

# Antioch forum touts importance of preparing students for careers

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ANTIOCH -- The three R's of education have multiplied.

Rigor, relevance and relationships are key components to learning both today and in the future, regional education and business leaders stressed at a round-table forum Friday.

Students need to see that the skills and information they are learning in the classroom apply in the workplace, said Keith Archuleta, executive director of the East County Business and Education Alliance and co-founder of Emerald Consulting.

There has been an emphasis in the East Bay in recent years on connecting academics to real-world work experience, said Carolyn Nelson, dean of education and allied studies at Cal State East Bay.

Nelson was one of four speakers during the round-table at Lone Tree Golf Course's event center.

The concept of career-themed pathways has gained steam in Antioch's school district. The district currently has four academies centered on specific themes -- performing arts, law, medical and environmental design for green energy.

The programs have shown early signs of success. Students have attended school more often and earned higher grades, Antioch Superintendent Donald Gill said.

Creating an atmosphere where students enjoy learning helps reduce truancy and increase graduation rates, he said.

Friday's forum also covered the importance of science, technology, engineering and math to make the United States competitive with other nations.

Those fields will be critical considering how rapidly technology is evolving, said Alan Ichikawa of Dow Chemical. All jobs will soon require a basic understanding of math and science, he said.

The concept of students learning from "9 to 5 is not realistic anymore," Gill said.

"Students are learning differently and around the clock. The amount of resources they have now is just startling," he said.

Amy Anderson, a work force coordinator at John Muir Medical Center, said the round-table confirms how critical it is for students to have hands-on experience.

"The students are able to see how relevant their education is to real life. Also, they learn to act professionally and other necessary skills," she said.

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ON THE AIR

The forum will be shown on CCTV at 8 p.m. Dec. 21 and 11 a.m. Dec. 22. CCTV is Comcast Channel 27, Astound Channel 32 and AT&T U-verse Channel 99.