

PROGRAM REPORT 2024-2025

Program year by the numbers

See how NICE is impacting
educators, students, and systems
through this look at our major
programs.

Letter from the Executive Director

Nate Zier Executive Director



I am pleased to share with you our 2024–2025 Program Report and extend my sincere appreciation for your continued support and partnership throughout this school year.

As I conclude my first year as Executive Director of NICE, I've taken time to reflect on the progress and accomplishments we've achieved together. By the numbers, NICE continues to expand its impact and elevate awareness around careers in the construction trades. These successes would not be possible without the dedication of our Board of Directors and the invaluable collaboration of community partners like you.

This year, we increased student and exhibitor participation at iBuild, expanded OSHA-10 training opportunities in schools, boosted engagement at Senior Day, and sustained involvement in the Institute for Shaping the Built Environment curriculum.

Additionally, we were proud to have received a capacity-building grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, which has enabled us to grow our team and strengthen the resources necessary for NICE's next chapter of development.

Looking ahead, we are committed to deepening our partnerships and engaging with a broad cross-section of our community. Over the next several months we hope to convene conversations that will inform the development of a strategic plan that will guide our work through 2026 and beyond.

24

NICE Events & Programs

**3,791**

Number of Students Served

**\$0**

Cost to Students & Schools



Program Overview



Students touring Doherty Steel as part of a Senior Day event

Senior Day Events

Senior Day events continue to serve as a cornerstone of our programming, providing students with meaningful, hands-on experiences that connect them with industry professionals and introduce them to a wide range of careers in the skilled trades. Activities may include job site tours, apprenticeship presentations, interactive learning opportunities, and other career exploration formats. During the 2024–2025 school year, NICE engaged 243 students from 14 school districts and 21 high schools through these events, which were held nearly every week from September through April. These partnerships not only enhance student awareness of apprenticeship pathways but also deepen their understanding of how trade skills translate into real-world career opportunities. Looking ahead to the 2025–2026 school year, we aim to host at least 20 Senior Day events, with broad representation from both industry partners and training programs.

Educator Events

NICE is proud to continue our annual Summer Educator Externship. This year, 20 teachers from five local districts will spend 26 hours exploring the construction industry through site visits, apprenticeship programs, and engagement with contractors. We also piloted a Math for the Skilled Trades day with MoKan Laborers, Plumbers Local 8, and IBEW 124. Based on strong interest, we'll continue this event in 2025–2026 and expand educator-focused professional learning. As more teachers seek to connect classroom learning to real-world careers, we're grateful for industry partners who support this important work.

Program Overview



Math teachers participating in our first Math for Skilled Trades Day

OSHA-10 Training

This year, NICE partnered with the MoKan Laborers Training Center to offer in-person OSHA-10 training for high school seniors. Through this collaboration, four schools participated in certification sessions, resulting in 57 students earning their OSHA-10 Construction certification.

The MoKan Laborers Training Center have been an invaluable partner in this effort, and we look forward to continuing this important work in the 2025–2026 school year—expanding access to high-quality safety training for graduating seniors.

Institute for Shaping the Built Environment

The Institute for Shaping the Built Environment, formerly known as Crayons to CAD, continues to be an important programmatic component for NICE. The curriculum integrates real-world skills such as site selection, budgeting, blueprint drafting, and model construction using recycled materials. Students complete a feasibility study, write persuasive letters, and present their proposals. Emphasis is placed on collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, and understanding urban planning concepts. The project culminates in a scale model limited to a small footprint and budget, with top designs advancing to the annual iBuild contest alongside entries from other regional schools. This year we had 169 student participants completing 41 projects. We are looking to create a pacing guide and curricular crosswalk to ease new teacher implementation.

iBuild Showcase



iBuild Showcase

iBuild remains the National Institute for Construction Excellence's flagship event, designed to increase student awareness of career opportunities in the construction industry, with a strong emphasis on the skilled trades. This impactful event would not be possible without the generous support of our 55 industry partners, who dedicated their time and resources to showcase their companies, training programs, and career pathways to students. A special thank you to Milwaukee Tool, Doherty Steel, and J.E. Dunn Construction for their additional contributions, which helped make this year's iBuild our largest and most successful event to date.

