

Students introduced to construction skills in popular tech ed course

Work crews often operate under tight schedules, but students in the construction class of Ozaukee High School technology education teacher Jerry Hoffmann faced a deadline that couldn't be missed — the end of the school year.

With careful planning, and dogged attention by Hoffmann, the students put the finishing touches last week on three 10-by-12-foot sheds that they designed and built as trimester projects.

“We charge the customer essentially the cost of the materials we use plus a little extra for tools, so they are getting a really good price.

The students talk to the client about how they want the building customized, create a model with the modifications requested and prepare a cost estimate for the materials needed,” Hoffmann said.

“Because of all that effort, the kids end up with a real sense of ownership in the buildings.” All of that comes before the students start using hammers and saws. Eventually, class members do everything from installing windows to applying roofing.

When the sheds were completed, they were transported to the customer's property and placed on slabs. Pouring the foundations is one aspect of the building project the students are not involved in.

“The students have control of the projects, but I watch them very carefully. We want to make sure the customer is satisfied, and that everything is done correctly,” Hoffmann said.

“I don't know how many of these students are going to end up working in the construction trades, but they are picking up useful skills they can use when they, hopefully, become homeowners.”

Although the construction class had 22 students for the third trimester, Hoffmann said interest has waned in many technology education classes in recent years.

“We used to have three teachers in the department. Now, it is me and (part-time teacher) Ray Hug,” Hoffmann said.

In addition to the construction sessions, Hoffmann teaches rotating classes in cabinetmaking, home maintenance, woodworking, power tools and computer-aided drafting.

Hug teaches the metalworking class, but also serves as an unpaid instructor in an independent study program on robotics.

Since arriving in the district two years ago, Hug has been a relentless advocate for expanding the technology education classes at Ozaukee High.

Ozaukee High class building for the future

Written by MARK JAEGER

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“I look at tech ed as real-world learning. We have to realize this is a changing world. Living on credit is becoming a thing of the past. To succeed in this economy, students are going to have to prove they can produce,” Hug said.

“The best way to keep students engaged, and to bring test scores up, is to make sure what they are learning is relevant.”

Hug is also pushing to expand technology education classes into the middle school and blending technical offerings with the options available through the district’s virtual program.

“For a small school district like ours having the experience it does with the virtual program, I think we are sitting on a gold mine,” he said.