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2 Plus 2 Program Spring 2015

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2+2 equals success

Chad Buzek teaches skilled and technical sciences at North Star High School. He received his bachelor's degree in agricultural education along with his skilled and technical sciences professional endorsement and certification from ALEC.

It's not your father's shop class.

Skilled and technical sciences, also called "industrial technology," is much more than nailing two-by-fours or tearing an engine apart. It is work-based learning with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math.

Currently, there are 450 skilled and technical sciences teachers in Nebraska middle schools and high schools. There are expected to be 20-30 openings for these teachers each year for the next five years.

The 2+2 Skilled and Technical Sciences Program in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and

Communication is designed to help fill that need. In this program, students attend a community college for their first two years, getting their technical education and an associate's degree. Then they attend UNL for two years to learn the teaching component. They receive from UNL a bachelor's of science degree in agricultural education, as well as a professional endorsement and certification to teach skilled and technical sciences.

The program can be a win-win-win for the students, the community colleges and UNL. Students reap the benefits of experiencing two different academic environments and save money by spending the first two years of their college education at a community college. Community colleges have a new program to offer, and UNL benefits because the community colleges have the facilities to provide hands-on learning.

I wanted to make a difference. I stopped worrying about money and focused on what would make me happy. Teaching is a family-friendly career, with flexibility and change. Every day is something new.

— Chad Buzek, Skilled and Technical Sciences teacher at North Star High School

Manufacturing and other industries support skilled and technical sciences programs because they can help provide the employees industry needs. Middle school and high school students also benefit from having a skilled and technical sciences program in

their school, said Eric Knoll, ALEC assistant professor of practice. "It gives students an opportunity to explore careers, and it may help them decide at an earlier age their future career," he added.

"Many students from rural areas want to return to their community after college. This program could provide an opportunity for them to move back home," said Mark Balschweid, ALEC department head.