

# HCCSC meets needs with welding program expansion

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A quick search on Indiana Career Connect shows at least 866 welding positions on their site. Welding has been in high demand in Northeast Indiana, and Huntington County Community School Corporation is making changes to meet that need.

HCCSC's Learning Center is expanding its welding certification program for high school students,

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college students and adults. High school students who choose to participate in a dual enrollment program with Ivy Tech Community College can earn a technical certificate in structural welding.

Huntington North High School Director of Career and Technical Education and Huntington County Community Learning Center Director Tiffaney Drummond believes the welding program partnership between the high school and college is a wonderful asset to the community.

"Students can participate in 12 half-day vocational Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs at Huntington North High School, which is very unique to Huntington. That means students do not have to leave their high school to gain skills that lead to immediate employment. The school district's commitment to the expansion of the learning center is another sign of the value they place in providing training to the entire community for skilled trades," Drummond said.

While being immersed in the welding program, Drummond said students receive hands-on experience and are tested at the same industry standards as college students and returning adults.

"This validates what they learn in the classroom, and also builds their confidence that they are prepared to do the job. We are locally training our future workforce to the same standards as the industry before they even leave high school. This program creates a graduation pathway completer and can help them earn a Technical Honors diploma. It is allowing students to pursue their passion and get a jump start on their future," Drummond said.

As well as high school stu-

dents, college students from Huntington University and Ivy Tech Community College are able to take welding for academic credit at the Huntington County Community Learning Center. For adults who want to quickly earn a welding credential, Ivy Tech Community College's offers welding certification training at the Huntington County Community Learning Center.

According to Drummond, the welding program has been popular with students since coming into fruition in 2018 as a half day program. Since then, the program became full day in 2019. There are 17 students enrolled in the program currently, and over 112 students have participated in welding since the Huntington County Community Learning Center opened in 2016.

Due to more students enrolling in the welding program, plans are underway to expand the welding program at the Huntington County Community Learning Center in December 2020. A new welding lab will be included in the expansion.

"The new welding shop will be three times the size of the current space and will allow our students to work in a state of the art welding lab designed to meet the needs of our curriculum. We are very excited to provide this type of learning environment to both our high school and adult students," Drummond said.

Drummond said a separate facility will be built next to the current facility. It will have an expanded welding shop with a classroom. There will be an advanced machine shop with a classroom that will allow the Precision Machining program to expand and modernize. The Criminal Justice program will have a classroom and simulator room.

"Also planned in the new space is shop space for both the current Industrial Maintenance classes and the po-

tential for Building Trades down the road. Space for the High School Alternative School will also be included in the new facility," Drummond said.

In a recent press release, Ivy Tech Community College Dean of Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Applied Science Darrel Kesler said he's pleased to expand the welding program to meet the demand of skilled welders in Huntington County. Kesler believes the program will enable students to go above and beyond the required expectations in the workforce.

"There are so many opportunities for the welding students including industrial certifications embedded within the courses and three or more AWS certifications. These students will be job ready right after high school graduation and from there, the possibilities are limitless," Kesler said.

Along with welding, students learn the value of hard work, attention to detail and safety in manufacturing. Drummond believes that the welding program has had a positive impact in the Huntington community. Many of the students who graduated with the first welding program class found work in welding locally.

"We know that employers need even more welders, and our hope is to meet that need with local talent. I think our community is lucky to have a school district that values trades programs, and is committed to helping students gain real-world, hands-on experience," Drummond said.

To learn more about Huntington North High School's technical and career programs, contact Tiffaney Drummond at [tdrummond@hccsc.k12.in.us](mailto:tdrummond@hccsc.k12.in.us) or 260-356-6104, ext. 1096. The website for the Huntington County Community Learning Center is <http://lc.hccsc.k12.in.us>, or visit their Facebook page for more information.