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Ready for Work: Students Pick Up Skills (By Making Grilles)

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A dozen students at the Williamsburg High School of Architecture and Design (WHSAD) have been engaged in a semester-long work study program to get a head start on a career in the manufacturing industry, reports Tanay Warekar for the Greenpoint Gazette.

The program is the result of a joint-effort between WHSAD and the family-owned and operated manufacturing company Architectural Grille, located in Gowanus, which makes, according to its website, “custom bar grilles, perforated grilles, and egg crate grilles.”

Students involved in the program, which meets twice a week at Gowanus in the studio that doubles as the firm’s manufacturing plant, take a hands-on approach to learning. Students have been taught how to operate state-of-the-art computerized fabrication machinery and working on lasers, water-jets and turret shapers.

Fred D’Antoni, director of special projects at Architectural Grille and a former high school principal, had reached out to WHSAD principal Gill Cornell after talking with the owners of Grille about the shortage of trained workers able to take on manufacturing jobs.

D'Antoni recalled that while he was still in school, students were taught a number of practical skills such as woodworking and basic construction techniques. But he says all that has now stopped in favor of academic rigor and training students for Ivy League schools.

"We should offer kids choices," he said. "Schools should continue to focus on academics of course, but they should have opportunities like this too. So often we find students graduating from the best colleges with no marketable skills." D'Antoni also mentions how the program will help employers like Grille.

Find out how it will help employers, as well as what the students have been designing for their school and for Grille, at [Greenpoint Gazette](#).