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Syracuse schools, firms create work partnership

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By Charley Hannagan
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Educators and business leaders Friday announced a first step to making sure Central New York companies have the qualified work force they need.

Business groups and the Syracuse City School District have created the Partnership for a Work Ready Syracuse.

As part of the program, students will earn a certificate they can take to a job interview, in addition to their high school regent's diploma, to prove to employers they have basic work skills.

"We still have too many of our children who don't graduate from high school. We still have too many of our children who graduate, but aren't ready for work," said Frank Caliva, director of talent initiatives for the Metropolitan Development Association.

But the schools can't do it alone, schools Superintendent Daniel G. Lowengard told employers Friday at a kickoff breakfast at the Renaissance of Syracuse. He urged employers to create mentoring or internship opportunities to show students what it's like to work in the real world.

Deborah Oden, of Syracuse, the parent of a high school student and four graduates of the school system, said a career exploration program in the school system is long overdue. "Really start with the kids. They need that exposure," she said.

The partnership is an outgrowth of last year's Journey to Jobs summit on work force development in the region, which is facing a labor shortage due to baby boomer retirements and a shrinking population.

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