Communicator

Information for the Grenada School District Community

August 26, 2026

Pre-K #1 in the State



Superintendent's Message

Dr. David Daigneault

Excellence continues to be what we strive for in every area for the children of Grenada. It is with tremendous pride and excitement that I share the outstanding results of the 2025-2026 Spring assessments for the Grenada Early Learning Collaborative.

This year, the Grenada Early Learning Collaborative achieved the No. 1 ranking in the State of Mississippi on the Pre-K Readiness Assessment, out of 40 collaboratives statewide. This remarkable accomplishment is a testament to the dedication, passion, and hard work of the educators and staff who serve our youngest learners each day.

As superintendent, I have had the pleasure of visiting these precious classrooms many times throughout the school year. There is something special about stepping into a Pre-K classroom and watching talented teachers and enthusiastic students learn, explore, and grow together. The classrooms are filled with energy, curiosity, laughter, and learning. While the children are having fun, they are also building the foundational skills that will prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond. Watching that process unfold is one of the most rewarding experiences of my role.

During the 2025-2026 school year, our Pre-K and Kindergarten students participated in the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. The Spring results are truly exceptional. Ninety-nine percent of our four-year-old students met or exceeded the goal on the Literacy Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), and 100 percent scored at or above benchmark on the Brigance Assessment.

These results represent the work of five three-year-old classrooms serving approximately 70 students and five four-year-old clasrooms serving approximately 100 students. The Grenada Early Learning Collaborative also proudly partners with Grenada Head Start, which provides five four-year-old classrooms serving approximately 75 students each year.

The success of our students continues into kindergarten. Grenada kindergarten students had an average scale score of 697 in the Fall and increased to an average scale score of 843 in the Spring—an impressive growth of 146 points during the school year. This growth placed our kindergarten students at No. 16 in the State of Mississippi.

See "PreK"
Continued on page 2

Harrell's Metal Works Continues a Legacy of Giving



The new all-purpose facility, donated by Harrell's Metal Works, will add much needed indoor space for student activities.

By Ben Leatherman
GSD Reporter

A new building taking shape beside Grenada's athletic practice fields will soon give Grenada High School's football and basketball cheerleaders something they have not had before: a dedicated indoor practice space during 4th block.

The new all-purpose facility will provide room for both cheer programs, along with air conditioning, restrooms and an indoor environment designed around their needs. For athletes who have previously practiced in shared temporary spaces, including the Armory and school gym facilities, the building represents a significant improvement.

But the story of the new cheer facility is also part of a much longer story. The building is the latest connection between Harrell's Metal Works, the Harrell family and Grenada's public schools, a relationship that stretches back decades.

During a recent interview at Harrell's Metal Works, owner Randy Harrell said the idea for the building began close to home. His daughter, Haley Moak, raised the need after seeing the cheerleaders' current practice situation. Harrell's granddaughter is also a cheerleader.

Plans were developed to provide adequate space for both squads, and a site was selected near the practice fields on the west side of campus.

For Harrell, responding to a need at the school is not unusual. The new building joins a long list of projects Harrell's Metal Works has contributed to the district since the 1980's. He also built the trailer that was used by Grenada Bands to haul equipment all over the United States.

Harrell recalled donating a storage building at the practice field roughly two decades ago. The company also provided panels at the football stadium used for displaying senior posters, donated another storage building at the football field, helped expand an athletic building used by football players and constructed canopies over bleachers at the baseball and softball fields.

Another project began with a simple observation by Haley during pre-K drop-off. She remembered watching teachers escort children from their vehicles to the school during bad weather, often standing outside with umbrellas and getting soaked in the process.

"I just felt so bad," she said. "The teachers have to help the children in and out of the car and walk them all the way to the door. I just remember them being out there with umbrellas doing the best they can."

Her reaction was straightforward: if the company could do something about it, they should.

Harrell's Metal Works helped provide a canopy to make the daily routine easier for teachers, students and families.

Those projects provide a visible record of the company's relationship with the school district. They also reflect the growth of a local business whose roots in Grenada extend nearly four decades.

Harrell grew up in Grenada and went into business with his brother in 1987. The operation began with two people working in approximately 6,000 square feet. Today, Harrell said, the company occupies about 88,000 square feet and employs approximately 50 people.

That growth has allowed Harrell's Metal Works to take on structural-steel projects throughout Mississippi and across the Southeast, with work occasionally extending even farther.

The company works with a large network of contractors, bidding commercial projects and fabricating structural-steel components that ultimately become part of schools, stadiums, industrial facilities and other large structures.

The scale and complexity of those projects make Harrell's Metal Works very different from the image many people may have of a traditional welding shop.

During a tour of the facility led by Harrell's son, Hunter Harrell, computer-controlled machines could be seen cutting, drilling, punching, marking and processing heavy steel. Detailers translate construction drawings into information that can be used by fabricators and machinery, while engineers may become involved when specialized structural components require additional review.

Fabricators, machine operators, detailers, project managers and quality-control personnel all play different roles in moving a project from a set of drawings to finished structural steel.

The company has continually reinvested in the equipment needed to perform that work. Harrell said money earned through the business has gone back into the operation, including the expensive computerized machinery throughout the shop. Those investments allow Harrell's to compete for complex structural-steel projects across a wide geographic area.

As the size and complexity of those projects have increased, their processes have become more formal as well. Harrell recalled pursuing American Institute of Steel Construction certification when the company worked on an addition to the Ole Miss baseball stadium, bringing additional documentation, inspection and quality-control requirements into the operation.

