

CORNERSTONE



Taking care of business

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Be aware of concerns, focus on influence

Every year at CESA 3, we center our efforts around a theme that guides our work and engagement with the districts we serve. This year's theme is "Be Aware of Concerns, but Focus on Our Influence." This theme is born out of the realization that the pandemic has often pushed us into a reactive stance instead of a proactive one. The pandemic forced us to rethink our educational approaches and modalities. While it has given us new tools for teaching and learning, it has also come at a cost. Concurrently, community groups have sought to influence local school boards, advocating for policy changes. Unfortunately, in some cases, these differences in opinion have escalated into personal conflicts. These statements may seem familiar, but it's essential to remember that all of you hold positions of influence. You possess the power to move beyond merely acknowledging problems or being victims of concern. This theme is a call to action, urging us to stop admiring problems and focus on solutions.



Dr. Jamie Nutter

It's crucial to look ahead. Since 2020, many districts have operated in survival mode, focusing on short-term priorities week by week or month by month, hoping that no significant issues would emerge. While staying attuned to local concerns, complaints, and political discourse is important, merely reacting to the latest challenges is a form of management, not leadership. In the context of our youth, we are tasked with leadership. The theme aims to redirect our efforts toward leadership, beginning with gathering feedback and data as a foundation. The approach will vary for each district, as they must balance solving immediate issues with planning for the future.

The following are examples of data and situations that our districts have faced. Referrals for occupational therapy, speech therapy, and physical therapy in young children have tripled across the region, while the number of professionals in these fields has declined. Consequently, many students lack the core strength needed to engage effectively in the classroom, navigate the school environment, write with ease, or manage sensory stimuli. This trend is prevalent across school districts. Reading scores have dropped for the first time

in two decades, and more than 30 percent of schools in the area are spending more than \$70,000 to support students who struggle to self-regulate in classrooms or school buildings. School districts have had to adjust their hiring practices, moving from recommending the most prepared applicants to recruiting individuals who may not have been trained as educators. These are just a few examples, and districts are actively seeking solutions to these and other challenges. As new expenditure baselines and operational costs rise due to historic inflation and a reduction in federal ESSR funds, districts are striving to balance their budgets. These examples illustrate why we've been in a management mode rather than a leadership mode.

To transition from management to leadership, school boards must find time for meaningful discussions beyond their monthly meetings, given the numerous decisions involved in multi-million dollar budgets to ensure compliance. The challenges that have accumulated in areas such as budgets, staffing shortages, educational outcomes, and student well-being need to be understood by all stakeholders, rather than being shouldered solely by school superintendents. Whether through retreats to address pressing issues or separate meetings to establish goals, school boards must engage in discussions that extend beyond monthly meetings to proactively address the demands placed on districts. Here are some considerations for your districts:

1. Develop a Plan: Does your school board know the top priorities and goals for students? Whether related to construction, material purchases, or hiring, decisions should align with these priorities and goals. A vision, which goes beyond a district's adopted statement, must be established, serving as a commitment to the community. Short-term and long-term goals should be set to make progress toward this vision, with a clear plan on how to achieve them, provide feedback, allocate time and support, and assign responsibility for communication and progress monitoring.

2. Have a Financial Plan: Ensure that your school board understands fundamental financial principles and the potential negative impact of insufficient reserves. Recognize the temporary nature of federal funding and prepare for its replacement. Establish a clear understanding of expected revenue and

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Out with the old, in with the new

CESA 3 adopts Hopin for registration system

BY KRISTIN GALLE

Change is often considered the catalyst for progress and innovation. This rings especially true in today's fast-paced world, where technology constantly evolves to enhance our lives. Embracing this philosophy, CESA 3, a leading educational service agency, has bid farewell to its old registration system, MyQuickReg, and welcomed a new and improved platform, Hopin. This transition marks a significant leap forward for CESA 3, ensuring a more streamlined and efficient registration process for participants.



Kristin Galle

MyQuickReg, while serving its purpose admirably, has become outdated over time. Recognizing the need for a robust and user-friendly system, CESA 3 embarked on a quest to find a superior alternative. After careful research and deliberation, they found their answer in Hopin—a cutting-edge registration platform that promises to revolutionize the way attendees interact with their events.

One of the most significant advantages of Hopin lies in its versatility. Unlike its predecessor, Hopin provides a com-

prehensive suite of tools and features tailored to meet the specific needs of CESA 3's registration process. With Hopin, participants can effortlessly register for events, access event information, and manage their registrations all in one convenient location. This cohesive experience eliminates the need for multiple platforms and simplifies the overall event planning and management process.

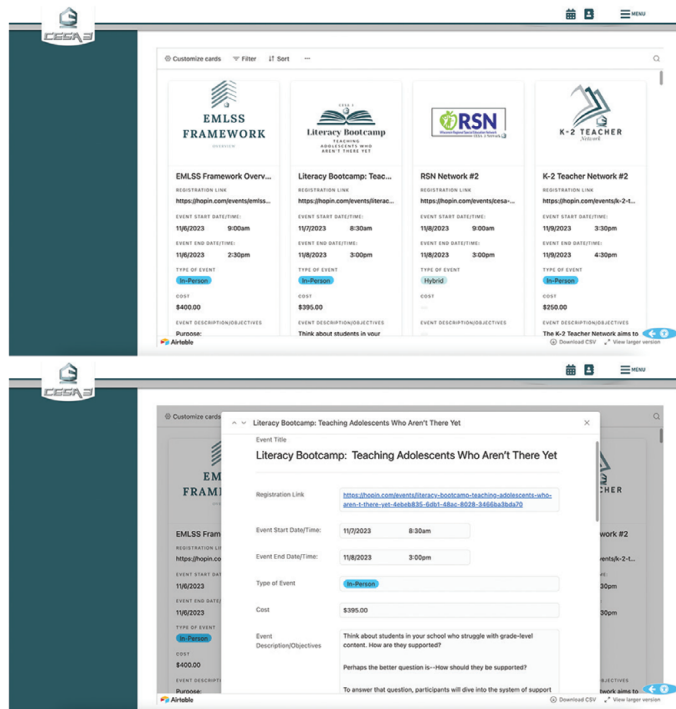
Another noteworthy aspect of Hopin is its seamless integration of virtual and in-person events. In today's evolving landscape, the ability to host both physical and virtual gatherings is crucial. Hopin's advanced capabilities facilitate hybrid events, allowing CESA 3 to expand its reach and accommodate participants who may face geograph-

ical limitations or prefer attending events remotely. By embracing this hybrid approach, CESA 3 ensures inclusivity and maximizes the impact of its educational initiatives.

Hopin's user-friendly interface is designed with simplicity and efficiency in mind. Navigating the platform is intuitive, making it accessible to both tech-savvy individuals and those less familiar with digital tools. Attendees can effortlessly browse event listings, register with a few clicks, and even network with fellow participants through virtual chat rooms and networking sessions. Hopin's emphasis on user experience ensures that participants can focus on the content and connections that matter most.

CESA 3's decision to switch to Hopin exemplifies their commitment to staying ahead of the curve and embracing innovative solutions. By adopting this modern registration system, they demonstrate their dedication to enhancing the participant experience, whether in-person or virtual. This transition not only benefits CESA 3 but also serves as an inspiration for other organizations seeking to optimize their event management processes.

