

# ATech Educator News

Copyright ATech Training, Inc.

February 2009

## The Education Trash Heap

You got a new class today! Looks like most of the school's education trash heap is now in your program. Is that a bad thing? Depends on how you view it. If you see your teaching position as just a job and you look forward to going home each evening, then the less aggravation you have the better! Right? But if you believe in trying to help each student achieve the most they can, then this is a great opportunity!



What is the education trash heap? It is the place that academic teachers and guidance counselors put students when they give up on them. They've decided these students are never going to college so why waste the effort. It is much easier to "teach" honor-roll students than these kids.

So, you get them. Sounds like they might consider you to be the "education landfill".



In many cases, you are a new or first few years teacher. Your qualifications were primarily industry experience and certification and you are

probably one of the lowest paid people in the school system. If you're lucky, you may make more than the janitor.

Naturally the question comes to your mind, "If all of these highly educated and trained teachers can't do anything with these kids, what am I supposed to do?". You have to make some quick decisions:

1. Are the students in your classes generally under control. In other words, if you tell them to do something, do you feel comfortable that they will attempt to do it in a safe manner?
2. Is your program structure a "lock-step" arrangement? By "lock step", I mean are the students in each of your classes at the same level and progress as a group? The key point here is can you give up time from the group to work with an individual student that obviously has problems?
3. Are you required to submit daily lesson plans to the administration? If so, what is the amount of flexibility allowed?
4. Do you personally want to make the effort? The rest of the education system has already given up on the student/s, so it is of little consequence if you do the same. Much easier on you too. You'll probably sleep better if you do. Nobody really expects you to do anything different. Maybe you're close to retirement, and who needs all of that aggravation?
5. And finally, **the best argument of all!** If you try to help this student, aren't you neglecting the other students who

have a chance of success? Shouldn't you sacrifice the few for the benefit of the many?

I'm sure that you have many more questions, but these are the main ones. So, if you've worked your way through those questions and still think you can or want to try to help these kids, how do you go about it?

1. You must first evaluate if the student/s represents a physical threat to you or the other students in the class. If the administration will let you see their records, that is the first place to start. If not, try to quietly identify other teachers that have worked with the student and attempt to get their ideas of the student. If you come to the conclusion that they represent a safety hazard to you or your students, you must give a letter of concern to the administration. Request a signed copy returned to you as acknowledgment of your concerns. If necessary, involve your advisory committee. But don't use them as a threat to the administration, only for advice from a different perspective.



2. Give the student a simple manual dexterity test: three bolts, 1/4, 3/8, and 1/2 inch in one hand and three of the appropriate nuts in the other hand. Then with their hands behind their back, see how long it takes for them to put the correct nut on each bolt. Might try this as a class exercise, cuts down on the individual anxiety. (Thanks to Dan Perrin)

3. Take a few minutes and talk to the student individually. Try to determine if they have any interest/background in the automotive/transportation area.

If you get through all of these steps and still view the student as "worth the effort", how do you start? Just as you should start with all of your students, get them busy as quick as possible. A method Robin Ferguson of Kirksville Vocational Technical School, Kirksville, MO, uses is to organize teams of two or three students each and have them inspect some engines. Preferably ones on test stands that are used for rebuilding. Have the teams look for and document fluid leaks. Then try to identify what type of fluid it is. Read Robin's ideas for first year students in the April 2006 issue of the newsletter. It is available on the ATech website, [www.atechtraining.com](http://www.atechtraining.com). The name of the article is "Changes and Results of You Teach, Why Do Students Not Learn?".



The key point is to get them busy with their hands as soon as possible. Make your class different from all the academic classes they've been exposed to so far in their educational experience. If you are lucky, you may turn out graduates like the guy in the picture on the right. :->

**Fred Hines**

# Next Generation “Smarter Car”



*ATech's Next Generation “Smarter Car” configuration allows students to study and troubleshoot separate electrical/electronic systems simultaneously.*

## “Value Added”, What is It?

“Valued Added” is defined as the improvement a company provides its product or service before offering the product to customers. Typically, customers have three expectations when considering a purchase: product quality and reliability, fair and competitive pricing, and service and support after the sale. How many companies can honestly say that they deliver in all of these areas?

Product quality and reliability are paramount to the success of our business. Each piece of equipment has one production operator from the time the order is placed to the date of completion. Your product is personally signed by the operator and quality control upon completion. When you purchase from ATech you can be assured that the product will operate as advertised. If you are not satisfied we will make it right or refund your purchase—guaranteed!

When pricing a product you want to compare features. Will this product perform the way you need it to? Does it include all the components to operate out-of-the-box? Is there a yearly license fee? ATech publishes a price list for all products and provides quotations that spell out the shipping costs. We promise to provide technical support as long as the replacement parts are available.

Our professional team of Product Representatives work very hard to offer clear, concise, and accurate information. The sale is only the beginning of a long-term relationship with our customers. For example, a couple of years ago we had a customer to contact us, in a bit of a panic, stating that the island where the school is located had just been hit by a typhoon. This school experienced water damage to several computers in an automotive lab, which also contained ATech software. The instructor was not only stressed about the loss of the computers and software in his lab, but how he would ever find the funds for replacement. We were able to assist with restoring the lab by replacing all of the damaged ATech software within 24 hours of the request, and at no charge to the customer.