For local students, that technology also creates career opportunities they may not expect to find inside a metal fabrication shop.



Learn more about jobs like Dylan's on page 5.

One of the machine operators is Dylan Black, a 2024 Grenada High School graduate.

Dylan operates one of the company's largest automated machines. His job, however, might surprise someone who associates metal fabrication exclusively with welding.

"I've never welded anything in my life," Dylan said.

Harrell's Metal Works acquired the automated cutter around the time Dylan began working there, and he was trained to operate it as his full-time job.

His experience illustrates an important point the Harrell family hopes local students understand: a career in metal fabrication does not necessarily mean standing behind a welding hood.

Haley said students may never discover the range of opportunities available if they are not exposed to them.

"There's opportunity," she said. "I don't think people really realize the opportunity that we have here for trades at Grenada High School."

See "Harrell's"
Continued on page 4

UMMC Grenada

A Community of Care

umc.edu/Grenada

Grenada Hosts First Drone Pilot Certification Course



Students and instructors participating in the first FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Certification Training Course were, (l to r) Lt Col Leonard Boothe, Ms. LaShuda Carr, Cadet Harmony Leavy, Chardarious Mayfield, Cadet Kaykwon Wilson, Cadet Tony Allen, Cadet Jeremy Yates, Colonel Marvin Reed, Cadet Londyn Glover, MSgt Vonetta Roseman and Cadet Landon Mill.

By Colonel Marvin Reed
NJROTC Instructor

Grenada High School Naval JROTC and South Panola High School Air Force JROTC recently joined forces to host the first FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Certification Training Course held in Grenada, giving students and community members a chance to earn the credential required to operate drones commercially.

Twelve participants enrolled in the inaugural course, and 10 completed the training. Nine went on to take the FAA Part 107 Aeronautical Knowledge Test, with six passing on their first attempt and earning their FAA Remote Pilot Certificate. The remaining participants came within a few questions of passing and plan to retest.

The course brought together two JROTC programs that have already developed strong drone programs of their own. Both Grenada and South Panola have earned national recognition through drone education, STEM activities and competitive drone programs, including national championships and high national rankings. The certification course gave participants another way to turn those experiences into FAA certification. Several organizations helped make that opportunity possible.

The National Drone and STEM Advancement Center and The Bean Path, a Mississippi group dedicated to expanding access to digital technology, partnered with the South Panola and Grenada JROTC programs to support the training. The National Association of Buffalo Soldiers & Troopers Motorcycle Club, Jackson Chapter, provided meals during the course, while the South Panola High School AFJROTC Booster Club supplied study materials for each participant. Together, the participating organizations also helped cover training and testing costs, reducing the financial barrier for cadets and community members seeking certification.

Instruction was led by Colonel Marvin Reed, Senior Naval Science Instructor for Grenada High School Naval JROTC, and Technical Sergeant Rodney Williams, Aerospace Science Instructor for South Panola High School Air Force JROTC. Reed is a retired United States Marine Corps officer with 32 years of service, including time as an F/A-18 Hornet pilot.

"This course is about much more than preparing students to pass an FAA examination," Reed said. "It equips young people with technical knowledge, leadership, discipline, and confidence that will benefit them throughout their lives."

Williams said the growth of drone education continues to create new opportunities for students.

"Several years ago, we believed drones could become one of the most powerful tools for inspiring students and connecting them to meaningful careers," Williams said. "Today, that vision continues to grow."

The FAA Part 107 certification can open doors to commercial drone work in fields such as agriculture, public safety, infrastructure inspection, construction and filmmaking. Organizers see the Grenada course as another step toward helping students and community members build skills that can translate into those industries.

Lt. Col. Leonard Boothe, USAF (Ret.), Executive Director of the National Drone and STEM Advancement Center and Senior Aerospace Science Instructor at South Panola High School, said the long-term goal is to continue expanding those opportunities.

"With the continued leadership of the South Panola and Grenada JROTC programs, along with the support of organizations like The Bean Path, we are building a statewide ecosystem that prepares students, veterans, and community members for careers in aviation, autonomous systems, and emerging technologies," Boothe said.

Organizers plan to make the FAA Part 107 training course an annual event and hope the partnership between South Panola and Grenada can serve as a model for similar programs elsewhere in Mississippi.

The inaugural course ended with six newly certified remote pilots, while the remaining test-takers plan to try again. With organizers already planning to bring the training back next year, the first course established a new pathway for Grenada-area students and community members to earn FAA certification and put their drone skills to work.

"PreK"

Continued from Page 1

These numbers are more than assessment scores. They represent children learning to recognize letters and sounds, develop early literacy skills, communicate, solve problems, build relationships, and become confident learners. Most importantly, they represent the incredible work taking place in our classrooms every single day.

The Grenada School District piece of this program is housed at The Red Top, or Lower Elementary, and operates in accordance with the guidelines and requirements established by the Mississippi Department of Education.

Each classroom is staffed by a certified teacher and an assistant teacher, providing our youngest students with a strong foundation in a caring and supportive environment.

The four-year-old program maintains a maximum of 20 students per classroom, while the three-year-old program maintains a maximum of 14 students per classroom. Selection is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Children participating in the four-year-old program must be four years old by September 1, while children in the three-year-old program must be three years old by September 1. Students must also be fully potty trained.

Both programs are full-day programs operating from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and follow the Grenada School District calendar, along with several additional program days.

