

Chilton Expands Welding Program

by Janet Murphy

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At the Chilton School District Board of Education meeting held Monday evening, Feb. 17, High School Vocational Arts teacher Steve Bartel updated board members about the additions made to the welding program in the past couple of years, including new equipment and the new 18-week Gas Metal Arc Welding course.

Bartel said the welding curriculum had included a nine-week Introduction to Metals course, which covers safety, tool training, and measurement, and a nine-week Advanced Metals course, which spends additional time on measurement and accuracy training, along with blueprint reading and MIG welding.

Bartel said the new GMAW class adds to the students' blueprint reading and MIG welding skills, while they also spend time mastering very specific tolerance levels that reflect business and industry standards. He said in the future, students will be able to receive dual credit for this course where they will receive a certificate from Fox Valley Technical College indicating they have completed the welding program at the High School, "and most importantly, these kids will be ready to go out and fill some immediate needs out in the local community."

Bartel said they have added a lot of equipment to the program in the last year or so, including five new welding booths for a total of eight so each student has their own space. He also noted there are still many items on their wish list that would help out the welding program, including a weld strength tester, a CNC plasma cutter, a vertical band saw, a drill press, grinders, and computer software.

Bartel showed photos of some of the projects the students in Advanced Metals and Tiger Manufacturing have worked on for the district, as well as for the community. He said last summer, Kent Katalinic from the American Legion asked them for help repairing the mailbox used to collect flags in front of Farm and Home. He said High School art teacher Jane Schmitz and her students would finish off the project with fresh paint.

Bartel introduced the eight students currently taking his GMAW class and gave them a chance to talk about what they were getting out of the course. While some just want to have the training as something to fall back on if they need to in the future, others plan to continue their coursework after high school at Fox Valley Tech to be able to help out with their family's business or to become professional welders, and one plans to attend Ferris State University in Michigan.