By the Numbers

~2,700 Students



60+ Schools



Employee Spotlight



Tina Shonk-Little

Program Coordinator

We're pleased to introduce Tina Shonk-Little, a dynamic construction professional with a proven track record in stakeholder engagement, partnership development, and workforce advocacy. With extensive experience through her involvement with IUOE Local 101 and Heartland Women in Trades, Tina has led impactful outreach initiatives, built strategic alliances, and championed inclusive programming. Tina joined our team in March 2025, and we are excited for her leadership in expanding our programs and enhancing outreach efforts to schools across the K-12 spectrum. Through Tina's engagement we have seen an immediate increase in construction representation at local career fairs and outreach events.

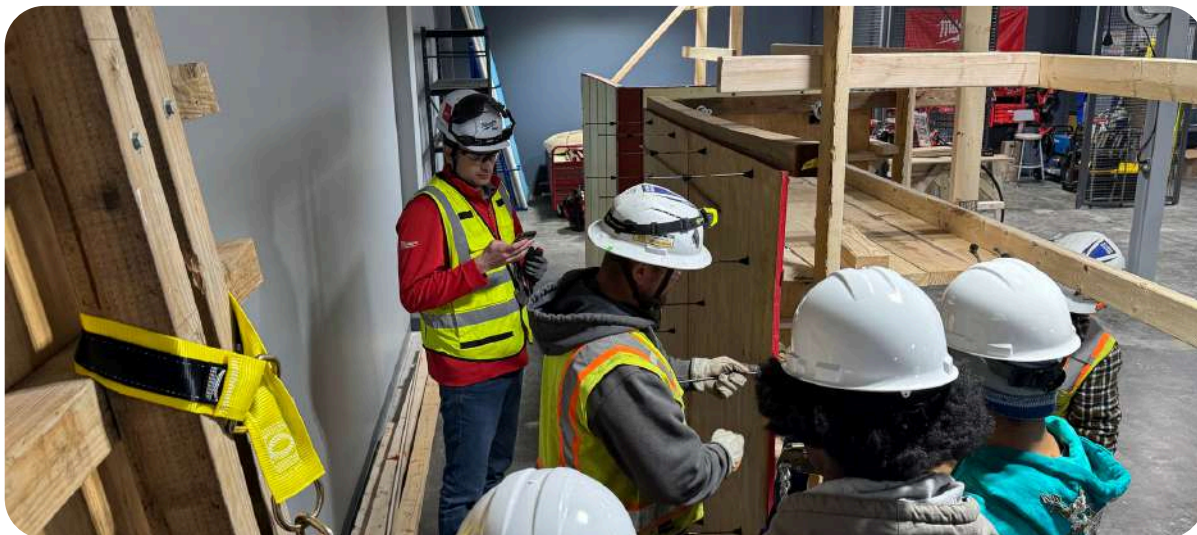
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NICE Education Support Initiatives

At the National Institute for Construction Excellence (NICE), our work extends beyond classrooms—we actively partner with a wide range of community organizations to promote career awareness in the construction industry. Our mission includes supporting systemic changes in education that foster early and meaningful career exploration. We believe students should be equipped to align their educational experiences with future career and college opportunities.

NICE is a proud partner of the Kauffman Real World Learning network, Jobs for America's Graduates – Kansas, Prep-KC, Scholar Smarts, and other regional organizations committed to improving student academic and career outcomes. These collaborations help ensure construction careers are part of career readiness conversations and strengthen system-wide understanding of opportunities in the skilled trades.



Students learn from Milwaukee Tool and Garney Construction at a Senior Day activity.

Gov. Kehoe's Workforce for the Future

Thanks to Executive Director Nate's extensive background in education and leadership roles with organizations such as the Greater Kansas City School Counselor Association, the Missouri Association for Career and Technical Education, and the Missouri Association for Career Services, he was recently selected to serve on the Workforce for the Future Challenge Group. This statewide group is focused on identifying and recommending strategies to expand access to career-connected learning opportunities for all learners in Missouri.

[\[Learn More\]](#)

Raytown Schools Academy Transformation

Executive Director Nate continues to support Raytown Quality Schools through his ongoing partnership on the industry side. In collaboration with the district and Ford Next Generation Learning, Nate serves as co-chair of the Academies of Raytown team. This initiative focuses on identifying high-demand career pathways and developing systems to create meaningful, career-connected learning experiences for Raytown students. The district serves approximately 8,000 students across the area, and this work plays a key role in preparing them for future workforce opportunities.

[\[Learn More\]](#)

Engage With Us

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Students at iBuild learn tuck pointing from Bricklayers and Allied Crafts Local #15 apprentices.