Our Pre-K classrooms are designed with young children in mind. Students learn through hands-on experiences, developmentally appropriate activities, learning centers, and technology.

At Grenada Elementary, our Pre-K students also have access to their own age-appropriate playground, reserved exclusively for our Pre-K classes.

None of these accomplishments happen by accident. They are the result of an outstanding team of educators and professionals who believe deeply in the children they serve.

I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to the entire Grenada Early Learning Collaborative team and our Grenada Head Start partners for this outstanding accomplishment. This recognition belongs to every teacher, assistant teacher, administrator, specialist, support staff member, and partner who contributes to the success of our youngest learners. Each person plays an important role in creating an environment where children can learn, grow, and thrive.

This is an extraordinary group of individuals who work tirelessly and with tremendous passion to provide our youngest students with the very best educational experience possible. They continually go above and beyond, and their commitment is evident in these outstanding results. I am incredibly proud of this entire team and grateful for the dedication they demonstrate each and every day on behalf of the children of Grenada.

The No. 1 ranking among 40 collaboratives across the state is certainly something to celebrate. However, the greatest achievement is knowing that because of the work of these dedicated educators, our children are entering school with the skills, confidence, and enthusiasm they need to be successful.

Excellence begins early, and in Grenada, our early learners are off to an outstanding start.

On behalf of the Grenada School District, congratulations to our Early Learning Collaborative team, our Head Start partners, our teachers and staff, and—most importantly—our students and their families. Thank you for demonstrating what is possible when a community commits to giving its children an exceptional beginning.

For more information about the Grenada Early Learning Collaborative and other programs offered by the Grenada School District, please visit www.grenadak12.com.

I could not be more proud of the work being done on behalf of the children of Grenada. The future is bright, and it begins right here in our classrooms.

School Holidays
www.grenadak12.com
Calendar Tab at the top of the page

More Than a Trade:
One Artist Discovers What She Could Have Been Building at GCTC



Photo by Ben Leatherman

Recent 2026 GHS graduate Alex Hayward discovers the design potential at the Grenada Career and Technical Center.

By Ben Leatherman
GSD Reporter

When Alex Hayward graduated from Grenada High School in 2026, she had already spent years interested in art and engineering. What she did not realize was how many opportunities she had to combine those interests at Grenada Career and Technical Center. She found out after graduation.

The realization came from a project Hayward had started nearly two years earlier. During her junior year, she was given the opportunity to create artwork for a custom snowboard. When the board featuring her design arrived the summer after graduation, she needed a way to display it. That brought her into GCTC's Carpentry program, where she discovered tools and possibilities she wished she had known about years earlier.

"I think if I had known the opportunities that were within the Carpentry class and how much my art could be incorporated into it, I definitely would have taken it," Hayward said. She added that, if she could go back, she would likely have taken the class as early as ninth grade.

Hayward's opportunity began when Nick Gilson of Gilson Snowboards visited with students and spoke about entrepreneurship and advanced manufacturing. When he opened the floor for questions, Hayward's attention immediately went to the artwork featured on the company's snowboards. She asked whether the company used in-house artists or commissioned outside artists and explained that she was an artist herself. That question led to an opportunity of her own. The board was commissioned, Hayward created the artwork, and Gilson Snowboards manufactured the finished snowboard and sent it back to her.

For the design, Hayward chose pomegranates, a subject that had become personally meaningful through her interest in both art and writing. Whole and cut pomegranates stretch across the board in a style Hayward created digitally but deliberately designed to resemble traditional painting.

"Even though it's digitally designed, it looks like it's hand-painted with the brushes I used, which is a style I really love," Hayward said.

With the finished snowboard in hand, Hayward turned her attention to creating a stand to display it. She started with sketches and worked through different ideas while considering both appearance and function. After choosing a design, she recreated it on a computer using CAD software, selected the wood, and used equipment in the Carpentry shop to cut and engrave the pieces. Along the way, she tested the fit of the snowboard and made another version when the first one needed improvement.

The stand itself became another extension of the artwork. Hayward's design was inspired by Gothic architecture so that it would complement the lettering on the snowboard and connect visually with the pomegranate imagery.

The project brought her interests in art and engineering together with computer design, woodworking and hands-on problem-solving. More importantly, it changed the way Hayward thought about Carpentry.

Before working in the Carpentry shop, she associated the class primarily with traditional woodworking projects such as houses and tables. She had not realized how much room there was for creativity and design.

"You don't think about the artistic value of it," Hayward said. "But it actually does play a big part in art."

Hayward's experience illustrates a side of Grenada Career and Technical Center that students may not recognize from a course title alone. Students do not have to be interested in only one trade or career path to benefit from a GCTC class. The same courses can give them new ways to use interests they already have in art, engineering, technology, design and hands-on work.

Current Grenada students still have the opportunity to discover those possibilities before they leave high school.

The finished snowboard may be the most eye-catching result of Hayward's project, but the larger lesson came from what happened next: an interest in art and engineering led her into a Carpentry shop, where she discovered that the opportunity to design, build and create had been there all along.

GES Green Top Discovery Lab Makes Science Fun



Alee Carver and Kate Weaver work with Discovery Lab Director, Devon Tipton to dissect an owl pellet.

By Carol Tharpe
Elementary Administrator

Walk through the front doors of Grenada Upper Elementary—affectionately known as "The Green Top"—and it won't take long to discover one of the school's most exciting classrooms. Located directly across from the school's front entrance, the Discovery Lab is a place where science is not simply read about in a textbook—it comes alive. Step through the door and you may be greeted by Bob, the box turtle, along with his turtle friends Atom, Proton, Neutron and Electron. Nearby, three geckos, Solar, Lunar and Eclipse, are likely to catch your eye. You might also see students working with 3D printers or exploring new worlds through virtual reality goggles.

