

Saanich School District Jumpstarts Student Careers – Andrew Parsons

by Stu Rhodes



It's no accident that Andrew Parsons completed level two of his technical training as an auto service technician before his 19th birthday. According to Roger Pires, career counsellor at Parkland Secondary School: "Andrew came to me in grade nine already knowing he wanted to be an automotive service technician."

Andrew's keen desire to learn about automobiles, support from family and a personalized education plan developed for Andrew by Roger Pires enabled Andrew to successfully pursue his life dream. "Starting in grade 10 I would go to school for half a day then go to work in the afternoons – it was so great!" said Parsons. He was able to work at his father's shop, Steve's Service, where he gained valuable work experience and insight into the trade. Andrew managed to attend to his academic requirements in the mornings and earn elective credits through work experience and secondary school apprenticeship courses at Steve's Service in the afternoons. "I had the desire to do it, which was helpful, but the most important part is just to be dedicated and have the support of a sponsor employer." Andrew's father signed him as a secondary school apprentice, which permitted Andrew to log hours for his trade certification throughout his high school years.

"Students can enter the work force earlier and get their earning potential up faster," said Steve Parsons, owner of Steve's Service. "I would recommend this program for other employers too."

Pires created a plan that permitted Andrew to attend Camosun College in grade 12 to complete his "level one" technical training as an auto service technician, earning him high school credits as well as college level certification. "I had been around the shop forever, and I already knew so much about it so it just seemed like the perfect next step for me," Andrew commented about heading to Camosun for his technical training. "We are able to design programs for each individual, so in Andrew's case he was able to make up all of his electives for graduation through his courses at Camosun College and his secondary school apprenticeship courses. Andrew was the perfect student in the way he combined his academics with his apprenticeship," said Pires. Saanich School District supports tuition costs for their trade students through funding received from the Industry Training Authority's youth initiative program known as ACE-IT.

Upon graduation from Parkland Secondary, Andrew received a \$1,000 secondary school apprenticeship scholarship in recognition of his accomplishments. Since graduating he has returned to Camosun to complete "level two." At this rate he will likely complete the four-year apprenticeship by the time he is 21 years old thanks to the head start he got in high school! Andrew says he would recommend this type of program to anyone interested in the trades because it allows students to get lots of valuable work experience and training before they even leave high school.

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