

## Construction trades program coming to NHHS this fall



By Chris Drost

North Hastings High School will be adding another Specialized High Skills Major program to its offerings this fall when a construction trades program will be added. The school currently has two similarly designed environmental programs, the very popular NOS and NERDS programs. SHSM programs allow students to gain credits toward their Ontario Secondary School Diploma and focus their learning on a specific economic sector at the same time. Bancroft This Week reached out to NHHS to learn more about the construction trades program and was invited to meet with construction trades teacher, Terry Weinert, and Cameron Winmill, teacher and co-op coordinator. The SHSM is not a new program, but it is new here. Every school has different SHSMs. This program is for high school students in Grades 11 and 12 only, explains Weinert. Students complete four regular required courses, such as English and math, in addition to four construction courses. Those construction courses could include such things as manufacturing, which refers to welding and machining, carpentry, technical design, such as Auto Cad, Fusion 360, Computer and Control Router and C & C plasma, a cutter for cutting steel. We have an excellent facility for new technology, says Weinert. Students require a minimum of two co-op placements but can take up to four. We get wonderful support from our employers. It is not a problem getting the students the experience they need, says Winmill. What is really great about SHMS is that it offers sector recognition certifications. We arrange for at least five, including such things as Working at Heights, First Aid, Health and Safety, CPR. There are five compulsory and two electives, so by the end of Grade 12, the students will have seven certifications, explains Weinert. There is also an experiential learning component to the program. This could be anything from touring a plant, attending a trade show or taking part in, or watching a skills competition. Skills competitions are province-wide and include carpentry, cabinet making, HVAC, welding, architectural design, landscaping, robotics and more. Students who compete would have to go through a regional competition to start. Another component of the program is what is called reach ahead experience. This includes visiting a location that could provide an approved apprenticeship program, including a college, university, or workplace. The sector partner experience portion of the program is where students engage with a sector partner where they can apply the skills they have learned. We already have three sector partners lined up for the fall. We try to keep it diversified, says an enthusiastic Weinert. The advantages of the program are that students get an education in something they are both interested in, and talented in. Unlike the NOS or NERDS program, this is not a program into itself, explains Weinert. The students still have four regular periods per day where they take regular subjects. There are 16 courses for Grades 11 and 12 and 10 are required for Specialized High Skills Major programs. The high school's new construction program is limited to 18 students and Weinert expects it will be full this fall. We have a phenomenal welding facility. The Canadian Welding Association and the HPEDSB invested in it just before COVID-19 because of the shortage of welders across the province. We don't require any physical changes or new equipment to get this up and going for the fall. The school board has upgraded equipment, says Weinert. We want to partner with community organizations to do projects, adds Weinert. He has already been talking with the fish hatchery about some work needed there and plans to contact Kevin Taylor about his proposed Little Blue Cabins initiative. Once students are enrolled in construction trades program, they will be enrolled in something called Skills Pass. This is a planning tool that will help track the certifications and training that each individual student has taken. Sean Pudlis is the recruiter for the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and the

board lead for the SHSM program at the HPEDSB. ?The two programs are weaved together. The program requires a minimum of two co-op placements that must be construction related. Students automatically get enrolled in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. This program has been around for about 20 years,? explains Pudlis. Making connections to local employers is expected to be key for students seeking future employment and/or apprenticeships opportunities. The Ministry of Labour funds the OYAP and pays for certification programs such as Working at Heights, safety equipment, and support for transportation costs. If a student is doing well in the SHSM program, that student can be signed on as an apprentice while still a high school student. They can start their apprenticeship in a construction related field prior to high school graduation. ?Everyone is more aware now of the need for tradespeople,? says Pudlis. The HPEDSB also provides extra funding for certifications related to construction, such as WHIMIS, safety etc., and field trips that are part of the ?reach ahead? component of the program. The Ministry of Education shared last year that SHSM programs across the province had a six per cent higher graduation rate than non-SHMS programs. ?I hope this is of interest to other students. The goal is to spread the opportunities through different schools. Parents are more encouraging of the trades now,? says Pudlis. Last year, one student was able to be sent to college to get her first in-school levels towards apprenticeship. This was the first time in about 10 years. This was a person who had been university-bound, but discovered she was more interested in electrical. ?During the 2021/2022 school year there were 335 students in 16 SHSM programs. Next year there will be 19, including the new one at NHHS,? added Pudlis.