Change can be daunting, especially when it involves transitioning from familiar systems to new ones. However, CESA 3's leap of faith in adopting Hopin demonstrates their confidence



Hopin's user-friendly interface is designed with simplicity and efficiency in mind. Attendees can effortlessly browse event listings, register with a few clicks, and even network with fellow participants through virtual chat rooms and networking sessions.

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The crucial role of school-based mental health programming

By NIKI SMITH

In today's rapidly changing world, the importance of mental health cannot be overstated, especially for young students and teens. School-based mental health programming is emerging as a vital component of education, addressing the holistic well-being of students. Here's why it is so crucial:

Early Intervention:

Schools provide a unique opportunity to identify and address mental health issues

early. With teachers and staff interacting with students daily, they can recognize changes in behavior or signs of distress, ensuring timely support and intervention.

Reducing Stigma: By incorporating mental health discussions into the curriculum, schools contribute to destigmatizing mental health problems. Open conversations help students and staff view mental health as an integral part of overall well-being, making it easier for those who need help to seek it without fear of judgment.

Academic Success: Mental health programming in schools positively impacts academic performance. Students who are mentally healthy are better able to focus, retain information, and perform well in their studies. Addressing mental health issues can lead to improvements in attendance and classroom engagement.

Life Skills: Mental health programs teach essential life skills such as stress management, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution.



Niki Smith

These skills not only promote mental wellness but also equip students with tools they'll use throughout their lives in various personal and professional situations.

Prevention of Mental Health Disorders: Educating students about mental health helps them develop self-awareness and resilience, reducing the likelihood of developing mental health disorders. Prevention is always preferable to treatment, and school-based programs play a significant role in this regard.

Social and Emotional Learning: Mental health programming often includes components of social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL helps students build healthy relationships, develop empathy, and handle social challenges, which are vital skills for life success.

“School-based mental health programming is an investment in the future of our society. It empowers students to understand, manage, and prioritize their mental health, setting the stage for a lifetime of well-being.”

Creating Supportive Environments: Schools that prioritize mental health create a safe and nurturing environment for students. When students feel valued, supported, and understood, they are more likely to thrive academically and emotionally.

Long-Term Benefits: The skills and knowledge acquired through school-based mental health programming have lifelong benefits. Students carry these lessons into adulthood, which can lead to healthier personal and professional lives, reduced healthcare costs, and less strain on mental health resources.

In conclusion, school-based mental health programming is an investment in the future of our society. It empowers students to understand, manage, and prioritize their mental health, setting the stage for a lifetime of well-being. By fostering resilience, reducing stigma, and promoting healthy habits, schools create an environment where students can thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. Recognizing the importance of mental health in education is not just a trend but a necessity for building a healthier and more prosperous future for all.

At CESA 3, we offer a variety of opportunities to increase mental health literacy for schools. We develop workshops and bring presenters into CESA, as well as provide on-site coaching and professional development for your districts. Our workshops are based on data collected via needs assessments and other sources from around the region and state. Several workshops and networking options are available at the CESA 3 website and are shared out with the pupil services and school counselor groups on a regular basis. All workshops are eligible for reimbursement using Get Kids Ahead and School Based Mental Health Services state funding sources.

To learn more, contact Niki Smith, Pupil Services Coordinator and Special Education Director at CESA 3.

How to develop confidence as a coach

Three takeaways from CESA 3's confident coaching workshop

BY MATT RENWICK AND JIM ADDISON

At CESA 3, we understand that in order to provide high-quality professional learning experiences for schools, we also have to invest in our own learning.

That is why we have devoted regular time and energy into building our capacity as coaches. As a network of coaches, we have defined our role as “collaborative professional growth providers; catalysts for empowering continuous learning.” Elena Aguilar, a prominent figure in the world of coaching, categorizes this work as art. Coaching requires a unique blend of skills, knowledge, and above all, confidence.

Where does this confidence as a coach come from? Recently, we hosted a one-day workshop at CESA 3 to explore this question. Joseph Kanke, statewide coaching coordinator at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, was our trustworthy guide. This article summarizes key takeaways from this workshop, shedding light on how coaches can develop the confidence necessary to excel in their roles.

Key Takeaway #1: There are specific competencies coaches can develop to increase confidence.

Joseph introduced our network to the Department of Public Instruction's list of coaching competencies. These skills are supported by the most current coaching literature.

Confident coaches:

- Have an equity mindset, including the ability to notice, disrupt, and dismantle deficit thinking and biases in others that uphold oppression.
- Can develop relationships based on trust, rapport and respect for clients and stakeholders.
- Communicate effectively in multiple contexts.
- Develop a knowledge base, for example understanding a range of coaching approaches.
- Can facilitate coaching conversations that promote reflection and challenge assumptions.
- Are able to facilitate change through the co-devel-



Matt Renwick



Jim Addison

opment of a client's action plans and goals, as well as analyze data that leads to improvement.

- Engage clients in reflective practice, with the goal of self-directedness.

Participants in the workshop took a self-assessment in these coaching competencies. The results were used to celebrate strengths and to decide on an area of improvement. (For more information about these coaching competencies, go to: <https://dpi.wi.gov/coaching>)

Key Takeaway #2: Confident coaches are intentional.

Coaching, regardless of the specific approach or philosophy employed, involves a recurring cycle for improvement. This structure for professional growth includes setting intentions.

These intentions are defined collaboratively by the coach and the client. An intention identifies what the aim is for improvement.

Setting an intention is crucial. It sets the direction for the entire coaching process.

- An intention influences the development of a plan of action. This “roadmap” is a logical pathway for achieving the desired outcomes. For example, if a teacher wants to improve student engagement during the literacy block, then the coach will guide their client to describe what student engagement looks like and feels like. This envisioning makes it easier to articulate the steps that need to be taken to reach this vision.

- A clear intention drives what type of data will be used during a coaching cycle. This data is collected, organized, and analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional change. Following the previous example, a teacher may document students' comments during the literacy block and later rate them based on the level of engagement demonstrated.

- Intentional coaching helps the client reflect on the outcomes of their efforts. A coach may ask: What worked well? What could have been done differently? These questions guide the client to think deeply about their practices and make potential changes for the future.

Used systematically, intentional coaching ensures that the time devoted to this type of professional learning is productive and meaningful.

Key Takeaway #3: Confident coaches facilitate change in behaviors through a change in beliefs.

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What is fluency and why does it matter?

BY KRISTIN GALLE

In the ever-evolving landscape of mathematics education, the concept of fluency has taken center stage. It's a term that has undergone a transformation in recent years, reflecting a more nuanced understanding of its significance. The 2021 update to the Wisconsin Standards for Mathematics, replacing "fluently" with "flexibly and efficiently," exemplifies this shift. But what does fluency entail, and why is it so crucial in the world of mathematics education?

Beyond Memorization: The Essence of Fluency

Traditionally, fluency in mathematics often implied the ability to swiftly and accurately recall facts and execute procedures, particularly when dealing with basic arithmetic operations involving whole numbers. Students were tasked with memorizing multiplication tables and addition facts, aiming for lightning-quick responses. While this form of fluency undoubtedly holds value, contemporary mathematics education perceives fluency as something more profound.



