The Trades — Noelia & Mike's Story

Automotive Technology | Classroom Discussion & Curriculum Plan | Grades 9–12

A Grow Allen Workforce Windows Resource · CTE, Advisory & Career Exploration Settings

To the Reader

This document is a guide, not a script. The video stands on its own in any classroom. Use all of this, part of it, or none of it — whatever serves your students best. The goal is conversation, not compliance.

Featured: Noelia (Wayne High School graduate) and Mike (Bishop Dwenger High School graduate), automotive technicians early in their careers, and their employer — a dealer principal who has built an earn-while-you-learn model that pays for all training and certification, from day one.

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9SEEWvn7CY&pp=ygUKZ3JvdyBhbGxlbg%3D%3D

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Why This Video Works

This video works because it answers the questions students are actually asking — not the ones adults assume they're asking. It doesn't talk about passion or following your dream. It talks about $12 an hour becoming $15, and $15 becoming $250,000. It features a young woman who loves cars and doesn't see work as a chore. It features an employer who says plainly: I will pay for every certification, send you anywhere the training takes you, and reward you as fast as you can learn.

That's not a sales pitch. That's a deal. And students recognize the difference.

PART 1 — BEFORE THE VIDEO

Pre-Viewing Activity

Opening Question — No Wrong Answers

Write this on the board before students walk in, or use it as a bell-ringer, entry ticket, or 'show what you know' activity:

> *"What do you think the highest-paid automotive technician in Fort Wayne earns in a year?"*

Have students write a number on a sticky note and post it on the board. Don't correct anyone yet — just let the range sit there. You'll return to it after the video. The real answer — $250,000 — will land very differently after students have heard the employer say it himself.

Quick Show of Hands

- How many of you have ever worked on a car — or wanted to?
- How many of you know someone who works as a mechanic or automotive technician?
- How many of you have ever considered this as a career path?
- How many of you assumed this career had a low ceiling — that it couldn't make you wealthy?

Brief Framing — Keep It Short

"We're going to watch a short video. You'll hear from an employer and two young technicians — a woman named Noelia and a young man named Mike — who are early in their careers. Just watch and listen. We'll talk after."

FACILITATOR NOTE

Play the video without a worksheet or advance instructions. The less scaffolding before the video, the more genuine the reaction after — especially when the salary range hits.

PART 2 IMMEDIATE REACTION

Post-Viewing Discussion

No structure yet — just open reaction. Ask one question and let it breathe:

> *"What was the first thing that stood out to you?"*

Common things students will flag — use these as natural entry points:

- Technicians making $250,000 — and the employer said it casually
- All training paid for — including travel to Columbus, Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati
- Noelia saying it's not a chore coming to work because she loves cars
- The employer saying kids have a "god-given right" to opportunity
- The comparison: equivalent of a four-year degree, paid for, while earning money
- The comment that kids don't always fit into the rules provided by the state

FACILITATOR NOTE

Don't rush to Part 3. That $250,000 number will dominate the first few minutes — let it. Skepticism is healthy and productive. Let students push back on it before you move to the structured discussion.

PART 3 — STRUCTURED DISCUSSION

Text-Based — Using the Video Transcript

Give students the transcript printed out or displayed on screen. Work through it together using the discussion questions below, organized by theme. You do not need to cover every theme — choose what fits your class and your time.

Theme 1 — The Employer's Offer

> *"I pay for all the training. You get all the certification. I'll send you to Columbus, Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati, wherever the training centers are on my dime. I'll pay you to do it and you'll reap the rewards."*

- What is this employer actually offering? Break it down into specific pieces — what does a student get, and what does the employer get in return?
- Why would an employer pay for all of an employee's training and certification? What's in it for them?
- If someone offered you this deal today, what questions would you ask before saying yes?
- What does it tell you about this employer that his highest-paid employees are the ones with the most training — and that he gives it to them as fast as they can consume it?

Theme 2 — The Salary Range

> *"I have technicians that make $50,000. I have technicians that make $250,000. The faster you can fix a car and the more cars you can fix, the more you'll make."*

- A $200,000 gap between the lowest and highest paid technicians at the same employer. What explains that difference?
- The employer connects pay directly to speed, volume, and training — not seniority, not a degree, not how long you've been there. What do you think about that model?
- In most careers, there's a ceiling — a top salary you can reach no matter how good you get. Does this career appear to have one? What would determine yours?
- Go back to the sticky notes on the board. How close were your guesses to $250,000? What assumptions did you make that turned out to be wrong?

