



Thinking about your next step after high school? The skilled trades offer real experience, great pay, and a faster path to success.

D214 EXPLORES THE TRADES

Hundreds of D214 students got an inside look at high-demand careers at the Regional Skilled Trades Fair, talking with experienced tradespeople about high-paying pathways available right out of high school. A huge thank you to Harper College and all our partners for bringing industry and education together!



Why the Trades? By the Numbers

Earn While You Learn

Many apprenticeships pay you to learn, so you can start your career with **skills, experience, and no college debt.**

High Demand

Skilled trades are in huge demand. Across 12 key fields, there's a need for about **584,000** new hires every year.

Great Pay

You might be surprised by how much these jobs pay. According to the **State of Illinois**, here are a few examples of median annual wages:

- Construction Equipment Operators: around **\$99,800**
 - Electricians: about **\$99,000**
 - Plumbers & Pipefitters: about **\$99,000**
 - Aircraft Mechanics: about **\$81,800**
- (Wages vary by experience and location.)

Tech Driven

These aren't your grandpa's jobs. Today's trades use **drones, robotics, 3D printing, and cutting-edge technology** every day.

Advice From The Pros

We asked industry professionals for their honest advice on building a career in the trades. Here's what they had to say.

PRO 1: THE OPPORTUNITY



Yolanda Valadez from Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council says the biggest opportunity comes from a wave of retiring members, creating a huge need for new skilled workers. Their key advice?

"Take your math seriously, do your research, and be prepared to work hard every day." The most crucial skills to build are "hard work, critical thinking, and communication."

PRO 2: THE FOCUS



Justin Gustafson from Boilermakers Local 1's top advice is to cast a wide net: **"Apply at 5 trade apprenticeship programs** that you are remotely interested in." Looking ahead, they see a spike in "more demand for power due to data centers." The key to success? Focus and endurance. The job requires "you to be able to work long hours and not be on their phone at all."

PRO 3: THE CRAFTSMAN



Jason Butz from Ironworkers Local 63 advises, **"Take pride in your craftsmanship and always show up all in."** He sees the future being driven by technology, from advanced tools to digital blueprints. To succeed, new employees will need both technical skill, like "working with digital drawings," and the "communication and teamwork" to coordinate on a busy job site.

Build Your Path

TAKE A CLASS

D214 offers dozens of career-focused classes. Check out the **Academic Programs & Pathways Guidebook.**



GET EXPERIENCE

Applications are now open on **SchoolLinks** for Summer Internships and Apprenticeships for the 26-27 school year.



TALK TO US!

Visit your Student Success Coach:

BGHS: [Mrs. Lenzini](#)

EGHS: [Mrs. Handel](#)

JHHS: [Mrs. Cohen](#)

PHS: [Mrs. Thompson](#)

RMHS: [Mrs. Carlson](#)

WHS: [Mr. Holme](#)

Specialized Schools:
[Mrs. Schmidt](#)

Trades: Myth vs. Fact

MYTH: You need a 4-year degree to get a high-paying job.

FACT: **Apprenticeships pay you while you learn.** You can start your career with zero college debt.



MYTH: Trades are "low-tech" or "dirty" jobs.

FACT: **Today's trades are high-tech.** Professionals use drones for site surveys, digital blueprints (BIM models), VR simulators for training, and robotics in advanced manufacturing.



MYTH: The trades are an industry only for men.

FACT: **The industry is actively growing and recruiting a diverse workforce.** There are amazing, high-paying opportunities and strong support networks for women and people of all backgrounds.

