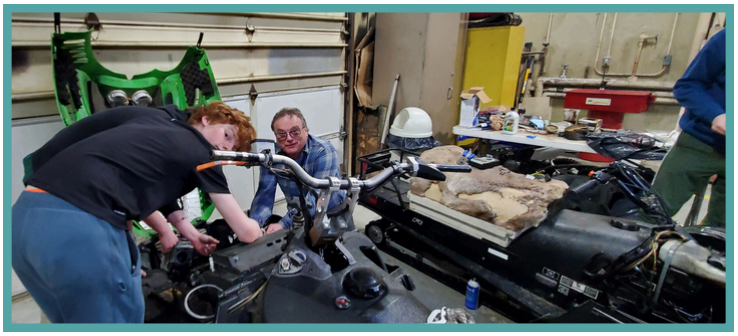
REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH: MICHAEL ADAMS

Celebrating 34 Years of CTE Impact: An Interview with a Community-Driven Educator, Michael Adams

This month, we are excited to highlight the inspiring story of a dedicated educator whose passion for career and technical education (CTE) has transformed his community and empowered countless students over the past 34 years.

With a background in Mechanical Engineering and certification in Secondary Math/Science, Michael Adams's journey began with a simple yet profound realization: combining academic and vocational education is a natural, effective approach. His first recertification class in 1992, entitled "Combining Academic and Vocational Education," set the tone for his lifelong commitment to integrating real-world skills into the classroom.

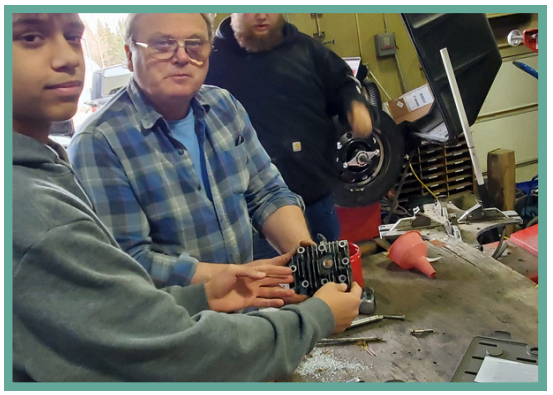
While mathematics initially captured his passion, he soon recognized how essential it is for students to see the relevance of math in work and life. Today, he teaches "Physics in Context," a hands-on course emphasizing physics' application in the workplace. This class serves as a bridge to CTE programs in Metals and Construction trades, fostering a practical understanding of how physics relates to various industries.



Beyond physics, Adams teaches Small Engines and Automotive classes, drawing from his mechanic roots, which he learned at his family's gas station in Delta Junction. His diverse teaching portfolio also includes AutoCAD drafting and managing a fabrication lab, where students recently completed a regionally recognized river boat project.

His work extends into community involvement—he runs a fabrication lab twice a week, tutors students, and collaborates with local businesses and military volunteers from Fort Greely. These partnerships have led to unique projects, such as printing a full-size pelvis for a physical therapist and a colossal squid for a young student.

What drives Adams the most is the success and gratitude of his students. Many return to visit, sharing stories of how his mentorship helped them pursue careers in engineering, teaching, and beyond. One student's mother even credited his influence for inspiring her son to become an engineer—and someday, a teacher himself.



He actively seeks to inspire his colleagues by promoting Project-Based Learning (PBL) across academic disciplines. His efforts have led to successful lab projects in science, English, art, metals, and woodwork. His goal is to make learning more relevant and engaging, reflecting his belief that “Learning by Doing” is the most effective approach.

Additionally, Adams is working on strengthening student pathways, integrating CTE and academic goals to provide students with clearer career directions. His school’s pathways team has shared their model at local, state, regional, and national conferences, receiving positive feedback and inspiring others to adopt similar approaches.

The community’s support for the fabrication lab has been unwavering, with local businesses and volunteers contributing to its success. A community dinner presentation of the pathways model drew enthusiastic participation and sparked meaningful conversations about how schools and local industries can collaborate.

He concludes with a heartfelt reflection: “I do all this work for the students. Helping them succeed is the most rewarding part of my job.” Michael Adams’s dedication exemplifies the profound impact that committed educators can have on students, colleagues, and the community as a whole.

Michael Adams’s story is a testament to the power of integrating academic learning with real-world skills, fostering community partnerships, and inspiring the next generation of innovators. His work embodies the spirit of CTE—preparing students not just for jobs, but for meaningful careers and lifelong learning.

We thank Michael Adams for his unwavering dedication and look forward to seeing how his work continues to inspire educators and students alike.