

Thursday, November 28, 2019
EDUCATION

Pledge initiative focuses on paths for school to work

By Gary Metzker

Correspondent

The question pops up as early as kindergarten: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Now students in the Long Beach Unified School District and elsewhere may be able to answer that question sooner rather than later.

A regional partnership called Advancing Linked Learning Innovation Network, abbreviated as aLLin, introduced its Career Pledge last week in an effort to better prepare a greater number of students to transition from education to employment. The pledge, launched at Carson's Dignity Health Sports Park, is also intended to give local employers expanded access to qualified local workforce pools — those with technical and professional skills — that will help them reach their goals more successfully.

Career Pledge is a regional collaborative among five school districts, five colleges and universities, and three workforce agencies.

The school districts are: ABC, Centinela

PLEDGE » PAGE [7](#)



Carl Gorski, who is in the engineering pathway at McBride High School, talks about his summer internship with Toyota at the Career Pledge kickoff.

PHOTO BY GARY METZKER

Pledge

FROM PAGE 3

Valley, Long Beach, Lynwood and Norwalk-La Mirada. The colleges are: Cerritos College, Cal State Long Beach, Compton College, El Camino College and Long Beach City College. And the three workforce boards are: Pacific Gateway, South Bay Workforce Investment Board and Southeast Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board.

Essentially, those entities signed a pledge that commits them to working together to "increase industry- aligned educational opportunities for students," according to an LBUSD statement.

"We serve approximately 300,000 students annually and the majority are from underrepresented and economically disadvantaged backgrounds," said Amy Smith, the executive director of aLLin. "The Career Pledge aims to reach beyond the goal of high school or college completion and stems from what we ask children very early on: 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' " "This initiative extends beyond serving students," she added. "It focuses more intentionally around ensuring our regional employers get qualified local talent needed to achieve their organizational goals."

LBUSD Superintendent Chris Steinhauser added that the Career Pledge will work hand in hand with the district's College Promise initiative, which allows high school students from Long Beach Unified to attend City College free for two years and guarantees admission to Cal State Long Beach to those who qualify.

" We are preparing students for college and careers, it's not one or the other," Steinhauser said. " You're not preparing for either one; you're preparing for both."

Steinhauser pointed out that big businesses, such as the Port of Long Beach, are not the only ones reaching out with opportunities; mom and pop business owners also want help.

"How many people truly know in high school what they want to do, because they may change their majors," Steinhauser said. "The beauty here is that to be a good worker there are certain common soft skills — getting along with others, following orders, being innovative, dressing appropriately — that all young people can experience.

"What I appreciate is everyone is breaking these walls down, to not saying, 'We can't,' but to say, 'How can we?' " Carl Gorski is a prime example of what the Career Pledge can do for students. The engineering pathway student from Mc-Bride High School had an internship with Toyota during the summer. He said he was challenged daily by his co-workers to think like an engineer and produce the results of an engineer.

"It's these types of interactions that make internships such an important resource for young people to utilize," he told the audience. "It isn't the applications like my counselor said or even beefing up my resume as my teachers hinted at.

"Internships, or any activity where a student interacts with a business, like career fairs or mock interviews," Gorski added, "are just about the best tools adolescents can use when faced with questions like, 'What major are you applying for, or what do you want to do when you grow up?' "
