

## Mounds View Students Build Solar-Powered Ice Fishing Houses, Gain Real-Life Construction Experience (and College Credit!)



Across the United States, high schools have responded to the needs of high achieving high school students by offering numerous opportunities to earn college credits, from AP and IB courses to partnerships where students are taught entry-level college courses in the high school.

For the most part, college credit is geared to students who plan to attend a liberal arts college or university, with courses being offered in subjects such as biology, calculus, world history, or a language, such as Spanish, French or German.

Often overlooked are students who intend to take a different path with their lives following high school. Students who dream

of working with both their minds — and their hands — in construction-related careers such as plumbing, pipefitting, welding or ironworking.

Fortunately, that gap in educational opportunities for some high school students is changing. And a good example of this is the Construction and Solar Energy pathways program offered through Mounds View Public Schools (District 621). The program is available to both students of Irondale High School and Mounds View High School, the two public high schools within the 621 District.

“Several years ago, we realized we needed to offer opportunities for our students to learn more about high-demand, high-wage jobs in the construction-related trades,” says Michael Werner, Mounds View School District’s Coordinator of Post-Secondary Planning. “By partnering with the MnSCU system, we now not only offer opportunities to begin learning a trade, but a process that allows them to earn credit toward a two-year or four-year degree.”

“In other words, we’re creating more options for our students — they can either pursue a career in construction immediately out of high school, or they can enter a Minnesota state college or university, or both,” Werner says. “More options is a good thing for students who are trying to discern a future career path.”

One such opportunity being offered to students attending the district is the Construction and Solar Energy course. The two-hour, one semester course (September through January) taught by instructor Mark Ahlers,

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## A Hidden Gem and a Different Path —

## St. Paul Central High School Automotive

Matt Lijewski has been teaching automotive technology at St. Paul Central High School for the past 13 years. His path was not the traditional one taken by most teachers.

Matt was born and raised on the east side of St Paul and attended Sacred Heart Catholic school through the 8th grade. While attending Harding High School, he discovered his passion in life, automotive. “I had an incredible automotive teacher (Mr. Walker) that fueled my knowledge and interest in my passion for cars.”

After graduating from high school, Matt pursued an Associate Degree in Automotive Technology and went on to work in the automotive industry for 20 years as a transmission and driveline specialist. Holding certification as a National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) and Automatic Transmission Rebuilders Association (ATRA) master technician, he worked very hard to become the very best in his automotive career by constantly training and keeping up to date on the latest technology changes in the automotive field.

Matt felt his career had become stagnant and was looking for a change that was both challenging and personally fulfilling. He heard of a job opening at Central High School as an automotive instructor and though that might



be a new and interesting career where he could utilize his personal experience and extensive automotive knowledge to educate the youth of St Paul.

“My interview went very well, and I was immediately given the position as automotive instructor as a licensed community expert,” said Matt. “I entered the teaching profession without the benefit of any teacher education or training. Basically, I was given the keys and had to either sink or swim. Unfortunately, the former instructor had taken all of the materials with them, and I had to create my own lesson plans, worksheets, tests, learn how to interact with staff and students and most importantly, making sure my students left the shop with all of their fingers and toes intact.”

Matt worked to become a fully licensed teacher. In 2015, he graduated with a degree

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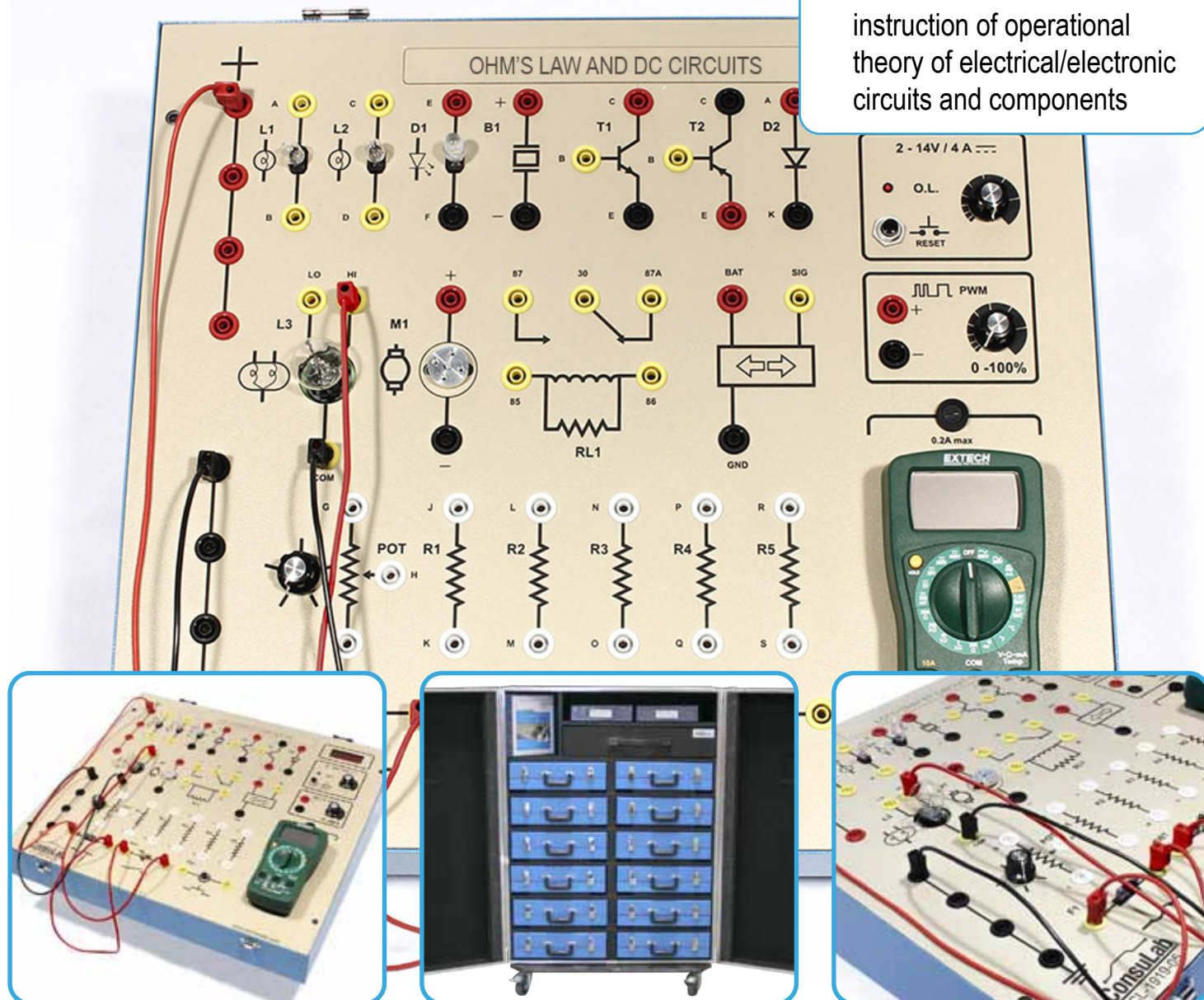
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Art by Calvin "Sonny" Clarke  
 Kitten in the Clothes Basket, 2020

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## Mounds View Students Build Solar-Powered Ice Fishing Houses Continued from Page 1



allows students to learn and work together to build a solar-powered ice fishing house that meets real-life building codes.

“Any student in grades 10 through 12 can take the course and learn skills such as basic plumbing, how to produce technical drawings, read building plans, build models/prototypes, and develop safe working practices,” says Werner. “While at the same time, earning credit”.

What evolved from a conventional wood construction class has turned into a partnership between the Mounds View School District, the local college, the Minnesota State Energy Center of Excellence, the St. Paul Building Trades Council, the Minnesota Trades Academy, and Construction Careers Foundation. Through this partnership, students have access to a mobile classroom focused on alternative energy along with the solar lab at the college.

“The St. Paul Building Trades, Construction Careers Foundation, and the Minnesota Trades Academy have been instrumental in helping Irondale develop this class and curriculum,” says Werner.

“We’re proud to have had a hand in crafting this very special program at Irondale,” says Don Mullin, executive secretary of the St. Paul Building and Construction Trades Council. “The Mounds View school district is doing an amazing job and this program is making a difference in the lives of young people. There is a huge appetite at high schools across our state for programming similar to what Irondale has achieved.”

