prototypes, art students will create digital installations, and business students will produce and market custom products. This interdisciplinary approach fosters collaboration, creativity, and applied problem-solving—all essential skills in today's job market.

Beyond school walls, the Fab Lab will serve as a valuable resource for the greater community. Local businesses will engage with students through internships and mentorships, while families and community members will have access to workshops and training sessions. These connections help bridge the gap between

classroom learning and real-world application, ensuring that Whitnall graduates are well-prepared for future careers.

By expanding our Fab Lab, Whitnall High School is investing in a future-focused learning environment that promotes academic excellence, career readiness, and community engagement—ultimately preparing students to lead, innovate, and thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

www.whitnall.com

Senior Rowan Pemble Forges a Bright Future in Welding

Mercer School District

For Mercer School senior Rowan, a chance encounter in the shop class her freshman year sparked a passion that has shaped her future. On the last day of class, her instructor, D'kota Engler, asked, "Hey, have you ever welded before? Give it a try." That simple challenge led to a journey of skill-building, confidence, and career readiness.

By her sophomore year, Rowan was excelling in welding, picking up techniques quickly. Living with Tourette's syndrome, she found that while some careers, like tattoo artistry or hairdressing, weren't ideal due to muscle control challenges, welding provided a creative outlet where she could thrive. "I still got to be creative in a way that wasn't destructive if I ticked," she explained. With D'kota Engler's encouragement, she realized just a month later that welding could be more than a high school class—it could be her career.

Through Mercer's welding program, Rowan earned dual-credit (courses that earn both high school and college credit) that gave her a head start at a local technical college. With guidance from school counselor Amanda Kopka, she made the strategic decision to stay in high school while completing her college credits, allowing her to save thousands of dollars in tuition.

When she finishes her program at the college, Rowan will graduate with two technical diplomas:

- Welding Technical Diploma
- Maintenance and Fabrication Technical Diploma

Unlike certifications, which cover individual skills, a technical diploma means Rowan will be fully trained in all aspects of welding, including working with various metals like stainless steel and aluminum, as well as techniques like TIG, MIG, stick, and flux core welding.

After graduation, Rowan plans to enter the workforce, looking for welding opportunities in the Waukesha area. With strong job prospects and proximity to family and friends, she sees it as the perfect place to launch her career. She's also already made a smart financial move, saving $10,000 and purchasing her own welding equipment—a long-term investment that will serve her well in the field.

Rowan hopes more young women consider careers in the trades. "It's important from an early age to involve girls in trades and show them that it's a possible career," she said. "If you set your mind to it and believe you can do it, anyone—especially women—should take that leap." At Nicolet, she's found strong support from instructors who believe that women often make excellent welders due to their patience and attention to detail. She also emphasizes the importance of early exposure to hands-on skills, noting that students in grades 5-8 at Mercer get the opportunity to explore the building trades. "It's a great life skill, even if you don't pursue it as a career," she said. "Everyone should have basic knowledge in things like cooking, car repair, and welding. Teaching kids when they're young makes it fun and less intimidating."

With her skills, training, and determination, Rowan is well on her way to a successful welding career. Her journey is a testament to the power of hands-on learning, strong mentorship, and perseverance. Mercer School celebrates her success and looks forward to seeing where her path leads next!

www.mercer.k12.wi.us

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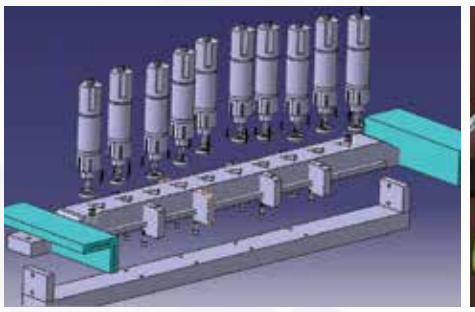

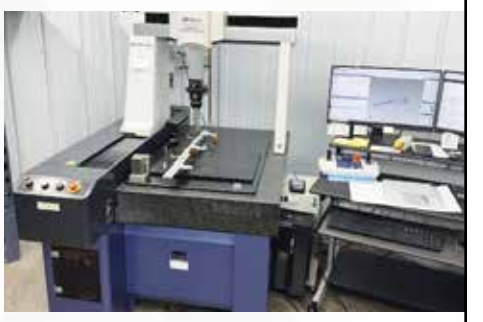


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Milton Redhawk Manufacturing

Technology Education Department
Milton High School

Over the last two years, Milton High School's manufacturing and welding program has been experiencing a bit of a rebirth. Since coming under the leadership of instructor, Terry Schindler, the programming for all areas of Technology Education at Milton High School has undergone a complete rewrite and rebranding process, which has resulted in major growth in all areas.

The welding and manufacturing course enrollment alone went from 158 to 220, which is an increase of 62 students in the courses since last school year. We have used this momentum to apply for grants and in-kind donations from our industry partners over the last two years.

