

Learning: "Chalk Talk" Column
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An influx of people in flux

By Stacy A. Teicher

As fun as it can be to learn for learning's sake, in most people's lives education is primarily a means to an end - a job, a promotion, a career change.

That's why colleges run career offices and businesses give continuing-education benefits to their employees.

With the job market in a slump, counselors who help people translate what they've learned into a paying job are working overtime.

Soon-to-be college graduates looking for that first job have to wait in line with pink-slipped alumni. At the University of Pennsylvania, alumni now make up 15 percent of career-counseling clients, up from 10 percent when jobs were plentiful, Associated Press reports.

Even sports pros need career-transition advice sometimes, considering many of them have to "retire" at an age when people in other fields are just starting to hit their stride. The National Hockey League recently launched the Life After Hockey Program to help its former players find the best way to finish college degrees or start new professions ([see story](#)).

Connecting education to work is especially important for adults with deficiencies in basic skills.

Rather than teaching remedial courses in isolation, community colleges should link them to jobs in high-wage fields such as information technology and healthcare, according to a new report from the nonprofit Workforce Strategy Center.

"Building Bridges to College and Careers" (online at <http://www.workforcestrategy.org/>) offers case studies of five colleges that model such "contextualized learning." Instead of simply teaching math, for instance, a school in Chicago teaches technical literacy courses tailored for manufacturing jobs in the city.

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