

**PRESS RELEASE**

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SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE  
4675 MISSOURI FLAT ROAD  
PLACERVILLE CA 95667**CONTACT**

**El Dorado High School:** (530) 622-3634  
EDHS Auto Tech & ROP Teacher Mike Dinubilo, Ext. 1192  
or EDHS Principal Matt Barnes, Ext. 1020

**Ponderosa High School:** (530) 622-677-2281  
PHS Auto Tech & ROP Teacher Archie Taylor, Ext. 2248  
or PHS Principal Christopher Moore, Ext. 2216

**Oak Ridge High School:** (916) 933-6980  
ORHS Auto Tech & ROP Teacher Bob Wilson, Ext. 3802  
or ORHS Principal Steve Wehr, Ext. 3010

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 13, 2010

## Highlights of the Automotive Program at District High Schools

The Automotive Program in the El Dorado Union High School District has more than a 50-year history, beginning in the mid-1950's at El Dorado High School as an Industrial Arts General Auto program. Today, with the technical advancements in auto technology, the automotive program has transitioned to a dynamic, more highly developed program that aligns with industry standards and focuses on preparing students for a successful career in the automotive industry.

At **Oak Ridge High School**, the auto program began in 1984 with the hiring of Auto Technology and ROP teacher Bob Wilson, and 26 years later Wilson continues to teach an automotive course at the school. Wilson assumes the role as a historian of the program and tells the story of how the automotive program evolved into a sequence of courses, starting with an entry-level exploratory class in Shop Fundamentals where his students got to experience working on their first internal combustion engine, followed by an Automotive Technology program, culminating in an ROP Automotive Services program where students learned job-entry skills. The auto program also provided students with the opportunity to receive advanced placement credit at nearby Sierra and American River community colleges. The program was constantly changing to meet the challenges of the industry.

Wilson has numerous memories and recalls the time when his students competed in a state and national Plymouth Troubleshooting contest. When Plymouth later dropped its sponsorship of the competition during an economic slump, Ford and AAA assumed the role and, to this day, continue as sponsors. Wilson also recalls the time when his students qualified for the International Automotive Technicians Challenge in New York in 2007 where they represented Toyota. He states that, "Through the various competitions over the years, our students have won thousands of dollars in scholarships and tools. I can remember students making their life-long career choice on the very day of competition."

The auto program was one of only a handful of public school automotive service training programs to become fully licensed with the Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR), and Wilson continues to use the BAR standards in his classes every day teaching his students what it means to do quality work performing to a standard.

Says Wilson, "The auto program has been a big part of my life over the years, and I know change is inevitable, but it is sometimes hard to let go of what you are passionate about." Wilson has witnessed the sequence of the auto courses at Oak Ridge transition to a basic Automotive Technology class. He feels that automotive skills need to develop and evolve over a period of time and that training needs to start at an early age. His passion about this program brings a smile when he thinks about how proud he is of his students' accomplishments over the years. "To this day," says Wilson, "I still have contact with my former students, even one who is looking into purchasing his second Ford dealership. I am so proud to have influenced their lives."

The current automotive program is shared among three sites—El Dorado, Ponderosa, and Oak Ridge high schools. Career Technical Education (CTE) Director Lisa Garrett states that, "Availability of appropriate technical facilities to house all of the various CTE and ROP programs at each site and the enormous funding required to build such facilities make it cost prohibitive. Instead, it makes practical sense to spread the focus and educational opportunities of the various CTE programs among the other school sites." Although the focus on the auto program has mostly transitioned to El Dorado and Ponderosa high schools, Oak Ridge, however, assumes a new focus—the CTE Manufacturing Engineering Program (MET), and Wilson is now refocused on the new MET lab at Oak Ridge along with his Automotive Technology class. District students interested in a career in automotive are offered additional ROP courses at both El Dorado and Ponderosa.

At **El Dorado High School**, automotive classes are taught by Auto Technology and ROP Teacher Mike Dinubilo. Dinubilo has been with the District since 2000. He emphasizes the importance of the auto program and states that, "We own cars both before and after we own homes," indicating the length of our relationship with automobiles. "In today's economy," he adds, "Being able to perform both simple and complex tasks on your personal car can be a huge savings."

El Dorado High School has three full auto classes and a very popular Automotive ROP offering. For the vast majority of students who sign up for these classes, this is an opportunity to work on their personal cars. Other special projects, however, occasionally pass through the school's shop, and students are always willing to take on any challenge.

Students who enroll in the auto courses cover the spectrum in academics and career interests. Many students are college bound, yet others are interested in the annual field trip to Universal Technical Institute to gain more exposure to careers in the auto industry, while still others are simply interested in learning how to care for their first car. This collective group of students understands that these classes are a privilege and opportunity. Dinubilo states that, "Our auto classes appeal to so many because everyone has a car." In addition, he emphasizes that students are learning skills that will carry through life. Many are learning the fundamentals of the mechanics trade, in-depth classroom theory and lab instruction in operation and troubleshooting of all major systems and components. In the first semester, students learn about tune-ups, batteries, starting and charging systems, fuel injection systems, and valve work, with emphasis on automotive electricity. In the second semester, students progress to drum and disc break theory and servicing, wheel alignment and power trains. "Students have high respect for our classes and our shop," says Dinubilo. "Graduates can be seen working in professional automotive shops throughout the area."

Auto Technology and ROP Auto Teacher Archie Taylor is the newer kid on the block with respect to teaching automotive courses in the district. He has been employed with the El Dorado Union High School District since 2004 and has been witness to a number of changes this year at **Ponderosa High School** (PHS). Taylor reports that for the first time PHS is offering three Automotive Technology I classes, as well as the Central Sierra ROP Auto Body class. All three of the Automotive classes are full, and the ROP Auto Body class has the largest enrollment ever, with 32 students. The number of sophomores in the automotive classes is also the largest yet, and by offering the extra section of Automotive I, Taylor

feels this will most likely ensure the addition of an Automotive II / Advanced Auto class next year, thereby providing a clearer pathway for students interested in a career in the automotive industry.

Taylor has also been witness to a number of renovations at Ponderosa this summer that were funded from the voter-approved Measure Q bond. The students and instructor are enjoying the addition of a new HVAC system. A new Tool Room is also in the works, which will allow the instructor the ability to keep better track of his tool inventory as well as aid students with identifying and using the tools more efficiently. The classes have just begun their first unit in Safety, where students are learning about the proper use of tools and equipment and the correct safety procedures to follow in the shop. Once students have completed this unit, they will then test their knowledge and proficiency on safety using the on-line safety program [www.SP2.org](http://www.SP2.org). This on-line program is quickly becoming the industry standard. Students, however, are not allowed to work in the shop until they have passed the safety test. Once the safety unit has been completed, the students' first hands-on experience will be a unit on small engines. During this unit, students learn what makes an engine run, as well as how to fully disassemble, measure, and reassemble the engine. Taylor says, "I am excited to see the auto program growing and appreciate that the district was able to expand this program. I would also like to thank the voters who approved the funding that made it possible to give us a better facility by which to teach our students. The automotive industry is a great industry and still has a lot to offer students in the way of future employment."