

ACE IT Partnerships Fuel Student Success

Vancouver, BC

Many young boys' fascination with cars has been jump-started by hours spent with their dads tinkering on the family vehicle. But for Brodie Finlayson, the 18 year old graduate from Vancouver's Eric Hamber Secondary School, the chance to participate in the ACE IT Auto Collision Repair Technician program helped turn a childhood interest into a coveted career.

ACE IT stands for Accelerated Credit Enrollment in Industry Training. It is a dual credit program that enables secondary school students to get a head start on the school based, technical training part of an apprenticeship.

"I've always been interested in cars, ever since I was little," explains Brodie. His goal to more seriously pursue his interest could easily have been delayed when his secondary school's shop closed down. Instead, his career centre teacher alerted Brodie to the industry training program offered in a partnership through the Vancouver Schoolboard and Vancouver Community College. Brodie started the program in his grade 12 year and hasn't looked back.

In June, Brodie graduated with a Dogwood certificate and more. As a part of the Auto Collision Repair Technician program, Brodie had the chance to compete in the Skills Canada Competition. He earned a gold medal in the provincial level and a silver medal in the national finals. "Being in the Auto Collision Repair Technician program has given me a huge advantage," says Brodie.

School District #39 Vancouver, under the direction of career programs coordinator Carole Macfarlane, had 29 students participate in three ACE IT programs this year— Auto Collision Repair Technician, Automotive Refinishing Technician and Hairdressing. According to Macfarlane, Brodie is a great example of the win-win aspects of ACE IT for the student and school, the partner college and the employers. "Brodie was a student

in a school that did not offer the program that he wanted," explains Macfarlane. "This was an excellent opportunity for him to enroll in a program at VCC where he excelled, earned a trade credential and graduated from secondary school".

For Vancouver Community College department head, Mario Tettenaro, the first formal year of ACE IT begins the realization of a vision shared by industry and post secondary educators. "Our industry partners have welcomed this program with open arms", explains Mario. "Our goal is to offer students multiple options in a variety of trades and to help them achieve their trade career goals. ACE IT is evolving rapidly and we are seeing an enrollment increase among young, enthusiastic, hard-working students," says Mario. "ACE IT is a huge success."

Employers in the community also benefit from the program. Brodie was placed at Mike's Quality Bodywork for his work experience. Today he is working there full-time and continues to earn hours towards his apprenticeship. With the equivalent of one year post secondary already completed, Brodie feels he is going in a positive direction. For other students interested in a trade career, Brodie has just three words: "Go for it!"

ACE IT was launched with seed funding of \$1.2 million from the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education and has so far received additional funding of \$2.3 million from the Industry Training Authority's (ITA) budget. In the 2005/06 year, 37 school districts are projected to participate in the ACE IT program and deliver 24 industry training programs to over 1,950 BC secondary school students.

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BELOW Brodie Finlayson proudly wears his silver medal won in the National Skills Canada competition

