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“Workforce Development Key Goal”

Fay-Penn Economic Development Council and the Westmoreland-Fayette Workforce Investment Board (WIB) are to be commended for being forward-thinking and forward-acting with regard to workforce development. According to the article, “Area job market will require more skilled workers...” (Oct. 19, *Herald-Standard*), both recognize an urgent need to connect employers and educators now to prepare students for the jobs our region’s employers will have to offer.

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development also recognizes that the region is at a crossroads concerning an adequate workforce. Many regional employers are growing or will grow. Their workforce needs should also grow. But many are also preparing for widespread retirements among baby boomer employees. Both situations present challenges if an adequate workforce is lacking. At this crossroads, a decision about the future must be made. Regional leaders affiliated with the Allegheny Conference have decided to pursue a real-world solution: the Pittsburgh Regional Compact. Across the 10-county Pittsburgh region, the Compact is creating partnerships between regional employers and educators to build the workforce by preparing students for jobs and careers here.

The Compact applies the concept of partnerships to the entire region, which encompasses 100,000-plus employers and nearly 130 school districts. Such a large-scale, unified approach has not been previously offered in the region. Ours is a high-tech economy. Proficiency in math, science, engineering and communication is required to fill jobs in high-tech sectors. Educators must impart the knowledge and skills that ready students to become qualified applicants for well-paying jobs in southwestern Pennsylvania. And through career awareness activities, employers will provide students with a real-world look at what working for their companies or industries can be like.

Now is the time for every regional employer and school district to invest in our future by joining the Pittsburgh Regional Compact. To learn more, visit www.pittsburghregionalcompact.org.

Michael Langley, Chief Executive Officer
Allegheny Conference on Community Development, Pittsburgh