The School District of Milton has been awarded the AWS Welding Workforce Grant for just over $24,000. Those funds were used to update some electrical and to add 6 Miller Multimatic 220 welders to the shop. This has increased the abilities within each of our welding booths taking us from 7 SMAW machines to 13 as well as adding GTAW and GMAW with the newer machines.

Another Milton instructor, Mason Pautsch, authored a DWD Workforce Development Grant, which was used to replace our old 4' x 4' PlasmaCam table with a newer larger 4' x 8' Boss CNC plasma table.

To help increase awareness and grow our program we also offered a Summer Welding Workshop for Girls. We had 26 participants who were able to learn about the field of welding and produce several take home projects along with practicing GMAW welding skills. The young women were treated to a "Lunch and Learn" session each day where they were able to learn about careers available from our industry partners. To wrap up the week-long workshop we held a round-table event where women from industry were able to talk about their experiences within the trades and what it has meant to them.

When Mr. Schindler started, we only had 2 or 3 industry partners. He has grown that to 12 active partners, who can be called on at any given time to collaborate on projects and shop initiatives. His extensive ties to the local community have afforded him the opportunity to grow these partnerships. We have also increased our number of Youth Apprenticeship opportunities over the last two years and are actively working with our partners to grow that part of our program even more.

Our students are the biggest beneficiaries of all of this hard work and dedication of our instructors. Students are able to take up to 6 different manufacturing and welding courses here at Milton High School. Most students will complete the capstone courses earning them the AWS SENSE level 1 certification, which is a great achievement for our students. Being a one-to-one district, our students are able to utilize computer programs like Autodesk Fusion 360 to create designs that they can cut on the new plasma table. This adds valuable knowledge of current technology to the hands-on approach in the shop environment.

Our students' futures are in mind as we add more CNC equipment and continue to grow and improve our program here at Milton High School.

www.milton.k12.wi.us

Spartan Manufacturing: Superior's Only Student-Led Business, Built For A Thriving Tomorrow

David Coy, Spike Gralewski,
and Adam Kuhlman
School District of Superior

Since its inception, Superior High School's Spartan Manufacturing has been a major partner in local industry in the Duluth-Superior area. The mission is quite simple: expose students to a variety of trades and industries and close the skilled trade gap so businesses in the area can thrive. But how did it all start? How did a student-led business become one of the fastest-growing classes in Superior? How can a school create something similar from the ground up?

To Get Started You Have To Get Started

In the Spring of 2022, the Superior High School (SHS) Technical Education Department (Tech Ed) started having conversations about how to best serve the community and keep our students engaged. Countless students loved the classes and wanted to take up a career in the trades. At the time, most Tech Ed courses ended junior year. Teachers Adam Kuhlman and Spike Gralewski took feedback from the students and started to look for options.

"We decided that starting a Student-Based Enterprise (SBE) was the route that we wanted to take our program," said Gralewski. "An SBE would allow students to run the business, connect with clients, marketing, create the product, and even handle billing. Adam and I could advise. Students with a capstone experience could find their way into a successful career."

It was nearing the end of the 2021-2022 school year, and Gralewski and Kuhlman knew creating an SBE would be a massive undertaking. Additional materials, along with a course book, would be needed. The two Tech Ed teachers approached Dr. Amy Starzecki, the School District of Superior District Administrator, about visiting the School District of Eleva-Strum's Cardinal Manufacturing. The workshop allowed school districts to see how a student-led business could operate and gave tips on structuring a class. Shortly after, Dr. Stazecki invited the teachers to present to the Superior School Board about the program. During the presentation on June 6, 2022, interest in the class grew.

"Shortly thereafter, it seemed like things moved pretty fast," said Kuhlman. "Spike started to work on a logo that we use today, and I contacted many local businesses. We figured we would connect with Cardinal Manufacturing and Tiger Manufacturing, the School District of Maple's program, and Webster School District to best create a roadmap for starting an SBE."

In November, the class was approved.

Don't Reinvent The Wheel. Make Sure The Wheel Fits Your Vehicle.

To do additional research on presenting new skills and processes to students, the teachers toured local business facilities. In turn, they invited local industry to tour our shops and make suggestions for improvement. Gralewski and Kuhlman believe that it's best to tailor your SBE to fit the unique needs of your community. Start small.

In the fall of 2022, Spartan Manufacturing started with seven students with a 7th-hour study hall, a soft launch for the program. The students developed relationships with local manufacturers and landed their first sale for 1,000 Yeti-style tumblers for two local businesses.

"Following that, word of mouth spread," said Gralewski. "People came in pitching ideas, and we made dozens of plasma-cut signs for families. We built off that early momentum.

Continued on Page 38

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Raider Manufacturing: A New Chapter in Central Wisconsin's Workforce Future

Wayne Kroeplin
Career and Technology Education
Marathon High School

In a quiet shop space inside Marathon High School, something extraordinary is taking shape: a student-run manufacturing business where young people aren't just preparing for the real world—they're stepping into it.