As part of the *Multi-Craft Core Curriculum*, students learn from solar installation companies that send representatives to share information and insight about installing solar energy systems. In working with solar installation companies, students gain knowledge about the basic components of a solar energy system, such as how energy works, how to prep for solar panel installation, and how to

calculate the cost and the return on investment (ROI) for solar energy systems.

In addition, students participate in fieldtrips outside of class. In the future, the high school would like to invite more building trades professionals to come into the classroom and share their insights about careers in construction.

By mid-January, the students will have completed their solar-powered ice-fishing house and will sell it to purchase materials needed for program’s next building project. The ice fishing house will likely be sold through an auction.

### Building Pathways to the Future

The Construction and Solar Energy class is one of six courses that Mounds View Public Schools recommends as part of its Construction and Solar Energy pathway, a series of courses to prepare students for a future career in the construction industry. The Construction and Power pathway is one of five pathways offered by the school district developed to prepare students for future careers. Those pathways include: Automotive, Business, Engineering & Manufacturing, Construction and Solar Technology, and Liberal Arts.

The other courses within the Construction and Solar Technology pathway series include:

- Intro to Engineering Design I and II
- Computer Integrated Manufacturing
- Digital Electronics
- Engineering and Manufacturing I, II and III
- Welding

Students are encouraged to take a number of general education courses to complement what they’ll be learning in the Construction and Solar Energy pathways program. These courses include:

- ARCC Communications Studies
- ARCC College Writing or AP Lang/Comp or CIS Comp
- ARCC Physics
- ARCC Biology
- ARCC College Algebra
- Energy Concepts

By entering into the Construction and Solar Energy pathway, students start to understand the importance of other subjects such as math or communications to a career in construction.

“Like every other high school in America, we hear students lament, “Why am I studying algebra? How am I going to use it in the real world?” says Werner. “Then they start to get into our Construction and Solar Energy program or our Welding program and begin realize how important math really is to the success of their project.”

“One of the aspects that I like about the program at Irondale is that students see

the connection between a career in construction and classes such as math or writing,” adds Mullin. “Math is used by skilled trades professionals every day on the job. Communications is critical to ensuring that everyone on a project team is doing what they should be doing at the right time. The beauty is that in the Construction and Solar Energy class, the



students get to see how math is applied in real life. That’s powerful.”

The Construction and Solar Energy program has articulation agreements for courses within the Solar Pathway program.

In addition, students who would like to complete an associate of sciences degree in the Solar Power track at the college have the opportunity to take additional college courses that meet general education requirements prior to high school graduation, including college courses in college writing, communications, physics, biology, and college algebra.

“It’s important that students not only pick up valuable skills and earn college credit, but that they recognize construction as a legitimate alternative to college or the military,” says Werner. “Our focus is on letting students experience these types of opportunities before they graduate.”

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[moundsviewschools.org](http://moundsviewschools.org)



## 10 Top Construction Careers

According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics

**Construction Manager** – Median salary: \$95,260

**Plumber** – Median salary: \$55,160

**Electrician** – Median salary: \$56,180

**Solar Photovoltaic Installer** — Median salary: \$44,890

**Glazier** – Median salary: \$44,630

**Equipment Operator** – Median salary: \$48,980

**Painter** – Median salary: \$40,280

**Sheet Metal Worker** – Median salary: \$50,400

**Structural Iron and Steelworker** – Median salary: \$55,040

**Construction Worker** – Median salary: \$36,860





## Jordan's Building Trades Course



### Jordan Public Schools

The Building Trades course, started in the 2021-2022 school year, is a part of our Summit Academy program at Jordan High School. The Summit Academy is an experiential career studies program aimed at highly motivated juniors and seniors looking to expand their educational experience and develop in the professional world working side-by-side with experienced professionals in authentic learn-

ing experience. The Building Trades course can be taken after applying to join the course.

Students taking the building trades course gain experience in every aspect of construction including surveying, concrete, rough carpentry, plumbing, electrical, insulation, sheetrock, roofing, finishing/trim, and painting. Students also earn the 10-hour OSHA certification as well as potential college credit through articulation agreements with partners

for nine educational courses. Students taking this course may look ahead to education and careers as contractors, plumbers, carpenters, electricians, masons, project managers, and engineers.

The Building Trades course has partnered to create projects for both school and community use.

For example, students have built a storage shed for soccer equipment and re-shingled, while adding new fascia, to the baseball dugouts.

This semester, students will be putting together two camper cabins for Cedar Lake

Farms (part of the Three Rivers Parks District). The Three Rivers Park District is providing the materials, and Jordan students will be putting the cabins together to include the 14' x 24' structure, bunk beds, and dining area.

A local lumber yard has donated the materials for the camper cabins and other structures, such as yard sheds or chicken coop, and upon completion, the lumber yard sells the structures within the community.

Students learn and create in a workshop space at Jordan Public Schools. For larger projects, such as the camper cabins and sheds, the students utilize a paved area located directly adjacent to the workshop space.

Any projects that offer students work in various trades through the entire building process are ideal. In these types of projects, students are able to connect with different pieces of project management, and it's great to see them engage in differing aspects of the building process that they really enjoy.

"A lot of students are able to apply what they have done elsewhere, but it may make more sense here. They can apply what they've learned in Math classes, or other courses and get a taste of the trades," Steve McClellan, Building Trades Teacher.

"We are very proud of our Building and Trades course. It gives students the opportu-



nity to learn about the trades in a hands-on environment. This is the type of real-world learning that we strive to offer our students," Jeff Vizenor, Jordan High School Principal.

"Any time school life can connect to the students' personal passions and future plans an entire new learning experience unfolds. The authentic experiences gained through courses like Building Trades are a central and fundamental piece of student growth. Allowing students to flourish and develop in a classroom that mirrors their own personal interests is exactly where education needs to continue growing," Erin Hjelmeland, Director of Teaching and Learning for Jordan Public Schools.

[www.jordan.k12.mn.us](http://www.jordan.k12.mn.us)



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# Minneapolis Youth Mentor Charles Walker Fosters Friendships, Community Pride Through Construction Internships



Amid the questioning of purpose and attempts to find community that are characteristic of adolescence, there comes a point in nearly everyone's adolescence when you need somebody to look you in the eye, and tell you that the work that you do, and the person who you will become—matters.

For many Twin Cities area high school students, Charles Walker is that person.

Walker is a Minnesota educator, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation organizer and youth mentor for the Minnesota Trades Academy, a paid summer construction internship experience for high school youth with the goal of preparing youth for adulthood through skill development, and access to good jobs with good benefits in the construction industry.

"My experience volunteering with the Minnesota Trades Academy has been overwhelmingly positive," said Walker. "A lot of these kids are looking for summer jobs, and some can't get one because of their age or because they don't have access to transportation. The Minnesota Trades Academy is an important program, because it eliminates these obstacles for students, allowing them the equal opportunity to get paid to learn a trade that they may want to go into one day, regardless of their background."

Walker's experience with MTA began seven years ago through a connection with Sam Ebute, Trades Navigator for the Construction Careers Foundation, a Twin Cities-based nonprofit organization with the mission to, "increase the diversity of entrants into the construction trades and to enhance young people's access to construction-related employment opportunities."

The pair had previously coached track and field together at North High School in Minneapolis and had bonded over their shared passion for, "getting kids set on the right path," according to Walker.

So, when Ebute informed Walker of the Minnesota Trades Academy's need for mentors to oversee their summer programming, Walker knew it would be a perfect fit for his skill set. He began mentoring with the program and hasn't looked back since, returning every summer since he first began his role.

## Finding Meaning Alongside Peers

For Walker, the value of the Minnesota Trades Academy extends beyond career preparation. The educator has found incredible success using his influence as a mentor to foster strong, life-long friendships between the program's interns— who, Walker notes, often come from very different backgrounds— and instill in his students, strong values of community engagement and service, respect for one's peers and one's community, and pride in oneself.

"I teach every kid that I encounter that we are not going to disrespect one another. If you have a problem with that you are in the wrong place," said Walker. "In my first year with the program, I had one group of students who were all gangbangers — But I teach every student that we are all one when we enter this program. I make it known that it's not about where they come from, it's where they are going, and we are all headed down the same path when we are with MTA. Once that respect is there, everything else falls into place."

