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## Auto tech program to change



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**GREENVILLE** - With the Automotive Youth Education Systems (AYES) now under the umbrella of the Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) group, more changes are being made with the Greenville High School automotive program, Beti Yoder, AYES representative, stated at a meeting of the AYES business and education council meeting on Tuesday at Greenville High School (GHS).



HEATHER MEADE/Advocate Photo

The Automotive Youth Education Systems (AYES) business and education council met Tuesday to discuss a tune-up for the automotive tech program at Greenville High School. Currently the program focuses on introducing students to eight critical areas of the automotive industry, but with the expected tune-up, the program will do more than just scratch the surface of one or more areas that local automotive industry professionals deem important, including brakes, documentation and communication, steering and suspension, and/or air conditioning. The council is seen here in front of the 2012-2013 auto tech program's project, "Energizing Tomorrow's Technicians," which focuses on the electrical system of the automobile.

Rather than certifying each school a second time, as was the practice previously, AYES is now accepting National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) certification under an educational alliance between NATEF, AYES, and the North American Council of Automotive Teachers (NACAT).

The goal of this alliance is to ensure that all training for the automotive industry is going in the same direction, Yoder commented. AYES' goal is to create a larger placement pool for students entering the automotive workforce, stated Yoder.

NATEF's standards will also be changing in the next year, opening up the field and growing, remarked Yoder. Due to these changes, and the re-certification of GHS' NATEF accreditation, GHS will work to improve and expand their program.

The council took advice from members of the local auto industry including

car dealerships, repair shops, automobile parts stores, and manufacturers on what to do with the extra hours they have available for their students' curriculum. Currently the auto tech program at GHS focuses on eight areas, just scratching the surface of engine repair, automatic transmission and trans-axle, manual drive train and axles, suspension and steering, heating and air condition, electrical and electronic systems, brakes, and engine performance.

Jim Anderson, an auto instructor at GHS, asked the council to rate the importance of students knowing "from the cradle to the grave" brakes, suspension and steering, or air conditioning. One of the most common answers was documentation and communication skills, which Anderson called "soft skills." When entering the workforce, students tend to lack the skills to document what they're doing, and the ability to communicate with customers face-to-face, said one council member.

The students in the auto program at GHS do not get face time with customers, said Anderson, but it is definitely something the program will take into consideration and work on, agreed Travis Nicholas, auto program instructor at GHS. Another concern is how students dress, though Anderson said there isn't much that can be done about that.

The business and education council decided that the priority for focusing and fine-tuning the program should be brakes, then documentation and communication, followed by steering and suspension, and finally air conditioning. The GHS auto program will use this information to fine-tune the program when renewing their accreditation in November of 2013, Anderson said.

This year the auto program will focus on learning more about electrical work with their project "Energizing Tomorrow's Technician." This project is important, said Nicholas, because cars today are heavily reliant on their electrical systems, and it's important for students to know.