Kristin Galle

Procedural Fluency Components

Procedural fluency encompasses more than just rote memorization. It encompasses several key components:

- **Flexibility:** Mathematically fluent individuals can approach problems with a variety of strategies and methods. They are not bound to a single approach but can adapt their thinking to the specific problem at hand. This flexibility encourages critical and creative thinking, fostering a deeper understanding of mathematics.
- **Efficiency:** Efficiency in mathematics refers to accomplishing tasks with minimal time and effort while maintaining precision. Efficiency empowers students to tackle intricate problems with confidence and reduces the cognitive load associated with lengthy procedures.
- **Conceptual Understanding:** True fluency goes beyond merely knowing how to perform mathematical procedures; it involves comprehending why these procedures work. It entails grasping the underlying principles and connections between different mathematical concepts. This conceptual understanding ensures that students don't merely apply procedures mechanically

but can explain the rationale behind their solutions.

The Breadth of Fluency

Fluency is not confined to basic arithmetic operations involving whole numbers; it extends across a broad spectrum of mathematical domains. This includes operations with rational numbers, finding equivalents, making conversions, solving equations, and much more. Essentially, fluency is applicable to almost every mathematical procedure, making it a fundamental skill set.

As articulated by Bay-Williams and SanGiovanni in their book, "Figuring Out Fluency in Mathematics Teaching and Learning," fluency can be likened to the convergence of these diverse mathematical domains. It represents a multi-dimensional skill that equips students to navigate the intricate world of mathematics effectively.

Wisconsin Standards for Mathematics, 2021: Embracing Flexibility and Efficiency

The substitution of "fluently" with "flexibly and efficiently" in the Wisconsin Standards for Mathematics in 2021 signifies a profound shift in our approach to mathematics education. It underscores that fluency is not about mere memorization but about developing the capacity to think critically, select appropriate strategies, and execute procedures efficiently.

This adjustment aligns with the contemporary vision of mathematics education, aiming to empower students with the skills they need to become proficient problem solvers, critical thinkers, and lifelong learners. It acknowledges that every student deserves access to instruction that addresses all facets of procedural fluency.

The Significance of Fluency

Fluency in mathematics holds immense significance for various reasons:

- **Foundation:** Fluency serves as the foundation for more advanced mathematical concepts. Without a solid grasp of basic operations and procedures, students may struggle when encountering more complex mathematical ideas.
- **Problem-Solving:** Fluency equips students with the tools they need to tackle real-world problems and mathematical challenges confidently. It enables them to approach unfamiliar situations with adaptability and resourcefulness.
- **Critical Thinking:** Developing fluency fosters critical

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The power of coaching for teachers, school leaders

Coaching in the classroom has revolutionized the way educators teach

BY ELLIE OLSON

In the dynamic landscape of education, coaching has emerged as a powerful tool, transforming both the classroom experience and the leadership dynamics within schools. This article explores the profound impact of coaching in education, emphasizing its benefits for both teachers and school leaders.



Ellie Olson

Coaching in the classroom has revolutionized the way educators teach and students learn. When teachers engage in coaching, they receive personalized support and guidance to enhance their instructional strategies. This one-on-one collaboration allows educators to reflect on their practices, set goals for improvement, and receive constructive feedback. Research consistently shows that teachers who receive coaching tend to implement new

techniques and strategies more effectively, leading to improved student outcomes. By harnessing the power of coaching, educators are better equipped to adapt to diverse learning needs and create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment.

Furthermore, coaching extends its reach beyond the classroom, benefiting school leaders and administrators. Effective leadership is crucial for the success of any educational institution. School leaders who embrace coaching cultivate a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Coaching provides them with a supportive environment to address leadership challenges, develop strategic plans, and refine their management skills. This not only enhances their ability to lead their schools effectively

but also fosters a collaborative and growth-oriented atmosphere among staff members.

Coaching also plays a pivotal role in fostering professional development and teacher retention. Educators who receive regular coaching are more likely to feel valued and supported in their careers. This, in turn, leads to higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover rates. As a result, schools benefit from a stable and motivated teaching staff, which is essential for maintaining consistency and quality in education.

Moreover, coaching is a powerful tool for fostering innovation and adaptability in the ever-evolving world of education. Through coaching, teachers and school leaders can stay updated with the latest pedagogical trends and best practices. They can explore innovative teaching methods, technology integration, and new assessment strategies. This adaptability is

crucial for preparing students to thrive in a rapidly changing global landscape.

In conclusion, coaching has emerged as a transformative force in education, impacting both the classroom and school leadership. It empowers educators to enhance their instructional practices, fosters a culture of continuous improvement, and supports teacher retention. Additionally, coaching helps schools remain adaptable and innovative in the face of changing educational landscapes. By recognizing and harnessing the power of coaching, our schools can nurture a more effective and dynamic learning environment for students and a more competent and satisfied workforce for teachers and school leaders alike.

Ellie Olson, a professional certified coach, is CESA 3's Leadership Coaching/Educator Effectiveness Coordinator.

Hopin

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in the platform's capabilities. As they bid farewell to MyQuickReg and embrace this new era, CESA 3 paves the way for an exciting future of seamless registration experienc-

es and unforgettable educational events.

In a world where technology rapidly evolves, CESA 3's move to Hopin stands as a testament to their dedication to progress and their unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional educational experiences. With this transition, they send a

clear message: out with the old and in with the new, embracing innovation to shape the future of event registration.

Kristin Galle is a CESA 3 Math/Science/Technology consultant, Library 21 coordinator and Digital Learning Coach.



Brad Van Epps photo

CESA 3 hosted the Holocaust Educational Resources Center (HERC) and 23 southwest Wisconsin educators in September. HERC was being featured by the Milwaukee Jewish Federation that day and a camera crew was present.

CESA 3 hosts Holocaust Educational Resources Center

BY BRAD VAN EPPS

CESA 3 hosted the Holocaust Educational Resources Center (HERC) and 23 teachers from southwest Wisconsin on Sept. 23 for a workshop designed to meet the requirements of Act 30.



Brad Van Epps

The Wisconsin State Legislature passed Act 30 to ensure that middle and high school students are sure to

learn about the Holocaust and other genocides to build understanding that will help us all learn from history.

The teachers were thrilled with the practicality and usefulness of the materials shared. HERC was being featured by the Milwaukee Jewish Federation that day and a camera crew was in attendance. The crew wanted to tell the story of southwest Wisconsin, an area with few Jews, but is home to educators who still embrace and desire to hear the stories that through education will help us all heal.

Mark Chambers from Weston and

Becky Mai from Cassville were interviewed about their experience with the materials since both of them attended the first HERC workshop in April 2022 and have been using what they've learned in their classrooms.

Sam Goldberg from HERC said, "We love coming to southwest Wisconsin and CESA 3. "There's more passion and interest in this subject from educators here than almost any other area of the state."

Brad Van Epps is CESA 3's Educator Development & Support Coordinator.

What is fluency?

Continued from page 6

thinking skills, allowing students to analyze problems from different angles and choose the most suitable strategies for solving them.

- **Lifelong Learning:** Fluency isn't just about excelling in school; it's a skill that serves individuals throughout their lives. Whether in everyday financial decisions or professional endeavors, mathematical fluency remains invaluable.

In conclusion, fluency in mathematics has evolved into a multifaceted skill encompassing flexibility, effi-

ciency, and conceptual understanding. It is no longer solely about memorization but about empowering students to think critically, adapt to diverse situations, and comprehend the underlying principles of mathematics. The revised Wisconsin Standards for Mathematics in 2021 signal a paradigm shift towards this modern understanding of fluency, highlighting its central role in equipping students for a dynamic and mathematically rich future.

Kristin Galle is a CESA 3 Math/Science/Technology consultant, Library 21 coordinator and Digital Learning Coach.

