

OnlineHS student first female ever to win state diesel competition

McKenzie Budrow will represent Washington this June at national trials



Diesel Equipment Technology became a state [SkillsUSA](#) competition category more than 50 years ago – in 1965. In all those years, male students walked away with first place awards. Last weekend in Yakima, female senior McKenzie Budrow raised a wrench in victory – the very first time for a female student. Her impressive skills earned her a slot at the [National SkillsUSA](#) competition in June in Louisville, KY. She also earned a \$10,000 scholarship to attend [Universal Technical Institute](#).

Budrow is a nontraditional student with skills and interests in a field often considered not traditional for females. As a junior, she combined time at Everett High School with time at [Sno-Isle TECH](#).

This year, she switched to the [OnlineHS](#) program at [Sequoia High School](#) so she could finish the last of her graduation requirements and still take sections at Sno-Isle before graduation this June.

Budrow's parents give credit for their daughter's success to Everett Public Schools' different learning experiences for different learning styles. In a message to Sequoia High's principal, Kelly Shepherd, they spoke of the importance of traditional high school, of *OnlineHS* and of Sno-Isle for students who excel in hands-on learning. They urged Shepherd to continue advocating for all students in a quest to find "... the type of education that will be meaningful to students' futures." Their opinion is that such options are often lost in the emphasis on traditional learning. Keeping hands-on learning pathways open "is what we hope McKenzie's story will achieve."

And what an achievement her first place win was! A [five-page document](#) on the state's SkillsUSA website details precisely the industry standard skills she needed. These standards are set by a technical committee with representatives of corporations including Caterpillar Inc., Cummins Inc., FedEx, John Deere, Kenworth Truck Co., Ryder Systems Inc., United Parcel Service and Volvo.

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Going into the diesel competition last weekend, students did not know precisely what industry skills they would face – only to be prepared for everything on the five-page list. They could have been asked to service and repair large diesel engines, transmissions, drive trains, electrical systems, brakes, hydraulic systems and cab components used in farm equipment, trucks and construction vehicles. They were to be ready for precision measurements, live engine troubleshooting, drive line component and drive line system diagnosis and repair, hydraulic theory and HVAC systems. Those situations could take a mere 20 minutes to tackle or could require up to four hours. In addition to the hands-on skills application, students were prepared to demonstrate competency in math, science and language arts and show leadership and professionalism.

As it turned out, the Yakima diesel competitors faced station challenges with air brakes, troubleshooting circuit boards, diagnosing software, precisely measuring a crankshaft and tackling a nonfunctioning manual transmission. Budrow aced these challenges and the written test to outscore the other students.

Budrow credits her Everett High math teachers with building skills she used to excel in precision measurement. Her parents again lauded *OnlineHS* and teacher Laura Wight, “We thank Laura for her continued work and patience with McKenzie as her English teacher! She should get an award for her tact and kind reminders of confidence in McKenzie's ability to get her work in. This style motivates her more than any other and it really is helpful when McKenzie is so busy and driven in these other areas.”

Principal Shepherd knows McKenzie has a bright future and wonders if she won't become just as well known as Patrice Banks, the female mechanic from Philadelphia who opened [Girls Auto Clinic](#), wrote a [guidebook for women](#) about auto repair and maintenance and has been featured on NPR's [Fresh Air with Terry Gross](#).

“I see in McKenzie the drive and entrepreneurial spirit to make her mark with quality work in a field traditionally seen as the purview of males. She's a great example of what can happen when you know what you want to do and you establish goals and action plans. She's a great role model for other young women.”

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