



Looking for Future Leaders, Consider Youth Apprenticeship

In fall of 2020, the Operating Engineers joined five other construction trades that operate a formal Youth Apprenticeship program through DWD: carpentry, electrical, masonry/concrete, mechanical/HVAC, and plumbing/sprinkler fitting.

Vinton Construction has committed to hire a student this spring from Valders High School as a youth apprentice. This is not the first time that Vinton has extended employment to a student before graduating. The son of an Operating Engineer at Mishicot High School was their first experience - today he is a first year apprentice with the Operating Engineers.

We spoke with Rich Lamers (VP, Vinton Construction) to understand how they approach youth apprenticeship in order to share their experience and encourage other contractors to consider it this fall. There are a few key messages that can make this a rewarding experience for your company.

- *Define the competencies and experience you are looking for.* The student joining Vinton this spring has worked on a family farm, accepts that he will need to put in his time before becoming an apprentice with Local 139 and values the opportunity to begin a career that will allow him to financially support a family in the future. The student is not coming to Vinton with hands-on construction experience but he is willing to learn, is hardworking (evident by his GPA), and wants a career that allows him to grow.
- *Provide clear messaging to the potential youth apprentices.* Vinton is clear with students on what the process will look like – they will not graduate from high school and immediately become an Operator. Following the youth apprenticeship work experience and high school graduation, the student would be brought on as a laborer. As a laborer, they are exposed to many different areas of the company. Once they have a better understanding of the work and have demonstrated their ability as a laborer, Vinton may have them begin an apprenticeship as an Operating Engineer.
- *Create a rewarding experience for both the youth apprentice and the company.* Bringing an unexperienced young person into the company requires forethought on what work he/she will perform and who will provide supervision. Vinton has the youth apprentice assist with yard and maintenance work and assigns him/her to a crew, ensuring that there is a regular team of employees providing guidance and supervision.

The workforce shortage our industry has experienced over the past few years has not gone away. Employing a youth apprentice is critical to the future of your company and the industry. Vinton Construction realizes "that our workforce is aging and we need to reach the next generation to grow within our company". This fall, students will be looking for employers to work with them through youth apprenticeship. Is your company willing to make that investment in the future?

Curious about the work that a YA student can perform? [Click here for a list of the skills that a student must learn and demonstrate through the program.](#)

If you are interested in learning more about YA or employing a Youth Apprentice for the spring, please contact Laura Cataldo at laura.cataldo@bakertilly.com or 608-616-2835.