"Besides gaining experience using tools, it is the friendship and bonds that stu-

dents make along the way that really makes the program a success," said Walker. "Those students from my first year with the program forged a strong bond together that summer, and many of them are still friends to this day."

With students' sense of purpose and community bonds growing increasingly unsteady under the weight of two years of a global pandemic, to say Walker's continued success in this sector is anything short of a miracle would be an understatement.

## Service-Oriented Program Builds Students' Sense of Purpose

Walker draws upon his well-earned foundation of respect to inform the work that interns perform in service of their community during their time in the program. Walker recalled one recent project where students built a handicap ramp for a woman living in south Minneapolis.

"The handicap ramp project was probably my favorite project that the kids completed," said Walker. "That project marked a big step for a lot of the students because they just loved working on that project. When it was completed, they were very happy with what they did for her, and so proud."

During a different project, in which students rebuilt a deck for an elderly woman living in Minneapolis, Walker realized that one of the student interns lived only two blocks away from the project site.

"I was recently in touch with that student, and he told me that he walks by that house every day. He spoke about how proud it makes him to see that the work he did on that house had such a profound impact on his neighbor," added Walker. "It is in this way that the program has had such a positive impact on how these students view and respect the world around them."

## Mentorship Matters

Walker values the respect that his students have for him and does not take that responsibility lightly. The educator is committed to showing up for any student who needs guidance, no matter how long it has been since their time with the Minnesota Trades Academy.

"If any of these kids get in trouble, I am often the first person that they call, even if it's years after they have taken part in the program," said Walker. "I do a lot of work in this community with youth, so they trust me to help them navigate difficult situations and help them resolve whatever issues they have."

Two MTA alumni whom Walker mentors to this day are DeShawn Davis, whom Walker first met when Davis ran on the 7th grade track team that Walker coached, and who took part in MTA three years ago; and Josiah Sutton, who completed the MTA program four years ago.

Davis and Sutton both entered a career in construction after their time with the program. Davis recently began an apprenticeship with a construction company that is renovating Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis, while Sutton is reaching the end of his bricklaying apprenticeship and will soon graduate to become a journeyworker.

Educators seeking guidance in informing their students about a career in construction or hoping to pass along the opportunity to join the Minnesota Trades Academy, can visit the Resources for Teachers page on the [ConstructionCareers.org](http://ConstructionCareers.org) website.

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## Students Gain Valuable Experience Building Habitat Homes



Last fall, ground was broken for the new home being constructed by Habitat for Humanity and the St Peter High School's Building Trades Program. This partnership has been building homes to meet the community need for affordable housing for 25 years. The collaboration between Habitat and the Building Trades class allows for high schoolers to get hands on building experience and an opportunity to participate on a project that has a lifelong impact on a Habitat family and the community.

Each year, the Building Trades class

offers 12–18 students a rigorous and relevant hands-on learning curriculum which helps meet the community need for affordable housing. Habitat provides the building materials and students build the home under the guidance of their teacher while they learn essential skills preparing them for occupations in the building trades.

“Whether or not it is something that they're interested in it as a career or it's just a way of learning new skills that they can use in some way down the road, I think that it's exciting that they're excited about it,” said Habitat

Executive Director Sondra Herman. “For us, it's wonderful to have that volunteer labor, because that's how we operate. That's how we make homes affordable.” KEYC

Habitat is committed to continue to offer families in St Peter the option to attain homeownership affordably. Families with access to affordable homeownership offers them a hand up not a handout creating improved safety, child education attainment, and build generational wealth. The St Peter Building Trades teacher and students are a vital part of this mission. Generous financial partners including the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation continue to consistently support affordable housing in St Peter and the Building Trades class through this collaboration.

### Habitat For Humanity Open House

Habitat for Humanity South Central Minnesota hosted an open house in November showcasing Saint Peter High School's Building Trades class's two most recent project homes in the Traverse Green subdivision.

Several members of Scott Robinson's current Building Trades class were on hand at the start of the open house doing work on the newest home located at 2110 Nelson Street. Attendees could also tour last year's project home (2111 Lundon Street), which has just a few minor details to finish up before the



new owners are able to close on the property, according to Juliann Wiersma, Habitat for Humanity South Central Minnesota's Communications & Development Manager.

About Habitat: Driven by the vision that everyone needs a decent place to live, Habitat for Humanity South Central Minnesota has built 145 homes and 630 individuals in Blue Earth, Sibley, Watonwan, Le Sueur, and Nicollet counties. Through shelter, we empower. Interested in donating or volunteering to support the Mankato build? Visit [habitatscmn.org](http://habitatscmn.org).

[stpeterschools.org](http://stpeterschools.org)



## The 916 Project—A Great Sign



In March, Jay Lewis, Lewis Electrical Contracting & Consulting Services Inc., mentored multiple youth in the Independent School District 916's Construction program.

Every year students in this program build a home from foundation to roof. This program is very much a community effort and the result is a home that is sold on the open market.

The City of North St. Paul provides the

lot that the home sits on every year. This year's home sits on a lot of a former blighted property that bothered neighbors to the extent that legislators were called about it and a squad car often monitored it. The problem property was torn down and a new 2500-square-foot home is being built in its place. This is the smallest home 916 has constructed, but the home needed to be scaled to fit the lot.

The students that cycle through the home throughout the day hail from 14 different school districts. Seventy percent of them have specialized IEPs. Of the 54 students, 15 have identified electrical as their trade of choice. Many have secured spots in electrical technical school programs.

The 916 Construction program could easily double to meet the needs of interested students; however, staff and one house site limit it to its current levels. The home will be sold this summer, and 916 will start a new property next fall.

If your community has a similar construction program, please let me know. The Electrical Association understands the workforce shortages within the electrical industry and the Association looks to provide additional support to these programs to help deliver members a skilled workforce.

The students are well on their way to successfully building a home!

This is a great sign of what's coming up the job pipeline!

*Article courtesy of Project Build MN*

[www.916schools.org](http://www.916schools.org)





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- Examine current practices in safety training with special emphasis on training youth to be safe in the trades classroom
- Develop basic grantseeking and grantwriting skills necessary for procuring additional resources and materials for their classroom/program
- Learn about the latest trends in construction through touring an active commercial job site.
- Participate in structured networking with other educators, administrators, and industry professionals.



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## The Carpentry Program at STEP High School



dents from all five high schools in the Anoka Hennepin School District to attend this class.

Each year, the process is started with the students giving input on what the house should look like. The footprint size and the number of exterior windows and doors are the same each year, but the finishing touches usually change with the current trends and interior walls are adjusted to fit the class's vision. It's important for the students to have ownership in the house. The class is about real-world experience.

Students start in the first trimester of each year framing the floor, exterior walls, roof, shingles, house wrap and installing the exterior doors and windows. In trimester two, they finish framing the interior walls, rough-in electrical, insulate the walls, install the vapor barrier and hang the drywall. The rough in plumbing is done by a local plumbing company. Over

What started out as a home improvement class in 1992 grew into the Carpentry program at Blaine High School. In 1992-93, they built fences and finished bedrooms for people in the community. The class was a success, but it was that felt students were not getting the complete experience of building a house so in the fall of 1996 the class started to build it's first house. The house was built right behind the school with the buyer to move the house to their location. The first house was a 24' x 48', 3 bedroom rambler that changed into a 24' x 48' with a 2 car attached garage. The program partnered with the Anoka Community Action Program to provide affordable housing for 3 years. When their vision changed, the classes began building a 26' x 52', 3 bedroom rambler.

The program was moved to STEP High School in 2019. This move allowed all stu-

Spring break, Advanced Drywall comes in to tape, mud and finish the drywall. Trimester three starts with painting, hanging interior doors, installing cabinets, interior trim, flooring, finish electrical and plumbing, and siding the exterior. The house is "turn-key" when the year ends.

Students will swing the hammer and use the nail guns. The power tools used by the classes have gone from plug in style to cordless. There have been some great advancements in tools over the years. There have been many changes in how a house is constructed as well. Improvements in materials and installation/construction practices have gotten better with time. Each year, once the cost has been determined, the house is placed for public auction with a minimum bid and the highest bidder gets the house!

