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Celebrating 50 Years of Educational Excellence

On track with Construction & Building Maintenance

Dating back to 1992, when Ashtabula County employers expressed a need for well-rounded building and grounds maintenance workers, the school has offered a diversified program that is both flexible and comprehensive. The program's name has evolved with its focus; "Construction & Building Maintenance" captures a sense of the program's breadth.

"When I got here (23 years ago), it was Building and Grounds Maintenance," says instructor Kevin Orvos. He says that when he joined the teaching staff, the Building and Grounds Maintenance program focused on maintaining property grounds, including lawn care, basic custodial duties and upkeep of the overall facility.

The current program is the Swiss Army knife of CTE in the building trades. It helps students expand opportunities by covering several of the major areas with a strong emphasis on the use of hand and power tools, workplace safety and workforce readiness.

"This program gives you the opportunity to learn more than just one trade," Orvos says. "You're going to get a little bit of everything in here."

Students learn all aspects of building construction, from laying up a foundation to framing a wall; from sanding trim to nailing roofing shingles. And because they know how a building goes together, they can fix the wiring or plumbing when something goes wrong. But what the program's title can't convey is the underlying premise that working with one's hands remains a noble and worthy pursuit in which experience matters. And A-Tech students receive plenty of experience in the school's workshop lab and in the field.

"The coolest thing Mr. Orvos has us do is work on (community) projects in the lab, go to a job site and actually work on stuff rather than just do book work," says Clayton Bennett of Conneaut, a program senior.

In the fall of 2018, his students built picnic tables and benches for Camp Whitewood, the county's 4-H camp in Windsor Township. Orvos relishes these projects, which help the community and can be completed in the school's lab. The project required the power and hand tools that a carpenter would use building a house or pole barn. Further, because the project didn't come with drawn plans, students had to reverse engineer an existing bench to create a drawing and materials list. Then, under

Orvos' example and guidance, they applied their basic knowledge of tools and techniques to perform the actual construction work.

"These kids are getting practical experience in everything," Orvos says.

The state sets standards for all career technical education programs in Ohio; schools select four areas in which to concentrate their training for that career track. Orvos says first-year Construction and Building Maintenance students learn tool use, safety and carpentry. The second year introduces electricity and plumbing, valuable skills that will serve them well throughout their lives as homeowners and community volunteers, as well as employees.

According to the program's career tree, entry-level jobs for graduates include sale associate in a lumberyard or home-improvement center, construction laborer, maintenance worker, weatherization installer, survey technician, loader operator and roofer. With a bachelor's degree, the students could qualify for management or supervision careers in construction. Their A-Tech training can even garner a few college credits at participating schools. And the students receive 10 hours of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training as part of their A-Tech

program.

"That's pretty much required by any employer before you can walk on the jobsite," Orvos says.

Regardless of the Construction Trades program they teach, Orvos, Notter and Polta agree that the most important skills they teach in their classrooms



The Construction & Building Maintenance program was added in 1992 as "Buildings & Grounds." Here, Carlos Matos gains valuable field experience at a jobsite in Pierpont in 2018. PHOTO BY CARL E. FEATHER

and labs are "work ethics." "What will be expected of them once they leave here," Orvos says. "The opportunities are out there, but they have to be motivated."

All three instructors have their own style and approach to teaching these skills, but "example" is at the heart of them.

"I am always with the students trying to explain to them that 'this is how things are done.' My work ethic is to 'always stay busy,'" he says.

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Meets 3rd Monday each month at 6:30 p.m.

Those wishing to attend should contact the Superintendent's office to verify meeting times, 440-576-6015

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