

Big Bend Community College

Automotive Technology Focus Group

Spring 2009

Former Automotive Technology students were asked to participate in a focus group where they were asked if their training had adequately prepared them for work and what the program should do to better prepare students for work in the industry. Students were asked about the classroom instruction, lab facilities, equipment, the related math, English and human relations classes and what would help current students be more prepared when they go into the workplace. The former students' input is given below.

Instruction: One student encountered a lot of maintenance such as transmission flushes when he started his first job. Instruction could have more on trouble shooting, since there are so many common problems. It is important to know how something is supposed to work, when it doesn't work, then find out why. The study guides helped put students through the motions. Many students still use their study guides and text books in their work. Students liked how the classes prepared them for their ASC exams. One student had passed all eight of the ASC exams before he left the program.

Students said the lab portion was very valuable. The hands-on experience of working on a car is invaluable. If there was anything to emphasize it would be to practice diagnosis and get experience on the scan tools.

Equipment: One of the things that would help is a "pusher" that moves cars that aren't running. In their current positions, students have pushers.

Students said that every job site has a different type of scan tool. Students asked if the program could get donations from industry for the write off on taxes. Some of the equipment has online programs that can walk you through anything you don't know. It allows you to map out the diagnostic and provide it to the customer. Understanding the machines is one of the best things a student can do.

There is a whole new set of air conditioning equipment on the market that BBCC will want to obtain.

Facilities: The best thing about the current facilities is that it is in a big space. However, when you compare Big Bend Automotive space to the Community Colleges of Spokane (CCS), Columbia Basin College (CBC), or Wenatchee Valley College (WVC) you miss that "polish" that they have in their facilities. Students who live in Othello or Quincy can easily go to CBC or WVC.

BBCC could use a locker room for men and women. Students said there were times when they had spilled something on themselves and would have appreciated a locker room to clean up.

It was nice to get the classroom facilities on the ground level even though they are in the remodeled art building. The drawback to having the classroom in another building is that students have to return to the main building to get additional reference material at times and the building is locked up.

Related Instruction: It would be beneficial to have the communications and human relations classes deal specifically with how to work with the customer. The classes should help you communicate your idea to your customer and become more persuasive.

Possible changes: Add diesel mechanics. Focus on the students that don't ask questions, a lot of the time they don't understand but don't want to look stupid in front of the others. Keep motivating students to make use of the lab night. The motivated students use it and it pays off. Students said that when they were on the job is when they wished they had put the extra effort into the lab portion.