TRADESFUTURES

How to Implement a School-Based MC3 Program

Intended Audience:

This guide is for Building Trades Councils (BTCs) or Apprenticeship Readiness Programs (ARPs) seeking to implement the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) within high schools. If a school or district independently wants to start an MC3 program, please refer to our separate materials designed for school-based stakeholders.

Overview of School-Based MC3 Programs

As of 2025, the MC3 has been successfully implemented in nearly 80 school systems across the United States, and interest in school-based ARPs is growing exponentially. These programs serve as powerful pathways for introducing students to careers in the building trades, providing structured exposure to high-demand occupations while they are still in high school.

As school systems increasingly recognize the need for postsecondary options beyond four-year college, MC3 offers students an equitable, hands-on, and proven route into meaningful careers. At the same time, these programs help communities address the "blue-collar drought"—a growing workforce shortage affecting construction and other skilled trades.

Roles and Responsibilities

What NABTU Affiliates Can Provide

- Full MC3 curriculum (particularly Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8)
- Qualified instructors or guest speakers
- Connections to local Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC) centers
- Assistance with field trips to local Building Trades Training Centers
- Placement support for participants post program completion
- The most up-to-date and relevant information regarding labor needs

- The most up-to-date and relevant information regarding best practices for ARP/RAP outcomes

Schools that offer the MC3 curriculum are eligible to apply for grant funding specifically targeted at CTE program expansion. These funds can help cover the costs of organizing field trips to JATCs and other industry-related experiences, such as transportation to and from schools.

What Schools Are Responsible For

- Instructional space and schedule integration
- Certified teachers or arrangements for qualified instructors
- Student recruitment and tracking after graduation
- Additional costs for certifications such as:
    - OSHA 10
    - First Aid and CPR
- Outreach and promotion to students, families, and counselors

Developing a School-Based Partnership

Regulatory Approvals

Before launching a school-based MC3 program, it is essential to understand the regulatory and administrative context in which schools operate, and who has jurisdiction over these requirements.

- **State Department of Education**: Establishes rules around curriculum standards, teacher certification, and instructional hours.
- **School Board**: Oversees local district programming and often holds final approval authority over program creation and implementation.
- **Individual Schools**: Implementation logistics typically require the support and cooperation of building-level leadership, including principals, administrative professionals, and instructional staff.

Teacher Certification

Understand who is authorized to teach high school students in your jurisdiction. In most school-based MC3 programs, CTE construction teachers deliver the content. However, some states may allow guest instructors or industry professionals to teach under certain conditions.

Selecting a School Partner

The first step is to identify a high school partner. Ideally, this would be a school that already offers a construction-related Career and Technical Education (CTE) program or is interested in starting one.

If a CTE construction program already exists, the MC3 can be added with minimal disruption and may be viewed as a value-add. If no program exists yet, the BTC can serve as a resource to help the school establish a new offering. In either scenario, the BTC provides a critical connection between the school and the building trades, offering a clear path from high school to apprenticeship.

MC3 programs can be implemented in a single school or across a school district (e.g., through a magnet model). Pilot programs are often a useful starting point to assess student interest and resolve logistical considerations before expansion.

Engaging Key School Stakeholders

Understanding the roles of key school system stakeholders will help you effectively engage the right people at the right time. Titles may vary by region, but the functions remain consistent.

Stakeholder	Role
State Board of Education	Sets minimum statewide standards, including hours of instruction, teacher qualifications, and curriculum approval. MC3 must align with these standards.
School Board	Holds ultimate authority over district programming. Can approve or block implementation. May include members from organized labor.
Superintendent	Oversees all schools in the district. While the School Board makes final decisions, superintendent support is crucial—especially for district-wide implementation.

High School Principal	Responsible for day-to-day operations at the school level. If implementing MC3 in one school, this is your key decision-maker.
CTE Teachers	Potential MC3 instructors. Engage early to ensure buy-in and clarify that the curriculum is designed to be taught flexibly, as long as objectives are met.
School Counselors	Play a key role in course selection and post-graduation planning. May be unfamiliar with apprenticeship opportunities. The MC3 can serve as a valuable resource.
Teachers' Unions (e.g., AFT/NEA)	May have a role in determining who teaches MC3. Be aware of any relevant labor agreements that apply to instruction.

Post-Graduation Tracking

TradesFutures requires that school instructors or administrators track and report data on MC3 completers after graduation in order to determine if students transition into Registered Apprenticeships and related construction careers. Programs should determine how they will track and report data to TradesFutures. Data submission is critical for monitoring overall program quality and is a requirement of TradesFutures funders, whose contributions allow us to offset the cost of administering the MC3.

