

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Wednesday, November 3, 2010

ContraCostaTimes.com

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Better training

"Tech-focused academies give East Bay students hands-on training for jobs" (Oct. 19) and they also help generate a pipeline of skilled workers that can boost local businesses' productivity and strengthen our economy.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 60 percent of all new jobs in the 21st century will require skills that only 20 percent of the current workforce has.

Fortunately, many schools in Contra Costa County are operating career-themed academies in a variety of industry sectors. In addition to technology and engineering, students can learn about careers in health, law, hospitality, and the arts, to name just a few.

Linked Learning, the educational approach that includes models such as Project Lead The Way, is an extremely promising educational reform based on the national Career Academies model. Research shows that students who participated in Career Academies went on to work 12 percent more hours per week and earn 11 percent more money than their nonparticipating peers.

If we are to develop a better skilled, more productive workforce, career-themed academies are the way to go and we need to expand access to them. Not only are they good for students, they're good for local businesses and our economy.

Charley Daly

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Daly is Chief Executive Officer of the Pleasant Hill Chamber of Commerce.