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**4,000** Contractors.

**157** Training Centers.

**6,941** Certifications in 2018.

**20,143** Certified Ironworker Welders.

**19,885** Apprentices and Trainees.

**6,000,000** invested annually on SAFETY.

**130,000** Ironworkers and billions in contracts for the most recognizable projects on earth.

**There are literally thousands of reasons to put your trust in Ironworkers.**



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## Returning Skilled Trades to the High School Curriculum

The Iron Workers' (IW's) Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC) is tasked with looking at the current workforce development situation to determine what should be done to prepare young adults to be career-ready after high school — not just college-ready. This challenge is not an easy one, but it is a vital one to meet.

When I was in high school, preparing for a career in the trades wasn't called "career technical education" or CTE. It was called "industrial education," better known as "shop." I was taught to use a torch, and I did a little welding and drafting in other shop classes. This was in 1986, and when I left high school, I was prepared to go on to become an apprentice. At 23 years old, I was the second-oldest guy in my apprenticeship class. Now, let's compare that to the current average age of a student in apprentice class: 28 years old. Why the dramatic increase in the age of these students over the years? It's because technical education courses in high schools have been eliminated.

We owe it to these young people to get career technical education back into high schools. Rising to this challenge, IW's JATC has formulated a plan. In the short term, we need to establish and strengthen awareness of current career opportunities in our nation. Furthermore, we need to revitalize our work-based learning programs and nationally promote apprenticeship. It's important to advertise what we're doing. The building trades are often overlooked by young people as a place where they can build their careers. We also need to measure performance and involvement in workforce development when awarding construction contracts. One way to do that would be to more frequently award contracts to contractors who participate in workforce development by hiring apprentices.

### Looking to the future

The Ironworkers have established long-term workforce development policies as well. We need to redefine how we measure the quality of our nation's secondary education system by career and college readiness. Again, we want all high school graduates to be career ready. We also need to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in CTE programs. Our apprenticeship coordinators across North America do a great job of recruiting, but we need to do a better job when it comes to hiring, women, veterans and members of ethnically diverse groups.

In October 2018, the National Training Fund launched a three-week pre-apprenticeship program. The program was initially designed for veterans and women. After successfully completing this three-week course of study, these women and veterans were prepared for direct entry into the training programs.

In March, we started our sixth pre-apprenticeship program for women. Having offered six women's courses and one veterans' course, we have maintained an 85-percent retention rate. This high rate of success tells us something we already knew: pre-apprentice training works.

But our work isn't finished. We need to establish and expand collaboration between industry, education and government. We also need to develop more balanced funding between post-secondary CTE and higher education. Currently, 95% of educational government funding goes to programs designed to get young folks into college. We need to change that funding, because we need to educate teens about the building trades.

We hope that our efforts inspire new approaches of communicating to high school students the abundance of new opportunities available for secondary and post-secondary education.

Ironworkers who "only" have high school diplomas are running multiple multimillion-dollar projects. They can do the work if we train them.



For more information, please visit [www.ironworkers.org](http://www.ironworkers.org)