



'Manufacturing Futures': A middle school bridge to advanced manufacturing pathways in Detroit and Dearborn

PROGRAM OVERVIEW • OCTOBER 2026

- **2,000-plus students** across 8 middle schools + 1 high school career center
- **\$500K** GM Corporate Giving grant
- **24** paid CTE student ambassadors
- **16** family engagement nights

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Manufacturing Futures is a new initiative that will bring manufacturing career pathways directly into middle and high school classrooms in the Detroit Public Schools Community District and the Dearborn Public Schools.

The program is rooted in work by the AFT Educational Foundation, teachers and Micron Technology, which together developed a [curricular framework](#) to provide students the foundational and technical skills needed to enter careers in the advanced manufacturing sector. The framework is currently being piloted in 12 school districts across New York. Manufacturing Futures brings it to Michigan, with a focused mission of building a bridge from middle schools into the advanced manufacturing pathways already available at career and technical education high schools in Detroit and Dearborn.

WHY GM IS INVESTING

General Motors has a long-standing commitment to strengthening its hometown communities. GM recognizes that a robust advanced manufacturing workforce doesn't begin with the job application; it begins in the classroom. By investing in Manufacturing Futures, GM is helping ensure that the next generation of Detroit-area students sees a clear, attainable path toward the high-demand manufacturing careers that drive the region's economy.

For more information, visit the GM Corporate Giving [website](#).

THE NEED

Detroit's CTE high schools offer exceptional advanced manufacturing programs, yet enrollment in these pathways remains below capacity. The reason is simple: Most students arrive as freshmen without ever having seen a computer numerical control machine, a robotics cell or a welding station. Research consistently shows that career interest and direction are shaped during middle school, making the feeder-school years the critical intervention point. Without intentional bridge programming, students bypass the manufacturing pipeline without ever starting it.

Dearborn also has strong traditional CTE programs—including in construction and skilled trades—but needs assistance building out an advanced manufacturing pipeline and providing equipment for its skilled-trades classroom to meet workforce demands in the community.

THE INITIATIVE

Manufacturing Futures introduces students from eight middle schools across Detroit and Dearborn to advanced manufacturing careers through curriculum, hands-on activities in equipment-outfitted classrooms, site visits, peer mentorship and family engagement—creating a clear, supported pathway into high school manufacturing coursework.

Grant investments are being made at both district sites. Key program components include:

Framework-aligned curriculum. Manufacturing awareness modules are layered into existing STEM or elective classes at participating middle schools—aligned to Michigan standards, and covering careers and earning potential, computer-aided design concepts, robotics, precision machining, and the role of advanced manufacturing in metro Detroit’s economic future.

“See it to believe it” CTE site visits. Each participating school sends student cohorts on guided tours of CTE high school manufacturing facilities, with live demonstrations, hands-on activities, and direct interaction with CTE students and instructors. Target: three visits per school per year.

CTE student ambassador program. Current high school CTE manufacturing students are trained and compensated as peer ambassadors, visiting feeder schools for classroom presentations and Q&A. Peer-to-peer outreach is among the most effective career-awareness strategies available.

Family engagement nights. Open to students and families at CTE facilities, these events include facility tours; employer speakers (including GM representatives); and information on job placement, apprenticeships and postsecondary options. Parents and guardians are key decision-makers in high school selection; engaging them directly and early significantly increases program uptake.

Equipment for classrooms. Every participating middle school receives equipment such as 3D printers and robotic arms for hands-on learning. Dearborn’s Michael Berry Career Center will also receive an investment in saws, drill presses and related tools for its skilled trades construction classroom—a one-time investment that will last for 10 years. All equipment remains with the schools when the grant period ends.

CONCLUSION

Metro Detroit built the American middle class through manufacturing. With General Motors’ support, the AFT Educational Foundation, the Detroit Public Schools Community District and Dearborn Public Schools can ensure that every student in a CTE feeder school sees a path from their middle school classroom to a rewarding, well-paying career in advanced manufacturing.