

City Recognizes Franklin School District, Tim O'Brien Homes for Construction 2 Building Trades Program

Partnership Connects Students With Real-World Experience

The Construction 2 building trades program at Franklin High School offers students hands-on experience in developing valuable skills and exposure to the construction trades, potentially leading to apprenticeships or careers in the field, which has been facing a crippling shortage of workers.

The partnership, which began six years ago, prepares students for future opportunities after graduation, including careers in residential construction. In any given month, there is a shortage of 200,000 to 400,000 construction workers, and home builders will need to add 2.2 million new workers over the next three years just to keep up with demand, according to the National Association of Home Builders.

That's where the Construction 2 program comes in. The class is open to juniors and seniors who meet certain academic requirements. As many as 40 experienced contractors from Tim O'Brien Homes, a Pewaukee home builder, work alongside students, mentoring them through the various steps of the home-building process. The students gain experience in all aspects of construction, including electrical work, plumbing and carpentry.

The program takes 12 students from Franklin High School to work alongside Tim O'Brien Homes for four months with the task of building a home from the ground up. The advanced construction class includes rough carpentry to finish, flooring, cables and green-living initiatives.

The completed homes are sold to families in the community, and the program helps address the skilled labor shortage in the construction industry.

Created by Franklin High School construction teacher Andrew Mente in partnership with Tim O'Brien Homes, the program is part of a broader initiative to expand career and technical education programs in the Franklin Public School District.

Wisconsin ranks No. 1 in the country for construction, according to the Associated Builders and Contractors' 10th annual Merit Shop Scorecard. This annual scorecard looks at all 50 states' taxpayer-funded construction projects and evaluates policies and programs that further workforce development and careers in construction.

This rating means that an increasing number of young people in the Midwest are choosing to pursue careers in construction straight from high school.

For students interested in entering the construction field but who are unsure whether it's a good fit, programs like the Construction 2 building trades program allow students test the waters to see not just whether a career in construction is right for them, but which specific field interests them the most.

In addition to being involved in home building, students in the Construction 2 building trades program also engage in other community projects, like park improvements.