One thing is certain: there is never a dull moment in the Discovery Lab. Led by outstanding educator Mr. Devon Tipton, the Discovery Lab provides third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students with hands-on opportunities to explore science, solve problems, ask questions and discover how the concepts they learn connect to the real world.

"When students know it is Discovery Lab day, I want them excited because they know they are going to experience science, not just read about it," Tipton said.

And excited they are. In fact, when visitors come to The Green Top, one of the classrooms they frequently want to see is the Discovery Lab. You never quite know what you will find happening inside, but you can be sure it will be fun, engaging and educational.

For Tipton, creating that excitement is intentional.

This summer, he attended the Innovative School Summit Conference in Nashville, where he returned with a wealth of new ideas to bring into the Discovery Lab. One of his biggest takeaways was the intentional use of humor in the classroom.

Research shared during the conference demonstrated that laughter can help create a sense of safety, making students more comfortable participating, taking risks and learning. Tipton plans to incorporate more humor into his lessons while also beginning each class with a strong "hook"—a joke, story, mystery, game, demonstration or unusual challenge designed to immediately spark curiosity.

The goal is simple: Get students wondering, "What are we doing today?"

Tipton also plans to use more whole-class response systems so students remain actively involved, thinking and responding even when another student is answering.

Movement will play an important role as well. Third graders will learn science vocabulary through motions designed to help them remember the meaning of important terms. These experiences are part of Tipton's intentional approach to scaffolding science instruction from third grade through fifth grade, allowing students to build a strong foundation year after year.

"The hands-on experiences are what make the Discovery Lab special," Tipton said.

And hands-on is exactly what students can expect.

Fifth graders will dissect owl pellets as they investigate food chains and look for evidence of what an owl has eaten.

Fourth graders will create stomata impressions from plant leaves and use microscopes with digital screens to observe the structures plants use for gas exchange.

Fourth- and fifth-grade students will also design and test boats while studying density. Fifth graders will rotate through stations where they perform and observe physical and chemical changes firsthand.

These are not simply activities designed to make science fun. They are opportunities for students to think like scientists.

"My goal is for students to do more than hear about science," Tipton explained. "I want them predicting, building, testing, laughing, solving problems, making mistakes, and trying again."

That philosophy is one reason Tipton's reputation as an outstanding educator precedes him. His influence reaches beyond the walls of the Discovery Lab, impacting both students and fellow educators.

Principal Kasey Lott recognizes the difference he makes.

"Mr. Tipton is exceptionally prepared for each day and each week, but what sets him apart is his ability to understand what students at each grade level need to be successful," Lott said. "He intentionally builds science skills from third grade through fifth grade, ensuring that students develop a strong foundation along the way. By the time they reach fifth grade, they are prepared not only for success on the state science assessment, but also for the continued learning, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills they will need throughout their education and beyond."

See "Discovery"
Continued on page 7

"Harrell's"

Continued from Page 1

Some positions at Harrell's rely heavily on computer skills. Others require employees to read blueprints, understand measurements, operate specialized machinery or fabricate heavy steel. The company also employs detailers, project managers and other employees whose work extends well beyond traditional welding.

The company's own workforce provides examples of how those careers can develop over time. Harrell pointed to employees who have been with the company for more than 30 years. One current project manager, he said, originally began working in the shop building rails before progressing into a different position.

That kind of advancement is possible because experience gained on the shop floor can translate into supervision, project management and specialized technical work.

Harrell said the company is willing to hire people with the right foundation and train them to perform the specific kind of work the company needs. He would like to see career and technical education continue preparing students with skills that can translate directly into local employment.

Some of the most valuable skills are also some of the most basic. Haley pointed to reading a tape measure and interpreting drawings as examples. A student who learns those skills may discover an aptitude for work he or she had never previously considered.

The earning potential can also be significant. Harrell said the most experienced employees working on the shop floor could earn more than $70,000 per year.

At Harrell's Metal Works, technical ability is only part of becoming a dependable employee. The family also emphasized accountability, honesty and a willingness to learn.

When a mistake happens in the shop, Hunter said employees are expected to identify it and speak up before the problem moves farther through the production process. Work is checked at multiple stages, and quality-control procedures are designed to catch problems before fabricated material leaves the facility.

Making a mistake is not necessarily a disciplinary issue. Depending on what happened, the solution may simply be additional instruction or training.

Hunter summarized the philosophy with a lesson that applies well beyond metal fabrication.

"We don't learn from our success," he said. "We learn from our failures."

Those employees — and the families behind them — also help explain why Harrell's Metal Works continues investing in Grenada's schools.

Harrell said he is not interested in recognition for the projects his company has donated over the years. His children went through the Grenada school system. His grandchildren attend Grenada schools. Many of the approximately 50 people who work for Harrell's Metal Works have children or grandchildren in the district as well.

"My grandkids are in there," Harrell said. "Our employees, their kids are in there, so we feel we can't go wrong giving back to the community."

Those shared family ties create a direct connection between the company and the schools around it. Harrell's Metal Works employs Grenada families while the school district educates their children — including students who may eventually find careers with local employers such as Harrell's Metal Works.

In that sense, the company's investment in local schools and its need for a strong local workforce are closely connected.

