

Institute for Women in Trades, Technology & Science

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High School Automotive Teacher Has Continued Success Recruiting and Retaining Girls



Phillip Jelinek, Automotive Technology teacher at Monrovia High School in Monrovia, CA is passionate about recruiting and retaining women in Automotive Technology. Last semester 10 of his 125 students were female. In his 21 years of teaching this class, he has always had between 3 and 13 girls in his classes. When I asked Phillip whether he had such successes because of certain strategies, he told me that he didn't intentionally employ any particular ones. However, after speaking with him for just an hour, it was clear that he uses very specific recruitment and retention strategies.

Phillip recruits girls into his class by telling them about his class in the hallways, through word-of-mouth recommendations from girls that have already taken his class, and through suggestions from counselors. Because Phillip's background was teaching automotive apprentices about the occupation, his unique teaching style works well to recruit girls to his automotive technology classes.

In his beginning automotive class (renamed Automotive Maintenance when a girl's parents decided that Auto 101 was not a class their daughter should take), Phillip teaches the students about the basic tools that are used in an auto shop by demonstrating their use in a hands-on environment. Many women learn by seeing a demonstration, then performing a task themselves through imitative learning.

He also teaches physics and math principles by contextualizing them through automotive examples. Real world examples have been shown to help women understand the material better and find applicable ways to use it outside of the classroom. Phillip stresses that no prior experience with Automotive Technology is necessary and that the only qualifications a student needs are curiosity and problem solving perseverance. When a student completes training in Phillip's classes, they are prepared to take on an apprenticeship or an entry level job in an auto shop.

Phillip encourages his students to pursue the Automotive Technology field in college and follows up with them after they have graduated to see if he can help them with career development. Additionally, Phillip has developed relationships with dealerships and auto shops around the Monrovia area that offer job placement or apprenticeship opportunities to his students after they have graduated. He passes out a list of these resources to his advanced classes and also discusses salary information, a best practice technique in recruiting women to the industry.

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Though Phillip claims that he has no specific strategies for recruiting and retaining women to Automotive Technology, his specific teaching style and dedication to his students have been factors that have accounted for the high number of women in his automotive classes throughout the years.

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