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Secretary Gassman Meets with Platteville Students Enrolled in Southwest Academy for 21st Century Excellence

State Labor Secretary commends Academy partners for efforts to promote youth skills training to support a strong workforce

PLATTEVILLE – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today highlighted the Southwest Academy for 21st Century program during a visit to Platteville High School.

“The Southwest Academy for 21st Century Excellence represents the kinds of investments and programs we need to prepare today’s youth for success in the jobs of tomorrow,” Secretary Gassman said. “The program’s focus on science, technology, engineering and math is helping to support a pipeline of workers in Wisconsin for the 21st century and beyond.”

Secretary Gassman joined Southwest Wisconsin Technical College President Dr. Karen Knox, area employers and other stakeholders in meeting with students, instructors and other individuals involved in the Academy, which is completing its first full year of operation.

The Academy is the combined effort of five southwest Wisconsin school districts to provide a career pathway in engineering for students, based on their prior experiences with Project Lead the Way, a best practices curriculum developed through a public-private collaboration in the 1980s to advance skills training for future careers. DWD provided funding support for Project Lead the Way.

The Southwest Academy for 21st Century Excellence has become a national model for how smaller school districts engage young people in learning science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills that will be needed for success in jobs of tomorrow. It has been highlighted at various conferences, such as the Project Lead the Way national conference in Austin, and it has received a number of awards including a Project Lead the Way Model School award and an “Excellence in STEM Award” by the Engineers & Scientists of Milwaukee.

Since taking office in 2003, Governor Jim Doyle has supported initiatives such as Project Lead the Way that help Wisconsin youth gain new skills and plan for their future careers.

“As Wisconsin continues to recover from the deep national economic recession, it is more important than ever that our future workers have strong problem-solving skills that will help them succeed in their new careers,” Secretary Gassman said. “The Southwest Academy for 21st Century Excellence is a model program for how to prepare youth and provide them pathways for career success.”