

Not Cut Out for College? No Problem!

by Valerie Eby

This is the first in a series of articles that will be appearing in upcoming issues of the MDHSA Diploma Program newsletter about opportunities that can equip your high school student/graduate to successfully enter the job marketplace. You can continue reading the series by registering your student in the MDHSA Diploma Program or by accessing it on the MDHSA membership portal. The first opportunity MDHSA would like to highlight is a local one: Barr Construction Institute in Hagerstown, Maryland, which is an educational arm of the Cumberland Valley Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) and is registered in PA, MD and WV.

Who is ABC? ABC is a nationwide non-profit organization whose purpose is to support and assist businesses in the construction field. One of the ways in which they do this is to help prepare and train the next generation for employment in construction-related industries. ABC accomplishes this by offering Craft Training through the combination of classroom training and on-the-job apprenticeships through their local chapters. Our local chapter, Cumberland Valley, is located at the Barr Construction Institute in Hagerstown, MD. They currently offer Craft Training in 22 fields:

Bricklayer/Mason	Heavy Equipment	Reinforcing Ironworker
Carpentry	Operator	Roofer
Cement Mason/Concrete Finisher	HVAC-R	Sheet Metal
Construction Craft Laborer	Insulation Worker	Sprinkler Fitter
Electrical	Painter	Steamfitter
Glazier	Pipefitter	Structural Ironworker
	Plumbing	Welder

One of the advantages of the Craft Training program is that it is available to high school students (age 16 and older), high school graduates, and adults who are looking to change careers. The program offers “beyond entry level skills” through its classroom and hands-on training and also connects candidates with employers through its apprenticeship program, essentially acting as an employment agency for these job categories.

Craft Training, involves four years of schooling while gaining on-the-job experience. Students attend two three-hour classes a week in the evening from September through May at the Barr Construction Institute in Hagerstown. The classes are taught by masters in the various construction industries and use NCCER curriculum. Since NCCER is a nationwide organization, each student will be able to complete his Craft Training even if he/she relocates.

However, before beginning their specialized Craft Training classes, students must complete the NCCER Core Curriculum course (CORE), which covers basic math and industry safety guidelines. CORE is presently offered as a correspondence course for a fee of \$800.00. Students will do the work at home and send their completed tests to the Barr Construction Institute for grading. Since course completion time is an estimated 76 hours, it is recommended that students complete CORE in the spring semester in order to begin Craft Training classes in the fall.

Upon enrolling at the school or anytime during the four years of classes, students can apply for apprenticeship jobs with companies in their field of choice. In other words, you must be a registered student to apply for an apprenticeship. If you don't have an apprenticeship job by the time you start school, don't worry. Barr Construction Institute keeps their unemployed students notified of companies that have job openings.

Please note that although Craft Training is available for 22 types of construction jobs, some of the fields have very few apprenticeship openings. The leading industry jobs that have the most job openings on a consistent basis are plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and carpentry. Masonry training is anticipated in the future.

In order to obtain an apprenticeship, the student must apply for the job and successfully pass an interview. It is important to note that these are actual jobs with a competitive rate of pay for apprentices, not volunteer positions. In fact, apprentices must work a minimum of 2000 hours per year. After each year of completion in the apprenticeship program, an apprentice will receive a pay raise until at the end of four years he will be working at a journeyman rate.

If your high school student wants to secure an apprenticeship job, he must be at least 16 years of age. In addition, the employer will need to obtain a waiver in order to employ a high school student.

The yearly tuition for the four-year program is \$2,000 (\$8,000 total). However, if your student is hired as an apprentice by a member company of ABC, tuition is discounted by 25%. In addition, some employers will cover the entire cost of tuition, so your student would be taking the Craft Training classes for free. If your student is not employed, he must pay the entire cost of tuition. Monthly payment plans are available as well as possible financial aid. Veterans may use their GI Bill benefits. Since the school is registered in PA, MD, and WV, Pennsylvania high school graduates with a state-recognized diploma will qualify for PHEAA aid.

Another option is for your student to secure employment with a private employer without a job referral from the Cumberland Valley ABC. That employment could potentially still count as an apprenticeship. You would need to contact Barr Construction Institute to find out how to do this.

If Craft Training sounds like a viable option for your high school student or graduate, please contact Barr Construction Institute at (301)739-1190 for more information.

NOTE: Craft Training is available for graduates throughout Pennsylvania. Visit the [Craft Training & Apprenticeship page](#) of Associated Builders and Contractors to find out what is available in your area.