### Student Quote

*Some of my best high school memories were made in carpentry class. One of my biggest take-aways was "The attitude that you bring to the house is the quality of work you will produce". Our teacher always said "never say it's good enough" which is something I will take to all aspects of life. I learned how to layout walls and trusses, sheet and shingle a roof, set windows, drywall and mud, the list could go on and on. I learned more than I could ever fit into a paragraph and I am thankful for the class and all it has to offer.*



### Current House Build Description

Built by STEP High School in Anoka, MN. This is a 3 bedroom, 1.75 bath includes: 18" free span floor trusses, 4/12 pitch roof, vaulted living room, kitchen and dining room. Exterior: Owens Corning estate gray architectural shingles, tubular skylight in each bathroom, Jeldwen vinyl casement windows, Concord "harbor bay" vinyl siding, vinyl soffit and fascia. Interior: Mission 3 panel interior doors, Cardell cabinetry featuring soft close hinges and drawer slides, under cabinet lighting, Calacatta marble laminate countertops, Life Proof luxury vinyl plank flooring, oil rubbed bronze hardware. If you have any questions regarding the house, please contact by email: [PurchaseQuotes@ahschools.us](mailto:PurchaseQuotes@ahschools.us).

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# Outstanding New Educator of the Year



## Moorhead Area Public Schools

From restoring World War II planes to shaping students' minds, second-year teacher John Clancy is enjoying the transition to the classroom. Last year, Clancy joined Moorhead Area Public Schools as the aviation and small engines teacher at Moorhead High School Career Academy. Before joining the education field, he worked on planes. His work ranged from World War II corsairs to training air crafts to business jets.

Although Clancy worked in the private industry for over ten years, he considered going into education during college. "I started school to become a science teacher, but I enjoyed working with my hands," he said. "My dad is an aircraft mechanic, so I wanted to follow in his footsteps."

Clancy's best friend since first grade, who works at the Moorhead High School Career Academy, mentioned there might be a teaching job opening in the aviation and

small engines program. As soon as he saw the position open, Clancy applied.

He took his experience and passion for working on planes into the classroom. In his aviation class, Clancy divides the time between lectures and hands-on projects. "We have flight simulators, so the kids can get an idea of what it's like to control an aircraft and how it works," Clancy says. "It's one thing for me to tell them how a wing creates lift, but if they get into the simulator they can experience what I teach."

**"I started school to become a science teacher, but I enjoyed working with my hands, . . . My dad is an aircraft mechanic, so I wanted to follow in his footsteps."**

He also brings practical advice that students can take home, even if they don't work in the industry. In his small engines class he teaches everyday maintenance of lawn mowers and snow blowers. "By teaching these useful life skills, students will have the basic knowledge to fix things themselves, sometimes saving hundreds of dollars."

Clancy's passion for his craft and excitement for his new position led him to be named the 2022 Outstanding New Educator of the Year by the Minnesota State

Transportation Center for Success. Joining the classroom has been a rewarding experience. "I had a quiet student that didn't talk much in class. After he graduated this year, he emailed me," Clancy says. In the email, the student thanked him for an awesome class and let him know he was his favorite teacher. "It meant a lot to me that the student reached out. It's special to have that kind of impact on that student's life, regardless of if they go into aviation."

Aviation is one of the programs of study at the newly opened Moorhead High School Career Academy. This building is a new, innovative program that provides students with applied learning experiences that readies them for career and/or college.

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## Raider Auto at Roseville Area Schools



New Facilities September 1, 2021

Ken "Mr. Sops" Sopcinski  
Roseville High School

The automotive program at Roseville High School came about the late 60s. Like many high school automotive programs across the country, the facilities, tools, and equipment were also from those years.

Up until 2 years ago, the program was taught from a 50+ year old facility that was originally a wood shop. It was housed in the district's former high school which had been converted into the middle school. It was small, outdated and off campus. None of which was a great combination.

However, it was what we had and we made it work.

Then the community stepped up . . . big time.

In 2016 I noticed a unique phenomenon happening. The US presidential candidates were, as part of their stump speeches, stating the need for more trades opportunities in our high schools. Usually, this part of a typical

speech would be about 4 year colleges, not trades schools. This was a real sea change in thinking and it was indeed part of the national conversation. Why are we no longer preparing students to enter the trades?

That mentality coupled with a Building Upgrade Bond being passed in Roseville, led us to the facility we have today. The shareholders of the community asked for and approved, arguably one of the finest high school automotive facilities in the country. Many people remark that it looks like a dealership. I like to reply, "it's better".

Two years ago, we opened an 8 bay, 6400 hundred square foot automotive repair facility. This time on-campus and attached to the high school. The facility is set up very similar to facilities found in the industry, along with the comparable tools and equipment.

We offer two types of classes within our automotive program.

The first are our Automotive Mechanics Classes. Our curriculum is "We fix real car with real problems."

Community members contact us about their vehicles and if it's a type of repair or maintenance we perform, we service their vehicles. Thus the students have an opportunity for everything from developing tool use skills (a lost opportunity for many of their generation unfortunately) to knowing/discovering if the automotive field is a good fit for their future.

We also offer a class called Know Your Car.

This class is popular with students who wish to learn how to buy a car. Especially a good used car. The reality is their first car will be old, with high mileage.



Students in the Know Your Car class learning how to read emissions stickers in order to identify make, model, year & engine displacement.

The knowledge of how to pick one that will be reliable and not be a money pit will be of high value to them. In addition, students learn basic maintenance, care, insurance, careers and any current events related to the automotive industry including the onset of Electric Vehicles.

In my 25 years of teaching this program, I have helped place close to 300 students into the automotive industry. Many of the dealerships and independent shops in the area have or have had former students on their payrolls. Many of these students attended post-secondary technical school as well. Of the students

I have been able to track, we have achieved a 96% graduation rate from post-secondary school. Thus students get a wonderful enriching experience in high school that prepares them for the next step.

Want to know more about us? Check out Raider Auto Shop on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/raiderauto>

[www.isd623.org](http://www.isd623.org)



"You deserve a break today" is an old McDonald's jingle. This 2005 Toyota deserves a brake today too. New ones. That is exactly the kind of work the students perform at Raider Auto. Need your auto serviced? Let's see if we can help you. Email [Raiderauto@isd623.org](mailto:Raiderauto@isd623.org)



Four of the Six technicians in this picture started in Raider auto shop classes. Roseville alumni getting it done!





## Binding Education to Vocation at Osseo High School



ISD 279 — Osseo Area Schools

*Although the Auto Program at Osseo High School has been in existence for decades, Dennis Huberty is in the middle of his first year at the school.*

*One of the former teachers completed the ASE certification program for MLR (maintenance and light repair technician). He met the 12 ASE standards, was accredited himself, had all the required tools, and went through the two-day inspection by ASE. Dennis is currently repeating that path.*

### Dennis Huberty:

The administration has been very supportive and helpful, especially Mr Godfrey, our CTE coordinator, and Ms. Vernig, our principal, and her staff. Ms. Vernig shared her vision of having a program where students could get the training they need to step into the workforce right out of high school. I have been running hard after that goal ever since. I have also been encouraged by the custodial staff as I moved and changed the classroom/shop space into an ASE level

shop.

The Auto program has two classrooms: The shop with all the equipment, and the showroom as I like to call it. It contains five vehicles donated by local dealerships along with a classroom. The room was converted from the old weight room and has mirrors on three walls in the back by the vehicles and the floor has a rubber coating. The two rooms were recently connected by a garage door which makes it more manageable by one teacher.

The shop area of the program is primarily an Automotive Maintenance and Light Repair Shop.

Some of the features include:

- Full ventilation
- Drains that work with eco-friendly wastewater collection that is emptied yearly.
- There is a service for the chemicals and the drain oil is stored underground in a 500-gallon tank.
- Two in-ground hydraulic lifts and an alignment rack which serves as a lift at times.
- Hunter equipment, including a tire changer, wheel balancer, brake lathe, and front-end alignment with a rack.
- A hydraulic press, grinders, drill press,

solvent parts washer, torch set, welders, battery care center with multiple chargers, charging system tester vat 60, 12+ toolboxes of hand tools, electronic testers, soldering irons, tubing flaring tools and benders, and specialty tools too numerous to list.