Meet Katelyn Oellerich, Social Emotional Learning Coach and Consultant

BY KATELYN OELLERICH

I'd like to introduce myself, my name is Katelyn Oellerich and I am the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) coach and consultant here at CESA 3. My role includes supporting schools with individual and school-wide consultation efforts, coaching teams to enhance behavior responses, and supporting student and staff mental health and well-being.

I have previous experience as a school psychologist in the Mineral Point Unified School District, Darlington School District, and with the Madison Metropolitan School District. In addition to my role as a school psychologist, I recently published a book through



Katelyn Oellerich

Routledge, "Using CBT and Mindfulness to Support Student Anxiety," am a lecturer with the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse School Psychology graduate program, and am a Clinical Counseling Intern. While in Mineral Point, I most enjoyed the opportunities to build connection between the community and school and was able to do this by facilitating the program "Families and Schools Together" (FAST) which included family and community building sessions; I also worked with leaders in the community and school to implement Mineral Point's first Mental Health Awareness week; and served on and led Iowa County's Mental Health Coalition.

My husband and I both grew up and graduated from the Mineral Point Unified School District and are grateful to be raising our children right outside of the town. As both a parent of school-aged children, and a past school staff member, I recognize the challenges that schools are faced with on a daily basis. Through my work with CESA 3, I hope to provide school staff with a framework to reduce behavioral challenges while also enhancing well-being. I welcome the opportunity to support your school and students in bridging the gap from where they are to where they want to be.

Katelyn Oellerich is CESA 3's Social Emotional Learning Coach and Consultant.

Confident coaching workshop

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Coaching is not merely about making different decisions in the classroom or adopting new teaching strategies. While these elements are important, they often represent surface-level improvements. Sustainable growth occurs when there is a fundamental shift in beliefs.

The CESA 3 Confident Coaching workshop emphasized the significance of helping colleagues examine their beliefs and ways of being in the classroom.

To understand this transformational process, Joseph facilitated simulated coaching conversations. Participants could adopt a role in a provided case study, or engage in an actual problem of practice. This experience helped us understand the importance of paying attention to what the client is saying and doing, as well as what they were not sharing. As coaches, we used this information to help our clients see their situations from a new perspective through the use of paraphrasing, pausing, and posing questions.

What do these three takeaways have in common?

Developing competence, being intentional, and paying attention to people's beliefs can be learned. Just

about anyone can be a coach. And that doesn't mean educators need to have a "coach" label in order to support colleagues in continuous learning.

As learners, we still have more questions after this informative workshop:

- What is the coach's role within schoolwide professional development?
- How do coaches help a school achieve curriculum coherence?
- How can leadership ensure the culture is supportive for coaching to thrive?
- When is feedback most effective, and when is not?
- What time, materials, and other resources are needed to ensure successful coaching experiences?

One more thing we do know: effective coaching doesn't happen in isolation. With that, be on the lookout this school year for an opportunity to join our coaching network. We are inviting anyone in our region and beyond who sees themselves as a leader in their profession to engage in our community and cultivate their own coaching practice. For questions and more information, contact Matt at mrenwick@cesa3.org or at 608-391-5856.

Matt Renwick is CESA 3's Systems Coach and Jim Addison is CESA 3's Literacy Coach.

First-year teachers start school year on the right foot with CESA 3

BY BRAD VAN EPPS

First-year educators gathered at CESA 3 after school on Sept. 20 to begin a year's worth of workshops designed to get these beginning teachers off on the right foot.



Brad Van Epps

Thirty-six teachers were in attendance to hear Brad Van Epps, CESA 3's Educator Development and Support Coordinator welcome them and focus on classroom manage-



Brad Van Epps photo

More than 30 first-year educators gathered at CESA 3 in September to begin a year's worth of workshops.

ment.

The best part of the evening was the opportunity for all of these teachers to connect and discuss the experiences they are having in the 16 school districts in attendance.

Our new educators are all looking forward to learning more each month as this ongoing series will teach them more about school communication, special education, legal issues, the teacher

retirement system, and much, much more.

Brad Van Epps is CESA 3's Educator Development & Support Coordinator.

Focus on influence

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expenditures based on current data and circumstances, accounting for variables like health insurance and salary increases. Communicate these financial realities to the community to dispel misunderstandings during fiscal challenges.

3. Community Engagement: Make sure your community is aware of your goals and priorities and understands their significance. Engage community members by in-

viting them to contribute in various ways, whether through volunteering, sharing expertise, or providing resources. Effective engagement begins with clear communication and feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and advisory committees. Collecting feedback from recent graduates can also provide valuable insights.

4. Data-Driven Decision Making: Recognize that each district is unique, and priorities may differ. Utilize feedback and data to objectively measure progress, avoiding decisions based

on gut feelings or unverified assumptions. Informed decision-making helps mitigate fear-driven choices and promotes evidence-based solutions.

5. Balancing the Focus: Beyond compliance, policies should address essential topics like equity, bullying, student mental health, and potential changes to education laws. Foster a commitment to continuous improvement among all district stakeholders, from bus drivers to board members.

The motivation behind this theme is a recognition

that we have often been mired in problems and conflicts, diverting our leadership focus toward problem-solving. There is a pressing need to shift our focus to address the challenges in our districts with priority and purpose. We cannot do this alone; we need the support of our parents and the community. However, they must understand the solutions. How are you leveraging your influence to enhance the quality of education for your students?

Dr. Jamie Nutter is CESA 3's Agency Administrator.



Contributed photo

Project SEARCH received the honor of being nominated as the 2023 University of Wisconsin-Platteville Homecoming Parade Marshals.

Project SEARCH interns enjoy exciting start to year

BY TRICIA DAVIS

The Project SEARCH program at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and the opportunities it provides for students with disabilities to gain employment skills and experiences is up and running again this year. This collaboration between the university, school districts, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Hodan Community Services, and CESA 3 is an invaluable experience for students with disabilities.

The program's structure consists of interns attending daily classes to learn employability skills. The

interns gain practical experience through three, 10-week internships in various campus locations. These locations range from custodial and grounds positions, dining services, and office settings. From here the interns learn what careers they may or may not be interested in. In addition, the Project SEARCH program also takes time to include opportunities for interns to visit area businesses and plan fun outings, which fosters a well-rounded learning experience.

The fact that Project SEARCH has been on the UW-Platteville campus for

seven years is a testament to its success and impact. Beyond the employment skills, the program also focuses on building a sense of pride, encouraging friendships, and instilling confidence in the interns, which are crucial for their personal growth and development. Following graduation on June 4, 2024, the interns will have a resume, experiences and a team of people, who will assist them with the opportunity of finding employment.

Recently, Project SEARCH was given the exciting honor of being elected as the Parade Marshals

for the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Homecoming Parade. Interns from past and present were welcome to attend and all made this event a success for the Project SEARCH community.

If you have any questions regarding the Project SEARCH program please contact Jim Nelson at the CESA 3 office: 608-822-3276.

Watch for future updates from our incredible interns!

Tricia Davis is CESA 3's Project SEARCH instructor.

UNITED



**Business, Education and Economic Development
unite to address
manufacturing workforce needs**

By JESSICA HELMS

More than 135 students, educators, manufacturers, and economic development professionals joined to celebrate October as Manufacturing Month at the 18th annual Business and Education Summit, a collaborative effort by CESA 3, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, the University of Wisconsin – Platteville, and the Southwest Wisconsin Alliance for Growth (SWAG) in Manufacturing at Southwest Tech on Wednesday, October 11, 2023. The goal of the Summit was to create partnerships that will result in collaborative solutions to address the workforce needs of the present and the future in the manufacturing industry that drive regional economic development.



