



LUXEMBURG-CASCO SCHOOL DISTRICT

318 NORTH MAIN STREET PO Box 70

LUXEMBURG, WISCONSIN 54217

PHONE 920-845-2391

FAX 920-845-5871

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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PRESS RELEASE

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Media Contact: Glenn Schlander

gschlender@luxcasco.k12.wi.us

920-845-2391, ext. 103

Ahnapee Diesel Center dedicated, offers students in-demand career pathway

L-C, NWTC, business community partner to create new curriculum for diesel service technicians

LUXEMBURG, Wis. – The Luxemburg-Casco School District today dedicates the new Ahnapee Diesel Center within the newly named Casco Career Academy, located at 619 Church Ave. in Casco in the district's former middle-school building. It houses the first credit-bearing, diesel-only high school education program in Wisconsin and is one of roughly 20 such programs nationwide.

Ahnapee Diesel is a consortium of area high schools: Luxemburg-Casco, Denmark and Kewaunee. Students in their junior and senior years are given the opportunity to earn college credits while also receiving credit towards high school graduation through a partnership with Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC). Twenty-two students are registered for Ahnapee Diesel in its initial academic year, 2021-22: 15 from L-C, six from Kewaunee and two from Denmark.

"We are excited by the possibilities that the Ahnapee Diesel Center offers students," says Glenn Schlander, superintendent of the Luxemburg-Casco School District. "This public-private partnership with NWTC and the business community should provide them with an efficient pathway into in-demand, high-paying jobs. "We also are happy to be able to repurpose our former middle-school building into a vibrant education facility within the Casco community."

While other state high schools may teach diesel as part of a larger automotive program, Ahnapee Diesel is the first credit-bearing, diesel-only high school program in Wisconsin, according to Dan Klecker, state education director at The Foundation of the Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association (WATDA), an organization that supports scholarships and educational programs leading towards workforce development solutions for transportation dealerships in the state.

Student instruction at Ahnapee Diesel began on September 1 with the start of the 2021-22 academic year.

With successful completion of NWTC's Diesel Maintenance Technician (DMT) curriculum while in high school, students attain a one-year technical diploma. The required 26 credits include courses such as Transportation Welding 1 & 2, Diesel Lab Operations, Intro to Diesel Mechanics, Intro to Electrical Systems, Diesel Heavy Duty Electrical 1 & 2, Chassis Sub-Systems, Hydraulic/Pneumatic Systems, and Engine Sub-Systems.

Gene Francisco, NWTC associate dean of trades & engineering technologies, oversees the program on behalf of the college. The on-site NWTC instructor is Duane Lundwall, who is certified as a Master Medium-Heavy Truck

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Troy Haws
Luxemburg-Casco Senior High
512 Center Drive
P.O. Box 410
Luxemburg, WI 54217
(920) 845-2336
(920) 845-2280 Fax

Todd Chandler
Luxemburg-Casco Middle School
512 Center Drive
P.O. Box 40
Luxemburg, WI 54217
(920) 845-9525
(920) 845-9029 Fax

Jolene Hussong
Luxemburg-Casco Intermediate School
318 N. Main Street
P.O. Box 70
Luxemburg, WI 54217
(920) 845-2371
(920) 845-2232 Fax

Pete Kline
Luxemburg-Casco Primary School
601 Marcks Lane
P.O. Box 220
Luxemburg, WI 54217
(920) 845-2315
(920) 845-2503 Fax

Technician by the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE). Before joining NWTC in 2018, Lundwall spent 14 years as a professional diesel mechanic for the City of Green Bay and Murphy Concrete & Construction in Appleton.

“This is a great example of a truly integrated partnership between businesses and educators,” says Francisco. “Unique opportunities, such as this, that allow students to gain college experience and employable skills within high school are going to make a huge impact in growing a competitive workforce.”

Upon graduation from high school, students can choose to pursue a technical diploma as a Diesel Heavy Equipment Technician or a Diesel Medium & Heavy Truck Technician. Associate degrees in either Diesel Heavy Equipment Technology or Diesel Medium & Heavy Truck Technology also are possible student pathways.

In 2020 there were 275,400 people employed as diesel service technicians and mechanics, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment is projected to grow 8 percent from 2020 to 2030; about 28,100 openings for diesel service technicians and mechanics are projected each year, on average, over that time frame. Employers increasingly prefer applicants who have completed postsecondary training programs in diesel engine repair and who receive industry certification, according to the bureau.

Strong support from area companies and the regional transportation industry have been a catalyst in getting the Ahnapee Diesel program off the ground. More than \$428,000 in combined financial contributions and in-kind donations – from 21 different organizations – has been received.

The largest contributor among the \$278,000-plus in monetary donations was Packer City International Trucks, which has three Northeast Wisconsin locations providing sales and service in the medium- and heavy-duty truck segments, at \$50,000. Four companies donated \$25,000: America’s Service Line (an American Foods Group company), Master Fleet, Kinnard Farms and Kriete Truck Center.

There were a number of significant in-kind donations, totaling in excess of \$150,000, to Ahnapee Diesel for instructional use. These include a 2017 diesel tractor by Paper Transport Inc. (PTI), along with a mini excavator and multiple engines by Roland Machinery and Komatsu. Bobcat Plus provided a skid-steer loader from its rental fleet to give students the opportunity to learn how hydraulics work.

Other companies making donations to Ahnapee Diesel include CSM Companies (aka Wisconsin Kenworth), Cummins Sales & Service, Debroux Custom Work, Dorner Inc., Ducat Trucking, Joski Trucking, Pagel’s Ponderosa Dairy, Peters Concrete, Rio Creek Feed Mill, Service Motor Company, Somerville Architects and WEL Companies.

Students also have been provided with fully equipped, professional-quality tool boxes for their use.

Zeise Construction served as the general contractor for the project, which converted the one-time Art and Wood Shop areas of the former Luxemburg-Casco Middle School into the diesel center. The district’s middle school moved to the main L-C campus at the start of the 2020-21 academic year.

Among the significant modifications within the 4,200-square-foot main instructional area were the lowering of the concrete garage floor by 2 feet to accommodate a full-size semi-truck cab, enlargement of the front overhead door to 18 feet, creation of a new exterior ramp, the addition of a rear overhead door to facilitate entry of smaller diesel equipment, enhanced exhaust systems and ductwork to adequately distribute air and mitigate contaminants, attachment of interior and exterior catch basins, and upgraded electrical outlets to support safe operations.

A 1,000-square-foot classroom space – the former school cafeteria – also is part of the Ahnapee Diesel learning environment.

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The Luxemburg-Casco School District serves nearly 2,000 Northeast Wisconsin students annually through four schools located on a single campus in Luxemburg: the Primary School (4K-2), Intermediate School (3-6), Middle School (7-8) and High School (9-12). The district maintains a strong tradition of academic and extracurricular excellence while preparing students to thrive in a global community. U.S. News & World Report in 2020 ranked L-C High School as a top 5 high school within the Green Bay metro area. Located between Green Bay, Door County and Lake Michigan, the educational community has been in existence since the early 1900s, with Luxemburg and Casco operating as separate districts until they merged in 1968. More information may be found at <http://www.luxcasco.k12.wi.us/home>. “We Are Spartans”