

The ABC's of the GST IBEST Program at Shoreline Community College
(General Service Technician, Integrated Basic Education Skills Training)

Description of Program:

- A. The General Service Technician program at Shoreline Community College is an introductory 45 credit (three quarters) automotive training program that integrates basic educational skills training along with the technical subjects that relate to automotive service and repair. The first two quarters are full time, and are integrated with basic education skills. The third quarter is a nine credit (half – time) internship. Most students continue working for the employer after the internship.
- B. We target students who have an interest in developing a career in the automotive service business and test lower than college-level math and English skills and who have a desire to learn automotive skills. The range is in the 220 to 250 CASAS scoring range (the program must have students within this range to obtain IBEST funding)
- C. Students must apply to the program and interview with the instructor. We seem to always have more applicants than space available (more so now that we are in economic recession)

During early development of the program, students were recruited from various local community based organizations and local Worksource offices. Now, we seem to get students through word-of-mouth. We also recruit from our local campus; visiting ESL classes and high school completion programs. However, it seems many students come from off- campus, where they have heard about the GST program or our other automotive programs (GM, Toyota, Honda, Chrysler)

- D. We attempt to mix the class with a diversity of students: They come from various economic and ethnic backgrounds and range from young men and women who have recently graduated from high school to older men and women who are looking to develop skills for a new career. Many of our students could be described as “non-traditional” because they typically haven’t thought of themselves as having an interest or capable of successfully completing a college type of program. Some are immigrants and many have not had the privilege to be from a middle class upbringing.
- E. Many of our students complete the program and find employment with an automotive dealership, independent repair shop, or franchise corporate stores such as Firestone, Sears, etc.
- F. Some students go on to further their training in one of our college two-year programs (General Motors, Toyota, Honda, Chrysler). Others will go to other

colleges for automotive related training programs that we don't offer at Shoreline (for example, auto collision repair, heavy duty/ diesel repair)

- G. Some students determine that a career in automotive service is not their true career interest and go onto other college programs on our campus. For example, I recently learned that two of our students entered the nursing program. Also, I ran into one of our students who completed the program a couple of years ago and is working part-time in a tire store. He was taking classes for transfer to the University of Washington. I feel we have succeeded when a student gets motivated by their college experience in the GST program to go forward into other college classes, regardless of whether or not they are related to automotive.

Challenges/What We Have Learned:

- A. Our automotive program at Shoreline has built its reputation on strong partnerships with various manufacturers. We offer specific manufacturer sponsored programs through General Motors, Chrysler, Honda, and Toyota. GST is not currently associated with a manufacturer because we have intended to be an entry-level program for students who have no prior automotive training or experience. We want to provide a broad perspective of the automotive industry; helping the student to understand the various career pathways within the automotive industry.

Since GST is not associated with a particular automotive manufacturer; this puts our program in a little different position with the other programs. Perhaps a little lower down the pecking order, sometimes receiving a little less attention or priority. If an IBEST program is to be added, it is important that the program have the same visibility and recognition as other automotive programs. Facilities for the program should be equal to that of other automotive programs. The perceived lower status is a reality of not benefitting from the outside funding that comes with a manufacturer-sponsored program.

GST may join this model of partnership as potential opportunities arise with new partnerships that are in the works at the college with other automotive manufacturers and their suppliers. We will still maintain the introductory nature of the first two quarters, though.

Our campus faculty and administration appreciate GST's role in offering students the opportunity to enter the automotive field. If a student applies to one of our two-year programs and that program's instructor doesn't feel they are qualified, the instructor will often refer that student to the GST program. After two quarters of GST, the student can transfer into the manufacturer sponsored program.

- B. We bring in a non-traditional automotive student. Even though Seattle is fairly ethnically diverse, certain stereotypes exist about what an automotive technician should look like and what types of backgrounds they should come from... We've pushed the envelope, though, and have placed many non-traditional workers into independent shops and dealerships. We know we have been successful because employers continue to hire our students.

Sometimes, students go to work for employers who serve specific immigrant communities. We have a local Ethiopian shop in Shoreline that has hired two of our Ethiopian students, and a local Spanish speaking used car dealership and repair shop has hired our Mexican and Cuban students.

- C. 45 credits seem to be the magic number for state worker retraining money. It is a challenge to provide both a fundamental foundation of automotive technology and enough hands-on experience, along with the basic skills instruction in just two quarters (third quarter is a nine credit internship and is not IBEST). I would suggest a full three quarters of instruction, with capstone projects required during the end of the third quarter. The third quarter could also provide an internship option for students who demonstrate clear readiness for job placement.

- D. Human dynamics of the teaching team: My experience with my co-teacher has been very rewarding, however, I can imagine how difficult it could be to team teach a program where instructors didn't see eye to eye.

We have regularly scheduled planning sessions each week. However, there never seems to be enough planning time. With team-teaching, be sure to build in extra planning time. Two teachers cannot fly by the seat of their pants. They will have disagreements in front of the class and look disorganized.

- E. Contact time with the students: How much time should the basic skills instructor have alone with the class? How much time for the technical instructor? How much time should both instructors overlap? The debate is still on. We overlap on most activities because I want students to know that I think the basic skills are important. The basic skills instructor would like more time with the students and we sometimes achieve this by dividing the class, especially when equipment and tool demonstrations benefit the student if group size is smaller.

Currently, our basic skills instructor is half-time (but usually works over that amount). The class size is 18 students. We generally have the right balance but I know that I need to give the basic skills instructor more time.

- F. Develop good screening materials and interview techniques to ensure the student applicant is right for the program and the program is right for them. GST graduates have a direct effect on how employers will view the quality of the program. Students who do not have good employability skills and are not

competent on the job will ruin a program's reputation. These points are consistently reinforced with students throughout the length of the program.

- G. A full time IBEST Coordinator is mandatory if the school has a number of IBEST programs. The non-traditional student can be easily overwhelmed and intimidated by the bureaucracy and multiple steps needed to negotiate financial aid, class registration, transportation, parking, child care, etc. A full time coordinator can help with these first steps. Additionally, there must be ongoing recruitment and promotion for the IBEST programs, and coordination with other campus services
- H. Career Navigator – This position contributes significantly to continued career growth and success for the student after they leave the GST program. The Career Navigator also works with students in our other programs, providing “wrap around” support to assist the student with further education and job opportunities. Aspen has allowed us to fund this position. I hope it can continue to be funded at the end of the grant.
- I. If your organization is considering an IBEST style of program, get ready to have fun and be rewarded with the most fulfilling teaching experience of your life. My background in teaching spans over thirty years. I have taught automotive technology in the high school and at community college. I have been employed as a corporate technical trainer for two automotive companies. I worked closely with American Honda to develop and teach the Honda PACT program at Shoreline Community College. Never have I had so much fun working with students and taking so much joy in watching their growth and success.