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Group wants state to offer job-training effort to all

*BY KATHERINE YUNG
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER*

To increase Michigan's competitiveness, every resident should have access to at least two years of education or training beyond high school, a national workforce investment group said in a report released today.

The study from the Workforce Alliance and its Skills2Compete campaign urges the state to expand its No Worker Left Behind job-training program to all residents, not just those that are unemployed or low income.

The report focuses on the importance of "middle-skill jobs," those that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year college degree. These are jobs like construction workers, health care technicians and electricians that account for 51% of all jobs in the state.

About 46% of all job openings in Michigan between now and 2016 will be middle-skill jobs, the report said. That compares with 30% for high-skill jobs that require a four-year college degree or more and 24% for low-skill jobs that need a high school diploma or less.

The findings buck the conventional wisdom that future job growth lies mostly in high-skill jobs.

The report predicts that many of the new jobs created from the national stimulus package will be middle-skill jobs. In particular, demand will be greatest for heavy-truck drivers, auto mechanics, electricians and licensed practical nurses.
