

WASHINGTON STATE TREASURER TOURS CB TECH

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Cheryl Schweizer/Columbia Basin Herald - (From left) Washington State Treasurer Duane Davidson, CB Tech director Christine Armstrong and Davidson's aide Leo Marquez look at the visual record of student construction projects during Davidson's tour Thursday.

MOSES LAKE — Washington State Treasurer Duane Davidson said he sees part of his job as increasing financial knowledge, both at the state level and for Washington residents. Increasing financial literacy, and encouraging residents to think about all their options when choosing careers brought him to Columbia Basin Technical Skills Center Friday afternoon.

Davidson, 57, was elected to the office in 2016 and previously served as Benton County treasurer.

The visit to CB Tech was suggested by Leo Marquez, the treasurer's office outreach coordinator and a graduate of Moses Lake High School. Skills center director Christine Armstrong conducted the tour, but suggested Davidson come back when classes are in session. Skills center students themselves will give the tour and demonstrate the programs, she said.

Davidson was impressed by the tour anyway. "I'm really pleased at what's going on here." In his opinion more places like CB Tech are needed, he said. The skills center provides students with training in and knowledge about careers that don't need a college degree, he said, and Washington needs more of that. He cited the cases of people he know who ended up going to college who didn't need it for the careers they ultimately pursued.

Davidson said he's concerned about debt - the state's debt as well as debt of individual Washington residents. One way to address debt is to increase financial education, at the state and legislative level and at the individual level. Part of his effort to increase financial literacy was his role in passing a bill during the 2017 legislative session that requires colleges using major financial aid programs to provide a financial literacy workshop to incoming students. The goal is to help students understand how the debt they incur today will affect them in the future, and how they can reduce debt by paying their own way, in whole or in part.

Davidson and Marquez were accompanied by Hannah Castro, legislative aide for state Sen. Judy Warnick and a MLHS graduate. Both Marquez and Castro were in the MLHS culinary program, at the old Chief Cafe downtown, and both admitted to a little envy when they saw CB Tech's kitchen.

Armstrong said the school has tried to give kids the skills they need at industry standards, and has consulted with local industry to get an understanding of those standards. But what employers really are looking for are people with good work habits, she said. Part of CB Tech's mission is to encourage those along with the technical training.

Marquez asked about students pursuing post-high school education. Armstrong said CB Tech officials haven't tracked that as closely as they wanted. But the existing data shows that post-secondary education is heavily influenced by career choice. Kids in the computer classes and criminal justice programs are more likely to go to college, due to the requirements in those careers. About half the marketing students go to college, she said, while most of the culinary students attend technical schools. Most of the construction trades students go into the industry.

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