Jessica Helms

“It is critical that we come together as communities to develop plans to highlight the positive aspects of manufacturing tied to the growth of our residents and communities in Southwest Wisconsin,” said Glen Brunner, Quality & ROS Manager at Rockwell Automation in Richland Center and SWAG in Manufacturing Co-Chair. “SWAG in Manufacturing is a partnership developed to help communicate these positive aspects of manufacturing in our region and develop methods to assist our future workforce to make manufacturing the career of choice in Southwest Wisconsin.”

Cybersecurity and Manufacturing

Keynote speaker Aaron Holverson, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College Cybersecurity Instructor, and his students shared a dynamic presentation focused on Industry 4.0, the fourth industrial revolution characterized by increasing automation, smart machines, smart factories, and informed data. Today’s machines are equipped with sensors that feature an IP address that allows the machines to connect to other web-enabled devices. In addition to making manufacturing processes more efficient, this level of connectivity exposes new entry paths for malicious attacks and malware. The group shocked the crowd with details on information security and demonstrated how easily a hacker can gain access to an organization’s programmable logic control systems and disrupt or shut down operations, along with create serious concerns for data security.

Keep Local Talent Local

Ela Kakde, Regional Economic Development Director for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), showed support for the efforts taking

place through the funding provided by the Workforce Innovation Grant and extended support to current businesses and future entrepreneurs. The WEDC is committed to creating and maintaining a business climate that allows organizations and entrepreneurs to maximize their potential. Working with more than six hundred statewide partners, including regional economic development organizations, academic institutions, and industry groups, they enhance our communities, support business development, advance industry innovation, tap into global markets, and develop a talented workforce to help Wisconsin realize its full economic potential.

“From an economic development perspective, training our students for these great paying careers right here in our communities is how we are going to keep these students in our region to live, work, and play after they graduate high school,” said Jessica Helms, CESA 3 Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator. “The goal of the Business & Education Summit was to create solutions for the workforce needs of the present and the future that will benefit our manufacturing employers, our stu-

“ From an economic development perspective, training our students for these great paying careers right here in our communities is how we are going to keep these students in our region to live, work and play after they graduate high school. ”

dents, and our communities.”

SWAG in Manufacturing, the region’s newest industry alliance

SWAG in Manufacturing, the region’s newest industry alliance, shared how the region’s manufacturing industry is uniting forces to address common challenges. A panel of SWAG in Manufacturing representatives provided invaluable insights on what they look for in employees, the changing manufacturing environment, and common industry misconceptions. The employer panel was moderated by Ron Brisbois, Director of the Grant County Economic Development Corporation. Panel participants included:

- Theresa Sander from Biddick, Inc. in Montfort
- Tina Stoeffler from Truvant in Prairie du Chien and Boscobel



Robert Callahan photo

Ron Brisbois, Director of the Grant County Economic Development Corporation, led an employee panel at the 18th annual Business and Education Summit. Panel participants were, from left: Jason Knapp, 3M, Prairie du Chien; Tiffany Lense, Sigma, Darlington; Tina Stoeffler, Truvariant, Prairie du Chien and Boscobel; Wes Rowe, Cardinal Glass, Spring Green; Theresa Sander, Biddick, Inc., Montfort; and Glen Bruner, Rockwell, Richland Center.

- Tiffany Lense from Sigma in Darlington
- Jason Knapp from 3M in Prairie du Chien
- Wes Rowe from Cardinal Glass in Spring Green
- Glen Bruner from Rockwell in Richland Center

“The changing workforce has created new challenges for manufacturing companies whether it be the new workforce’s different life priorities, language barriers, cultural barriers, and even a lack of basic housing resources to sustain the workforce we need to fill our open jobs and make our products,” said Lense, Talent and Culture Manager at Sigma in Darlington and Co-Chair of SWAG in Manufacturing. “SWAG in Manufacturing hopes to help support our communities, focus on education and awareness of what manufacturing brings, and allow people to make manufacturing their career of choice.”

“Manufacturing plants offer opportunities such as machine operators, electrical and mechanical techs, engineers, robotics and automation techs, Human Resources, Supply Chain Management, Accountants, Environmental Health and Safety, as well as multiple leadership opportunities and other specialized jobs,” said Knapp, 3M Prairie du Chien Plant Engineering & Security Manager and SWAG in Manufacturing Co-

“ For those looking for great careers, we want them to look at their opportunities in manufacturing first. ”

Chair. “For those looking for great careers, we want them to look at their opportunities in manufacturing first.”

Academic and Career Planning using Regional Career Pathways

Darla Burton, CESA 3 Regional Career Pathways Coordinator, shared information on regional career pathways (RCP) and the benefits of utilizing an RCP map for academic and career planning. For high school students, regional career pathways align education and training with the needs of the local job market, provide

a range of postsecondary options, result in a high school diploma with at least one industry-recognized credential, and help students enter or advance within an occupation. For schools, career pathways provide a specific

academic and career (ACP) plan for occupations that are in demand in Wisconsin. This allows schools to focus on student and curriculum activities with input and support from regional employers and higher education. For employers, regional career pathways make partnerships with a greater number of schools possible. This allows employers to shape the future talent pipeline, foster young talent, and highlight local career opportunities across an entire region.

“Regional Career Pathway (RCP) maps bridge the gap between education and employment, benefiting students, schools, and employers alike,” Burton said. “The maps serve as a unifying force, providing students with enhanced educational prospects, schools with local, tailored strategies to prepare the future workforce, and employers with the means to actively participate in molding a brighter, more prosperous future for their communities.”

Industry Recognized Credentials for High School Students

Tom Martin, CESA 3 Career & Life Ready Coordinator, announced that CESA 3 credentialed more high school students than any high school entity in North America through the National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3). Students can earn industry recognized credentials utilizing CESA 3 training kits available for school districts participating in the Carl Perkins grant. Schools who have educators that have completed Tom’s train-the-trainer courses can check out training kits for:

- **Snap-On® and Starrett® Precision Measurement Instrument Certification** – The skills acquired during this comprehensive training are valuable tools for life that can lead to rewarding careers in a vast array of industries in the global marketplace.

Precision measuring is the cornerstone of quality in products and services many people rely upon each day. This certification includes hands-on training on instruments that are vital to engineering, manufacturing, aerospace, power generation, and natural resources, to name a few. Students who earn this certification will be proficient in the use of a variety of instruments ranging from tapes and rules to calipers and micrometers.

- **Snap-On® Multimeter Certification** – The knowledge and experience gained in this critical discipline are tools for life essential to a successful career in critical industries such as automotive repair, transportation, wind power, manufacturing, HVAC, and robotics. This certification includes training on the problem-solving capabilities of Snap-On® digital multimeters — the

same technology used by professionals in the workplace. Training is focused on subjects from basic applications to advanced troubleshooting. This certification provides a widely recognized endorsement of technical expertise and demonstrated achievement. When students successfully complete this Snap-On® certification, they obtain one of the most requested skills in the industry today.

- **AC/DC Fundamentals** – Decrease production downtime, improve efficiency, and increase output – all these factors hinge on understanding electricity and how to work with it safely. These courses have been specifically developed to give students the knowledge and skills required to enable them to work safely and effectively with electricity. The lab components of the

training offer the student the opportunity to build, test and troubleshoot AC/DC circuits and examine the operating voltages and currents related to proper circuit operation. Technicians will use various instruments to make circuit measurements and calculations.