Students completing the ASE Task list for MLR certification is the primary focus. This does include both extensive safety training and personal standards and work habits. For example: brakes in MLR had 29 tasks to be completed from researching the fluid type and any service bulletins, testing brake fluid for contamination, bleeding or flushing the brake system, refreshing a rotor off vehicle, measuring the thickness and comparing it with specifications, to even checking the vacuum assist. Those 29 tasks are but 1 page of 14 contained in the ASE task list.

Brakes are one of the four focuses in the MLR program.

Although articulation credits available, the real certification is the MLR name under the ASE badge the students would wear on their shoulder after completing the two-year, 540-hour program.

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**Continued on Page 16**



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## Paving a Road to Success



*Derek Doescher  
Automotive/ Powersports Instructor  
White Bear Lake Area High School*

The 2022-23 school year has provided White Bear Lake Area Schools students a variety of opportunities to engage and connect with professionals in the transportation industry. Through hands-on learning experiences both in and out of the classroom, our students are seeing real world career options as they plan for their futures.

Inspiring tomorrow's technicians, mechanics and engineers can begin at any grade level. The District's Career Pathways Transportation program and Automotive Instructor Derek Doescher hosted the first Transportation Career Day for middle schoolers. More than 150 eighth graders participated in hands-on activities with visiting local automotive industry partners and with the Minnesota Transportation Center of Excellence's educational trailer. The event, which was a part of the Youth Service Training (YST) grant that the district received from

the Department of Labor and Industry, introduced students to the industry and allowed them a glimpse into career options they might not have considered. The special event was covered in a weekly video update produced by the district and can be found at <https://bit.ly/3iZliz9>.

At the high school level, our students were some of the first in the state to study autonomous vehicles as part of their curriculum. One class activity included an exclusive look at Bear Tracks, a low-speed, driverless, electric, multi-passenger shuttle that is a pilot project of the Minnesota Department of Transportation and multiple partners. The vehicle, the second of three planned connected and automated vehicle demonstration projects coordinated by MnDOT and the first in the Twin Cities metro area, drove students through the schools' parking lot. The students witnessed firsthand the technology involved in the project and learned about the teamwork that went into creating the shuttle from representatives of the companies that built the



autonomous vehicle, who were on-hand to answer questions and provide examples of other projects in the works. The experience was shared out in a weekly update video and can be enjoyed at <http://bit.ly/3wrGimE>.

Allowing students the opportunity to have conversations and make connections with those in the automotive industry has been an important part of our program design. Another pivotal element has been to provide students the opportunity to explore continuing education options and meet with local professionals. More than 30 students recently spent the day touring a local college and a full-service automotive repair business. During the tours, students were able to survey courses and programs available to them if they chose a career in the transportation industry and see the operation of a locally owned repair facility. This day was a huge success for White Bear Lake's Automotive Program and the automotive industry. At the end of the day, one student walked up to Mr. Doescher and told him, "I 'hate' you Mr. Doescher. I, now, want to go on to additional schooling after high school again."

The White Bear Lake Area Schools Automotive Career Pathway, one of seven Pathway programs offered by the district, provides students with knowledge gained through coursework and hands-on experi-



ences, alumni support and career pathway coaching, opportunities for workshops and special programs, and the opportunity to earn industry-recognized credentials. Outside of the classroom, students have access to internships, job placement and job shadow opportunities, and trades ambassador programs.

White Bear Lake Area Schools is able to provide these high quality transportation education opportunities to students in partnership with local industry partners and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.

[www.isd624.org](http://www.isd624.org)



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## Automotive Technology at SouthWest Metro

Jennifer Bock

Director of Communications

SouthWest Metro Intermediate District 288

SouthWest Metro's Automotive Technology courses give students hands-on experience in engine performance and repair, transmissions, drive train, suspension and steering, electrical systems, and heating and air conditioning. Riley, a Shakopee High School graduate, likes that "it's more advanced than most high school programs. It helps you get a step forward in mechanics and there's always something new to learn and always something to do."

The automotive facilities consist of a lab along with classroom and storage space including a separate tool room and storage room where equipment is secured. The lab has four garage doors that can accommodate approximately six full-sized vehicles. There are three car hoists, one of which is an alignment rack.

SouthWest Metro follows Automotive Service Excellence (ASE), the industry standard, and updates the program every five years to maintain that certification. In addition, all CTE programs, syllabi, and curriculum need to get approval from the Minnesota Department of Education when a new course is added, a new teacher is hired, or every 5 years.

Beyond the standard coursework, the program prepares students for ASE Entry Level Certifications and they receive up to 11 articulated credits to various Minnesota college automotive programs. Communication is key within these partnerships to ensure that the high school content is aligned with current and relevant content needed by the industry. The program has an industry advisory board for this purpose and they are required to meet two times per year.

Soft skills, employability skills, and leadership skills are embedded into both programs. Our industry partners say that these are often time more important than the technical skills. Both programs are members of SkillsUSA, which is a career and technical student organization where these skills are reinforced and taught throughout the year.

SouthWest Metro Intermediate District is always looking to expand CTE offerings depending on the fluctuation of interest in different career fields and pilot fledgling programs with the changing professional landscape. Just in the 2021–2022 school year were Drone Operation, Small Engine Repair, and Video Production launched as potential choices at Dean Lakes Education Center, SouthWest Metro's newest campus in Shakopee. Additionally, next year the district is promoting Residential Electrician courses in



the high-wage construction industry. Even if a student ultimately declines to pursue the career path that their chosen course is directed toward, the experience gained is invaluable. To be able to produce tangible results on a project and spend time away from a desk and screen is a disruption in routine that never fails to ignite a spark in the youth that attend CTE classes.

For more information, visit [swmetro.k12.mn.us](http://swmetro.k12.mn.us) or contact Mike Opp, Career and Technical Education Coordinator ([mopp@swmetro.k12.mn.us](mailto:mopp@swmetro.k12.mn.us)) (952) 567-8017

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## St. Paul Central High School Automotive Continued from Page 1



in Career and Technology Education. In that same year, he was also awarded the Outstanding Alumni of the Year Award by his technical college. As he continued his education and growth as a teacher, he felt that the School of Urban Education Program in the Twin Cities metro area would be beneficial to his teaching profession and provide the best education for the inner-city school that he works at. In the summer of 2022, after years of hard work, he graduated with a Master's Degree in Urban Education.

The Automotive Program at Central High School consists of two levels; Auto 1 and Auto 2. Auto 1 is offered to grades 9–12.

“In my introductory Auto 1 class, I educate my students about the basics of automotive knowledge and repair. How to work in a shop safely, hand tools/power tools, maintaining your vehicle, tires, batteries, starters, and alternators. The goal of the class is to prepare my students for purchasing and maintaining their own automobile and avoiding common problems associated with vehicle ownership. In addition, we explore career options in the industrial trade industry, which is a well-pay-

ing, essential, high demand career. This class is taught in a traditional classroom setting.

In my advanced Auto 2 class, I prepare my students to become a “do-it-yourselfer” or to enter post-secondary automotive training. I accomplish this goal by providing a mixture of traditional classroom education with real world/hands on training. In addition, I have partnered with local businesses to give my students valuable apprenticeship opportunities for career exploration and employment. I feel that what I teach is a lifelong skill, that is transferable to other career options and will save my students thousands of dollars in their adult life.

This class is taught outside of the traditional classroom.

Auto 2 is taught at a shop located two blocks away from the main campus. It was originally a Skellys gas station back in the 1940's. In 1971, Skelly donated the shop to the St Paul school district and it was converted into an automotive shop/classroom. It's a small, two-bay garage. Quite often we do repairs outside due to the limited work area. In the last few years, the district did gift



the program with two new hoists, new tire machines, an updated security system, new LED lighting, a new heating system and a new, beautiful, epoxy floor.

Auto 2 is available to students in grades 10-12 that have successfully completed Auto 1. Students learn everything from brake jobs to engine removal. This class specializes in general vehicle maintenance repairs, not auto body repairs. The unique part of Matt's Auto 2 program is that they work it like a real shop. Students learn on teacher/student/community member vehicles. Students must diagnose the problem, write up the vehicle, order parts and complete the repair. The main benefit of this type of working/learning set up is that students are working on real world problems, the vehicle must be repaired correctly, and the tires can't fall off when the vehicle drives out of the shop. The customer gets the value of an inexpensive repair (we charge \$10–20 for repairs or sometimes just a box of doughnuts) and the students get the experience of fixing real problems. An A in this class can earn college credit as well!

