Peshtigo tech education classes prepare students

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Peshtigo 8th grade technology education students pose with their wood epoxy projects.

PESHTIGO—Eighth grade students in Peshtigo take two one quarter technology education classes which introduces them to a number of different skills. One class is taught by technology teacher Mike Paquette where he creates design challenges for students to work on in teams.

"The goal is to mimic a business and teach students the problem solving process they need to go through to bring a product to market," he said.

The class members are faced with a challenge product to create, such as a coin sorter. They research design and do an efficiency study. Students then purchase materials, write purchase orders and checks, and learn to maintain a tight budget. The goal is to complete a finished usable prototype. Eighth grade students also learn about robotics. They learn about circuits, basic electrical systems, and even how to solder. Paquette is not alone in the technology education department. Beth Rocque also teaches a technology education class which focuses on different knowledge and skills.

In Rocque's class, students learn a number of work related skills, including coding javascript, isometric and orthographic sketching, architectural drafting, 3D printing, and woodworking! Coding skills are important because "most factories are humans maintaining machines." Learning to create and read isometric, orthographic, and architectural sketches are really important in industry and the trades, educators say.

Three dimensional printing is "huge in the field," and is very important in engineering and manufacturing. Students also learn some basic woodworking skills and are exposed to tools. The students in the fall classes competed in Brown County Home Builders' Association by building an adirondack chair and bench. "Industry and the trades fields are huge, so we introduce as many exploratory concepts as possible for eighth graders," Rocque explained.

Recently, students completed a woodworking project she called a "Geometric Wood Epoxy Project." "After designing their projects, students had to fit all of their geometric shapes within a specified area, which was challenging at times," Rocque said. She taught students how to scale their designs. They got to choose from various woods, which included oak, cherry and black walnut with different shades, colors and grains. All of the wood for the projects were donated by Aacer Flooring.

Students learned to operate several tools for the project, such as the band saw, which allowed them to cut wood into geometric shapes. Student Evan Young said, "The tool I found most interesting was the band saw. The speed of how fast the blade spun and how it cut a perfect line in the wood was pretty cool."

After sanding the shapes and placing them into the design, students then sealed the project together with epoxy. Two weeks after applying epoxy of varied colors, students squared off the projects using a table saw. Student Karter Carpenter said, "The tools I was most interested to learn were the band saw and the table saw. I want to continue woodworking and learn to build things like tables, chairs, and cabinets."

"This geometric wood epoxy project requires math, science, and art skills." Rocque said, "This helps students gain problem solving and decision making skills which will help them later in life." Rocque's project utilized geometry, measuring, woodworking, and principles of manufacturing.

"Students learned to mass produce one shape multiple times, as well as the skill of plastic forming," she said, adding that the concept of conserving materials and patience is taught in the epoxy stage of the project. Eighth grade student Abbey Graff said, "The coolest thing I learned was to use epoxy. It was fun and exciting, and turned out really cool"

"We want to emphasize universal skills students need across all career sets, such as the ability to problem solve and work together as a team," Paquette said. Rocque adds, "Seeing the pride students have once the product is finished, is super rewarding."

Student Nathan Sebero enjoyed learning more about coding and liked how his wood epoxy project turned out. "I see myself working in the trades or manufacturing," he said.

Editor's note: This article was submitted by the Peshtigo School District.

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