The new all-purpose building beside the practice fields is the latest physical reminder of that relationship.

Soon, Grenada's cheerleaders will walk into a facility built specifically to give them a better place to practice. Years from now, many students may never know the full list of facilities and improvements Harrell's Metal Works contributed to the district or the conversations that led to them.

They will simply use them.

For Randy Harrell, that appears to be the point.

"It's all about my kids, my family, and our community" he said. "That's what it's all about."

Congratulations!

Sarah Smart

Winner of the Criss Office Chair



Criss Office Supply

2245 Commerce St • 662-226-1901

M-F 9-5 & Sat 9-12

BRING YOUR VISION

BUILD YOUR LEGACY

FALL 2026 CLASSES BEGIN **AUG. 24**

Last day to register: Sept. 4

Classes offered on campus and online.
Undergraduate programs include:

Allied Health Studies
Communicative Sciences & Disorders
Criminal Justice
Elementary Education
General Business
Multi-Disciplinary Studies

NEED MORE TIME?
Apply for Spring 2027 for FREE during Fall Visit Week: October 19-22



ANNA PALMER FROM GRENADA, MISS.
UM-Grenada Class of 2023
Bachelors in Elementary Ed.

Ole Miss | Grenada

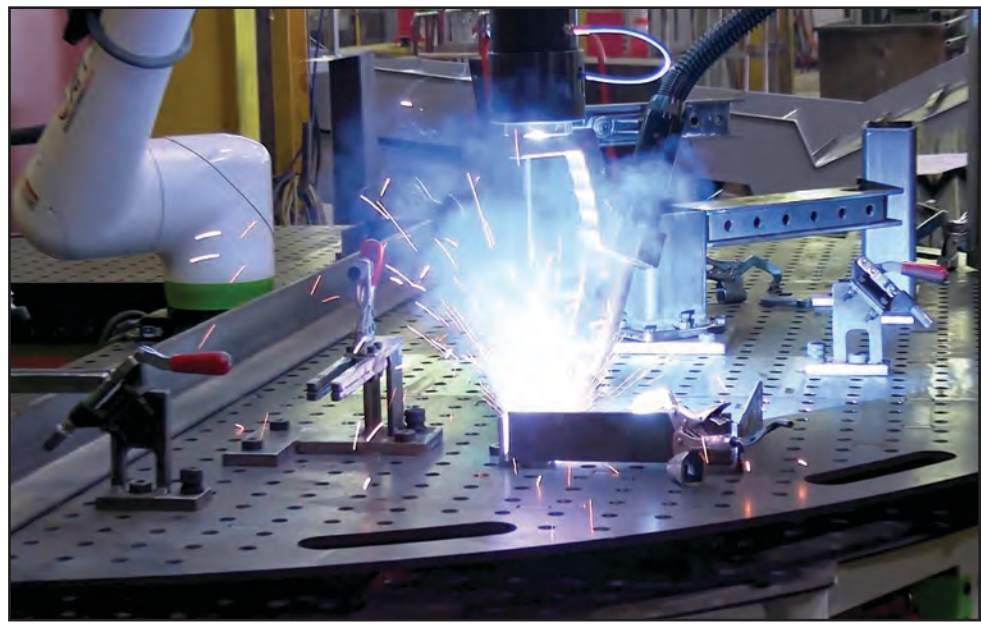
OUTREACH.OLEMISS.EDU/COMMUNICATOR

1060 Avent Drive in Grenada, on the Holmes CC-Grenada Center campus

For more information, contact Associate Director Jessica Coker-Hughes by phone at (662) 227-2348 or by e-mail at jlcoker3@olemiss.edu

Tools of the Trade: When Welding Meets Robotics





By Sherry Worsham
Director of Community Partnerships

Grenada students will learn what happens when an old trade meets robotics, programming and modern manufacturing.

For generations, learning to weld has started with a person, a welding torch, two pieces of metal and a lot of practice. Soon, Grenada students will be able to add something unexpected to that picture. A robot. Grenada School District is adding a **MOD-WELD** collaborative robotic welding system to its Advanced Manufacturing program, giving students an opportunity to explore what happens when the skilled trade of welding meets robotics, computer programming and automation.

At the center of the system is a FANUC CRX-10iA collaborative robot, often called a cobot, paired with a Miller Auto-Deltaweld 350 welding system. The robotic arm has a reach of just over four feet, and students can program it through a tablet-based interface or physically guide the arm into positions as they learn how to establish movements for it to repeat.

It sounds futuristic. In modern manufacturing, it isn't. Robotics and automation are changing how products are made, but they haven't eliminated the need for skilled people. Instead, they are changing the skills those people need. And that is where the **MOD-WELD** gets interesting. A robot doesn't walk into a welding shop knowing how to weld. Someone has to teach it. That person needs to understand what a good weld is supposed to look like in the first place.

Before the Robot, There Is a Welder

Imagine giving the cobot a simple assignment: weld two pieces of steel together. Before the robot moves, someone has already made a surprising number of decisions.

The metal has to be prepared. The pieces must be measured and positioned. Someone has to determine where the weld begins and ends. The materials have to be held securely in place. The robot's path has to be programmed and checked. Then the finished weld has to be inspected.

Did the robot do what it was supposed to do? Is the weld where it belongs? If not, why not? That last question may be the most important one. A robot can repeat a mistake perfectly. If a piece of metal is positioned incorrectly or the programmed path is wrong, automation doesn't magically correct the problem. The robot can repeat that incorrect operation with impressive consistency. A skilled person has to recognize the problem, determine what caused it, correct it and try again. Suddenly, robotic welding isn't really a story about robots replacing people. It's a story about people learning new skills.