Theme 3 — Noelia's Voice

> *"I love cars, so this is right up my alley. It's not really a chore coming into work. I'm able to get in a groove and get to know how these cars function. I learn something new every day."*

- Noelia is a young woman in a field that has historically been male-dominated. What does it mean that she's in this video — and that she says she wants to talk to any student thinking about this path?
- She says it's not a chore coming to work. How rare is that? What would it be worth to you to feel that way about your job?
- She also says she felt immediate pressure to perform when she arrived. How do you hold both of those things at once — loving where you work and feeling real pressure to prove yourself?
- What career would make you feel the way Noelia describes? Do you know yet? If not — how do you find out?

Theme 4 — It's Not Just Nuts and Bolts

> *"I had an assumption that it was all going to be nuts and bolts. Something goes wrong or something's broken, you replace it. But a lot of this is computer stuff."*

- Mike walked in with an assumption that turned out to be wrong. What assumptions do you have about careers in the trades — and how confident are you that those assumptions are accurate?
- Modern automotive technology is deeply connected to computers, diagnostics, and software. What does that mean for the skills this career actually requires?
- The employer says you need the will to learn — and that if you don't have it, you'll sink. What's the difference between someone who has that will and someone who doesn't? Is it something you're born with, or something you build?
- Mike took initiative — webinars, in-person classes — beyond what was required. How does that kind of self-directed learning change a person's trajectory in any career?

Theme 5 — The Mentorship Model

> *"The ability to move up throughout the ranks also goes hand in hand with the type of mentors that we have. It is our job and their job in a way to teach these young kids that if you want this as a career path, this is what you have to do."*

- The employer describes mentorship as a two-way responsibility — the mentor teaches, and the apprentice shows up ready to receive it. What does your side of that deal look like?
- The supervisor in the video says Noelia and Mike share the same drive and work ethic — and that it's awesome to see them grow. What does it feel like to be described that way by someone who is investing in you?
- Who in your life right now is functioning as a mentor — someone who is passing their knowledge to you? If you don't have one, where could you find one?
- By year seven, eight, or nine, an employee here has received the equivalent of a four-year college degree — paid for, while earning. How does that change the traditional argument for going to college?

Theme 6 — Opportunity as a Right

> *"Every kid in Northeast Indiana that wants to have an opportunity at life, that they have that opportunity. I feel that is their god-given right, and we need to figure out how to give them that opportunity."*

- The employer frames this not as charity or a business strategy, but as a moral obligation. Do you agree that opportunity is a right? What does it mean when it isn't equally available?
- He also says kids don't always fit into the rules provided by the state — and that the capabilities in our community go way beyond the classroom. What does he mean? Do you agree?
- What opportunities exist right now in Allen County that students your age don't know about — or haven't taken seriously? What would it take to change that?
- What is your responsibility in creating your own opportunity — and what is the community's responsibility in making sure that opportunity exists?

PART 4

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

Choose One Based on Your Class and Time

A The Real Numbers Comparison

20–30 minutes | Math + Career Literacy

> **Important:** This exercise is NOT intended to steer students away from college or advanced degrees. The goal is to help students **think carefully about all of the possibilities in front of them.**

Give students this scenario in pairs:

Person A

Graduates high school and enters an automotive technician apprenticeship. Starts at $12/hr as an intern, advances to $15/hr upon hire, and receives all training and certifications paid for by the employer.

Person B

Graduates high school and enrolls in a 4-year university automotive or engineering program. Takes on $40,000+ in student loans and begins repayment 6 months after graduation.

Ask pairs to research and calculate:

- What does Person A earn in years 1–4 combined, assuming raises tied to training milestones?
- What does Person B owe after 4 years? What is their estimated monthly loan payment?
- At what point — if ever — does Person B's degree pay off compared to Person A's head start?
- What certifications could Person A earn in 4 years that would increase their earning potential?
- Which path carries more risk? Which has a higher ceiling — and does that ceiling depend on the person or the path?