- **Torque** – In-depth knowledge of torque theory and experience in wrench selection and torque application form tools for life that enable technicians to be productive, efficient, and safe when using torque instruments in a wide variety of industries.

Whether just starting out or a veteran of the shop, a working knowledge of torque theory and application is a fundamental requirement for any engineering, maintenance service or repair position. This certification course includes hands-on classroom training and advanced lab exercises, providing a widely recognized endorsement of technical expertise and demonstrated achievement. Students who successfully complete the course obtain the training and professionalism required to be safe, accurate and proficient on the job.

- **Mechatronics** – Our Mechatronics Training System and curriculum provides a practical approach for new training or upscaling existing skills with learners



Robert Callahan photo

Mike Dietrich, Vice President of LAB Midwest, joined CESA 3 to discuss a Manufacturing Youth Apprenticeship Academy pilot program at River Valley High School.

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Changing the paradigm



Robert Callahan photo

CESA 3 offers its Precision Measuring Instruments kit to its 31 member schools. Nearly 4,500 credentials have been awarded to high school students.

Upskilling Gen Z with your Career & Life Ready Team

BY TOM MARTIN

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report from August 2022, individuals who earn an industry credential on average earn \$2,000 more annually and are more likely to be employed than those who did not earn a credential. In addition, a recent Journal of Research in Technical Careers study dated May 2023 found that “earning a certification in high school prepared students for success in both 2-year and 4-year colleges.”



Tom Martin

Essentially, through volumes of reading from both academic and industrial bases, the verdict is that credentials are necessary given the microsecond changes in technology. Given this momentum, CESA 3 continues to lead the state and now North America in providing rigorous and relevant credentials to our high school students in southwest Wisconsin. These include:

Precision Measuring Instruments – students are exposed to and interact with 22 of the most utilized measuring instruments throughout all occupations. CESA 3 recognized from its interaction with industry that our students were not as native to measurement analysis, computation, and conversion as they should be. Today, after awarding nearly

4,500 credentials to high school students, we are hearing that students are much more adept at measuring with frequency and accuracy. We do not have formal research to connect the credentials to the change in skill, but firmly believe one has impacted the other.

Multimeter – students garner the functionality of a digital multimeter. Whether it’s the elementary assessment of DC voltage or more complex duty cycle reading, students not only learn the why of each function, but can now apply it to real world problems in their CTE courses, Youth Apprenticeship programs and soon, life.

AC/DC Fundamentals – these

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Youth Apprenticeship experience helped Guzman discover her passion

BY BRIANNA GUZMAN

Last year, I completed the Youth Apprenticeship program as a Certified Nursing Assistant.

The program helped me because I was able to gain knowledge and learn skills that are helpful as a CNA. Through this opportunity, I am more prepared and know how to work with my residents and assist them with their everyday life activities.

The Youth Apprenticeship program paid for me to take the CNA class, along with other classes that I received college credit for completing.

While gaining experience as a CNA, I discovered that my passion is helping others and am now attending Winona State University with a major in nursing.

I am extremely thankful for the opportunities that the youth apprenticeship program has provided me!

Brianna Guzman is a former Youth Apprenticeship student at Fennimore High School and was Salutatorian of Fennimore High School's 2023 graduating class.



Contributed photo

Brianna Guzman, a former Youth Apprenticeship student, is now attending Winona State University for nursing.

Upskilling Gen Z

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certifications have been specifically developed to give students the knowledge and skills required to enable them to work safely and effectively with electricity. The lab components of the training offer the student the opportunity to build, test and troubleshoot AC/DC circuits and examine the operating voltages and currents related to proper circuit operation. Technicians will use various instruments to make circuit measurements and calculations.

Torque - torque is universal in the applications seen throughout industry. Students understand the concept both mathematically and scientifically as a life cycle. By the end, students can look for a reading, know its tolerance, but most importantly have strategies in tow to utilize if the adhesion is not made

properly.

Mechatronics - This is now a new discipline which marries mechanical engineering with electronics. With the advancement of AI (Artificial Intelligence), students are designing and building machines that now think on their own.

Due to the efforts of our schools, CESA 3 has earned fifth in certifications earned in North America in 2023 as of July 31! Higher than the University of British Columbia, Canada's leading engineering school.

This is a big deal for us as we change the paradigm here in Southwest Wisconsin. We, your Career & Life Ready team, are adamant about career readiness. Through our Education for Employment contract with your district, we can provide over \$400,000 of equipment and training every year for your contract.

While 1,217 certifications are nice, our goal at CESA 3 is that every one of our more than 9,000 high school students in our nearly 40 schools

earn a credential. Why? So that we can supply our region with the best trained workforce, which means a greater efficiency quotient in the workplace, which means more opportunities, better employee enhancements, quality life and what we hope are increased student enrollments.

We, the Career & Life Ready team, thank you for your continued commitment to our region. Through our work with IRC's, we know that an impact is being made and it's all because of you.

If you're not sure about whether IRC's are offered at your school, please contact your school administration. If you would like to learn more about these credentials and the regional vision we have for them, contact Tom Martin, tmartin@cesa3.org, for more information.

Tom Martin is a CESA 3 Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator.

Top Youth Apprenticeship schools honored

BY CHUCK KELLER

The CESA 3 Youth Apprenticeship Consortium had a record year in 2022-2023, with over 400 students participating.

The reason for this is the hard work and dedication of professional educators in our member schools. The top producing Youth Apprenticeship schools were honored recently at local presentations. The criteria for the top school ranking is based on student participation rate. Youth Apprenticeship participation rates are determined by the total number of 11th and 12th grade students in a school divided by the number of Youth Apprentices.

One requirement of the Youth Apprenticeship program is a student must be in the 11th or 12th grade to participate. We feel this is the most equitable way to compare programs as our largest school has 248 eligible student available to participate while our smallest has 31.

The statewide average participation rate is about 6 percent. The CESA 3 participation rate average is 14.76 percent. A total of 27 CESA 3 schools exceeded the statewide average.

The top producing schools are:

Ithaca 46.27 percent participation

Barneveld 31.43 percent participation

Riverdale 31.43 percent participation

Iowa-Grant 28.57 percent participation

North Crawford 27.27 percent participation

Mineral Point 26.67 percent participation

Wauzeka-Steuben 22.58 percent participation



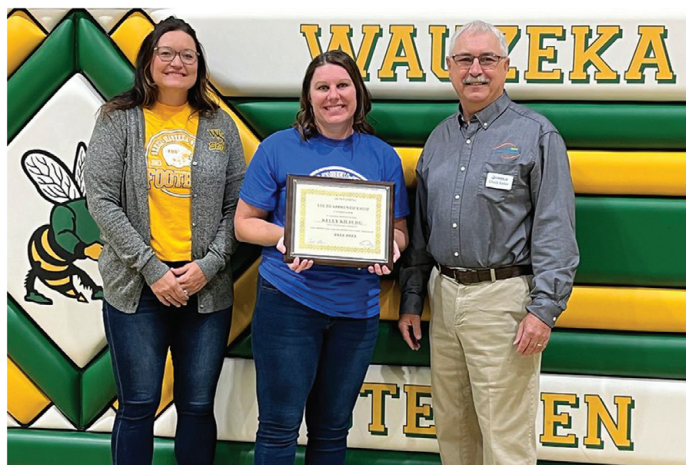
Contributed photo

Monica Kershner (left) and Meredith Bevan receive the award for the Ithaca School District. Ithaca was tops in CESA 3, with 46.27 percent participation.