One Skill Leads to Another

A student doesn't begin by walking up to a sophisticated robotic welding system and pressing a button. The learning starts much earlier.

It may begin with something as simple as reading a tape measure accurately. Then come fractions and decimals, angles and dimensions. Students learn about materials, technical drawings, welding fundamentals and how pieces must be positioned and secured.

Robotics adds another layer.

Where is the robot now? Where does it need to go? At what angle should the welding torch be positioned? Where should the weld begin? Where should it end?

The **MOD-WELD** system is specifically designed for FANUC robot operation and programming.

Grenada's equipment package also includes welding squares, pins, clamps, angle fixtures and other work-holding equipment. Those less dramatic tools are important because before a robot can repeatedly weld a part, the part must be repeatedly placed in exactly the right position.

Measurement connects to fabrication. Fabrication connects to welding. Welding connects to robotics. Robotics connects to programming. And all of them connect to quality and problem- solving. That is *One Skill at a Time* in action.

Safety Is a Skill, Too

Robotic does not mean risk-free. Welding involves intense light, heat, sparks, hot metal, electrical equipment and fumes. Adding moving robotic equipment makes understanding the work area and following established procedures even more important.

Grenada's system therefore includes more than the cobot and welder. The equipment package includes welding protective equipment, an arc-rated curtain, a weld screen and a portable four-stage fume extraction system. The manufacturer's information makes an especially important distinction: the surrounding curtain protects people from the welding arc; it is not a safety barrier against movement of the robot.

That is exactly the kind of distinction students must learn. Safety isn't something students get through before the "real" training begins. Safety is part of knowing how to do the job.

From Making a Weld to Making a Product

At first, learning the robot may be simple. Move from here to there. Establish another point. Change the angle. Create a path. Run it slowly. See whether the robot went where expected.

Then welding can be added. Eventually, students can begin thinking beyond making one weld to making an entire product.

Imagine several pieces of metal becoming a frame. The pieces must be measured and prepared. They have to be held accurately in a fixture. The robot needs a sequence for completing the welds. Then the finished frame must be inspected for dimensions, squareness, weld quality and consistency.

Now comes a different challenge. Make another one. Can the second match the first? Can the third? That introduces students to one of the fundamental ideas of manufacturing: repeatability.

Making one good object is an accomplishment. Developing a reliable process that produces good objects repeatedly is manufacturing.

So, What Does the Human Do?

If the robot holds the welding torch, what is left for a person to do? Quite a lot.

People design the product, prepare materials, create fixtures, program the robot, establish the process, operate the equipment and inspect what it produces.

And when something goes wrong, a person has to determine why.

Instead of simply saying, "The robot messed up," a technician investigates. Did the material move? Was the fixture correct? Was a programmed point wrong? Did something change in the setup? Did the machine actually do exactly what it was told to do?

That is troubleshooting, and it is a skill that reaches far beyond robotic welding into machining, automotive technology, industrial maintenance, engineering, electronics and nearly every technical field.

Learning for Careers Close to Home

The **MOD-WELD** will ultimately be housed in the Entrepreneurial & Innovation Center and integrated into Grenada School District's Welding and Advanced Manufacturing pathway. The district's EquipMS proposal identifies robotic welding, automated production, welding fundamentals, industrial safety, quality practices and fixture setup among the skills the system is intended to support.

Those skills have particular relevance in Grenada, where manufacturing is an important part of the local economy. The district's proposal identifies Milwaukee Tool, Modine Manufacturing, Novipax and Advanced Distributor Products among area manufacturers and emphasizes the growing importance of automation, precision fabrication and advanced production technologies.

A student fascinated by welding may pursue fabrication. Another may discover that programming the robot is more interesting and explore robotics or automation. A student who enjoys figuring out why machines don't work may discover industrial maintenance. Others may move toward quality control, CAD, CNC machining, engineering technology or manufacturing engineering.

There isn't just one career hiding inside the **MOD-WELD**. There are many doors.

The Tool Is Only the Beginning

The **MOD-WELD** is an impressive piece of technology. But ultimately, it is still a tool. And a tool becomes valuable when someone learns how to use it safely, intelligently and skillfully.

Perhaps a student first walks into the lab simply because watching a robot weld looks cool. That's enough. Curiosity is a perfectly good place to begin.

Then comes safety. Measurement. Welding. Robotics. Programming. Troubleshooting. A first project. Another project. Another skill.

And somewhere along the way, a student who came in just to see a robot may discover something much more important: I can learn to do this. One tool. One new skill. One more possibility. *One Skill at a Time*.

EquipMS Grant Makes Mod-Weld Possible

Grenada School District was awarded $102,844 through the AccelerateMS EquipMS Grant Program to purchase the Mod-Weld collaborative robotic welding system featured in this Tools of the Trade article. The award supports the district's growing Advanced Manufacturing program and will bring industry-level robotic welding and automation training to students at the Entrepreneurial & Innovation Center. We are grateful to AccelerateMS for investing in Grenada students and helping us build the skilled workforce our community and Mississippi need.



All for Your Health

UMMC™

umc.edu/YourHealth

Celebrations Around the World at the Kidzeum



First grade students from Ms. Davis's room lead a parade to celebrate Children's Day. They enjoy waving their Koi windsocks as they march to the beat of drums.

