

School District of New Berlin Students to Build House with Tim O'Brien Homes

New Berlin, Wis. – A new partnership between the School District of New Berlin and Tim O'Brien Homes officially kicked off last week with the ground breaking of a new single-family home in New Berlin's Red Fox Crossing neighborhood. The district's Construction III students, comprised of both Eisenhower and West seniors, will help build this home, working alongside the Tim O'Brien construction team and contracted skilled workers.

Modeled after an existing relationship the builder has with Oconomowoc High School, this experience provides students with hands-on, authentic involvement in the construction building process. Complimenting its career and service-based learning program, which provides students with experiential learning opportunities, the district was able to add Construction III as a capstone in its construction pathway. The home-building experience allows students to apply what they have learned in the classroom while deepening their understanding within an area of interest in an effort to inform their secondary and post-secondary plans in a non-traditional classroom setting.

"We are thrilled to be able to provide this experience for students who have expressed an interest in construction," said SDNB's Kelli Kwiatkowski, Director of Secondary Teaching and Learning. "It is a perfect opportunity for those who have selected a pathway in a construction-related skilled trade. Likewise, it provides great exposure to a wide variety of related careers, including project management, for those students who are still in the exploring stage."

The Construction III students will learn about and assist with all aspects of construction including framing, roofing, plumbing, electrical, HVAC and finished carpentry. Jeff Martin, technology and engineering instructor, teaches the course and will assist the students at the worksite in applying and expanding the skills they have previously developed in the prerequisite courses.

During the official groundbreaking ceremony, Tim O'Brien Homes production manager Pete Lange stressed the tremendous impact home construction has on the economy and predicted a life-changing semester for the students who will be at the job site for a minimum of 3 hours every morning.

"I want the kids to know a few important things besides how cool it's going to be to actually build a house while they're in high school," Lange said. "First, housing is a main driver of our economy; you never hear national economic news reported without some reference to housing starts. Hundreds of associated industries are positively impacted by new home purchases.

"Second, the satisfaction these boys will realize from being part of the construction team that builds this home cannot be understated. Years from now they will be able to drive by this neighborhood with their own kids and say, 'I helped build that house while I was in high school.'"

And not just any house. The homes at Red Fox Crossing will be Wisconsin's first Net Zero Community, generating enough power from solar photovoltaic systems attached to the roofs to offset the projected electrical consumption of each home in the community.