“I feel that what I teach is a lifelong skill, that is transferable to other career options and will save my students thousands of dollars in their adult life. I want to prepare all of my stu-

dents for success, no matter their race, color of skin, gender or economic status. Without my program, many urban youths would not have exposure to the subject matter and struggle with the inevitability of vehicle ownership,” says Matt.

“I identify myself as a hardworking, passionate educator. As in my career in automotive, I want to be the best at my teaching profession. I feel that my students deserve nothing less. I truly love my job at Central and enjoy teaching a diverse student population. I feel that the best part of my job is connecting with students and getting to know them on a personal level. I have found that the key to student success is taking the time to build that all important teacher/student relationship and treating students with equity and respect. Each student brings in a unique set of skills and life experiences that provide excellent opportunities for us to learn from each other.”

Matt is the 2020 winner of Fox 9 Teacher of the Year Award.

[www.spps.org/central](http://www.spps.org/central)



## Binding Education to Vocation at Osseo High School Continued from Page 13

advisory board of local dealerships and partners that are in need of technicians who can make “6 figures,” said one service manager. There would be a good chance that they would hire the students right after graduation and could help with tools and any additional schooling. The goal is to get students into the field without debt or delay.

Community partnerships have been very important, and our advisory board is the glue that binds education to vocation. Their vision keeps us relevant in what we are teaching. One of the members donated the tire changing machine we are now using. Other members have donated cars for the showroom. We frequently repair cars for teachers when their problem fits our curriculum and recently we took in a repair for a man with cancer while he was going through chemotherapy.

A new expansion is currently being researched. My hope would be to expand



the program to the magnet level where other schools outside the district could participate. I also plan to open after-school, student-led clubs. One such club from the past was high mileage competition, or maybe an engine building club. Whatever the focus, the key is to provide opportunities to develop, teach, and encourage young leaders.

[www.district279.org](http://www.district279.org)







## North Branch Area High School's (NBAHS) Automotive Program is On the Move and Growing!

*North Branch Area Public Schools*

NBAHS automotive students had a wonderful semester under the tutelage of Dave Fisk, owner of Fisk Tire, who taught Intro to Auto (Auto 1). Students worked in the auto lab learning hands-on car basics. Learning from a local business owner added depth to the course and motivated students to learn more about the automotive pathway. Fisk assisted the district in getting its automotive program going and North Branch Area Public Schools couldn't be more grateful for his help!

Enrollment in auto and welding classes continues to rise! For the first semester, NBAHS 25 students enrolled in Intro to Auto and 63 enrolled in a welding class. Semester two enrollment rose to 80 students enrolled in an Auto class and 75 enrolled in a welding class.

Traditional high schools typically have one or two Industrial Tech teachers able to teach a variety of courses designed for exposure to trade skills. In today's high school those teachers are few and far between because skilled labor is more lucrative in the private sector. NBAHS is dedicated to giving students classroom experiences that go much further than exposure. Industry

adjusts very quickly to the needs of customers; the methods used to train staff need to be reflected in high school courses to engage students in a possible career path.

That is why NBAHS is focused on hiring industry professionals to become instructors to train students on the skills and techniques required for the modern workplace.

As the program continues to grow, it welcomes instructor Pat Geraghty to teach both Advanced Welding, and new auto classes. Coming additions to the autos program include Auto 2 "Brakes" and Auto 3 "Vehicle Service," along with the continuation of Auto 1. Geraghty, now retired from the private sector, went to school for welding and has over 40 years experience in welding and over 30 years experience in the automotive industry.

NBAHS is currently planning a video promoting all of its Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings, including the emerging auto offerings.

CTE programs are on the move at NBAPS and seeing students making informed decisions about their futures is evidence that the district is accelerating in the right direction!

Career and Technical education initiatives were celebrated and accelerated last May. North Branch Area High School hosted an informational luncheon attended by roughly 40 area industry leaders in a wide variety of fields, including welding, manufacturing, information technology, health care, automotive, marketing and business, as well as representatives from local government, the state, and institutions of higher learning.

All came together to hear how students have been affected by the school district's emphasis on Career and Technical Education and how they may play a role in expanding the scope of the program to even more learners.

Students spoke to those in attendance about their experiences with job site tours, college visits, hands-on exploration, job shadows, and internships. Through efforts to expand CTE experiences, more students than ever are getting first-hand experience with potential careers before they leave high school. Dozens of students attended college visits, nine students participated in job shadowing at the local Ford and Chevy service areas, and two received paid internships with local companies.



[www.isd138.org](http://www.isd138.org)



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## **K** Ariana Wright, Kasson-Mantorville Schools, Named Minnesota's 2022 NAESP National Distinguished Principal



Ariana Wright, principal of Kasson-Mantorville Elementary in the Kasson-Mantorville Schools District, and a member of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) is Minnesota's 2022 NAESP National Distinguished Principal (NDP). MESPA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) present the prestigious award.

"I am humbled and honored to represent the hundreds of passionate, dedicated and student-centered elementary principals from around the state as the 2022 National Distinguished Principal of Minnesota," said Wright, "Serving students, families, staff, and the communities of Kasson and Mantor-

ville is my passion and being recognized for doing what I love is something I will treasure as a highlight of my career! I am genuinely grateful to the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association for providing a strong foundation of support and leadership development opportunities."

Wright began her career in education in 2001 as a music teacher at the St. Michael Catholic School in St. Michael, Minnesota. In 2003 she moved to the Belle Plaine Public Schools District, where she continued to teach music until she was hired as a principal at Menahga Elementary School in 2011. Then in 2015 Wright made the move to her current position as principal of Kasson-Mantorville Elementary.

Among her greatest accomplishments as a principal, Wright is proud of building a strengths-based leadership culture at Kasson-Mantorville Elementary. "Over the past four years we have developed this culture in our school community through learning about strengths and embedding a strengths-based approach into our systems," Wright said in her application, "Teacher and student agency has been a positive result of this effort." Wright emphasized that staff, not just administrators, must be part of the framework for this system to work, "To ensure positive learning conditions for students, work needs to be done to ensure positive working conditions for all staff."

When asked how she supports learners who are struggling, challenges learners who are excelling, and maintains high standards for all, Wright stated, "One of my core beliefs as a leader is that everyone deserves excellence. All students, staff, parents, and our community deserve an excellent education for our children. At Kasson-Mantorville Elementary I set high expectations and do not settle for less." She explained that she focuses on actionable feedback and instructional coaching with her staff, and emphasizes compassion in her leadership, "I see the best in others and call them into their limitless potential. Seeing the best in staff and providing feedback to help them grow ensures success for all students."

Alecia Meline, a First Grade Teacher at Kasson-Mantorville Elementary, recommended Wright highly for the honor, "Mrs. Wright has many admirable leadership qualities, but most foundationally, she leads by example. She does not ask her staff to do something she would not do herself. She reaches out to families with strategies and solutions she has used with success. She knows that the mark of a good leader is building a community of good leaders. This has been built in our school by paying attention to the voices around her, sharing responsibility, recognizing compatible strengths, making a safe space for differing opinions without judgment, delegating when necessary and

appropriate, being creative, being persistent, and being inexhaustibly positive with a great sense of humor. For that, she is admired."

"MESPA is very excited to have Principal Ariana Wright from Kasson-Mantorville Elementary School to be selected by her peers as the 2022 MESPA National Distinguished Principal," said MESPA Executive Director, Jon Millerhagen, "Principal Wright's energy in helping other principals is infectious. She is a true leader and has led principals at the division level in Northern and Southeastern Minnesota, in fact, she received the Southeast Division Leadership Achievement Award in 2018. Ms. Wright's leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic benefitted several schools throughout Southeast Minnesota when she shared her COVID Learning plans for in-person and virtual learning. Congratulations Principal Wright on receiving the 2022 NAESP National Distinguished Principal Award from Minnesota."

*Courtesy of Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA)*

[www.komets.k12.mn.us](http://www.komets.k12.mn.us)



## **CSTA Teaching Excellence Award – Congratulations Melanie Olson!** **A First for Minnesota Educators!**



Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose School District's Melanie Olson is one of ten national recipients of the 2022 Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA) / Infosys Foundation USA CS Teaching Excellence Award. She is the first Minnesota educator to receive this award. Melanie received a full scholarship to the CSTA 2022 Annual Conference in Chicago

and a \$7,500 stipend in recognition of her outstanding work.