By Melanie Williams
Kidzeum Director

Students have started the school year with an exciting first visit to the Kidzeum! This year's opening experience, "Celebrations," invites children to discover how people around the world celebrate special holidays, festivals, and traditions. Through hands-on activities, students explore the many ways families and communities come together to celebrate.

As they learn about celebrations in Asia, they are transported to China and Japan. They are greeted by a dragon and practice using chopsticks as they learn about the Chinese New Year. They also learn to write Chinese numbers on rice paper with calligraphy brushes and help tell the story of the new year using puppets. While learning about Japanese festivals students enter a room full of floating lanterns and trees full of cherry blossoms. They participate in a Children's Day parade, complete with drums and Koi shaped windsocks.

On their next visit students will learn about celebrations in other countries such as Nigeria, Brazil and India. Students will have the opportunity to taste food, play instruments and learn about various artists and types of art from these cultures.

Students are discovering that celebrations can be very different from one country to another, while also sharing how many things in common such as; music, art, decorations, family, and community play an important role in celebrations around the world.

Balloon Quest Camp Hosts Summer Camp



Campers had to use good communication and teamwork to beat the opposing team in parachute volleyball.

By Tammie Cavanaugh
Balloon Quest Director

For the past three years, Balloon Quest has hosted a summer camp for elementary students in fourth and fifth grades, featuring a different science theme and a variety of activities each year.

This year, students explored simple machines (levers, pulleys, inclined planes, screws, wheel and axles, and wedges) and learned how these tools help make work easier. To apply their knowledge to a real-world challenge, students worked in small teams of three to design and build a mini-golf course incorporating simple machines.

To aid in construction, students used ChompSaws and Makedo Tool Kits from the FABLab to create simple machines and obstacles from cardboard. They also used pool noodles, tape, cardboard tubes, and other materials to design unique and challenging golf holes. The students' creativity was amazing! They tested and adjusted their designs to achieve the correct angles and make each hole successful. After completing all the holes, students played through their fellow campers' courses and discussed the different simple machines and obstacles they encountered.

Campers also:

- Completed all six escape rooms at Balloon Quest and participated in a scavenger hunt in each room.
- Designed their own camp bags using fabric markers and canvas tote bags.
- Played a variety of games, including cornhole, ping pong, four corners, and activities designed to help them learn more about their fellow campers.

The week concluded with a field trip to Grenada Lake. The hike along the Old River Run Trail began pleasantly but was cut short by a storm. Fortunately, the Grenada Lake Visitor Center provided students with an engaging indoor experience. Through a film, displays, and an indoor scavenger hunt, students learned about the history of Grenada and Grenada Lake.

The third annual Balloon Quest Summer Camp was a week filled with science, creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, and fun with opportunities to put knowledge into action while creating, exploring, and learning together.

Grenada School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, veteran status, or other characteristics protected by law in any of its policies, practices, procedures or program operation. Grenada School District is an equal opportunity employer. For inquiries regarding this policy on discrimination contact: Title IX Coordinator, Dr. Tina Herrington; ADA/504 Coordinator, Dr. Lyle Williams; Grenada School District, 253 S. Main, Grenada, MS 38901; 662-226-1606

"Discovery"

Continued from Page 3

Grenada Upper Elementary has been recognized as a Project Lead The Way Distinguished School for more than eight years—a testament to the dedication of educators who have worked to integrate STEM education into the school's curriculum.

The Discovery Lab is an important part of that commitment.

Through hands-on learning and STEM-focused experiences, students strengthen critical-thinking, problem-solving, communication and collaboration skills. Tipton has played an instrumental role in teaching and modeling these strategies for both students and teachers.

He leads by example, inspiring curiosity, creativity and confidence while helping create a school environment where innovation and academic excellence can thrive.

It is no surprise that Green Top fifth graders have consistently performed well on state science assessments. Their success is built over time, beginning with the foundational experiences they receive in third grade and continuing through fourth and fifth grade.

But perhaps the greatest measure of success is something much simpler: the excitement students feel when they hear those three magic words—"Discovery Lab day!"

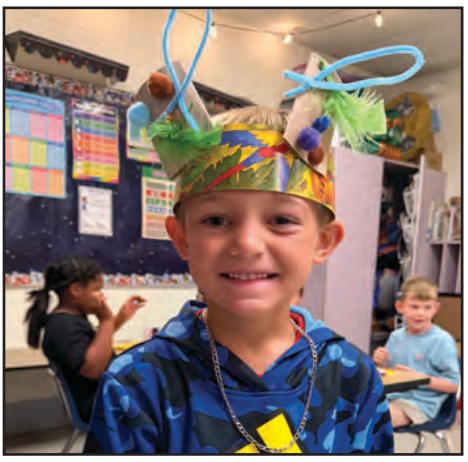
With turtles, geckos, microscopes, 3D printers, virtual reality, experiments, laughter, challenges and plenty of opportunities to discover something new, the year ahead promises to be an unforgettable one for Green Top's third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students.

At the Discovery Lab, science isn't just a subject.

It is an adventure waiting to be discovered.



FABLab Introduces STEM to Elementary Students



Logan Browman created special animal ears when studying animal habitats.



Prince Herrington was excited to launch the airplane he built when studying the laws of flight.



Lewis Lyon exploring engineering skills with roller coaster mania.

By Nicholas Johnson
FABLab Lead Instructor

This summer, students across the Grenada School District had the opportunity to explore, create, build, and learn through hands-on STEM experiences during the district's Summer FABLab Camp.

