



## Education & Training Corner



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### **Construction Academies in Southeast Alaska Hands-on instruction for students in Juneau and Ketchikan**

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The goal of the Alaska Construction Academies is to serve the industry by providing knowledgeable, motivated, entry-level employees, and to serve students and job seekers by allowing them to explore their aptitudes and interests under the guidance of experienced, hands-on instructors from within the industry. An integral part of this strategy is to increase the likelihood that trainees will find jobs by tailoring instruction to the needs of local employers and providing referrals for actual job opportunities, often directly, but also through the Alaska Job Centers.

The Construction Academies in Juneau and Ketchikan began in 2008. They are funded through the

Construction Education Foundation (CEF) by grants from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development. Both academies have an adult and a high school component.

The Juneau Construction Academy's (JCA) in-school program provides courses for high school students in construction and related trades at the district high schools and an alternative school during the school day and through after-school courses for interested and motivated students. The adult program includes classes that teach basic construction techniques and often include information on weatherizing homes in

the wet southeast weather. The JCA began “House Build” last year, a project in which students design, build and sell a home. This year’s home was designed by Caitlyn DeRocher, a senior student at Juneau-Douglas High School taking architecture and engineering courses. She designed the home with help from high school instructor Craig Mapes, UAS Professor Robin Gilchrist and Tamara Rowcroft with the Juneau Housing Trust.

The Ketchikan Construction Academy (KCA) combines classroom instruction and on-the-job training with local contractors. KCA’s adult program instructors are licensed local contractors, and during the classes they become familiar with potential employees. KCA offers students help with resume writing and interviewing skills to prepare them for jobs. At a special graduation celebration, KCA added “speed interviewing” as a way for multiple employers to meet and interview course graduates in five-

minute sessions.

Ketchikan High School partners with Southeast Alaska Builder Industry Association (SEABIA) members to offer opportunities for students in construction trade classes to make site visits and “help” as a concrete foundation is poured or watch as beams are set into place. And welding classes give students the skills needed to work in the Alaska Ship and Dry Dock industry.

There are also Construction Academies in Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula. In 2010, rural Construction Academies were started in the Bethel, Nome and Kodiak regions funded by the Denali Commission.

*For more information about Academy classes or how to hire AkCA course graduates, contact your local Construction Academy, visit [www.alaskaca.org](http://www.alaskaca.org) or call AkCA Director, Kathleen Castle at (907) 222-0999.*