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Well, welcome to the Unpacked Podcast, where we are unpacking the realities

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in today's public schools.

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I am Mickey O'Neill. I am the host today, and I am the Chief Communications

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Officer at Ingham ISD, and I am joined by Monique and Jamie today.

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Could you ladies introduce yourself, please?

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Sure. I'm Monique Colizzi, one of the Career Readiness and Work-Based Learning

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Coordinators at Wilson Talent Center.

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And I'm Jamie George, the other Career Readiness and Work-Based Learning coordinator

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at Wilson Talent Center. Well, thank you for joining us today.

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We are going to talk a little bit about the work-based learning umbrella and

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what it means to employers.

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So when we talk about work-based learning, there's a lot of different experiences.

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Our juniors and seniors that are in high school at the Wilson Talent Center

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learn to help them prepare to be an employee.

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So let's start first by talking about what are businesses kind of looking for in a student?

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What are they looking for to

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help them pick the right employee even though they're a student of ours?

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I think a lot of our employers that we're meeting with these days,

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they talk a lot about soft skills.

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And so in our programs, we teach employability skills.

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So dependability, coachability, teamwork, collaboration, problem solving.

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So a lot of our employers are telling us that the students come to them with

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those skills. They can teach kind of those particular skills that they need

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to know to do the job, but they're coming in with those soft skills.

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Well, that's wonderful.

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So the best of both worlds kind of with the CTU program is that we teach them the soft skills, right?

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And we teach them the technical skills. So they have both. So that's a benefit

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for our employers. That's fantastic.

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So talk a little bit about internships

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today versus maybe 20 years ago and what that kind of looks like.

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And what does an internship look for look like for our students and our employers?

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So, Miki, I wouldn't say that the opportunities, the work experience has changed

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that much other than the names.

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Back in the day, it was called co-op. Still the same.

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Structure, same opportunities. But I think what's different about today's market

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is that there is a huge talent gap.

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And maybe I just didn't realize it back in the 80s, but employers in every sector,

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every program in our building are looking for that next talent.

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So they're really, I mean, like Jamie mentioned, the mock job fairs,

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mock interviews, they're really looking for ways to become involved so they

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can get to know our students, get to know our programs, our building.

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I think we have a great reputation.

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Students who are out there working are creating and paving a path for students

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that are going to follow and doing those things like Jamie said.

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They're showing up. They have a great work ethic. They're very knowledgeable.

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They're leaving our programs with designations, certifications,

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college credit, and you can't say that collectively of any other population.

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So I think our students have a great advantage and we're in such a great position

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in the Lansing area, the Ingham County area, to showcase our students and their abilities.

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That's fantastic. Before the podcast, we talked a little bit about how you guys

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are getting a lot more employers to reach out to you recently.

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Can you share a couple of examples about, you know, employers that are looking

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to find the students that can support their growth needs or even just volunteers

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to do job, the mock job fairs?

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Are there a couple kind of examples by industry maybe that you could share?

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I would say for me, our hospitality and culinary, we've had some several people

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reach out to us this year and we have students that are out in those areas working,

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which we have not had in the past.

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And so, again, I think those are skills, specific skills that students are learning

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in class, like serve safe and things like that, that can transfer into the workplace

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without having additional training needs.

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And so I know a lot of our culinary and hospitality people were impressed that

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the students have that certification because it's not an easy certification to get.

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So that's one example that I would have.

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Okay. Okay, great. And we have, I mean, we've got business partners that we've

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been working with for many, many years. Do you want to give any of them a shout out?

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Oh, my gosh. Well, from we've only been in this position for a couple of months,

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but we've got definitely Frankino Molden Engineering, Black Imaging.

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We've got Maury's of Okemos. We've got auto tech students working there.

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Merendorf Meats. Everything is Cheesecake, Crowne Plaza.

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OK. And a lot of health care facilities around the area who are taking our students

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for job shadows. OK. And there's many more. So I apologize.

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I didn't list them all. No, you're good. You're good. We want,

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you know, try and we can get more, right?