Program Flexibility and Curriculum Implementation Considerations

Academic Calendar Integration

The MC3 must include a minimum of 120 instructional hours but is flexible in how it is delivered. Options include:

- One-year or two-year implementation
- Integration across multiple class periods or blocks
- Supplemental instruction to meet local education requirements

Some districts have also counted math hours separately or added instructional time to accommodate state mandates.

The **OSHA 10-Hour Construction Safety Course**, which is required in the MC3, must follow specific regulations set by OSHA. It must be taught by an authorized instructor and delivered in segments no longer than 7.5 hours per day. For questions about OSHA instruction, contact your local Building Trades Council.

Math Requirements

Schools can meet the 40-hour construction math requirement for the MC3 in a separate high school math class if the Building Trades Council agrees that the course meets the learning objectives laid out in the MC3. Programs that take this approach should still include time in the MC3 curriculum to assess student competencies in the Unit 5 math concepts, particularly those that apply to construction scenarios.

Assessments and Testing

In 2019, an optional multiple-choice MC3 Final Exam was developed to support standardized assessment across programs.

Additionally, each unit in the MC3 includes suggested assessments in the lesson plans. Instructors may also create additional formative and summative assessments as deemed appropriate by the teacher and the district.

Course Scheduling

Identify how far in advance course offerings need to be approved to align with the school's academic calendar. Work with the school to build planning time for scheduling, staffing, and course registration.

Student Eligibility and Certification

Schools have some discretion in determining how students are selected or placed into the MC3 course. It is also important to clarify that successfully passing the course does not automatically result in an MC3 certificate. Students must meet all program requirements as outlined in the curriculum.

Recommended Grade Levels for Implementation

MC3 can technically be implemented at any high school grade level. However, it is strongly recommended that schools offer it to **9th or 10th graders**. Doing so allows interested students to:

- Take multiple construction-related electives (e.g., welding, electrical, HVAC, carpentry) throughout high school
- Build a strong foundation in the trades prior to graduation
- Better prepare for entry into Registered Apprenticeship programs immediately after high school

Early implementation also maximizes the program's long-term impact.

Enrollment and Access

Enrollment decisions—such as whether the program is open to all students or targeted to a particular group—can be made collaboratively by the school and local BTC. While the BCTC can provide guidance, the demands of each individual student's schedule and the offerings available will likely determine enrollment. Programs should aim to reach as many interested students as possible while ensuring instructional quality and logistical feasibility.

Placement

The MC3 serves not only as apprenticeship preparation but also provides an opportunity for career exploration and awareness for students. As an educator, you will want to prepare students for potential placement into the Construction Trades by:

- Ensuring students understand the expectations when pursuing a career in the construction industry
- Preparing students to meet the minimum requirements for entry into a registered apprenticeship program (e.g. high school diploma, basic interview skills, applied math skills)
- Introduce the variety of crafts and career options available to students in the industry
- Provide information on the trade-offs between traditional four-year college and registered apprenticeship programs

You will also want to consult your Local Building Trades Council to assist you with the following:

- Scheduling training center visits to different local construction trades in your area
- Scheduling in-classroom visits by local training directors or local council leaders
- Facilitating introductions between interested students and employer partners, through mock interviews, jobsite visits, or employer attendance at MC3 graduations
- Outlining demand for construction apprentices and notifying you (or other school staff) of upcoming employment opportunities for interested students**Resources for School-Based MC3 Programs**

Available Materials

To support your implementation efforts, the following resources are available:

- **FAQ: MC3 in Schools** (PDF)
- **MC3 in the Schools: A Guide for CTE Teachers, Administrators, and Counselors** (PPT)
- **NABTU Apprenticeship Brochure: Enhance Your Skills, Advance Your Life**
- **TradesFutures Apprenticeship Readiness Brochure**
- **Pamphlet Series for Students, Parents, and Counselors**

All materials can be accessed at:
https://tradesfutures.org/about/apprenticeship-readiness-program/

Final Considerations

- Begin outreach and planning well in advance of the desired start date.
- Pilot implementation can be a strategic first step before scaling district wide.
- Engage teachers, administrators, and counselors early to ensure buy-in.
- Track student outcomes to demonstrate impact and build long-term support.

For additional guidance or technical assistance, contact your local Building Trades Council or TradesFutures representative.

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