

# ROCHESTER AREA

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## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

### NEWS RELEASE

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### **Rochester business and higher education community invests more than \$150,000 into area schools with new web-based program**

**January 9, 2009** – As part of its commitment to workforce preparedness, the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce and the Workforce 2020 coalition, in partnership with Rochester Public Schools and the business community, invested more than \$150,000 in area schools to launch a new and unique national program called Learn.Do.Earn.

Learn.Do.Earn is a powerful suite of Web-based tools dedicated to ensuring that students – and their parents – have the information they need to make the best possible academic, behavioral, career and financial decisions in middle and high school. The program is part of a larger initiative, Workforce 2020, which is committed to promoting a globally competitive education and workforce development system for all.

This program is made possible through the generosity and financial investment of the following sponsors: Workforce 2020, Mayo Clinic, Think Mutual Bank, Rochester Community & Technical College, Winona State University Rochester and Kwik Trip. With their support, Learn.Do.Earn has the capacity to positively influence large numbers of students with minimal impact on school operation and is at no cost to the schools.

“The Workforce 2020 coalition is committed to making education a top priority in our community and closing the opportunity gap in Rochester,” says Jess Ihrke, Vice President – Workforce & Education at the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce. “This means raising the bar for all of our students and ensuring that all students graduate successfully from high school. Learn.Do.Earn is one strategic way the business and education community are coming together to motivate and inform students that if they learn more now, and do more now, that they will in fact earn more later.”

The program connects students’ middle and high school experiences and decisions with the real world, and presents research-based advice from ‘virtual business people’ who offer a plan of action for the students. Learn.Do.Earn awards credentials and certificates

to students who meet the criteria defined in each of its five programs, which students can use to market themselves to prospective employers and colleges.

"The Learn.Do.Earn program is a great opportunity to help kids understand the importance of challenging themselves to do well in school at an early age," says Steve Myhro, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Willow Creek Middle School. "If students want the income and job satisfaction that can make them happy and comfortable, they need to start planning for that now. Learn.Do.Earn provides a powerful message empowering young people to start planning for their future."

Students at Willow Creek Middle School and Mayo High School are currently being exposed to the Learn.Do.Earn program. Continued deployment of the program throughout all middle school and high schools in Rochester Public Schools will start during the 2009-2010 school year. Further deployment in private and area middle and high schools is scheduled for 2010-2011.

"I am the future; I have the power in me," says Jonathon Miron, a 6<sup>th</sup> grader at Willow Creek Middle School who recently went through one of the Learn.Do.Earn modules. "The Learn.Do.Earn program helped me by giving me a foundation to start on. I know that I can face the challenges ahead."

The program was originally developed by the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation in response to employer concerns about mounting pressure from global competition and the limited availability of qualified American workers. It has been in operation in New Jersey for more than three years and was launched nationally in December 2006 due to popular demand. While five states are now implementing the program, Rochester is the only individual community.

**Note: Please see accompanying release regarding the official Learn.Do.Earn media launch scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2009 at 10:45 a.m. in the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce Boardroom (220 S. Broadway, Suite 100), and the Learn.Do.Earn scavenger hunt at Willow Creek Middle School on Friday, Jan. 16.**