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If more people want to participate, they should just give us a call,

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right? Absolutely. All right.

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So will you share a little bit about, you said job shadows. So that lead me

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to what's the difference between a job shadow and an internship?

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And in the student's journey at the Wilson-Talent Center over one or two years,

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what does a job shadow look like versus the internship? And how does that exposure

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good for the employer as well as the student?

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So job shadows, Mickey, are open to juniors and seniors, which is our population.

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I would say we probably have more junior students participating in the job shadow

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piece, but then also encouraging seniors who are out looking for a work-based

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learning career training opportunity to go do a job shadow.

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Figure out, you know, what culture, what the environment is like,

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if it's a good fit for you.

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So I think we always encourage them to do job shadows and really figuring out

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what they want to do with their lives, doing it through a job shadow,

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that one hour to two hour time frame, spending it with an employer.

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It gives them some real experience into this is not what I thought it was or,

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oh, my gosh, this is exactly what I thought it was. And I really want to do that. Absolutely.

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And then the difference between the job shadow and the career training piece is,

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you know, where students on the career training piece are able to be in placed

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in a work environment, typically between two and four days a week.

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There is a requirement that they have to be face-to-face with an instructor

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at least one of those days. So we've got upwards of 20 students right now out

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working in a variety of occupations.

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That's fantastic. That's fantastic.

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So how are you getting to new employers?

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I know you mentioned that there are some interactions you have with some of

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the sessions you already have set up.

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But are there other ways that you're getting new names?

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Share maybe some of the examples that you shared with me before we started the

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podcast with our listeners so they can learn a little bit more about how they could get involved.

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So I'll speak to my programs in the building anyway.

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If we don't, I put the leadership position on the students. If they come in

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to me and they say, I want to work.

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OK, let's come up with a list. They're not going to magically fall out of the

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sky. I do have a database of past employers that we've worked with.

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But students sometimes try to pick an employer that's within close proximity

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of their local district or their home.

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So I'm having them do some research and then taking those skills from Boss Mode

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Boot Camp, from Job Fair Mock Interviews, going in, shaking hands,

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dropping off a resume, setting up meetings.

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I think they need to have an active role in that without us...

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Handpicking employers and sending them out. So I'm super proud of the students

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taking that initiative.

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That's great. That teaches them a skill set too, right?

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To take ownership, to make sure that they're going after something that's really

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important to them, which they may not do if we just said, oh,

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let's connect you to this employer.

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So I think that's a really good connection for our students.

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Do businesses normally hire students after their work-based learning experiences?

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So depending on what their staffing looks like at that point,

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but several of our students have gotten offers outside of maybe they've done

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a job shadow, maybe they've done an unpaid experience, and now it's turned into a paid experience.

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And so I know I've had that experience with a couple of students that have gone

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out of mine, and I think, Monique, you have too. So it could potentially turn

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into, you know, a full-time job.

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Some of our businesses also offer apprenticeship programs after.

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Talk a little bit about that. So there's some requirements for apprenticeships.

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So apprenticeship programs, the students are usually 18, and it's generally

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will begin after they graduate from high school.

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And so some of the students that we have, for example, at Block Imaging,

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I think there are maybe 12 Wilson Talent Center students now either interning

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or working at Block Imaging.

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Okay. So they take them through a two to four year program where they do some

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schooling and some hands-on training in their different areas.

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Okay. Yeah. All right. Wonderful.

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Something I wanted to add real quick, Mickey, as Jamie mentioned,

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some of our strong employers supporting the work-based learning journey is that we haven't been to one.

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Stop in our 20-some places that we visited without somebody saying,

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we have 5, 10, 11, oh, my daughter goes to Wilson Talent Center.

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We've hired this many people from Wilson Talent Center.

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Every place we go has a connection with Wilson Talent Center, which is super cool.

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They were a student here. They've hired our students. So it's...

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That's fantastic to hear.

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Yeah, it really is. Shout out to the staff there because they're doing a great job. yeah.

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Well, that's all we have time for today. Thank you for joining us for the Unpacked

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Podcast and unpacking the realities in today's public schools.