

Building for the Future

Construction Academy students get real world experience



Cory McAiney demonstrates how to safely use a nail gun to Construction Academy students at St. Joseph's Catholic High School.

By Lindsay Hanifan

(Windsor, Ontario, Thursday May 24, 2018) - Students involved in the WECDSB Construction Academy are learning transferable skills that will provide them with a wide variety career options well into the future.

“The future is looking very bright for our Construction Academy students,” says Marko Senjanin, lead masonry teacher at F.J. Brennan Catholic High School, one of the two schools involved in the academy, which is open to Grade 11 and 12 students enrolled with the board. “There is a high demand for this career path, as there are many new upcoming jobs such as the Gordie Howe International Bridge approaching. This line of work will need lots of employees to accomplish the job.”

While students at Brennan learn the masonry trade, over at nearby St. Joseph's Catholic High School, students learn other construction-related trades such as framing, electrical, and plumbing.

With the masonry focus at Brennan, students learn how to lay bricks in such decorative patterns as a common bond, English bond, and Flemish bond, as well as how to use a masonry saw to make different brick cuts, and understanding when and how mortar is ready to properly lay bricks. In Grade 12, students build brick columns and learn to work with cement blocks.

In the construction segment at St. Joseph's, students have learned to frame a small house, and in partnership with the Kiwanis Club, built four cabins for the Sunshine Point Camp in Harrow, which is for deserving children around Windsor-Essex. In the upcoming weeks, students will also build a home with Habitat for Humanity in Leamington, bringing to eight the number of homes built by students.

“Working on partnerships in communities such as this one, are an excellent opportunity for students to improve their skills and showcase their talents while giving back to the community,” says Cory McAiney, lead construction teacher at St. Joseph's.



Through the Construction Academy, students have the option to begin their apprenticeship in high school through OYAP (Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program). By the time they graduate, they have already completed more than 1,200 apprenticeship hours.

Students gain valuable experience in their trade, and have the opportunity to network with many contractors, and employers. Through their co-op placements, students get real “on the job” experience, where they learn directly from Red Seal Masons, Carpenters, and other Skilled Trades. Many students who are in their placement have been told by their employer that they are looking to hire them full time once they graduate high school.

Students also receive multiple certifications through the program such as Working at Heights, WHMIS training, CPR and first aid, and confined space training. Providing these services to students in the program are great not only for them, but also for their future employers, as they won't need to complete this basic training before starting their job.

Grade 10 students interested in the program go through an application and selection process. Through the interview, students are asked specific questions to determine whether they would be a good candidate. Any student who prefers hands-on work would be a great fit for the

program, according to Senjanin. If selected, Grades 11 and 12 are primarily focused on the Construction Academy, while incorporating the necessary classes to graduate.

Being involved with the Construction Academy has been extremely gratifying for McAiney.

“This has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career,” he said. “I get a great sense of pride when I see our students succeed, both in the classroom and on the job.”

Click here for the Construction Academy video: <https://youtu.be/pRXMDODiBuA>