



For Immediate Release
April 9, 2025

SALEM SCHOOL DIVISION EARNS NATIONAL GRANTS FOR MANUFACTURING SUMMER CAMPS

*SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS AND MIDDLE SCHOOLERS
WILL BENEFIT FROM THE \$37,000 AWARDS*

The Salem School Division is pleased to announce that it has secured \$37,000 in grant money that will directly benefit students with an eye on technical education. Sparkforce, the Fabricators and Manufacturers Association Foundation, awarded Salem 7 grants that will be used in various ways this summer.

One of those is a \$25,000 allocation that will allow Salem to host a four-week manufacturing inclusion camp for individuals with special needs, between the ages of 16 and 30. SparkForce, Alro Steel, Altec, Greater Roanoke Workforce Development Board, Integer, Mersen, New Millennium, and Wabtec will join forces to provide the participants with two weeks of classroom training and two weeks of on the jobsite training.

“We have known for years that identifying and attracting young people to build a skilled workforce takes a combined effort from our schools and the private sector,” said Curtis Hicks, Salem Superintendent of Schools. “For businesses and organizations to succeed we must find ways to engage, develop, and then retain these individuals. These camps will provide the spark to influence career paths.”

Many industries and businesses struggle to fill entry level positions. The hope is that the inclusion camps will give students and parents a realistic view of what is possible when soft skills training and job training geared toward manufacturing jobs is available.

“We have witnessed with our own success stories, both past and present, that special needs students are often some of the most dependable and hard-working employees in a workforce,” said Bridget Nelson, Coordinator of Special Education. “Often, they simply need the opportunity to prove themselves and an employer willing to bring them onboard. These camps will be extremely valuable.”

In addition, Salem received \$12,000 in the form of 6 separate \$2,000 grants for our middle school students. SparkForce, Alro Steel, Altec, Greater Roanoke Workforce Development Board, Mersen, New Millennium, Universal Technical Institute/NASCAR Technical Institute, Virginia Western, and Wabtec will work with our students to provide both classroom and real-world learning opportunities.

Current 6th and 7th graders who enroll in the summer program will experience one week of welding and one week of technology education, along with math and English instruction. Current 8th graders will be able to sign up for one week of technology education camp or one week of welding camp.

“We have seen both interest and participation in our career and technical education offerings grow incredibly in the past decade,” said Jeff Bird, Salem’s Coordinator of Assessment and Accountability. “The key to unlocking the potential in our students often comes down to putting these tools in their hands and finding ways for them experience these jobs in the workplace. These camps will allow us to do just that.”

The highlights of the various grant funding were presented to Salem’s School Board members at their April 8 meeting.

“We see this as nothing but a universal win for our students and our community,” said Andy Raines, Salem School Board Chairman. “We are extremely appreciative of those who worked to secure the grant funding and the many industries and organizations who have offered their time to help make these two summer camps a success.”

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