PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Graphic Communications program at Saunders Trades and Technical High School in Yonkers is a four-year program serving students in grades 9-12. Each year approximately 30 students enroll in this intensive program and graduate with a Career and Technical Education designation on their diploma.

The curriculum offers a mix of academic and hands-on coursework. Students are exposed to digital design, traditional art methods, and professional workplace practices. The program offers instruction to prepare students for careers that focus on visual storytelling and using word and image to develop creative concepts. Students learn about emerging technologies and gain experience working with a Xerox Color Press printer, Canon scanners, and Apple computers. They are trained in industry-standard software, including Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign, and are taught not only technical skills, but also how to think creatively. Graduates of the program demonstrate a mastery of these skills and are poised for positions in the industry as graphic designers, multimedia designers, package designers, and more.

KEY PROJECTS

Students in the Graphic Communications program are assigned projects that are relevant to issues teenagers face, such as a cyber safety, traffic safety, and workplace safety. Students regularly submit their projects to design contests and art exhibitions and consistently have their work selected and showcased every year.

During their senior year, students become curators of their own work, gathering their past pieces into a final portfolio. Their portfolios include...
observational still-life drawings and an array of digital work, including posters, package design, photo composites, and branding design. At the end of the year, students are required to present their work to a Portfolio Review panel of their peers and industry professionals. The seniors explain and defend their work and receive feedback. This experience helps prepare them for public speaking in college and the workplace. Portfolio Review also serves as a venue to showcase the artwork created by lowerclassmen, which further instills a sense of family and community among students in the program. The review provides an opportunity for all the students to see each other’s work, which isn’t always possible in the classroom setting.

Students in the Graphic Communications program gain specific practical and professional skills that give them an advantage over other college and job applicants. The program incorporates as much real-world work-based learning into the curriculum as possible. One of the ongoing “live jobs” is on the school’s annual yearbook. The entire book is created in-house, with students designing the cover, laying out the pages, taking photographs with a professional DSLR camera and retouching them, and selling advertisements to help raise funds.

ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS
The Graphic Communications program has a post-secondary articulation agreement with SUNY Farmingdale that offers juniors and seniors the opportunity to earn three college credits while attending Saunders Trades and Technical High School. If students satisfy the criteria, their high school coursework is considered equivalent to Farmingdale’s Introduction to Graphic Design course.

PARTNERSHIPS
Business partners are hands-on in their involvement with the students. Balfour Publishing works closely with the students while they design the yearbook. Balfour employees frequently visit the classroom to meet with students about all aspects of yearbook production. POP Displays assist students in designing the SkillsUSA Chapter display. Representatives from Yonkers Riverfest met with the students to share a design brief for the logo students created for the event.

These partnership experiences provide students the opportunity to gain industry-specific skills while building relationships with employers in the community.

PROGRAM AWARDS
Saunders Trades and Technical High School is an active participant in the annual SkillsUSA competition. Every year, they host a competition where students can showcase their abilities and compete for medals. The Graphic Communications program has won in various categories over the years. In 2018, students earned medals in three of the five categories in which they participated: a Bronze Medal for Chapter Display, which required students to build a three-dimensional structure; a Silver Medal for Promotional Bulletin Board Design, which also incorporated 3D elements; and a Gold Medal for Banner Design.

CTSO CONNECTIONS
Saunders Trades and Technical High School is an active participant and a regular award winner in the annual SkillsUSA competition.

About CTE TAC of NY
The Career and Technical Education Technical Assistance Center of NY is funded through a state contract under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act, administered by the New York State Education Department (NYSED).