



Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board

MEDIA RELEASE



1325 California Ave, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3Y6 ph: (519) 253-2481 fax: (519) 253-0620

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Solid Foundation

New masonry program prepares students for meaningful careers, addresses skills gap

(Windsor, Ontario, Friday, June 19, 2015) – Local students will have the opportunity to gain a solid foundation for the future now that the WECDSB is offering a brand new masonry sciences program.

The program, which will be offered at F.J. Brennan Catholic High School in September, was announced at a ceremony at the school today. Developed in partnership with the Canada Masonry Centre, the secondary program is the first of its kind in Canada. Besides instructing students about the basics of masonry and brick-laying trade, it also introduces them to a variety of technologies, technical print and measurement reading, familiarization with building products and materials, proper tool handling, health and safety curriculum, ergonomics, and various roles on construction job sites. Students will work throughout the semester on projects, with a final masonry assignment representing a real life task in the trade.

While part of the program's aim is to address a current skills gap in the trade, it also prepares students for a wide variety of occupations according to John Blair, Executive Director of the Ontario Masonry Contractors' Association.

"It's not just about being a bricklayer or a stone mason," he said. "Graduates from this program can go into an apprenticeship, construction technology programs at community college or into engineering programs at university, and they'll have a great head start because they'll already understand the nomenclature of the trade. From there, they can go in to project management or a whole host of other professions. Their value to potential employers is going to be very high."

The current skills gap in the trade is a pressing problem for local builders according to Tony Masciotra, president of the Ontario Masonry Contractors' Association, and the local firm Con-Tact Masonry Ltd.

"Young people haven't been going into this trade for a while and that's created a real problem for us locally," he said. "We're delighted that the board is offering this new program. Students need to know they'll be learning a highly sophisticated trade that could lead them to a great career and an excellent standard of living."

Offering such a program is just one part of the WECDSB's vision to do something concrete and meaningful about better training students to fill the increasing number of skilled trades jobs that are being left vacant in this region, according to Director of Education Paul Picard.

"Learning together in faith and service"

“As a board, we have an obligation to educate students and direct them into the pathways that match their individual aspirations,” said Picard. “But we also have a civic duty, to do what we can to support the local economy, and an important part of that is in trying to direct students towards professions that are in need of young talent here.”

As a graduate of F.J. Brennan, Board Chair Barbara Holland said she’s delighted her alma mater will be offering such an important new program.

“One of our board’s priorities is to create a culture of innovation, and this program does just that,” she said. “It exposes students to a great experiential learning opportunity, which never would have happened without a critical partnership with our friends from the Ontario Masonry Contractors Association. We hope to pursue more of these types of collaborations in the future so that we can provide even greater opportunities for our students.”

Part of the F.J. Brennan Centre of Excellence & Innovation, the program’s courses will be taught by Marko Senjanin, who recently completed Level One of the masonry apprenticeship program after finishing an eight week training course at the Ontario Masonry Training Centre in Mississauga. So far, about 55 Grade 9, 10, and 11 students have registered for the program, he said.

Senjanin has spent the last three months preparing the Masonry Learning Centre to provide students with a real life learning environment. A significant investment has been provided to launch of the program, with major construction to retrofit the shop including a proper ventilation system, designated cutting and mixing areas, masonry storage and student workstations that mirror industry standards.

“We can’t wait to get started in September,” Senjanin said. “The students are all very enthusiastic about getting in to the lab and learning the hands-on part of the trade.”

For further information contact:

Stephen Fields, Communications Coordinator
Cell: 226-347-0113, E-Mail: Stephen_fields@wecdsb.on.ca