

TRADES FUTURES



North America's **Building Trades** Unions



Careers in the Building Trades

A Guide for School Counselors and CTE Teachers

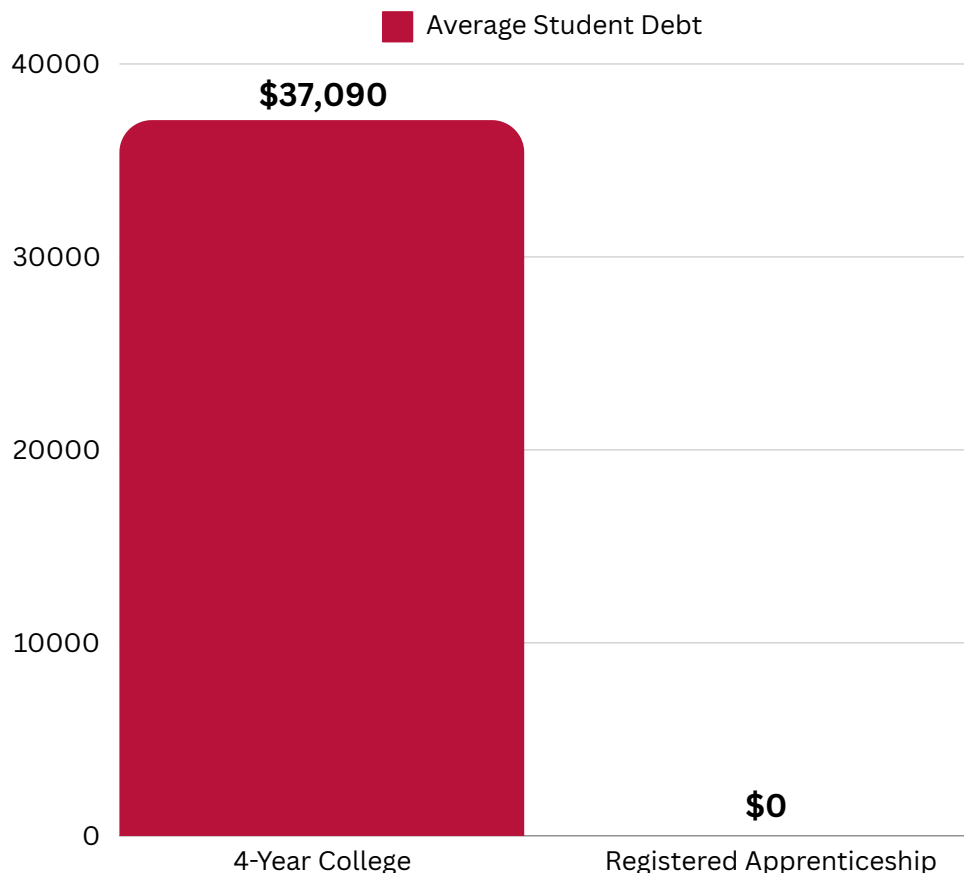


Introduction

We know counseling students as they approach high school graduation is a challenge. How do you steer them in a direction that will lead to a financially rewarding and personally fulfilling career?

College, of course, is one option. But not every high school graduate wants to go to college. Not everyone thrives in an academic setting. What, then, for the smart, ambitious, and hardworking young person who likes to work with their hands and wants to make something of their life without going to college? We suggest an apprenticeship in the Building Trades.

This guide covers the opportunities apprenticeship in the construction trades offer as well as the requirements and responsibilities necessary to succeed in apprenticeship.



