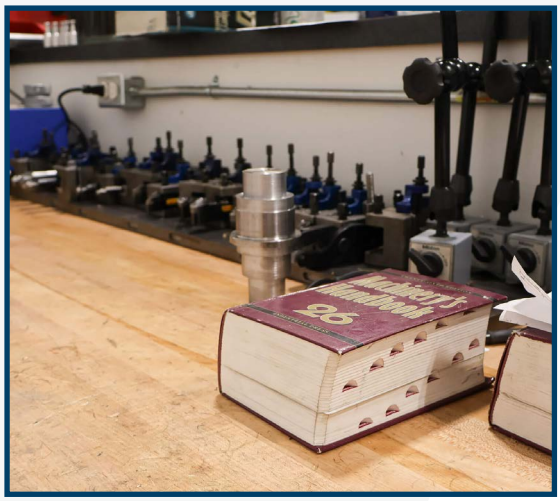
SHAPING FUTURES THROUGH MACHINING: ARGUS SUPPORTS CALMAR SECONDARY SCHOOL'S MANUFACTURING PROGRAM

At Calmar Secondary School, the students are gaining a head start on promising careers in manufacturing and machining, all thanks to a hands-on program led by educator Darren Roth. The school's machining program teaches students essential skills and safety knowledge. It provides practical experience that makes them highly employable in a field that continues to see significant demand for talent.



In the blog below, we will explore how programs like this shape students' career paths, the importance of industry partnerships in sustaining these initiatives, and their lasting impact on rural communities.

Building a Foundation for Success

Darren Roth, the school's machining program instructor, discusses the importance of teaching basic machining skills. These skills prepare students for immediate entry into the workforce and give them an advantage when pursuing further education or apprenticeships.

The program also opens doors for students through Provincial and Federal skills competitions that allow them to showcase their talents to potential employers. While not every graduate chooses machining as a career, approximately a quarter of them pursue work in the field, often entering positions that set them on the path to long-term successful careers.

Adam Peterson, one of the machining students at Calmar Secondary School, stands in front of the Haas Mini Mill CNC machine used in the class.

"Our students often leave for post-secondary institutions like NAIT and quickly rise to the top of their class," Darren explains. "They usually have their pick of jobs because of the skills they learned here at school."

Having machinist programs available to high school students allows them to discover a career path they may not have considered. Grade 11 student Adam Peterson put it best: "It opened up a new vision on what is out there for trades. It gave me a look at something I never thought of doing."

Industry Partnerships Contribute to Educational Programs

Contributions from industry partners are invaluably helpful to schools running machining programs, as the cost of purchasing, transporting, and maintaining tools and equipment can be significant. Donations of tooling and enrich student learning and bridge the gap between education and the workforce, fostering connections with potential employers. This collaboration ensures classes like this are available and inspires students to explore a future in the trades.

One of the two donated three-jaw chucks.

Recently, Argus donated two three-jaw chucks, a much-needed addition to their machine shop. In the past, Argus has also assisted with fundraising efforts for CNC milling machines and has helped the school save costs through their expertise in moving heavy machinery.

Left to Right:
John Wright (Argus) and instructor Darren Roth.

"This partnership allows us to maintain a fully equipped shop," explains Darren. "Running a program like this is expensive; without industry support, it simply would not be sustainable."

The new chucks have already enhanced the learning experience for beginner students. According to Darren, starting with a three-jaw chuck makes it easier for students to learn the basics of machining. From there, they can progress to more complex tools like four-jaw chucks as their confidence grows.

Darren is quick to acknowledge that this is only possible with the steadfast support of industry partners like Argus. "This program would have stopped years ago without their help," he says. "The budget just does not exist to keep it going otherwise."

Argus has supported the program for over 10 years, providing resources, expertise, and long-term support whenever needed. "If we run into a problem, I send an email, and the support flows in," says Darren.

Long-Term Impact on the Surrounding Community and the Industry

Many smaller rural schools don't have programs like the one at Calmar Secondary School. They are a valuable way for students to try something new without travelling far for their studies. Many discover that they have a passion for machining and pursue careers in the trade.

The program is poised for growth, with a new collegiate school focused on the trades to open next

year. Darren is optimistic about the future: more students, staff, and even greater opportunities for the next generation of machinists.

By having this program accessible to rural students, Calmar Secondary School ensures that youths from not only Calmar but also surrounding areas like Warburg and Devon can explore the trades.

Providing experiences like these helps shape their futures and strengthen the manufacturing industry by introducing new talent into the workforce.

Conclusion

The machining program at Calmar Secondary School highlights the transformative power of hands-on education in preparing students for in-demand careers. By equipping young people with essential skills, safety knowledge, and real-world experience, this initiative not only opens doors for individual success but also strengthens the workforce and supports the growth of rural communities. With support from industry partners, these programs continue to thrive, inspiring the next generation to explore and and find success in fields like manufacturing and machining.