Contributed photo

The North Crawford School District and staff, specifically Stephanie Colsch (with award), were honored for being one of the top-producing Youth Apprenticeship programs in Southwest Wisconsin. In 2022-23 North Crawford had 17 students successfully participate in the program which is approximately 26 percent of the eligible population. North Crawford has seen significant growth in Youth Apprenticeship participation. In 2020-2021, 10 students participated.



Contributed photo

The Wauzeka-Steuben District and staff, specifically Kelly Kilburg (middle), were honored for being one of the top-producing Youth Apprenticeship programs in southwest Wisconsin. District Principal Tiffany Dums (left) joins Kelly to receive an award from Chuck Keller (right), CESA 3 Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator. In 2022-23 Wauzeka-Steuben had nine students successfully participate in the program which is approximately 29 percent of the eligible population.

Argyle 22.22 percent participation
 Boscobel 21.01 percent participation
 Potosi 20.00 percent participation

Chuck Keller is a CESA 3 Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator.



Contributed photo

CESA 3 Youth Apprenticeship Coordinator Chuck Keller presents Rhonda Scallon from the Boscobel School District (left) with a plaque for being honored as one of the top-producing Youth Apprenticeship programs in southwest Wisconsin. In 2022-23 Boscobel had 27 students successfully participate in the program which is approximately 23 percent of the eligible population. Statewide the average participation rate is about 6 percent. Boscobel has seen significant growth in Youth Apprenticeship participation in the last two years. In 2020-2021, nine students participated.



Contributed photo

Angela Schulting, Barneveld High School Guidance Counselor, accepts a plaque celebrating Barneveld as one of the top-producing Youth Apprenticeship programs in southwest Wisconsin. Barneveld was second only to Ithaca in CESA 3, with 31.43 percent participation.



Contributed photo

Art Pronschinske (left) and Darla Burton accept the award on behalf of the Iowa-Grant School District. In addition to her role as Regional Pathways Coordinator, Darla and Art work together on the youth apprenticeship program at Iowa-Grant, who was the fourth top producing youth apprenticeship school district for the 2022-2023 school year.



Contributed photo

CESA 3 Career & Life Ready Coordinator Tom Martin presents the award for the sixth top producing youth apprenticeship school district to Erika Brunson of Mineral Point (right). The Mineral Point School District has a 26.67 percent participation rate, as compared to the average participation rate of 14.76 percent.



Contributed photo

Tyson Gehrke, a senior at Fennimore High School, has been a part of the Youth Apprenticeship program since January. He currently works at Community First Bank as a teller.

Gehrke poised for future success thanks to Youth Apprenticeship

BY TYSON GEHRKE

Hello, my name is Tyson Gehrke. I am currently a senior at Fennimore High School, and I have been a part of the Youth Apprenticeship program since January of my junior year. After taking many of my high school business classes and starting a job at Community First Bank in Fennimore as a teller, my business teacher influenced me to join the Youth Apprenticeship program. Through the Youth Apprenticeship program, CESA 3 has paid for me to take classes at Southwest Tech to further my education. Currently, I am taking online accounting

“ The classes I am taking through the Youth Apprenticeship program are building the foundation for me as I plan to major in Agriculture Business with a minor in Finance, to hopefully get into agriculture finance when I am finished with college. ”

classes and a night class focused on Farm Business & Production Management. Through my time in the Youth Apprenticeship program, it has made me realize that I want to be in the Ag Business field in the future.

The classes I am taking through the Youth Apprenticeship program are building the foundation for me as I plan to major in Agriculture Business with a minor in Finance, to hopefully get into agriculture finance when I am finished with college.

Working at Community First Bank has allowed me to grow professionally. My everyday tasks are to communicate with

customers as a teller and answer any questions that they may have. I have also had the opportunity to learn about the behind-the-scenes operations at a bank. This experience will help me in the future as I pursue opportunities as an ag lender. Even if that is not my eventual career, I will be involved in ag business one way or another, so growing those skills with customers now is preparing me for the future.

Knowing the why of transactions is important while working at a bank and what I am learning in the classroom connects to that why.

I have always been strong in school but have always had an interest in agriculture since I was young. I am currently active with FFA and want to continue being active within the organization after high school. In high school, I realized a passion that I had for business and finance. I joined Future Business Leaders of America during my sophomore year of high school and have won numerous competitions in accounting. This experience made me want

to be involved within finance as it was something that I was good at and had an interest in. It was also shortly after that when I started working at the bank. Having a basic knowledge of finance has allowed me to excel in my current position at the bank.

The Youth Apprenticeship program has set me up for life after high school because of the connections I have made through it.

I have great co-workers at the bank who will be there if I need anything after high school. Also, having the connection to the bank could help me in the future get a job or a recommendation from a co-worker. Likewise, I am excited about the connections that I can make through my college classes at Southwest Tech. Getting to know the teachers could help me in the future as they could recommend me for job positions. There are also guest speakers in my Farm Business & Production Management night class, and I am looking forward to meeting them and hearing about their experiences.

Overall, the Youth Apprenticeship Program has helped me greatly in determining a potential career path.

I would recommend this to other students as it is a chance to not only get a higher level of education for

free, but also on-the-job experience. I know from my work experience that I will be much more comfortable talking to future customers than I was before the program. This is a great opportunity for students to take advantage of, and if done correctly can save money, as well as make money while working in high school.

The Youth Apprenticeship program has set me up for future success, and I could not be more pleased with the work experience I have gained and the education I have received.

From Kimberly Perry, Community First Bank Branch Manager/Customer Experience Center Coordinator: "I have had the privilege of working with Tyson for almost a year. He is a hardworking, dedicated, driven, intelligent individual and the Youth Apprenticeship program is perfect for fostering these traits in a work environment at an early age. I am continuously impressed by all of the activities Tyson is involved in at school and the community, while maintaining his focus on school,

his job, and his future.

"The Youth Apprenticeship program helps show young adults how to hone in on the skills that make them a desirable employee.

"As an employer, we get a unique glimpse into the day-to-day activities the student participates in, and we learn about additional opportunities to support our community.

We also have an incredible

opportunity to help develop the innate skills of the student, as well as those that may not come naturally. We get to give them a sneak peek into all the different roles we have at the bank, which can be beneficial for career planning. As a leader, I am passionate about helping my team get to where they want to be in life, not just at CFB. With Tyson, I get to do that every day. He has big dreams. We know we cannot keep him forever because he's determined to get where he wants to go, but if his experience with us is a great one, he'll keep us in mind in the future.

"I would definitely recommend the Youth Apprenticeship program to other employers because these students are our future. If we can develop their skills, support them in their goals, and help them get to their next steps in life, that is an honor. It benefits everyone."

“ I would definitely recommend the Youth Apprenticeship program to other employers because these students are our future. If we can develop their skills, support them in their goals, and help them get to their next steps in life, that is an honor. It benefits everyone. ”

Continued from page 15

gaining valuable hands-on experience in basic motor control, switches, relay logic, and pneumatics. Students learn the fundamental concepts to safely design machine systems and wiring as well as an introduction to automation control components. Our practical approach to training utilizes industry-standard components, designed to simulate industrial systems that are modular and offer connectivity with infinite opportunities for continued learning to close the skills gap.

