

## **Gov. Baker takes a spin at Southeastern, announces voke plan**

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Gov. Charlie Baker stopped at Southeastern Regional Thursday to announce a new adult vocational school initiative.

EASTON – Gov. Charlie Baker brought along a big announcement about vocational schools for his visit to Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical High School Thursday morning.

The students had something for Baker, too.

As he toured the precision machinery shop, Southeastern students gifted the governor a fidget spinner, one of their many projects in a room abuzz with metal-milling machines and 3D printers.

It's an aluminum toy, crafted right in the machinery shop, that spins on its axis and is believed to help reduce stress and nervous energy.

Perhaps Baker will give it a few spins during his reelection campaign next year.

Joe Fulton, a sophomore from Brockton, presented Baker with the fidget spinner, who gave it a spin before sticking it in his pocket.

Baker also looked over one of the shop's 3D printers, where sophomore Colleen Wood explained how they were helping fix up fire boxes in her hometown of Norton. Caleb Faustino, of Stoughton, showed off their milling machine, where students were crafting custom wheel rims.

The school had all kinds of projects on display for the governor's visit, from dishes created in its culinary arts program to the tiny houses created in the Maker Space area.

"This was the first voke-tech school I visited as a candidate in 2014," Baker said. "And it really opened my eyes to the potential and the opportunity of partnering more aggressively with voke-tech schools and their students and their faculty."

Baker announced a new state program Thursday at 10 state vocational schools, including Southeastern, that will provide potential college credit for adults who take evening classes at the schools.

The new Advanced Manufacturing Certificate Program will also accept Pell grants and state MassGrants, the governor said.

"That makes it affordable, accessible, and a real opportunity to get a credential that can translate to a terrific opportunity in a booming industry here in the Commonwealth," Baker said.

The certificate will require about 300 hours of class time, according to the governor's office.

As he gave his comments to a capacity crowd in the Maker Space, Baker spun his new toy in his hands.

Cora Boyle, a junior at Southeastern, spoke before introducing the governor.

An East Bridgewater resident, she explained her hopes to study aeronautical engineering and eventually work at NASA.

"Who knows, maybe someday you'll read about my team being the first to land a spacecraft on Mars," she declared.

Michael Tamasi, president of AccuRounds manufacturing company in Avon, also spoke. His company has faced a dearth of trained manufacturing employees in the last few years, he said.

"Finally, advanced manufacturing is getting the promotion and the visibility that we've been dying for," Tamasi said.

“We have a dire need for talent. The pipeline has been left dry for too many years.”

Education Secretary James Peyser and Office of Labor and Workforce Development Secretary Rosalin Acosta also spoke at the event.

Peyser called vocational schools one of the great assets of the state, but also “a hidden asset.”

“Equally important is that it’s an underutilized asset,” Peyser said. “There’s a lot of time that is being used part time, and we need to figure out how to make sure we’re getting more bang for the buck and leveraging the assets that we have. This program in particular is one of the ways to do that.”

Southeastern Superintendent Luis Lopes agreed, saying that while the high school capacity is full during the day, the building is about 80 percent empty in the evenings, when adult programs take place.

Southeastern has already benefited from Baker’s programs. Its Maker Space, where Thursday’s event took place, was a product of a \$100,000 state grant. In all, it has received close to half a million dollars in state grants.

The school is also celebrating its 50th anniversary. Baker left his signature, joining others, on a decorated car hood with a 50th anniversary decal.



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