



Partnership Helps Put City Scholars To Work

By: Lindsey Christ, June 14, 2010

Jose Flores won't graduate from high school until next week, but he's already started a good full-time job repairing engines for Access-a-Ride vans. He learned many of his skills at East New York Transit Tech High, but he got work experience, connections and the job offer through a new internship program.

"It gave us the skills to know what we could do in the office, resumes, tips on how we could get a job and have a better opportunity at achieving a job," Flores said.

Scholars to Work is a first-ever partnership between the Department of Education, Department of Small Business Services and Workforce Investment Board.

"We have a high school for planes, a high school for trains and a high school for automobiles. And what we've finally been able to do is make some very concrete connections between the work going on in those schools and what's going on out in the workforce across New York City," said Gregg Betheil of the Department of Education.

If we weren't here, someone comes out with a great skill, they're not going to college and then their opportunities are limited," said **Commissioner of Small Business Services Robert Walsh**.

At a ceremony celebrating the program's first graduates Monday, Chancellor Joel Klein said partnerships like this are going to increase during the next five years.

"What you're going to see is a much more open, dynamic, collaborative process, in which the organization is not Department of Education standing alone but really integrating the necessary parts from all over," the commissioner said.

The pilot program started out small. Only 25 students were selected, 17 of which completed the program. But all of the agencies and schools involved say they were committed to getting it right this year, so they can expand to include many more students and businesses in future.

"One of the things the committee did to make sure that the program worked is they listened to the schools input from an educational perspective," said Transit Tech Assistant Principal Paul Tropicano. "We were looking for students that demonstrated an ability to work with their hands who weren't sure if they were going to go college or going to seek employment."

Those behind the program say the students can now get real experience making the city's transportation system move, while kick-starting their own careers.