Manufacturing Youth Apprenticeship Academy

Mike Dietrich, Vice President of LAB Midwest, joined CESA 3 to discuss the Manufacturing Youth Apprenticeship Academy pilot program taking place at River Valley High School. Kickstarted by a \$50,000 award from a Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Fab Lab Grant, this phased project provides advanced manufacturing skills and enriches learning with real world experiences such as job shadowing, industry tours, and career camps. The vision of the CESA 3 Career & Life Ready team is to create a state-of-the-art Advanced Manufacturing Academy to serve multiple CESA 3 school districts that can be replicated throughout Southwest Wisconsin and create a reliable model that can serve other rural areas in the nation. Participating students will be ready for today's advanced manufacturing careers by developing the necessary foundational skills and knowledge.

The Academy will implement Industry 4.0, a four-course curriculum series specifically for advanced manufacturing to include Introduction to Mechatronics, Introduction to Industrial Control Systems, Robot Operation & Programming, and Introduction to Industrial Internet of Things. Students will also earn up to nine industry recognized credentials and complete a one- or two-year manufacturing Youth Apprenticeship.

To continue to drive this initiative forward, CESA 3 submitted a grant proposal to the Career Z Challenge sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Labor, and Commerce and was one of eighty-one semi-finalists across the nation. As a Career Z Challenge semi-finalist, CESA 3 is receiving technical assistance to support the refinement and implementation of the project from Kaptivate, a national strategic communications firm helping clients navigate change, along with the opportunity to participate in a community of practice and access to learning workshops, peer collaboration opportunities, and other resources. The final phase of

“ Through the Career Z Challenge, Kaptivate will empower us to pivot and essentially thrive in a hyper-connected world through innovate strategies and impactful communication platforms. As Kaptivate is data-driven and people-focused, their input toward Career Z will be innovative. ”

the Career Z Challenge will occur in July 2024, with the grant award announcement in August 2025.

“Through the Career Z Challenge, Kaptivate will empower us to pivot and essentially thrive in a hyper-connected world through innovative strategies and impactful communication platforms. As Kaptivate is data-driven and people-focused, their input toward Career Z will be innovative,” Martin said. “Kaptivate has strong program management experience in communications, digital marketing, change and technology adoption, and open innovation. Together, we will create a comprehensive set of tools and strategies we need to articulate and realize sustainable success of the Manufacturing Youth Apprenticeship Academy.”

Youth Apprenticeship

Helms was joined by John Keckhaver, Youth Apprenticeship Section Chief from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, to talk about the Workforce Innovation Grant and the Youth Apprenticeship program.

CESA 3 manages the region's youth apprenticeship consortium on behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. The Youth Apprenticeship program provides high school juniors and seniors with an opportunity to explore their chosen career pathway while allowing employers to develop a qualified and committed workforce. Any high school junior or senior on track to graduate is eligible to apply to participate in the youth apprenticeship program. In addition to gaining valuable work experience, students earn at least minimum wage and receive related instruction at a value of up to six college credits for each year they participate in the program. Upon completion of the program, they earn a Certificate of Occupational Proficiency from the Department of Workforce Development.

In 2022, CESA 3, Southwest Tech, and UW Platteville were awarded a three-year Workforce Innovation Grant

to help grow the manufacturing workforce. CESA 3's goal within the grant is to increase the number of youth apprentices in the manufacturing industry.

"The partnership we have grown with Southwest Tech and SWAG in Manufacturing is invaluable and will make a significant impact on the knowledge that high school students have about careers in the manufacturing industry," Helms said. "By working closely with our region's manufacturers, we are creating solutions and connections to educate, expose, and prepare students for these in-demand, high paying careers right here in our region.

"I am very proud to share that through collaborative efforts, we have implemented new youth apprenticeship programs at Rockwell Automation in Richland Center and Cummins in Mineral Point. This is just a start. We're excited to work with any manufacturer in our region to assist in implementing youth apprenticeship programs that grow their talent pipeline."

Southwest Tech and the Workforce Innovation Grant

Holly Straka, Workforce Innovation Grant Coordinator from Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, discussed the Workforce Innovation Grant and programs that are available to prepare individuals of all ages for careers in manufacturing.

The Workforce Innovation Grant is a testament to Southwest Tech's commitment to fostering the growth and development of the manufacturing industry in our region as it is administered as a partnership with both CESA 3 and UW-Platteville. The initiatives unveiled under this grant are designed to bridge the skills gap, equip students with cutting-edge knowledge, and provide manufacturing companies with a skilled workforce to meet the demands of today's rapidly evolving industrial landscape. Some key highlights and initiatives under the grant from Southwest Tech include:

Mobile Industrial Maintenance Training Equipment: Equipped with new state-of-the-art mobile equipment and simulators, Southwest Tech can bring the Industrial Maintenance training directly to the manufacturers.

This will facilitate convenient and customized training, ensuring that their external partners have access to high-quality education and skills development that will prepare them to troubleshoot, repair and maintain industrial machinery.

Custom Upskill Training and Pathway Certifications into Manufacturing: To further empower individuals looking to enter or advance in the manufacturing industry, Southwest Tech offers custom upskill training programs and pathway certifications. These tailored programs are designed to meet the unique needs and skill requirements of aspiring manufacturing professionals, offering a clear and accessible path to success in the field. In particular, the Gold Collar Certification, which will allow students to explore various careers in

manufacturing. This certification will teach career readiness, allow students to discover different pathways in welding, machining, and industrial maintenance and connect students with employers through plant tours.

Outreach and Engagement: Recognizing the growing Hispanic population in our area, Southwest Tech has expanded its Outreach and Engagement initiative to include enhanced English Language Learner courses. These courses are designed to provide crucial language skills to non-English speakers,

enabling them to participate more fully in educational and employment opportunities, particularly in the manufacturing sector.

Industry Partnerships: Southwest Tech has forged strong partnerships with local manufacturing companies to provide students with internships, co-op programs, and job placement opportunities. These opportunities are growing and expanding through SWAG and the Workforce Innovation Grant. This not only benefits students, but also addresses the workforce needs of local industries.

"Southwest Tech is excited about the tremendous impact the Workforce Innovation Grant will have on our manufacturing programs and the industry as a whole," Straka said. "This initiative allows us to better prepare



Robert Callahan photo

Holly Straka, Workforce Innovation Grant Coordinator from Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, discussed the Workforce Innovation Grant at the 18th annual Business and Education Summit.



Robert Callahan photo

Students who attended the 18th annual Business and Education Summit had the opportunity to visit with multiple local employers during an employer and resource fair.

our students for successful careers in manufacturing and serves as a valuable resource for local manufacturers seeking skilled talent.”

These initiatives not only strengthen Southwest Tech’s commitment to manufacturing education, but also enhance the overall economic development of our community by fostering a skilled workforce. The region is grateful to WEDC for their support in making these initiatives a reality.

Connect with us! Please feel free to use these resources to continue this conversation and connect with us!

Southwest Tech – Business & Industry Services

Contact: Holly Straka
 hstraka@swtc.edu
 Phone: 608-822-2323

SWAG in Manufacturing

Contact: Holly Straka
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 Phone: 608-822-2323

Youth Apprenticeship

Contact: Jessica Helms
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 Phone: 608-822-2141

Industry Recognized Credentials

Contact: Tom Martin
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 Phone: 608-822-2154

Academic and Career Planning / Regional Career Pathways

Contact: Darla Burton
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