> **A note for the class:** graduating with substantial debt is not inevitable. Scholarships, work-study programs, summer employment, and campus jobs can dramatically reduce what a student owes. Encourage all students to work with their school counselor on a plan that minimizes debt regardless of the path they choose.
>
> ***Debrief as a class — there is no right answer. The goal is to think clearly about trade-offs, not to declare a winner.***

B Interview an Automotive Professional

One-Week Project | Research + Communication

Students identify one person in their life — family, neighbor, community member — who works in automotive technology, dealership service, or a related trade. They conduct a structured interview:

- How did you get into this field?
- What does a typical workday look like?
- What certifications do you hold — and how did you get them?
- What do you earn, and how has that changed over time?
- What surprised you most about this career once you were in it?
- What's the hardest part of the work that people on the outside don't see?
- Did anyone talk to you in high school about this path? If not — what would have helped?
- If you could talk to a high school student considering this career right now, what would you tell them?

Students write a 1-page reflection or present to the class. The goal: hear the real story from someone in their own community, in their own words.

C Career Pathway Mapping

20–25 minutes | Individual + Pair Share

Each student maps their own version of the pathway shown in the video — and then identifies how they will actively prepare at each stage:

STEP	IN THE VIDEO	MY POSSIBLE PATH	HOW I AM PREPARING RIGHT NOW
Entry Point	Internship — $12/hr from day one	?	*What internships, CTE programs, or employer connections exist in Allen County that I could pursue before graduation? Who do I need to talk to?*
First Job	Hired as technician — $15/hr + training	?	*What skills, certifications, or work habits will an employer like this one expect from me on day one? Am I building those now?*
Training & Certs	All paid by employer — sent anywhere	?	*What certifications exist in my field of interest? Do I know what ASE, manufacturer-specific, or other credentials are valued by local employers?*
Mid-Career	Mentored — growing in skill and income	?	*Who is mentoring me right now — or who could be? Am I showing up in a way that earns that investment?*
Long-Term	$50K–$250K+ depending on drive & training	?	*What does financial readiness look like for me? Am I building the habits — work ethic, continuous learning, reliability — that determine where in that range I land?*

> **The fourth column is intentionally uncomfortable.** Its purpose is to push students past *"here's my dream"* and into *"here's what I'm actually doing about it."* For many students, that column will be mostly blank at first. That's the point. The blank space is the conversation.

D The Debate

20–25 minutes | Critical Thinking

Divide the class into three groups. Each group prepares and argues one position:

- **Group 1 argues:** *"An employer who pays for all your training is a better deal than any college scholarship."*
- **Group 2 argues:** *"A four-year degree still opens more doors and provides more long-term security."*
- **Group 3 — playing themselves:** *"I'm not sure yet, and that's okay. Here's how I'm keeping my options open."*

Give each group 10 minutes to prepare, then hold a structured 10-minute discussion. Afterward, drop all assigned positions and ask the room:

> *"What's the real answer? And is this even an either/or question?"*

FACILITATOR NOTE

Group 3 consistently produces the most honest and useful conversation. Validating students who don't yet know what they want — while still pushing them to think about how they're preparing — is frequently where the real breakthrough happens.

PART 5 CLOSING REFLECTION

Individual Writing — Exit Ticket

Students write responses to any two of the following three prompts:

- *"Before this video, I thought automotive technology was _____. Now I think _____."*
- *"The part of this video that most applies to my own life is _____ because _____."*
- *"One question this video left me with is _____."*

FACILITATOR NOTE

Collect and read before the next class. Student responses will tell you exactly where to take the conversation next — and which students might benefit from a one-on-one follow-up about this path.

GOING FURTHER

Extension Ideas

Multi-Day Unit

- Day 1: Video + discussion (Parts 1–3)
- Day 2: Activity — Option A or B
- Day 3: Guest speaker — an automotive technician, service manager, or dealership employer
- Day 4: Site visit to a dealership service department or automotive training facility
- Day 5: Reflection presentations and pathway mapping (Option C)

Guest Speaker Connections — Fort Wayne & Allen County

- Local dealership service departments — many are actively seeking young technicians
- Ivy Tech Fort Wayne — Automotive Technology program
- Indiana Auto Dealers Association (IADA) — workforce pipeline connections
- ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) — certification pathways for students
- Grow Allen Workforce Windows network — automotive and transportation employers across Allen County

Connect to Grow Allen

Workforce Windows Tours can bring students directly into automotive and transportation environments — dealership service floors, training centers, and technical facilities — giving them the same ***"I can see myself here"*** moment Noelia and Mike describe in the video. Visit **GrowAllen.com** to connect your class to upcoming Workforce Windows opportunities.