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**The Labor Skills Gap is Hurting New York Employers  
Understanding Middle Skills and Exploring Alternative Career Pathways  
A Breakfast Panel Scheduled for May 20<sup>th</sup>**

(Westchester/Rockland) April 24, 2019 — According to the National Skills Coalition, middle-skills jobs, which require education beyond high school but not a four-year degree, make up the largest part of America’s and New York’s labor market. Key industries in New York are unable to find enough sufficiently trained workers to fill these jobs. Demand for middle skills jobs is expected to remain strong through 2024, with 45% of job openings falling in this category.

The Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board will host a high-level learning and panel discussion on Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup> to address the shortage of middle and soft skills training and illuminate options for mapping sector specific career paths through stackable credentials as a viable choice for high school students. School board presidents, superintendents, guidance counselors, employers, higher education professionals, and others who work with students are encouraged to attend.

The event is free and will be held at White Plains High School / Library Media Space, 550 North Street, White Plains, NY 10605. Breakfast and registration will take place at 8:30am and the program will run from 9:00am – 10:30am. Online registration is requested (<https://career-pathway-breakfast.eventbrite.com>).

The May 20<sup>th</sup> panel will be moderated by **Thom Kleiner**, *Executive Director*, Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board, with panelists **Dr. Michael Baston**, *President*, Rockland Community College; **Dr. Joseph Ricca**, *Superintendent of Schools*, White Plains Public Schools; **Dr. LaTasha Hamlett-Carver**, *Career Center Program Specialist*; **Teresita B. Wisell**, *Vice President, Workforce Development and Community Engagement*, Westchester Community College; **Carolyn Chieco**, *High School Guidance Counselor and Consultant*, **Daniel Bonnet**, *Deputy Executive Director*, Center for College & Careers at the Guidance Center of Westchester, and **Orane Barrett**, *Chief Executive*, Kool Nerd Club.

“We are seeking to clarify the various options that exist for finding and pursuing a career while at the same time gathering information from those who work with students and parents. With the high cost of a 4-year college degree looming large for many families, we want to shed light on the alternatives and encourage students to consider careers they have a passion for and can gain credentials and experience in, without the expense of a traditional four-year college degree,” stated Thom Kleiner.

“At Rockland Community College we are totally committed to providing middle skills programs and stacked credentials through career pathways so that those interested in a career that doesn’t require a four-year degree, can get the training they need and get into the workplace sooner,” stated Dr. Baston. “We want to shift the mindset to one that embraces viable choices and options dependent upon the interests of the individual. No one should feel as though choosing a path that doesn’t require a four-year degree is somehow less significant. Our goal is to show that it is a better choice for many not simply based on cost, but also based on a swifter entrance into the workforce,” added Baston.

The upcoming panel is an extension of the conversation that was started at the Talent Shortage Symposium in October of last year, hosted by the Mount Vernon Career Center, where economic development and education professionals and employers gathered to discuss the talent shortage and skills gap issues and the need to get career pathway information to youth earlier to help them plan for their education and ultimately fulfill the needs of employers around the region.

“Lack of soft skills is the biggest complaints we hear from HR departments and it's across the board for all types of jobs and education levels. Even candidates that have the desired technical skills don't make it past the interview because they lack personal skills like how to smile, greet people, communicate, and present themselves. It's an issue that needs to be solved,” added **Orane Barrett**, Kool Nerd Club.

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**THE WESTCHESTER-PUTNAM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WPWDB)** is comprised of leaders and staff of state and county government agencies, non-profits, public education, and the private sector who work together to strengthen the partnerships between business, education, and service providers within the “Career Center Network” to meet the needs for a skilled workforce. The WPWDB pursues funding opportunities and develops model programs and leading-edge practices. The “Network” is made up of four Career Centers (White Plains, Mount Vernon, Peekskill, and Carmel) as well as partner agencies that provide state-of-the-art technology, training, resources, and services to youth, adults and employers. For more information, visit [www.westchesterputnamonestop.com](http://www.westchesterputnamonestop.com).

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