It is with great pride that we build and supply quality products and service to the automotive industry. If we may be of assistance to you or your organization please feel free to contact us at [sales@atechtraining.com](mailto:sales@atechtraining.com) or at 859-485-7229. We also invite you to visit our website at [www.atechtraining.com](http://www.atechtraining.com).

***Others talk about great product quality and service...ATech delivers them. Ask our customers.***

# Benefits of Using ATech Trainers

by Mark Spisak, Central Piedmont Community College

One of the big problems in training the next generation of automotive technicians is the fact that the volume of information that needs to be absorbed and the basic skills needed to succeed have doubled or even tripled over the last decade.

But the blueprint for traditional automotive education has been held to a 2 year associate degree or certificate time-frame. We're at the point that there could or should be a 4 year bachelor length time frame to cover it all. But we don't have it.

So schools must decide to either leave some material out of the curriculum, squeeze the material into a much shorter time frame, or some other solution. Assuming most schools are also pressured to increase the number of students to instructors as a ratio, well things get tough.



We started incorporating ATech equipment and software into our program about 8 years ago. The benefits showed up shortly thereafter. A simple example is the troubleshooting of an electrical problem on a bugged vehicle in the shop. Depending on the number of students to cycle through the vehicle, the number of vehicles, and the time allotted for the lab, things can get tight.

But by combining real problems on a live vehicle



with simulated problems on mock ups and trainers the instruction can become more complete, and the more a student can practice the more he or she retains.

In a way, having the mock ups and trainers available doubles the time each student can practice the skills. The same applies to our using the 1800 series of electrical trainers. It is no secret that the technician today needs a more than an elementary level of electrical troubleshooting knowledge. We take students through a program of instructor lead electrical theory and basic circuit understanding. Then in the next phase have them work on the 1800 series trainers from ATech. The sheer volume of problems a student must solve in the program is skill building at a whole different level. It makes the jump from basic electrical to our more advanced electrical courses so much more successful.

Simply imagine having a class of 20 to 24 students. Using the NATEF tasks as a guide, how many different problems on how many different cars can be done in one semester? Using the trainers has benefited the students as well as made the instruction more efficient and made it "stick".

# Assessing Automotive Programs

Below is a response we received from one of the instructors who attended an ATech Workshop, when asked the question, "What do you use to assess your automotive program?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Fred,

I want first offer my sincere thanks for the great training and fellowship I received at Belterra in June. Your passion for our business is contagious.

## What do we use to assess an automotive technology program?

30%: End of program testing from ASE/NATEF: because it gives us a common yardstick to measure our success. This could be amended if a school offers a manufacturer-specific program that features its own tests.

60%: Technical/Industry/Military job placement: this category has to be somewhat flexible; I can introduce you to former students that are very successful in related but non-automotive fields. This category is going to be very dynamic according to the local market. We had a wind turbine prop manufacturer move into our area; they will be hiring some of our graduates when they get their production online. We have a rail car and locomotive rebuilder hiring our grads. We have an Anheuser-Busch bottling operation north of Ft. Collins; they hire techs to work in automation, turns out that an auto mechanic has almost the same skill set. Pay is \$17 to start, not bad for a 20-21 year old. The list goes on and on but I think if we provide a skill set to a person and they are using some or all of it to work, hopefully support themselves, and pay taxes, then we've done our job. Obviously, this category changes with demographics and local economic conditions.

10%: Student end of program surveys and classroom surveys: can be very insightful, but sometimes you have to read between the lines. The kids don't always come out and say what they mean but if XX% of the students say the instructor needs to speak up or has knowledge gaps then we have something to look at. They all want more lab time and fewer lectures.

I joke with people that ask me what I do for a living; I tell them I build taxpayers. It really does not matter to me what a kid does after they leave here as long as they are successful.

**Joe Davis, Instructor -Automotive Technology  
Front Range Community College**

## HAVE A SUCCESS STORY?

We are very interested in hearing about successes in automotive education. If you have a story you would like to share, please send your information to:  
kimjewell@atechtraining.com



ATech Training Inc.  
 12290 Chandler Drive  
 Walton, KY 41094  
 (859) 485-7229  
 www.atechtraining.com  
 sales@atechtraining.com



ATech Training, Inc.



## A Veteran Owned and Operated American Company

ATech Training is a member of:



Automotive Industry Planning Council

and Actively Supports:



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- The Educational Trash Heap 1
- Next Generation “Smarter Car” 2
- “Value Added”, What Is It? 2
- Benefits of Using ATech Trainers-  
by Mark Spisak, Central Piedmont Community College 3
- Assessing Automotive Programs 3
- CAT Spring 2009 Conference 4
- Instructor Position Available 4

#### INSTRUCTOR POSITION AVAILABLE

Position: Automotive Technology Instructor  
 Location: Pittsburg University—Pittsburg, KS

**Position Responsibilities:**

Primary teaching and extra-curricular activities will focus around teaching AT 654 Advanced Hydraulic Systems/Off-highway systems laboratory. Additional courses required.

For a complete job description visit [www.atechtraining.com](http://www.atechtraining.com), and click on employment opportunities.



**California Automotive Teachers**

**California Automotive Teachers (CAT)  
 Spring Conference 2009**

**April 24-25, 2009**

**Hosted by: Universal Technical Institute**