

June 27, 2008

Ford wants to accelerate learning

*By Rasha Aly and Debra Gruszecki
The Indio Sun*

Ford Motor Co. is not only interested in cars.

It is also driving up students' motivation in Coachella Valley classrooms with the Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies curriculum.

Ford PAS engages high school students in business, global economics, engineering, alternative energy and math studies while honing job skills needed for today's work force.

The Ford Motor Co. Fund is awarding this week a \$50,000 planning grant to the Coachella Valley Economic partnership to help establish a Ford PAS Resource Hub.

Its purpose:

Train area educators.

Create networking opportunities between the education and business community for the Ford PAS.

Rather than listening to lectures, students gain hands-on experience from the Ford PAS curriculum, said Sheryl Carrier, program director for Ford Motor Co.'s 21st Century Education Programs.

The students "are not doing the traditional work in the classroom," Carrier said. "The teacher is not sitting at the blackboard. They are doing projects similar to what we are all doing in the world of work."

Carrier gave an example.

Classes may be divided into groups of students where each group may be asked to represent different entities within a company. One group may work on designing a new product, while another may determine how to package the product and a third could look at the financial constraints.

"They work together to solve real-life problems," Carrier said.

Ford introduced Ford PAS to the valley in 2007.

Professional development training has already started for about 75 educators from all three valley school districts, College of the Desert, Riverside County Office of Education, UC Riverside and Palm Desert's California State University campus in October.

The \$50,000 grant will help support a program called Career Pathways, aimed at creating new job opportunities for valley high school students and young adults in targeted industries including media production, energy and environmental technology and health care and aging, said Kim McNulty of CVEP.