The three-week camp was held throughout June and provided elementary students with opportunities to experience science, technology, engineering, mathematics, creativity, and problem-solving in exciting new ways. Students spent their mornings working inside the district's Mobile FABLab, where learning moved beyond textbooks and became an interactive experience.

Throughout the summer, campers participated in a variety of hands-on projects that encouraged them to think like engineers, designers, inventors, and problem-solvers. Students worked collaboratively, learned how to use different technology and equipment, completed STEM challenges, and created projects they could proudly call their own.

One of the major goals of the camp was to show students that STEM can be both educational and fun. Each activity encouraged students to ask questions, experiment, make mistakes, try again, and celebrate their accomplishments. The camp also provided students with opportunities to develop important skills such as teamwork, communication, creativity, perseverance, and critical thinking.

The Summer FABLab Camp was coordinated and directed by Nicholas Johnson, with support from a dedicated team of educators including Kay Taylor, Hensley Moulder, and Jasmine Hervey. Together, the staff worked to create a safe, engaging, and welcoming environment for approximately 30 students during the summer program.

The summer camp also put the teachers' own training into action. Prior to the camp, the team completed Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Launch training, with every teacher becoming a PLTW Launch certified teacher. They also received hands-on training in the operation of the Mobile FABLab from GSD Transportation Director, Benji Britt. This training included equipment and safety procedures, setup and daily operations, and driving the Mobile FABLab. That preparation gave the teachers the confidence and skills to take what they had learned and immediately apply it with students during the summer camp.

The Mobile FABLab played an important role in making these experiences possible by bringing innovative technology and STEM resources directly to students. The camp demonstrated how powerful learning can become when students are given opportunities to explore concepts through hands-on experiences.

In addition to the daily projects and activities, the summer program allowed teachers to learn more about what students enjoy, how they approach challenges, and the types of STEM opportunities that could continue benefiting students throughout the school year.

The conclusion of the summer camp also provided an opportunity for staff to reflect on the successes of the program and begin discussing ways the FABLab could continue serving students through future camps and after-school programming.

Most importantly, the summer was about giving students an experience they would remember. From walking into the FABLab each morning excited to see what they would create next, to proudly showing off completed projects, students demonstrated curiosity, enthusiasm, and a willingness to learn throughout the entire program.

The 2026 Summer FABLab Camp was more than just a summer activity. It was an opportunity to inspire the next generation of creators, innovators, engineers, and problem-solvers while showing students that learning can happen anywhere when they are given the tools and encouragement to explore.

As the summer program came to an end, students left with new skills, new experiences, and memories of a summer filled with creating, discovering, and learning.

The Grenada School District looks forward to continuing to provide innovative STEM opportunities that prepare students to dream big, think creatively, and build for the future.

Growing Culinary Creativity: Hydroponics and Edible Flowers



(Photo left)

Culinary Arts students (left) Kelbie Castleberry and (right) Summer Pryor prepare to plant the program's first hydroponic garden. Students will learn to grow and use the produce from a hydroponic garden.

By Meg Newcomb
Student Services Coordinator

The 2026–2027 school year brings something new and exciting to the Culinary Arts program: the opportunity to introduce hydroponic gardening into the classroom! This innovative project will allow students to grow fresh herbs, edible flowers, and other ingredients right at school while connecting gardening, sustainability, and culinary creativity.

Students can grow a variety of herbs and edible flowers, such as basil, mint, cilantro, parsley, and pansies. These ingredients can be harvested and used in the culinary classroom to add fresh flavors, beautiful colors, and creative decorations to dishes.

This new hydroponic project will give students a hands-on learning experience that goes beyond traditional cooking. They will learn how plants grow, how to care for them, and how fresh ingredients can go from the growing system directly to the plate. Students will also develop skills in teamwork, responsibility, food safety, sustainability, and presentation.

Adding hydroponics to Culinary Arts for the 2026–2027 school year is an exciting step toward creating a more innovative and engaging learning environment. Students will have the chance to grow it, cook it, and create with it—turning fresh ingredients into delicious and beautiful culinary experiences.

Criss Office Supply
2245 Commerce St. - Hwy. 51 South

Sunworks Construction Paper - Reg.$3.44/pk - ONLY $.50 PACK -

Buy 12 dozen Designer Pencils - Reg $46.68 - NOW ONLY $12

Spectra Art Tissue Paper - 100 Sq.Ft. - ALL COLORS - Reg.$7.89 - 3pks - $10

81' Crepe Streamers - ALL COLORS - Reg.$ 1.59 roll - NOW 5 for $1.00

Select Books - 30% to 50% Off Retail

4'X12' Solid Color Fadeless Bulletin Board Paper - Reg.$12.99 - 50% OFF

50% OFF RETAIL PRICE ON ALL:
PAINT - TEMPERA, ACRYLIC, POWDER, WASHABLE, FINGER - ALL COLORS
GLITTER - ALL COLORS AND ALL SIZES
PRE-PRINTED AWARD CERTIFICATES INCLUDING CLASSROOM, KINDERGARTEN, SCIENCE FAIR, ACADEMICS & SPORTS
4' X 12' FADELESS DESIGN BULLETIN BOARD PAPER ROLLS - Reg.$12.99
36"X48" PROJECT BOARDS - ALL COLORS

© 2026 Grenada School District • Superintendent - Dr. David Daigneault
Communications - Robbie Buchanan • GSD Reporter - Ben Leatherman • Photographer - Michael Sanford • Contributor Tammie Cavanaugh