

19.5%

increase in construction trades enrollment

SOURCE: NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE

It gives students a head start understanding how to use tools, different processes, and what goes into the whole construction industry.”

- Ryan DeCardenas,
CTE Construction Trades Instructor



Screens from the CAT excavator simulator allow students to practice and improve their operating skills. PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY NATALIE GARWOOD

In the CTE Construction Trades lab at Eisenhower High School, senior Kristian Srbinovski uses the excavator simulator, which logs hours and skill learned on the CAT machine.

PHOTO BY NATALIE GARWOOD



Wearing virtual reality goggles, senior Jacob Kohl practices his crane operating skills on a CAT simulator. The hours logged have helped students get to the top of hiring lists in the construction trades.

PHOTO BY NATALIE GARWOOD



Inside a small structure his CTE Construction Trades class built, senior Avery Eno applies new electrical wiring skills to add a switch and light. PHOTO BY NATALIE GARWOOD



Utica Community Schools offers hands-on construction experience

CTE Construction Trades class offered at Eisenhower High School trains UCS students in construction skills and management

DESIGN BY NATALIE GARWOOD
UTICA ARROW'S PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

STORY & CONTENT BY GRACIE WETHERINGTON & LORIANA MANNINO
UTICA ARROW'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & MANAGING EDITOR

As more students are opting to go to trade school instead of college, Utica Community Schools students can earn hands-on trades experience in its CTE Construction Trades class.

“Our construction trades program gives kids a jump start into the trades. Whether they go in as a laborer or go into construction management, it gives them a head start in understanding how to use tools, different processes, and what goes into the whole construction industry,” Eisenhower High School teacher Ryan DeCardenas said. “We’re able to talk about drywall, framing, electrical, plumbing, and we go into heavy machine operation, obviously with our simulators. We just give the kids an opportunity to see what is under the construction umbrella, which is pretty big. The class touches on a lot of different areas and the kids get to dabble, as far as what their likes and dislikes are, in the construction industry.”

While the classroom has space for students to construct structures, complete with windows and electrical wiring, it also includes a CAT training center with machine simulators which mimic a job site.

“The simulators show us how to operate the machines, as well as basic ways on how to maneuver them in tight spaces,” senior Jacob Kohl said. “They also show us that it is a lot harder than it looks, because most of the machines do more than one thing. A lot of the machines pick stuff up, put stuff down, and show what not to do with the ma-

chines and what makes them break. They also show how to operate them in the most cost-efficient way.”

One student has had real-life experience with CAT machines, and knows first-hand that the simulators are very realistic.

“The CAT simulators are very helpful. My dad used to work for the city of Rochester, so I used to drive the CAT machines with him all the time,” senior Garret Carney said. “They are very helpful, but they are very hard to learn with all the components. The simulators are very accurate to the real machines.”

The construction trades class has something for every student, and gives them a chance to figure out their favorite aspect of the construction industry.

“This class is similar to a college class,” senior Kaiden Bayer said, “but more for getting ready for a career outside of college, preparing yourself more for an everyday lifestyle of getting your hands dirty, rather than sitting in a class reading a book. It helps me get ready for life by teaching me, for instance, electrical in case I ever have to do it in a house or something. I’ll be able to. It gives me experience for future apprenticeships or careers, as well.”

This class is not only great for the opportunities it provides and doors it opens, but for the relationships and new found passions that are made.

“Every year is different and every class is different. I have always had the luxury of having students who love

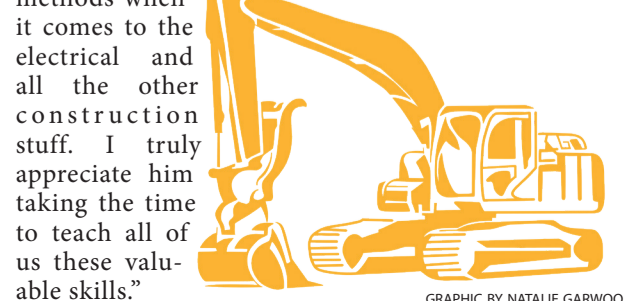
working with their hands and love the success of building something,” DeCardenas said. “I think, overall, the best part of my job is being able to see kids make something and have that sense of pride and accomplishment from what they did.”

Students feel similarly about their teacher and all he does for them.

“I love Mr. D.,” senior Zander Baumann said. “He cares about what we want to do with our lives, and wants to see us put our all into our work.”

Senior Anthony Lulgjuraj feels similarly to Baumann.

“I have a great teacher who really teaches us a lot. He is a fantastic teacher, and I really respect him,” Lulgjuraj said. “He helps out and always interacts with us. He has very good teaching methods when it comes to the electrical and all the other construction stuff. I truly appreciate him taking the time to teach all of us these valuable skills.”



GRAPHIC BY NATALIE GARWOOD