

**Wichita Falls Independent School District
Construction and Electrical Technology Advisory Committee
Meeting
Monday, May 9, 2016
11 a.m. Carrigan Center**

CALL TO ORDER

The Construction and Electrical Technology Advisory Committee Meeting was called to order at 11:02 a.m. by Michelle Wood, WFISD's CTE specialist.

PARTICIPANTS

Michelle Wood, CTE specialist
Mark Holcomb, Vernon College, directs Industrial Automation
Mona Statser, Workforce Solutions
Synthia Kirby, Carrigan Principal
J. Tanner Wachsman, RJ Wachsman Homes
Rick Carpenter, United Regional
John Harmon, Harmon and Holcomb Homes
Shonna Norton, WFISD counselor
Jessica Bennett, WFISD counselor
Christopher Willow, WFISD
Scott Little, Carrigan instructor
Dan Gray, Habitat for Humanity executive director
Ann Work Goodrich, WFISD communications specialist

BUSINESS

The group elected a chair (Vernon College's Mark Holcomb) and secretary (J. Tanner Wachsman of RJ Wachsman Homes) to direct the meeting. The leaders may not be WFISD employees.

OVERVIEW

Mrs. Wood explained the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Architecture and Construction Track in the district's expanding CTE program. In 9th grade, students start with a class called, Principles of Industrial Trades. "This is the first year we've had it. We've had a huge response," said Mrs. Wood.

Mr. Willow summarized the key projects in this introductory year of training. Students learn to read a tape measure and add fractions. They learn OSHA job safety requirements.

Mrs. Wood explained that Construction Technology, Electrical Technology (formerly called Electronics), and Architecture Design programs will all be held at Carrigan next year. These hands-on courses are now beginning in the sophomore year, which is new. "If we can get them earlier, we may keep them longer."

Mr. Little explained that in their first year, students learn safety, tool usage and terminology. They need time to "get their head wrapped around" the lingo and skills. They partner with Habitat for Humanity and build a house on site.

In Construction 2, students learn the science of estimation, cutting rafters, stairs, "much more how-to, technical carpentry," said Mr. Little. The skill of reading a tape measure may take six weeks.

The third year is a Practicum in Construction. "It's split between those who can get a job and those who will stay with me," said Mr. Little. "If they stay with me, they will learn about plumbing and electricity and get a wider view of what's going on."

Mr. Little said his goal is to point students to college, to get "something behind their name" as certifications so that they can move through the ranks as managers and make the most money and get the most job satisfaction possible.

Mrs. Wood made the following points on practicums:

- The district loses a lot of kids to early release. The practicum may motivate students to stay in school for that. "We want them to work in a field we're training them so they will be more productive."
- Only seniors do practicums/internships.

Rick Carpenter said United Regional requires all interns to be 18 years old.

Mr. Little said he questions students to pinpoint their specific interests so their internship targets what they want to learn. “We want them to see the real world...that Mr. Little is not just blowing smoke when he says you need to work hard. Learning by hard knocks is the best.”

Mrs. Wood said creating internships takes strong collaboration with businesses.

Mr. Willow said in his Electrical Technology courses, he teaches residential and construction, even though they are two different worlds. “I teach them both ways in case they want to work on houses, be a service guy, or go into construction.”

He also spends a lot of time teaching the codes for actual construction, he said.

Mr. Little stressed that not all students will be qualified to be sent out on an internship. Deciding who can will take interviews by teacher and business professionals. The number of internships will also be based on how many spots the business community can make available. “This year I had five spots open up. I had 10 students,” he said.

Enrollment

Mrs. Wood said enrollment has increased in the industrial trades. Next year, construction is expecting to enroll 21 students, all sophomores and juniors who are currently in construction. Welding has 40 students this year and is overfilled. The ideal number is 16 students, she said.

Mr. Little said his construction program had 27 students enrolled this year; it is now 18. Nine will return to Construction 2.

According to Carrigan Principal Synthia Kirby, programs often lose students to early-release programs or work programs. Or students accelerate their credits by attending Harrell and graduating early. “Next year we will have two different graduation plans,” she said.

WFISD counselors said that students' enrollment in CTE programs will be influenced by the other opportunities, like PALS, that students take advantage of.

"We are trying to set kids up for success," said Mrs. Wood.

This year, the Electrical Technology class lost a teacher, which hurt the program. Eight students enrolled in the first year of the program. There will be four returning seniors. It will be taught a half-day at Rider, then at Carrigan next year until the new CTE Center opens.

Now there are 22 students in Architecture Design, where they are learning about AutoDesk (computerized design program) and design.

Curriculum

Mrs. Wood said the school districts across Texas are adopting new textbooks for CTE course work in the 2017-2018 school year. With one year to go, WFISD will continue to use current textbooks (which are new every 10 years) and the current curriculum.

Mr. Little said he gears his teaching toward certifications and the state-required TEKS.

Mrs. Kirby said the state requires the TEKS, but those are changing too with the new textbook adoptions.

Mrs. Wood asked for suggestions on curriculum material.

Mr. Little said he uses study guides through the Homebuilders Institute.

John Harmon asked if he could look at the study guides. Mr. Little invited him and anyone else into his classroom to look at anything he had.

Mrs. Kirby said the district keeps the “latest and greatest” code book and classroom sets of workbooks. It’s important to spend money on CTE materials so kids are learning cutting-edge information, she said.

“My code books are based on what’s adopted in our city at the moment,” said Mr. Little.