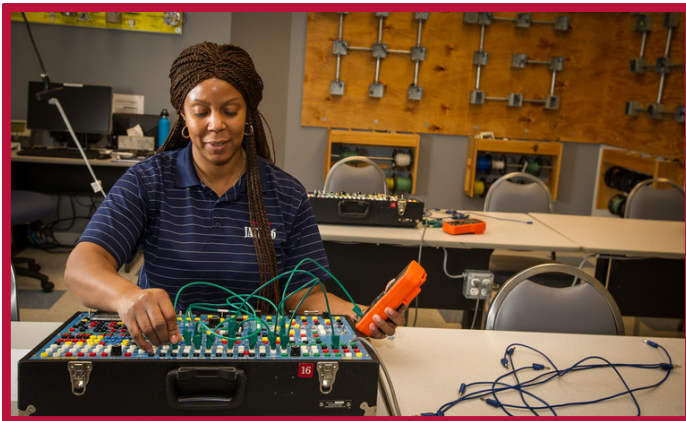
Source: U.S. Department of Education, December 2023

What is Apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is an age-old method for learning a skilled craft through formal instruction and mentorship. Apprentices work directly with, and learn from, skilled craftspersons, with low student to instructor ratios. They acquire knowledge and skills through on-the-job training. And they earn while they learn.

“Registered apprenticeship” in the construction trades dates back nearly a century and means that an apprenticeship program must meet standards not only for training and compensation but for health and safety and equal opportunity protections established by the U.S. Department of Labor and/or State Apprenticeship Agencies.

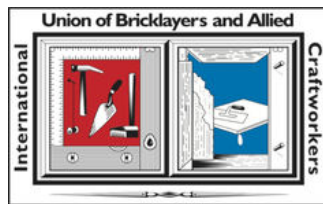
Depending on the trade, apprenticeship programs run from three to five years.



What are the Construction Trades?

Each of the 15 construction trade unions in North America offer apprenticeship: electricians, plumbers, carpenters, painters, ironworkers, sheet metal workers, operating engineers, bricklayers, plasterers and cement masons, roofers, insulators, boilermakers, elevator constructors, laborers, and teamsters.

Together, the construction trades offer roughly 1,600 apprenticeship programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, as well as Canada, though not all trades operate in every city and region. At any given time, there are roughly 200,000 men and women in apprenticeship programs. Collectively, the construction trades spend nearly \$2 billion annually on apprenticeship training.



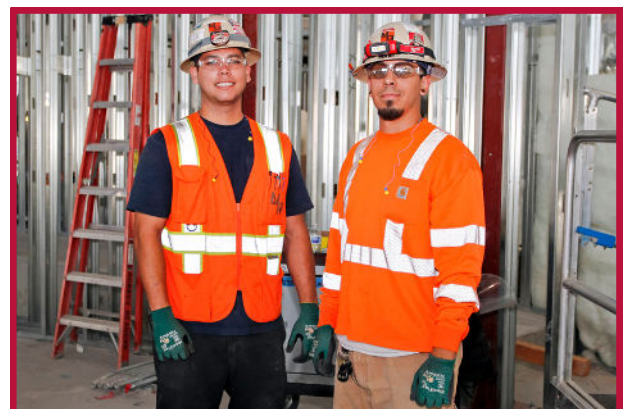
What are the advantages of Apprenticeship?

- Apprentices receive **WORLD CLASS SKILL TRAINING** in a craft on the jobsite and in labs and classrooms at a Registered Apprenticeship Training Center, mentored along the way by contractors and skilled craftspeople
- Many apprenticeship programs offer **COLLEGE CREDITS**
- Apprenticeship **TRAINING IS FREE**. You heard that right – no cost to apprentices or their families – no student loans, no student debt
- Apprentices are **PAID WHILE THEY LEARN** at wages significantly above the minimum. And if they perform to standards, they will get bumps in pay as they accumulate hours in the classroom and on the job, as well as meet other milestones
- Apprentices receive **ADDITIONAL BENEFITS**, including health insurance and a head start on a pension
- Apprentices become part of a **UNION BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD** that encourages a sense of belonging, solidarity, and mutual self-help
- Apprentices enjoy **PRIDE IN THEIR SKILLS** and the satisfaction of helping to BUILD THEIR COMMUNITIES
- Apprenticeship is **TRANSFERABLE**. An apprentice can work anywhere in the country where there are apprenticeship openings in their trade
- Successful apprentices **BECOME JOURNEY WORKERS** where they will earn significantly more in their lifetime than non-union construction workers and even many jobs requiring a college degree

What are the requirements and responsibilities of apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is open to everyone, regardless of gender, background, or previous involvement with the justice system. But there are a few simple requirements and some significant responsibilities to apprenticeship. Most trades require an applicant to be 18 years of age and possess a diploma or GED. Because job sites are often in out of the way locations, reliable transportation is a must. And due to the hazards associated with construction, drug use is not tolerated, and most apprenticeship programs include drug testing.

