

CAREERS GET A JUMP START

Reving up a Career in Auto Mechanics

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Johal Novak has always loved working with his hands. As a child, it started with lego, later progressing to toy models. When he reached high school, he discovered auto mechanics in grade 9. By grade 11, he realized that this was his true calling and applied for the Automotive Service Technician Apprenticeship Program at McNair Secondary School.

The Automotive Service Technician Apprenticeship Program is currently in its second year at McNair. Instruction is provided by Brian Barenscott, a certified mechanic and teacher. Interested grade 12 students learn to diagnose and repair all facets of automotive operation, including power train, suspension, brakes and electrical. In addition to high school credits, all successful apprenticeship students also receive credit for their level one technical training from the Industry Training Authority. The program also has a partnership with Kwantlen University College, which allows students to receive classroom instruction at the brand new Cloverdale campus while earning additional credits towards a citation.

Novak really enjoys working with cars because of the variety that it offers. “You get to work with different cars with different problems all the time.” He likes the challenge of trying to figure things out and loves the fact that unlike a desk job, “it is not the same thing, day in and day out – it’s different every day”. He also recognizes the fact that everyone will need mechanics because “all cars – old and new – will always need to be worked on and serviced.”

The apprenticeship program currently runs as 50% theory and 50% hands on work. In the past, Novak admits to never liking really book work. Now, he enjoys the classroom much more because he gets to apply his newly gained knowledge immediately in the shop. Students in this program at McNair are in the shop every day, all day for one full semester. This has the advantage of allowing students to be fully immersed in their auto training.

Novak thinks Barenscott is a great teacher and looks up to him for his skill and ease. “I’ll be stuck trying to do something and I’ll ask him for help. Then he’ll come over and do it the simplest, fastest and easiest way. He makes it look like a piece of cake. I want to get to that point one day”. Barenscott thinks of Novak as a very mature and even keeled student who can be relied upon when it comes to responsibilities and leadership roles.

Novak loves the fact that he can start his apprenticeship while still in high school. He loves the pace and the fact that if he waited until graduation, he would probably be put on a waiting list for the exact same program. After graduation, he intends to continue his training and be fully certified as a Red Seal mechanic. Novak’s dream is to one day have

his own shop. He already has a plan to start saving money in order to buy all of the equipment he is going to need. Apprenticeship programs such as this help students like Novak take their first major step towards their dreams. “Cars are like humans – you need to feed them and treat them well”. We could say the same thing about dreams.

All Richmond School District students and parents are invited to come out & see Johal demonstrate his skills at the 4th Annual Career Options Fair. He and his fellow Automotive Service Technician Apprenticeship Students will be demonstrating motor and engine repairs. Attendees will also have the opportunity to learn how to jack up a car and put on a spare tire. All of this takes place indoors on March 1, from 3:00 – 8:00 pm at Cambie Secondary School.