

## Future workforce topic of business event

Times Leader staff



WILKES-BARRE – Regional business executives met Friday at the Woodlands Inn for lunch and to discuss something bigger, the future workforce.

At their 10th annual joint board meeting, chamber of commerce officials talked about early-childhood education and using the critical development years from birth to age 5 to build social and behavioral habits that allow students to enter kindergarten ahead of the academic curve.

Peter Danchak, PNC Bank's regional president, helped coordinate the event. He sits on Gov. Tom Corbett's Early Learning Investment Commission, a group top business executives who communicate the importance of quality education to their peers.

He said early education helps students prepare for skilled positions they might not be ready for if they began learning at the kindergarten level.

"We believe that investing in our children today will build a better workforce for tomorrow," Danchak said.

Steven Barnett, a Rutgers University economics professor, addressed the financial importance of enhanced education for pre-school children.

In order to be globally competitive, United States educators need to take early education more seriously, he said. "Guatemala might be one of the poorest countries in this hemisphere, yet they're looking for ways to implement universal Pre-K," Barnett said.

Bruce Clash, a state director for Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, gave striking statistics that further pushed Barnett's point – education, starting with preschool, can prevent crime.

"Sixty-eight percent of prison inmates are high-school dropouts," Clash said. "In short, they drag on our economy and state budget."

Clash said business executives get a hearing when they approach state legislators.

"Their voices command a lot of attention with the power structures in Harrisburg," Clash said.

State Rep. Phyllis Mundy said after the meeting that she has been an advocate of enhancing education and is encouraged by business initiatives.

"I felt like one voice," Mundy said, "until law enforcement and the business community started weighing in."



**Web Link**

Scan QR Code or go to:

[http://timesleader.com/stories/Future-workforce-topic-of-business-event,205150?search\\_filter=bruce+clash+&town\\_id=1&sub\\_type=stories&print=1](http://timesleader.com/stories/Future-workforce-topic-of-business-event,205150?search_filter=bruce+clash+&town_id=1&sub_type=stories&print=1)