

Industrial Tech Class Boosts Student Skills

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INDUSTRY SUPPORT — RCHS Industrial Technology Program instructor Mark Smith (left) and his students were visited earlier this month by Jerry Finch, an industry expert who wrote Skill Standards for the Wood Career Alliance of North America, and currently helps with Skills USA.

By:

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Students in the Reed-Custer High School Industrial Technology program continue to boost their skills and learn real world applications as part of their day-to-day education in one of the district's fastest growing course offerings.

On Nov. 15, RCHS Industrial Technology instructor Mark Smith gave an update to the Board of Education.

“One of the things we do, is we build long boards, because it forces the kids to use computers very heavily,” Smith said. “They design on computers using software programs, they do lots of math, they drive our CNC equipment, and they produce long boards with an engraving of their choosing [that they draw] in AutoCAD.”

The students engage in several hands-on classroom activities, including making guitars, making signs for the library and the new school, and working on a custom cabinetry job for a customer in Arizona.

Students have also attended trade shows to speak with industry professionals. Smith gave a presentation at an Industry trade show, AWFS (Association of Woodworking & Furniture Suppliers Fair) over the summer in Las Vegas, and has secured more industry supporters for the class.

Smith told the board that while kids and technology seem to go hand in hand, there is still a lot of work that goes into teaching the younger generations about computers and technology.

“Most of us have this idea that these kids have grown up with computers, they know everything. Well, actually, that’s not true,” Smith said. “They know how to Twitter, they know how to Instagram, they know how to turn on the gaming console, they know how to use their phones. And that is about it. So, we have to teach our kids, here’s how you do e-mail, here’s how you attach something to your e-mail. It’s really quite amazing, because that’s not what the common person’s impression is of young kids.”

The students also worked on a shelving project for the new Reed-Custer Elementary School.

“We had ordered the library items for the new building, and decided we didn’t have quite enough shelving to organize the books the way that we wanted to,” said Superintendent Mark Mitchell. “So, instead of dealing with trying to get those items in, we went and saw [Mr. Smith] and he and his students pretty much carbon copied what we did and we had them within three weeks. They were there for the open house, the kids were heavily involved, helped us load them, [we] installed the three units on the wall one morning and when you walk through there, you can’t tell what was theirs and what was already in there.”

Mitchell said interest in the program, now in its second year under Smith’s supervision, continues to grow.

“It’s just nice to see kids get involved and do something that benefits the school and the community,” Mitchell said. “It’s going well, we’re seeing growth in numbers, growth in enrollment in the program.”

Earlier this month, Jerry Finch visited the Reed-Custer High School Industrial Technology program. Finch has been instrumental to many education and industry ventures for the last three decades. He was the lead instructor at the Fox Valley Wood Manufacturing Technology program, and has served on the boards of WoodLINKS USA and AWI Wisconsin.

Finch wrote Skill Standards for the Wood Career Alliance of North America, and currently helps with Skills USA.

He has been a longtime friend and mentor to Smith, who said his support of programs over the year has been invaluable.

Smith said industry supporters make it possible to offer great educational opportunities to Reed-Custer students. A list of RC Industrial Technology industry supporters can be found online at rchsit.weebly.com/program-supporters.html.