Raider Manufacturing, set to formally launch in winter of 2026, is a partnership between Marathon High School and the Central Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance (CWIMA). The initiative is the latest example of how schools and industry leaders can collaborate to solve one of Wisconsin's most urgent challenges: rebuilding the skilled trades talent pipeline.

The idea started with CWIMA, which approached Marathon High School with a bold vision—to build a student-run manufacturing business from the ground up. They have committed to supporting the program by helping connect the school with private sector partners, assisting in sourcing funds and equipment, and fostering long-term relationships between students and real-world industry professionals.

"This is exactly the kind of model CWIMA was created to support," said Conney Edmondson, Executive Director. "We're not just talking about workforce development—we're creating direct, hands-on experiences that give students a real sense of purpose and possibility. Raider Manufacturing is going to change lives—and we're proud to be part of it."

Though still in its early stages, Raider Manufacturing has already made an impact. This school year, students built custom kitchen cabinets for a local family in need, using advanced software and CNC machinery to simulate a real-world production environment. The project not only served a humanitarian purpose but also allowed students to learn advanced manufacturing processes while earning compensation for their work.

The program has also dabbled in wood signs, benches, furniture pieces, and repair work—all part of a pilot effort to test products and services for their manufacturability, profitability, skill requirements, and most importantly, fun. The curriculum aims to cover a wide spectrum of trades and disciplines, including both wood and metal fabrication, building trades, and principles of engineering and design.

But the vision goes much deeper.

"We want students to feel less like they're at school and more like they're part of a high-performing manufacturing team," said Wayne Kroeplin, the lead educator behind the effort. "They'll explore roles in product design, automation, robotics, Lean principles, Six Sigma, quality control, marketing, and more. It's not just about building things—it's about building confidence, maturity, and career direction."

Fourteen students are already enrolled in the program for the 2025–26 school year, with more expected as word spreads. The goal is to create a company culture that mirrors the best of modern manufacturing—where employee engagement, accountability, and pride in workmanship are at the center.

Wayne adds: "We want this to be an amazing experience—something that challenges students to be their best selves, and shows them they can be valued, contributing members of something much bigger than themselves."

Programs like Raider Manufacturing are becoming a national movement, inspired by successful models in states like Indiana, Missouri, and Michigan. But in Wisconsin, CWIMA is helping lead the charge—ensuring that the next generation of workers doesn't just read about the future of manufacturing but becomes a driving force within it.

marathon.k12.wi.us

Spartan Manufacturing Continued from Page 36

Your best marketing is from those in your community and the relationships you created."

Share Your Vision

SHS students began sharing the vision for Spartan Manufacturing with anyone who would listen. SHS joined the local technical college's advisory board, presented the Rotary Club, the Superior City Council, and the Superior-Douglas County

Chamber of Commerce. These presentations led to countless other networking opportunities and helped build excitement within the surrounding community for this new approach to learning in our Tech Ed.

Prepare Yourself And Students For Success. How Can We Help?

"The program is in its third year, and we've come a long way," said Kuhlman. "We are still improving the workshop thanks to local investments and will continue to see progress. Right now, we have about 30 students in our class. We developed a five-year plan for our SBE. We now have local industry partners reaching out to see how they can help their organization."

On May 7, 2025, Spartan Manufacturing hosted its second open house, which welcomed countless community members and businesses. That night, stakeholders approached Spartan Manufacturing to discuss how they could help take the class to the next level.

One of Superior's guiding principles is Pay It Forward. They work daily to instill in our students and wouldn't be where they are without relationships. If you want to learn more about Spartan Manufacturing and want to reach out, head to www.spartanmfg.org.

Timeline of Events

- **2017** — Superior Visits Maple's Tiger Manufacturing, CESA 12 workshop
- **March 30, 2022** — Discussion with Superior administrators to bring a manufacturing capstone program to SHS
- **April 19, 2022** — Superior travels to Cardinal Manufacturing for workshop to start a student based enterprise
- **June 6, 2022** — Gralewski and Kuhlman presents to Superior School Board to create a new class
- **Summer 2022** — SHS Tech Ed meets with businesses in the Twin Ports to discuss partnerships: Swanstrom, GMP, Lakehead Constructors, Alltech, Epicurean, and Cenvous Energy/Superior Refinery.
- **September 2022** — Soft launch of Spartan Manufacturing, 7 students in program
- **September 2022** — First major order was placed. Cenovus ordered 500 tumblers for $6,000
- **October 2022** — Gralewski joins Superior Industrial Maintenance Advisory Board
- **December 21, 2022** — Spartan Manufacturing holds press conference to announce grant partnership with Cenovus, $50,000
- **February 7, 2023** — Spartan Manufacturing presents to Superior City Council to discuss their class
- **May 24, 2024** — Spartan Manufacturing hosts first community open house. Cenovus Energy awards another $50,000 to help build welder booths.
- **November 12, 2024** — Spartan Manufacturing hosts CTE jamboree
- **May 7, 2025** — 2nd Open House held, program raises over $7,000
- **July 28–31, 2025** — Spartan Manufacturing hosts first summer school class, "Manufacturing Boot Camp"

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