

Jeffers HS students enjoying new trades facility

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PAINESDALE - Not all students who graduate from high school go on to a college or university, which was the reason for construction of the Adams Township School District trades building.

The new building opened at the start of the school, and instructor Mike Randall appreciates having the facility.

"It's exciting," he said. "The kids want to do a lot of stuff."

Article Photos



Jeffers High School building trades instructor Mike Randall makes a cut on a board as students look on outside the new building trades facility at the school. The district's building trades program, which is in its third year, is popular with students. (Houghton Daily Mining Gazette photo by Kurt Hauglie)

Randall said, the building will be used to teach construction trades including carpentry, electrical, plumbing and welding.

"We're going to have a welding station," he said.

There will be a designated area for plumbing, also, Randall said.

"The plan is to set up a work corner with a vanity and a toilet," he said.

There are 25 students in the first class this semester, Randall said. This group is all boys.

Eventually, Randall said the students will construct three or four storage sheds. They might build and sell saunas, as well.

The building was constructed by DP Construction Inc. of Chassell, but Randall said the interior was left relatively bare with the intent being the students would finish it, which would give them a sense of ownership.

"It'll be great once we get everything going," he said.

District Superintendent Tim Keteri said the trades program is in its third year, and the new building provides a larger and more efficient space for the program.

The trades building - which is also called the vocational center - cost about \$500,000, which came from all donated funds, Keteri said.

"That is huge," he said. "That is a direct reflection of community support."

The main contributors were John and Ruanne Opie, Keteri said. Other contributors were Paul and Margaret Karppinen, Frank and Nancy Rugani and James and Susan Anttonen.

The building trades program is for grades nine through 12, and Keteri said when students finish the program they may not get hired right away, but they'll have a foundation they can build on.

"This program is not set up to get them to be a welder, but it gets them on the path to be a welder," he said.

In addition, Keteri said some employers could be willing to hire a student who finishes the trades program thinking they won't have to spend as much time training the student.

Keteri said he and the school board understand the value of providing a trades class for those students who have no intention of going on to post-secondary education. Those students who do want to go to college could benefit from the program, as well, because although about 80 percent of district graduates go on to post-secondary education, the college or university graduation rate of those students is only about 30 percent.

Although state officials, including Gov. Rick Snyder, have given vocal support for the need for trades education, Keteri said the Legislature hasn't provided funding for it in state aid to schools.

The plan is to expand the trades program to include automobile repair, Keteri said. The new building also includes space for culinary arts. There will be instruction in cosmetology, which will start in January, with 12 students signed up.

"That's all part of a skills-based education," he said.

More than 50 students have signed up for the trades classes for the school year, Keteri said.

Many of the professions the trades program is instructing students in pay very well, Keteri said.

"A trades class is not a sub-secondary education," he said.