

April 6, 2001

President – School Board
Shiloh Community Unit School District NO.1
21751 N. 575th. Street
Hume, IL 61932

Dear Sir or Madam:

My purpose in writing is to ask you to take special notice of the work being done in your school by your Industrial Technology instructor, Mark Smith. You should be aware that the level of instruction he is providing his woodworking students is far above the average of high schools in this country. He is doing exactly the kinds of things that will help students learn the technology and processes of the modern wood products manufacturing industry. His efforts to teach applied CNC and CAD in woodworking are right on target.

I met Mark last year in August, when he and his wife traveled to the International Woodworking Fair in Atlanta. (Very few high school teachers would make this kind of effort to improve their knowledge and connection with industry.) He has sent me photos of his student's projects and shared with me his curriculum outline. I am very impressed

I am the lead instructor in Wood Technics at Fox Valley Technical College in Oshkosh, WI. Our school is one of the leading woodworking schools in the US (WMIA Woodworking Educator of the Year in 1996). I am also a member of the Board of Directors of WoodLINKS USA, and a primary proponent of the Wisconsin WoodLINKS pilot project in 4 high schools here in east-central Wisconsin. We hope to expand this vital project to many other high schools in the state, and into surrounding states in the Midwest, in order to assure that qualified young people will be available in the future to enter the wood products manufacturing industry.

This industry, which is a very large one, made up primarily of small companies, is in dire need of skilled workers, at all levels. To solve this shortage, we need to rejuvenate high school woodworking programs across the US. WoodLINKS is a non-profit organization, established by the industry to find good high school programs, and help them get better. It is supported by several national industry organizations and the US Forest Service.

When our pilot is complete next year, and we are able to expand the WoodLINKS project, I hope that we can include Mark Smith and Shiloh High School. I urge you to make sure that his program has your support.

Sincerely,

Gerald E. Finch
Wood Technics Instructor