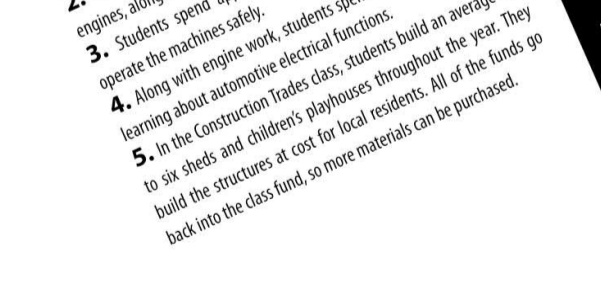


Next CTE page will feature MCTEAA



ALL IN

"My favorite part about this class is working on all the different types of engines that come in here."

~Senior Michael McCracken

Jimmy Nuse
Utica High School's Arrow newspaper Editor-in-Chief

The garage door rises as an off-roading Jeep Wrangler rolls through the door; the hood of the vehicle immediately pops open and the mechanics start another hard day's work. Typical auto shop equipment and tools fill the room, and while one car is raised on a lift so the mechanics can work on its undercarriage, another car has others working on a stereo system that requires the soldering of wires.

This may seem like a typical scene from the local auto shop, but these technicians are students enrolled in one of the many Career Technical Education (CTE) classes offered in Utica Community Schools.

Every day, UCS high school students enrolled in Automotive Technologies and Construction Trades are bused to the high schools that house these practical, hands-on courses. Henry Ford II, Stevenson, and Eisenhower High Schools all house auto and wood shop classrooms.

"Each classroom has identical equipment," auto tech teacher Jeff Kment said, "and the students are taught by highly qualified teachers. This way the kids are receiving an equal education at each school."

Students in the Automotive Technologies class are prepared to take a certification test at the end of the year through the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF). After learning basic automotive skills such as coolant flushing, oil changes, and engine fundamentals, students move on to advanced work focusing in four particular areas: brakes, steering, suspension, and electronics.

"The first three certifications really help kids have the best opportunity to gain an entry-level job," Kment said, "while electronics is where the most money is to be made."

For those struggling with traditional math concepts, auto tech and construction trades classes provide practical applications of mathematics.

In Kment's auto tech class, for example, students use math in 'real world' applications. "We give them real-life situations to use their math skills. Every week we have Math Monday, where the kids can learn a new way to apply math to construction," teacher Ryan DeCardenas said. "For example, when building a house, students have to measure angles at which the walls are being put up, along with making sure the floor is leveled."

Along with learning valuable math applications, the students learn the basics required to live independently.

"Everyone is going to own a car at some point. You may not be a mechanic, but you are an educated consumer," Kment said. "By taking this class, you understand how much parts cost and when it's time for a big fix, you'll realize that they could be overcharging you."

Students enrolled in these programs also realize how valuable they are. "You learn a lot of things," senior David Schmidt said, "and one day you're going to realize how valuable they are when you're trying to take care of your own house."

Students enrolled in the auto program also realize how valuable it can be to know what you're talking about when dealing with car troubles.

"This class gives me a lot of opportunities to learn about all different types of cars and engines," senior Michael McCracken said, "since a lot of other students bring in different cars to work on."

Generally, the CTE classes are all about hands-on experiences and being able to use it outside of high school. While both of the featured classes live up to that standard, they provide much more for students.

In Jim DeFrance's class, his students are also learning the business side of running their own company.

Groups of students, along with DeFrance, work together yearly to produce five to six sheds, as well as children's playhouses, for members of the community. They are able to do this at cost.

If the rest of the benefits from the class aren't enough, these programs also offer students the chance to earn college credit. Students who complete either of these programs are eligible to earn up to six credit hours at Macomb Community College. These classes are considered introductory courses in Automotive Technologies and Construction Trades at the college.

By offering introductory courses to students, the district hopes students will continue their education.

"The high school diploma is absolutely necessary," Kment said, "but you need to take the extra step and go to college so you can make it to the next level."

As the year continues, students will cover a vast number of topics. In the auto tech classes, students will further their knowledge by focusing on the electrical aspect of automobiles, while the construction trades classes will aim their focus toward building a house together, including putting up siding, insulation, and shingles.

In the coming years, the White House predicts that skilled labor will begin to grow and more jobs will be added. With classes like Auto Tech. and Construction Trades, UCS is playing a part in building a better America.

"This is the type of class where you get hands-on assignments and projects. You're not just sitting in a desk, doing book work."

~Senior Nick Onge



1. Students in Jeff Kment's auto class learn a variety of skills throughout the course of the year. Areas of focus include steering and wheel alignment.
2. Those enrolled in the Auto Tech class learn about a variety of engines, along with what it takes to keep them running.
3. Students spend approximately ten weeks learning how to operate the machines safely.
4. Along with engine work, students spend a portion of the class learning about automotive electrical functions.
5. In the Construction Trades class, students build an average five to six sheds and children's playhouses throughout the year. They build the structures at cost for local residents. All of the funds go back into the class fund, so more materials can be purchased.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

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to Career Technical Education

For more information about CTE at the high school level contact the Macomb Intermediate School District. Contact Macomb Community College for college level programs. See contact information above.

MCTEAA
Macomb Career and Technical Education Administrators Association

TECH PREP
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