



Autoshop goes hi-tech at Newark City Schools

Four high schools in the Newark area are benefiting from a new computer-based teaching program that has been installed in their automotive shops. At a recent teacher training event held at Technology High School in Newark, New Jersey, we paid a visit to see how the new Autolab system is working.

Addressing multiple learning styles

Jennifer Mitchell is the district School to Careers Supervisor, she was closely involved in the investigations into new auto teaching resources that led to the Autolab purchase. We asked what led to that decision;

“The school to career division used Perkins funding to provide resources to the technical education programs we deliver in the district. We could see an immediate need to enhance what we were doing in automotive. We found out about Autolab and the first thing we did was visit a number of working sites on Long Island. We took the auto teachers with us as it was felt that they should make the ultimate decision about the purchase.

We all liked what we saw and all the instructors who were using it were very positive about the way they and their students can use it. From my own perspective it showed how the system adds a greater level of information for the students and perhaps, more importantly, it addresses multiple learning styles.

This lab shows students things that they can't see in a shop. They hear things being read to them, they see videos and animations and they do hands-on work on desktop simulators. The PowerPoint® presentations linked to the student response system are great. The students really love using it.”



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Ms. Jennifer Mitchell,
Supervisor



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Mr. Marcus Bond,
Automotive Teacher

Real-world skills

Jennifer explained some of the benefits of the system, “I don’t think the teachers realized just how powerful the ClassAct system is. This training will really help them understand the competency-based tracking and the ways in which they can create electronic portfolios. These are great because they show exactly what each individual student knows, giving them something they can take to an employer for a job interview. The dealerships love the fact that they can see exactly what level of skills and competence these students are leaving the program with.”

Auto Teacher, Gary Giampino told us about the way he uses Autolab in this program;

“I really like the PowerPoint® presentations and the ClassAct SRS student response system. Anything that gets them to learn is great. The jobsheets are excellent. I get them to complete them as we work through the lessons. It helps make sure they don’t rush through the computer assignment. Completing the worksheets makes them pay attention, especially as I make the jobsheet part of their grade.”

Managing the program

Marcus Bond from Malcolm Shabazz High School, told us;

“Once you get over the fear of how much information there is in this system you realize how excellent it is as a complete teaching program. The management tool really helps, particularly with the facilities it gives me to annotate each student’s record. I give each student a three-ring binder so they can keep copies of all their jobsheets, worksheets and test score sheets. This way they have a hard copy of their performance at the end of each semester.”

Helping teachers and students

For me, the best feature of the Autolab system is the way it provides all the background theory on the shop activities that they will have to do. For example, we can run through a complete suspension strip-down job using the software so they can see exactly what parts have to be removed and in what order.

This way we don’t have students in the shop tearing up our cars and damaging themselves on the vehicles.”

All the instructors were unanimous in their praise for the system. They felt that it really enhances their programs and the fact that it is computer-based was a real plus. Marcus Bond explained why;

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Personalized learning program

Another benefit that was identified by the instructors and by Jennifer Mitchell was the way the system can be used to provide a completely individualized learning program for each student.

“Using the management system, we can set up a profile for each student that just gives them exactly the modules they need for an Auto 1 program for example. Even if they miss out on a lesson we can let them access it at a later point and they can catch up. This system is truly excellent, you can just give them the concepts they need and they don’t need to see anymore than the particular curriculum demands!”