

## **Testimony of Ken Engel**

### **Vice President, Human Resources**

#### **Domino Brands**

I am delighted to be here today to offer my thoughts about the importance of developing a college and career-ready workforce, and the role of the business community in supporting the public education system to achieve this.

As the Vice President of Human Resources for Domino Brands (the international sugar company), we take this very seriously and the rationale may seem obvious – the success of our business depends upon the availability of a well- educated and well trained workforce. We need skilled workers who have math and reading skills, the ability to think critically and utilize skills that enable them to be effective employees in a high level manufacturing operation.

Over the past few years, we have had difficulty finding these young people to come work in our Yonkers facility and other facilities across the country. The irony of this in Yonkers is that there is one of the few public vocational schools, Saunders Technical and Trades School, which has received national recognition as a Blue Ribbon School. Through a relationship with Yonkers Partners in Education, a not-for-profit organization that serves the Yonkers Public Schools, we have begun to work with Saunders to redesign their curriculum to so that students graduate from high school prepared for jobs at Domino and other manufacturing companies throughout the region. As an example, this week employees from Domino have been working with teachers from

Saunders to align the mechanics, electronics, and architecture curricula to meet the needs of real companies like Domino.

This partnership has been extensive and has become part of our corporate mission. In addition to helping to shape the next generation of Domino employees, we are proud of the role that we play throughout the Yonkers community. Our Code of Ethics specifically outlines the role of Domino as a Corporate Citizen and we are involved in the Yonkers Public Schools in many ways – as a large funder and school partner.

I would like to encourage this Education Commission to consider a state-wide effort to engage businesses representing industries in the task of helping to educate our students. We can provide input and thinking into the State Standards and provide real-life experiences – internships, apprenticeships and career days that will help students better understand what they need to be doing in high school to achieve their career dreams.

Working with schools to bring the experiences from the business world into the classroom can only help students succeed, while providing companies with workers who have context, perspective and skills needed for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.