In addition, a successful apprentice must demonstrate a strong sense of personal responsibility—on time every day, ready to work, being part of a team. A successful apprentice has a solid work ethic—taking initiative, giving their all, performing any task required of them, putting in an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. A successful apprentice is open to learning, asking questions, taking instruction, following directions. And a successful apprentice gets along well with others, treating everybody on the jobsite with the dignity and respect they deserve.



Where can apprenticeship take your student?

The sky's the limit. After their apprenticeship is up, the successful apprentice transitions into journey worker status, with higher pay and responsibilities, including the training of the next cohort of apprentices. From there, a journey worker can enter into supervisory jobs, such as foreman, general foreman, construction supervisor or superintendent. There are positions in the union, such as stewards, training instructors, and officers. There are government positions such as inspectors. Or the private sector may beckon. Many skilled construction workers open their own contracting and sub-contracting businesses. And should college become more attractive later in life, a skilled trade is a great steppingstone to a career as a civil engineer, urban planner, or architect.

And education and training does not end with apprenticeship—there are lifelong learning and self-improvement opportunities as a journey worker in the construction trades unions.

\$60,000 per year average wage for a fully proficient worker who has completed an Apprenticeship

\$300,000 more over life of career compared to non-apprenticeship participants



How do I introduce my students to the Trades?

To learn more about apprenticeship opportunities, contact the construction trade union locals in your area and ask for the training director's office. They can send someone to speak at your school or career fair. Or you can set up a field trip visit for your students to a local Training Center. Building Trades Training Centers are administered by an equal number of labor representatives and contractor representatives which comprise a Joint (Labor-Management) Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC). This labor-management partnership is the foundation upon which our Apprenticeship System has been constructed. There are many trades for students to consider, so setting up more than one visit is a good idea. The training director's office at a trade union local can not only explain what a particular trade does but the specific steps your students need to follow to become an apprentice.

To find the trade union locals and JATCs in your area, you can use the below resources on NABTU's website:

[Official Council Directory](#)

[Training Center Map](#)



IUOE International Training and Conference Center - Crosby, TX

How do I introduce my students to the Trades?

Another option is to incorporate the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum, or MC3, into the CTE Program at your school. This curriculum is a 120-hour, apprenticeship readiness curriculum, that was designed to prepare students for apprenticeship in the Building Trades. The curriculum was developed by NABTU's 14 International Training Directors. It is currently used in over 60 school-based settings across the US.

The curriculum is administered by TradesFutures, a non-profit organized by the Building Trades to develop, promote, and expand Apprenticeship Readiness Programs (ARPs) across the country.

To learn more about ARPs and the MC3, you can visit the [TradesFutures website](https://www.tradesfutures.org) or reach out to program@tradesfutures.org.

TRADES FUTURES

Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) Units/Hours Overview

Unit 1 – Orientation and Industry Awareness – 16 Hours (Required) Construction Industry Overview – 8 HRs The Building Trades & Apprenticeship – 8 HRs
Unit 2 – Tools and Materials – 8 Hours (Required) Must include hand-on component
Unit 3 – Construction Health and Safety – 20 Hours (Required) CPR/First Aid – 8 HRs OSHA10 – 10 HRs Women's Health & Safety – 2 HRs
Unit 4 – Blueprint Reading – 4, 8, or 16 Hours (Elective)
Unit 5 – Construction Math – 40 Hours (Required)
Unit 6 – Heritage of the American Worker – 8 Hours (Required)
Unit 7 – Diversity in the Construction Industry – 12 Hours (Required) Diversity Awareness – 4 HRs Sexual Harassment – 8 HRs
Unit 8 – Green Construction – 8 Hours (Required)
Unit 9 – Financial Literacy – 4 or 8 Hours (Elective)

Total Required Instructional Hours = 120

All school-based MC3 programs should refer to requirements in their local jurisdiction and add units/hours accordingly.