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FEATURED

PHS Trades Academy is ‘amazing opportunity’

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The first cohort of 16 students in Plainville High School Trades Academy cut the ribbon.
Brian Johnson



PLAINVILLE — Local and state leaders, students and supporters from local businesses and nonprofit organizations gathered at Plainville High School to cut the ribbon on the new Plainville High School Trades Academy.

The Plainville High School Trades Academy aims to address the growing state and national workforce skills gap by preparing students for high-demand careers in the skilled trades. It builds upon the district's focus of ensuring college and career readiness for students.

The program positions Plainville High School as one of the first high schools in Connecticut to offer students the opportunity to earn industry-recognized NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research) credentials and apprenticeship hours while still enrolled in high school.

The Academy launched in collaboration with the Construction Education Center (CEC), which is also located in Plainville. It leverages CEC's expertise, certification pathways and industry partnerships. The program utilizes Plainville High School's technical education facilities to "deliver authentic, hands-on training that leads directly to workforce readiness and postsecondary opportunity."

Plainville High School Principal Jennifer DeLorenzo said the new Trades Academy will help Plainville High School expand career opportunities before students graduate. It will also help tackle the growing skill gap in the workforce.

“Our students will receive authentic, hands-on training to meet the demand of the workforce,” she said. “Nationally, more than 50% of skilled trade professionals are nearing retirement age. More than two million additional workers will be needed by 2020.”

DeLorenzo said average trade salaries range between \$55,000 and \$85,000 annually, without the need for a four-year college.

Superintendent of Schools Brian Reas called the opening of the Trades Academy a pivotal moment for the district. He thanked all of those who made it a reality.

Board of Education Chair Foster White said the establishment of the Trades Academy exemplifies the district’s “portrait of a graduate” — collaboration, communication, innovation, mindfulness and resiliency. He wished success to “the most important people in the room, the 16 students who were part of the first cohort that applied for and was approved for the program.

Susan Sadecki, president and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation, said she attended some of the initial planning meetings where the vision for the Trades Academy was laid out. She said she left those meetings a believer and all that was missing was the pilot funding. She thanked the board members who contributed a combined \$105,000 to help the program get started.

“This will be an amazing opportunity for the next generation and for workforce development,” she said.

Irene Parisi, chief academic officer for the Connecticut State Department of Education, credited local leaders for being able to “rewrite the rules” and expanding opportunities for students. She said she hoped to see some female students in the cohort next year.

Dr. Miguel Cardona, chair of the Connecticut Career Pathways Commission, said all students should have career opportunities upon graduation. He said programs throughout Connecticut will be looking to the Plainville High School Trades Academy as a model for their future programs.

Sen. Henri Martin said the aging population in the manufacturing sector will create a huge void. He said the Plainville High School Trades Academy will help to fill that void. He expressed optimism that other sectors such as medicine, finance and media will also get similar pipelines.

Rep. Rebecca Martinez spoke about how the state provided \$80,000 to help get the program started. She said it is an “exciting opportunity for Plainville students.” She said she is “so proud” of Plainville and told the students that their town and their state are all supportive of them.

“They can stay here in the high school, come in, try the trades and still have their core classes,” she said.

Patrice McCarthy, executive director of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, said the Plainville High School Trades Academy is a “great collaboration.” She said she will be showing it to their 400 volunteer board members as an example model for other districts.

Marcie Addy, director of education with the Construction Education Center, said she is “tremendously proud and excited” to work with the Plainville Trades Academy. She said CEC is located five minutes down the road in town. The nonprofit, founded in 2007, provides the “gold standard” of curriculum, she said, which is accepted internationally. She said students will be provided with the right credentials to grow the workforce.

Brent Davenport, vice president and owner of Shaffer Beacon Mechanical, thanked all of the partners who made the Plainville High School Trades Academy possible. He said when he graduated Plainville High School in 1997 he had great trade teachers, but never an opportunity such as this. He told the gathered students they will be the future of their industries.

Todd Berch, state apprenticeship director for the Connecticut Department of Labor, presented certifications to DeLorenzo and Reas. He said the opening of the Plainville High School Trades Academy wasn’t just a ribbon cutting, but “planting a flag” for apprenticeship programs. He said it will provide trades students the same level of advantage that Advanced Placement programs do for students bound for college. They will complete the program with 500 of the 8,000 hours needed to complete their apprenticeships.

“It will be a coupon for their futures,” he said.

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