According to Mark Holcomb, it’s difficult to find curriculum that teaches all the things you think are appropriate and teaches them in the way you think they need to be taught. “It’s a fine art for instructors to find curriculum that’s taught the way you like it,” he said.

That’s why it’s important to bring in local professionals, said Mr. Willow.

Mrs. Wood said the district will pay for curriculum development this summer for teachers so that the curriculum will be consistent at each of its three campuses.

Certifications

All three Architecture and Construction Track programs require certifications. The first is Industrial Trades OSHA. Students can also pass basic and advanced certifications with the Homebuilders Institute.

Mona Statser said more certifications, like for truck driving, were going to be offered at Vernon College, but that is “not happening” now.

Study guides for certifications are not expensive, according to Mrs. Kirby.

It will be important to tie into the National Homebuilders Association, not just the Texas Homebuilders Association, according to Mr. Harmon.

Initially, WFISD helps students by paying for certification tests. Then, the State of Texas reimburses the district when the student passes, said Mrs. Kirby.

This is the third year that Texas has reimbursed districts for students who earn certifications, said Mrs. Wood. “They may not always. Right now, Texas is reimbursing.”

One participant recommended an ACME brick program certification to consider.

“There are so many opportunities,” said Mrs. Wood. “One step at a time.”

Mr. Holcomb said that he has conferred often with Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Kirby. He wants relationships between Vernon College and WFISD to go deeper and he is committed to assist and support the district in its career programs during the next two years, he said. Because Mrs. Wood worked for more than a decade at Vernon College, “she knows how things work on our side,” he said. “Don’t be shy about asking for help.”

Competitions

Providing competitions for students is important to build their skills and leadership, said Mrs. Wood. Construction and Electrical Technology classes use Skills USA to compete at the state level. Winners progress to national competition.

Students can also join the National Technical Honor Society if they maintain a 3.0 grade point average.

These two organizations undergird their classroom training.

Supplies and Equipment

In construction, students need smaller projects that can be done at their home campus. Currently they often work at a Habitat for Humanity site getting real life experience. But they lose class time and the work “destroys their clothes,” said Mrs. Kirby.

The group needs smaller projects that can be done at the home campus that will help the community.

Mr. Little said his dream is for his classes to build their own home and auction it off. He’d like to include interactive countertops and make it solar ready. “We want to do what’s coming tomorrow,” he said. “I want to keep myself fully invested (in state-of-the-art techniques). I don’t care about what happened yesterday.”

An upcoming change in codes across the city will create big changes for local contractors, he said.

The CTE program has had staffing problems with the electrical technology program, which has hurt it, said Mrs. Kirby. The former staff member, however, did not spend all of her budgeted money, so that has been spent recently to enrich the program for next year.

The district is not wedded to only the Skills USA competitions, said Mrs. Kirby. They want students to be involved in as many organizations as possible.

One district goal is that every pathway will have some sort of competition for students to compete with their skills, said Mrs. Wood. Students need more to challenge them than simply coming to and from school, she said.

By Fall 2017, all of the programs will be headquartered at the CTE Center. Students from all three high schools will be there for their CTE classes.

In Construction, it may look like the CTE space is just a lot of floor space with power reels. There will be money for furniture and equipment, but it goes fast, said Mrs. Wood. She is trying to spend prudently by covering such costs and needs now – and also by requesting that community members donate leftover wood from projects, bumpers that the students can repair, or leftover tile, light fixtures, switches, plugs and wire. “As you can see, we’ll take your trash,” joked Mrs. Wood.

A participant asked if the district had considered adding a plumbing program. “Not yet,” said Mrs. Wood. “Plumbing is huge. It’s just getting kids to be interested in it. They think, ‘toilets.’”

“It’s great money,” said J. Tanner Wachsmann.

Appreciating the value of a plumbing career will require retraining parents and kids, said Mrs. Wood. Plumbing is often the field that parents will point at to their children and say, “That’s why you go to

college.” The truth is, said Mrs. Wood, that plumber probably earns two times the salary that she does.

Retraining students on the value of careers like plumbing can begin as early as fifth grade when students begin researching careers and in eighth grade when they begin using Career Cruising, which introduces them to jobs that match their personalities.

Students will also be exposed to a variety of careers through the Career Fair for 8th graders. Three thousand students will assemble Sept. 27, 2016 at the MPEC to learn about careers. Community members will be tapped to speak to students about their careers at this event.

Goals for students include:

- They will graduate high school with some sort of certification that will transfer to any community college in Texas.
- They will be introduced to a career field they like and learn the many jobs within it that they may not have thought about.
- Many students will not identify themselves as college-bound, but if they latch onto a career dream, many will shoot far higher than they originally planned.

Special Populations

Construction is heavily dominated by male students, as you would expect. One girl took construction the first semester. Girls do gravitate to welding.

One participant said there actually are a lot of women in the construction trade, “but they’re not doing hands-on. They may be reps or in design...but not hands on.”

Women also work at lumberyards, plumbing companies and electrical shops. They just aren’t doing the installation work.

Architectural Design classes draw an equal number of men and women.

There is no gender bias with these classes. "It is what it is," said Mrs. Wood. "It is open to all."

Teachers and counselors are selling the idea of CTE classes to students by telling them it is an excellent way to work their way through college.

Carrigan tours are "semi-effective," said Mrs. Kirby.

The goal for the CTE Center is to serve 1,000 students per day. That number may be reached more quickly than you'd think, said Mrs. Wood. Just having a new building will help pique students' interest. "Students only see today," she said.

The next Community Advisory meeting will be in September 2016. These meetings will generally meet in spring and fall.

END

The meeting concluded at 12:30 p.m.