

High School Team Wins Inaugural Student Competition at AAPEX 2025

Two students from North Kansas City Schools broke down and reassembled a Chevy 350 engine in 1 hour and 44 minutes; AAPEX to make competition an annual event

LAS VEGAS, NV, UNITED STATES,
November 12, 2025 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- Two high school students from North Kansas City Schools in Missouri won the first-ever student engine assembly competition at the Automotive Aftermarket Products Expo ([AAPEX](#)) in Las Vegas last week. Three teams in total, including two from local vocational-technical colleges, raced against each other during the timed event.



Winning team; from left to right: Bernard Tansey, (co-emcee/organizer), Taem Aljallad (student), Adrian Madinger (student), Bogi Lateiner (co-emcee), Jack Stow (student instructor), Joseph DeLorme (a competition sponsor from Dorman Products)

Taem Aljallad and Adrian Madinger, both of whom are just 17 years of age, disassembled and reassembled a Chevy 350 engine in 1 hour and 44 minutes in front of a live audience. The duo was coached by Jack Stow, an A.S.E. certified master automobile technician and automotive instructor with North Kansas City Schools.

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Jack Stow, automotive instructor, North Kansas City Schools

“These two young men demonstrated incredible focus, even when they ran into challenges, in a very high-pressure environment,” said Bernard Tansey, who co-emceed the event and owns Euro Clinic, an independent repair shop based in Santa Clara, Calif. “There was a large crowd watching, people had their cameras out, and yet their attention remained centered on the task at hand.”

Two other teams of automotive students from the Advanced Training Institute (ATI) and College of Southern Nevada (CSN) also participated in the

competition. Both of these vo-tech schools are based in Las Vegas, where AAPEX hosts its annual event, which draws about 45,000 attendees and more than 2,000 exhibitors from 120 countries.

The competition was sponsored by a half-dozen automotive aftermarket businesses. These sponsors helped cover the cost of travel and lodging for the students, provided the engines for the competition, tools for the students to work with, and donated more than \$1,000 in prizes.

Sponsors of the student competition included AutoZone, Inc., Dorman Products, Euro Clinic, Milwaukee Tool, Motor Age Training and Ratchet & Wrench, an industry trade publication.

Practicing outside of school hours

While both students are taking high school automotive classes, neither one of them had taken apart an engine before. However, they practiced diligently in their free time leading up to the event. Their instructor, Stow, helped them obtain an engine for them to practice with and coached them during their practice sessions.

Every team had a coach, but under the rules of the competition, coaches could only provide verbal advice and encouragement. Only students were permitted to touch a tool or any part of the engine. Many in the crowd watching credited Stow's poise during the competition, as he calmly directed Taem and Adrian throughout the competition.

The high school team jumped out to lead right from the start. They disassembled the engine in just 31 minutes. Reassembling the engine proved to be more challenging. For example, the pair ran into difficulties putting the eighth and final piston back together; the opposing teams started to catch up. Even so, they persevered and completed the assembly first, in 1 hour and 13



At work during the competition - Adrian Madinger and Taem Aljallad work reassemble the engine as their instructor, Jack Stow, looks on



Three vocational-technical schools, including one high school, fielded teams for the competition.

minutes.

“We were incredibly proud of Taem and Adrian simply for signing up for the competition,” said Stow. “They put in the work outside of school hours, learned to trust each other and that teamwork helped them to win the competition.”

Competition calls attention to the auto technician shortage

The competition was fielded to help raise awareness of a [shortage of auto technicians](#). Their ranks are thinning as the workforce ages. Auto technicians are retiring faster than the industry can replace them. At the same time, a burgeoning demand for technician services compounds the problem.

Americans own [291 million light cars and trucks](#), and are dependent on those vehicles to get around. Collectively, the average age of those vehicles is 12.8 years and growing. Americans are hanging onto their vehicles longer as the average MSRP for a new vehicle has topped \$50,000 – with monthly payments around \$1,000 per month.

Students interested in a career as an auto technician can complete their training in as little as two years, often with little student debt, if there is any. Surveys show that, on average, technicians are well compensated, earning a median salary of \$90,000 annually, with the potential to earn more.

There are also a variety of career opportunities. Many go on to open their own shop or work for any of the thousands of companies in the automotive aftermarket supply chain. As modern vehicles and parts are increasingly made with millions of lines of software code and chips, auto technicians are mastering technical skills in addition to mechanical ones.

AAPEX aims to make the competition an annual event

Based on the successes of this year’s event, several schools have expressed interest in sending competition teams next year – and there’s even talk of potential international competitors. AAPEX plans to host the student competition again at next year’s show.

More information on the 2026 student competition at AAPEX will be announced in the spring. Students and schools interested in participating next year can contact the AAPEX student team at aapexstudents@aapexshow.com. Aftermarket businesses interested in sponsoring the competition should contact Chris Kalousek at chris.kalousek@aapexshow.com.

About AAPEX

AAPEX unites the more than \$2.3 trillion global automotive aftermarket industry and historically draws more than 2,700 exhibiting companies from around the globe that display innovative

products, services and technologies that keep the world's 1.6 billion vehicles on the road. AAPEX provides advanced technical and business management training for professionals to maintain excellence and take their businesses to the next level. Industry buyers include automotive service and repair professionals, auto parts retailers, independent warehouse distributors, program groups, service chains, automotive dealers, fleet buyers and engine builders.

AAPEX is a trade-only event and is closed to the general public.

AAPEX is co-owned by MEMA Aftermarket Suppliers and the Auto Care Association. For more information, visit AAPEX 2025 or e-mail: info@aapexshow.com. On social media, follow AAPEX at [#AAPEX25](https://twitter.com/AAPEX25).

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