



<http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/print-edition/2011/04/22/east-bay-schools-aim-to-refresh.html>

East Bay schools aim to refresh biotech labor pool

By Lindsay Riddell

Date: Friday, April 22, 2011, 3:00am PDT

At many schools in the East Bay, businesses are stepping in where state and federal programs have failed — training children in science and technology to create a skilled workforce to one day staff biotech and cleantech companies clustering there.

Members of BayBio, a regional biotech trade group, have signed onto a program launched in 2010 that connects biotech employees with schools, donates resources and equipment to science labs, provides internships, has employees review resumes and more.

The Bio-community.org program is starting in Oakland Unified Schools this year and is already operating or launching in other under-resourced areas in East Palo Alto, San Mateo, Antioch and South San Francisco. Bayer helped fund the pilot program with a \$15,000 grant.

"Forty-seven percent of biotech CEOs say an unprepared workforce is one of their top three concerns looking forward," said **Gail Maderis**, president and CEO of BayBio. "And when you get to a full employment picture ... we can't get enough workers in biotech, and the workers we do have are (foreigners) here on green cards and visas that are becoming less practicable."

BayBio and BayBio Institute, which supports entrepreneurship, science education and life science career development, have several other programs that also fill gaps in science and technology education including the Bio-Link equipment depot, where life science companies donate equipment and materials for classroom use.

Bayer said the partnerships between biotech companies and schools make sense.

"There are a lot of employees at companies out there with those resources to give and this gives them a way to reach those teachers with the desperate needs," said **Trina Ostrander**, manager of public policy and communications for Bayer in Berkeley.

Biotech Partners, another nonprofit connecting biotech companies to youth, was developed by Bayer Health Care and the City of Berkeley to match underrepresented youth with career training and internships in biotech companies. Today the program serves between 150 and 200 students from Berkeley High School, Oakland Technical High School and the Peralta Community College District.

[Chevron](#) joined with Project Lead the Way to bring engineering training, curriculum and computers to Richmond High School for a new program — the Richmond High School Engineering Academy.

“The key thing here is the public-private partnership,” said **Duane Crum**, state director for Project Lead the Way, which offers curriculum for STEM education — science, technology, engineering and math — to schools. “We can offer courses, teacher training and resources, but with all the budget cutbacks, nobody can do it alone.”

Already this year, \$2.8 billion in cuts to higher education have been signed into state law. The federal budget removed \$238 million from career education programs and education technology state grants.

That’s why schools are increasingly looking to corporate partners for help.

In 2010, Chevron donated \$25 million in California to science, technology and math education and economic development.

“It’s important to Chevron because people in the science and technology fields will be the people who we hire in the future,” said Chevron Richmond Refinery Manager **Mike Cole**.

But it’s more than that. High schoolers who participate in the program say the engineering class, where they use computers to design trains or complete 3-D puzzles, has motivated many of them to stay in school and to pursue college.

“I wanted to be a dropout,” said Engineering Academy participant **Jesus Hernandez**, a Richmond High School sophomore. “But it’s a fun class to be in and I hope some day to be an engineer.”

Read more: [East Bay schools aim to refresh biotech labor pool | San Francisco Business Times](#)