The CS Teaching Excellence Awards are designed to recognize outstanding teaching by K-12 computer science teachers. Winners excel in inspiring students to explore the computer science field, engaging students in learning rigorous standards-aligned computer science content, and broadening the participation of underrepresented students in computing.

Melanie Olson resides in Monticello and has taught for the Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose School District in Minnesota for 17 years, with the last 11 being in the Quest Program which is a school-within-a school for gifted and talented students. She has a B.S. in Elementary Education and an M.S. in Special Education from St. Cloud State University. She holds teaching certificates in Technology Education, Gifted Education, and Environmental Education from Hamline University.

Melanie teaches a multi-age class of grades 2-4. She began integrating com-

puter science (CS) in 2013. Continuously seeking opportunities for her students she has integrated Micro Bits, Spheros, Dash and Dot Robots, LEGO Mindstorm sets, Makey Makey kits and a variety of CS curriculum. Students learn Python language using Firia Labs Jumpstart and CodeBot curriculum. Melanie says, "My ultimate goal is to instill a passion for CS and give students the tools and resources they need to continue learning beyond the walls of my classroom."

Melanie provides professional development throughout Minnesota and nationally by presenting at conferences and working with school districts. She serves on the Minnesota Department of Education's Gifted and Talented Education Committee. She is Vice President of the Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented. She serves as an advisor to the State of Minnesota's Javits project, Universal Plus. This project identifies second- and third-grade students showing increased interest in and positive attitudes toward their learning in

general, and CS. The goal of the grant is to identify a greater number of students as gifted, particularly in CS, who are limited English proficient, 2E, or are from a traditionally underrepresented racial/ethnic group.

Melanie has been honored as a TIES Exceptional Teacher for technology integration, a regional WEM Award recipient, a State WEM Award recipient and was featured on the show Hands-On-Science airing on Twin Cities Public Television.

[www.bhmschools.org](http://www.bhmschools.org)





## **M** Onamia Educator is 2022 Minnesota Teacher of the Year **Congratulations Sarah!**



been in her hometown, working with third- and first-grade students in Onamia Public Schools over the last nine years. She says it is important to live in the town where she teaches so her students can see and identify her, the only BIPOC teacher in her district, as a community leader. “I want to give back to the community that once helped to set me up for success,” she said.

She’s showing everyone that you don’t need to leave small towns to accomplish big things. Onamia is the smallest Minnesota town to claim a Teacher of the Year in nearly 40 years.

“We have 859 people in the community of Onamia and now I have a bigger platform to speak for them,” she said.

Lancaster believes in the power of relationships and helping her students establish an identity for themselves. “As a teacher, I get to show my students that they can reach beyond whatever barriers they encounter,” she said in a video submitted to the Teacher of the Year selection panel. “I get to show them that beyond these barriers is an amazing person, a scholar, an athlete, someone looking to connect with their culture and find their true identity. I can supply and awaken the language, strategies, enthusiasm and joy that very well may have been inside them all along.”

“If you find me on any given day I’m coaching, directing a musical, I’m at a meeting

at city hall, I’m at the school teaching,” Lancaster said. “So my students see me in all different capacities and that’s how I want them to see themselves.”

“No matter the age of the students she is working with, Sarah displays an unrivaled amount of passion for student education and improvement,” said Cynthia Martin, a fellow first-grade teacher at Onamia Elementary, in a letter of recommendation for Lancaster. “Sarah is forever willing and open to acquiring new knowledge to help students in need of intervention or enrichment. Her breadth of knowledge in teaching methods is vast, and she is able to connect with students in so many effective ways.”

“As a first-grade teacher, it’s been rewarding to see how students learn from each other. We practice conflict resolution, and many have gone from not knowing how to communicate—sometimes called screaming—to advocating for themselves. It’s great to see their academic as well as personal growth,” said Sarah.

Lancaster has coached more than 20 seasons of both athletics and arts programs in Onamia, directing three of the annual high school musicals and volunteering with local youth groups as well as through her church.

*Information courtesy of Education Minnesota*



2022 Minnesota Teacher of the Year Sarah Lancaster threw out the first pitch at the St. Paul Saints game July 12!

Sarah Lancaster, a first-grade teacher at Onamia Elementary School in the Onamia district, is the 2022 Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

Lancaster is the 58th recipient of the prestigious award, the first from the Onamia district and the first teacher of Asian Pacific Islander descent to be named Minnesota Teacher of the Year. An independent selection committee representing Minnesota leaders in education, business and government chooses the Teacher of the Year from individuals who are nominated and who then choose to become a candidate. She was chosen out of an initial list of 77 candidates from around the state

Lancaster’s first and only teaching job has



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# Moorhead Teacher of the Year



## Moorhead Area Public Schools

"I take great pride in assisting my students and their families by meeting them where they are at," Sheila Stadstad says. Sheila, who has been a school social worker for 18 years, feels fortunate to have a role in education.

Sheila provides valuable information in a way that most effectively helps families. "Our world, now more than ever, is complicated by

cultural, financial, and political differences," she says. "Looking for shared commonalities amongst our students and their families helps me support them further."

"Sheila treats ALL people with the respect and dignity they deserve," says coworker Chris Osborn. He touts her tireless advocacy to give everyone a voice and create an equitable system for all students. "She makes all of us better at our jobs because of her humanity."

A go-to person for many of her teammates, Sheila has a way of connecting with people and immediately putting them at ease. "Sheila makes things happen with families we never thought possible," says coworker Stephanie Holm. "She follows through on every single issue placed in front of her and gets involved in activities that make our schools a better place."

Prior to her work at Moorhead Area Public Schools, Sheila was a licensed social worker employed by Becker County, Anoka County and Clay County. She received a bachelor's degree in social work from Moorhead State University in 1989. In 2020, Sheila earned her master's degree in social work.

She is also a member of the Minnesota School Social Worker Association.

"Sheila has been and continues to be an advocate for children who oftentimes don't have a lot of support from others in their lives," explains coworker Shari Gustafson. "Sheila is a trusted advocate for all staff who come to her for advice."

Congratulations to Sheila for being named Moorhead Teacher of the Year. Each year, Education Moorhead selects building and district level educators of the year based on peer nomination and voting. This year's nominees from each building are listed below:

- **Becky Anderson** — Robert Asp Elementary
- **Ondrea Cook** — Horizon West Middle School
- **Dan Dahlvang** — Horizon East Middle School
- **Andrew Ellingson** — Ellen Hopkins Elementary
- **Rebecca Lee-Hunt** — ABE/West Central Academy/ALC/Vista Building

- **Amy Pederson** — Dorothy Dodds Elementary
- **Sankream Prak** — Moorhead High School
- **Christine Soukup** — Early Learning
- **Sheila Stadstad** — Teacher of the Year
- **Michelle Ziebarth** — Probstfield Elementary

[www.isd152.org](http://www.isd152.org)



## Congratulations to These 2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools!



### Lake Middle School 2022 National Blue Ribbon School

*Ms. Molly Roeske, Principal at time of Nomination*

*South Washington County School District*

Lake Middle School, located in Woodbury, MN is an amazing place for students to learn and achieve. The school's primary focus is to provide a safe, student-centered environment inspiring leadership, academics, kindness, and excellence for everyone. Staff strive to be an inclusive, supportive, and responsive setting. The staff believe strongly in individualized personalized learning to ensure that each student's unique learning needs, individual experiences, talents, and interests are supported in every way to ensure



Lake Middle School, South Washington School District

students reach their full potential. Staff's efforts and motivations, to support students in times of celebration and challenges, is focused on meeting the needs of all students, honoring their individual stories and experiences. Academically, students are held to high expectations and standards of academic performance. However, Lake Middle School acknowledges that each student's social and emotional needs must be fully supported in order for them to reach their academic best.

Lake Middle School has many traditions and initiatives that enhance the educational experiences of our students. One of the most significant initiatives Lake Middle School has undertaken is to utilize strategies developed in the Top 20 Teens and Teachers programming to be considered a Top 20 School. The Top 20 initiative's vision is to encourage students and staff members to become the best version of themselves. The strategies which are geared for students, families, and staff members to

improve their thinking, learning, and communicating in the school, home, and community settings. These strategies are utilized in developing social and emotional learning through school-wide messaging and common language related to our school culture and climate, building and maintaining relationships and support systems for all students, and overall academic success.

<https://lms.sowashco.org>

[lms.sowashco.org](https://lms.sowashco.org)



### Lincoln K-8 School 2022 National Blue Ribbon School

*Principal James Sonju, Principal at time of Nomination*

*Rochester Public School District*

Lincoln K-8 Elementary School is a STEM-focused district-wide option school located in Rochester, MN. The staff strive to make Lincoln K-8 the greatest school in the universe for students as they educate and empower children in a STEM-focused, family-oriented, and creative community by cultivating excellence. The school's innovative science curriculum supports academic excellence and fosters the next generation of talented and creative scientists. Lincoln has

**Continued on Page 22**



# Congratulations to the Minnesota Principals of the Year 2022

## 2022 High School Principal of the Year



**Nathaniel "Natty" Messick**  
Fertile-Beltrami High School

Nathaniel "Natty" Messick, principal of Fertile-Beltrami Schools for being named the 2022 Minnesota High School Principal of the Year. Natty has been the principal of his school for the past eight years.

Over those years, Natty has instilled the value of the "Falcon Way" — focusing on a

culture of responsibility, respectfulness and determination. As one student states, "Our school has an amazing sense of unity that doesn't happen in other places. There is so much support for each and every student. Our teachers and administration always greet everyone with a smile and make sure that each student knows that they are cared for." Furthermore, according to an administrator in the district, Natty creates a strong culture, "Mr. Messick is very approachable, people-person, student-oriented principal who works to establish one-on-one relationships with all participants in our school system. Students, staff and community members feel connected and supported by our principal — which, in turn, creates trust and a sense of belonging."

Designated a Blue Ribbon School in 2018 by the U.S. Department of Education, Fertile-Beltrami has also been recognized for its academic accomplishments numerous times by Minnesota's Department of Education with its "Reward School" and "Celebration Eligible" designations.

[fertirebeltrami.k12.mn.us](http://fertirebeltrami.k12.mn.us)



## 2022 Middle Level Principal of the Year



**Michael O'Neil**  
Pequot Lakes Middle School

Michael O'Neil has been named this year's recipient of the Minnesota Middle Level Principal of the Year. Mike has been an administrator for eight years, the past seven years as the principal at Pequot Lakes Middle School.

Mike understands the importance of individualized and high-quality education offerings for his students. He states, "As a campus community, we have worked to stay the course in providing each child with their version of "what they need" to be successful. This includes a strategic PLC devoted to Social Emotional Learning and the support of some of our most challenging students on campus." As stated from a teacher under Mike's leadership, "Mike has been courageously steadfast in his messaging and in his decisions related to equity. His advocacy for equity is rooted in his desire to hear from people whose perspectives have been shaped by experiences different than his own. He is a humble learner in this regard, modeling curiosity and respect in his personal and professional equity work."

"Every moment is precious . . . A core belief that is shared at PLMS. Each minute of every class period is an opportunity to engage and inspire students in a rigorous and enriched environment. Bell-to-bell engagement is at the foundation of our efforts at PLMS. It is our hope that this experience extends beyond the walls of PLMS to our students' home lives as well. Our students are our greatest investment."

[www.isd186.org/PLSD](http://www.isd186.org/PLSD)



## 2021–2022 Assistant Principal of the Year



**Nick Bakke**  
Mora High School

Nick Bakke, Assistant Principal at Mora High School, has been named this year's recipient of the Minnesota Assistant Principal of the Year Award, and is now eligible to be considered for the National Assistant Principal of the Year honors. Nick has been an administrator for the past nine years at Mora High School.

Nick comes with high praise from staff and community members. A special education teacher shares that Nick comes with many strengths, including listening to the concerns of others as well as being able to soothe stressful situations. Both powerful tools when working with students and parents. Furthermore, Nick's principal notes his dedication to continually improve the culture of Mora High School. Although he faces many challenges and difficult conversations with students, he never shies away. His ultimate goal when working with students is not to discipline, but to change behavior. One community member expressed that Nick treats all students, regardless of age, gender, race or GPA with respect. He is always thinking of ways to include kids in different levels of activities and training to ensure he finds ways for them to fit in. Congratulations Nick! Thank you for your strong leadership and dedication to your students, staff and community.

[www.moraschools.org](http://www.moraschools.org)



Courtesy of the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)

<https://massp.org>

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## Blue Ribbon Schools Continued from Page 20



Lincoln K-8 School, Rochester Public School District

longstanding, strong, and established partnerships with the incredible scientific community of Mayo Clinic and IBM. Lincoln's Zebrafish lab and inquiry studies provide hands-on learning as students explore their own questions, problem solve situations, and conduct novel science experiments.

Innovation is Lincoln's mindset as staff adapt technology to students' needs, including 3D printing, robotics, programming, drones, fluorescent microscopes, broadcasting, and more. Lincoln has had 1:1 with iPads for years. Staff are always adapting to create collaboration opportunities with technology for students. Students and staff work to improve the environment through a Honey Bee project, school gardens, and in an outdoor classroom. Lincoln is a creative community that incorporates visual arts, mural paintings, music, band, orchestra, and class productions. Mural paintings can be seen throughout the entire building, outside, and in the outdoor classroom. Family engagement is a strong focus as staff strive to connect with families in a multitude of ways. Lincoln utilizes the talents of families with volunteering, fundraising, expert speakers, school events, auction, and social activities. Lincoln school community is incredible!

[lincoln.rochester-schools.org](http://lincoln.rochester-schools.org)



### Lowell Elementary School 2022 National Blue Ribbon School

*Mr. Todd Sauer, Principal at time of Nomination*

*Ms. Kathryn Ann Johnson, Current Principal  
Brainerd Public School District*

Lowell Elementary School is one of six elementary schools in the Brainerd Public Schools District in central Minnesota, housing grades K-4. Lowell is a strong family of dedicated educators that believe in helping each student reach their full potential by setting high expectations. Staff value life-long learning and relationships with students, families, and community. Lowell's educational model allows students to work at their own level, while making positive connections with multi-

ple staff members and their peers. Lowell offer opportunities to learn Spanish as a second language and allots daily time for engaging instruction around topics that expand background knowledge, including robotics and culinary opportunities.

Students from all backgrounds are challenged through a rigorous and positive learning environment. Teachers in each grade level have collaborative work time every day for 30-minutes. Teachers discuss student progress, adjust various learning groups, and create continuity between their practices to reach the highest quality instruction.



Lowell Elementary School,  
Brainerd Public School District

When needed, students receive remedial instruction in reading and math. Lowell has full-time special education teachers assigned at each grade level. The school utilized a portion of Title I funds for a full-time literacy coach. This allows for continuity and high impact practices to be implemented throughout the building. The district screen all students for possible placement into Lowell's Area Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE) program. This program provides gifted students a modified curriculum that accelerates their math instruction and expands their reading curriculum beyond their grade level peers.

[brainerdlowell.ss12.sharpschool.com](http://brainerdlowell.ss12.sharpschool.com)



### Maple River West Elementary School 2022 National Blue Ribbon School

*Mr. Jon Lewis, Principal at time of Nomination  
Maple River School District*

Maple River Public School is nestled squarely in south central Minnesota. On the west side of the district is Maple River West Elementary School. There is a strong partnership between the families and the school that has been successful for all.

For the past five years, the school has used a program based on the science of reading. Maple River is still in the process of reforming the elementary Language Arts curriculum by implementing Word Study. Word Study quickly became a central focus to daily reading lessons. This science of reading approach to teaching students has increased students' performance. This focus has become district-wide during Professional Learning Community meetings to help teachers connect with others across the district. Being able to learn from others who have similar challenges has brought our group of teachers closer together. Staff have done an outstanding job of taking a concept, which was initially created for individualized instruction, and make it small group oriented. Teachers are seeing once struggling readers volunteer to read in class because of what they have learned and are



Maple River West Elementary School,  
Maple River School District

confident in reading in front of their peers. The staff recognizes that students who are entering their classes are advanced from previous years.

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**- Jen Sahr, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)  
Coordinator, Fargo Public Schools (North Dakota)**

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