

# Pipeline to Employment

District leaders and businesses in Edgerton are working together to provide opportunities for students



## SESSION: PIPELINE TO EMPLOYMENT — FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

**Presenters:** Edgerton School District: Dennis Pauli, district administrator; Mark Coombs, high school principal; Joe Mink, technology education teacher (pictured); Dylan Counter, student

School leaders in Edgerton wanted to launch a program that would set their district apart, connect the district with local business, and, most importantly, provide real-life work experiences for students.

With those goals in mind, the Edgerton School District started its Pipeline to Employment Program this school year. The program connects high school students to employers in the Edgerton area in an effort to get students part-time work in a field that they are interested in. Students get paid, are treated like regular employees, and get school credit for the experience.

While the program is just starting out, district leaders say it has been a success. The district has students working with a local manufacturing company, local newspaper, and, among others, two area veterinary clinics.

When District Administrator Dennis Pauli and Edgerton High School Principal Mark Coombs began work on the program, they reached out to area businesses. Business leaders in the community told Coombs and Pauli that they were interested in students who would show up to work

on time, could take direction, and were ambitious and excited about what they're doing. "I thought, that's 95 percent of our kids," Coombs said.

One student, Dylan Counter, a junior at Edgerton High School has been working for Componex, a local manufacturing company in Edgerton that makes precision aluminum rollers for printing, laminating, and product packaging. Counter begins work at Componex at 6 am and then goes to school from 9 am to 3 pm. He says the experience has been very valuable.

"There isn't a day where I don't learn something new," Dylan said.

Joe Mink, technology education teacher at Edgerton High School, said the program is trying to prepare students for high-paying, high-skilled jobs. Mink said that he has heard from local manufacturing employers that graduates of technical college still need a tremendous amount of job training. Programs like Edgerton's Pipeline to Employment help give students on-the-job training they can't get in a classroom.

"We're really trying to close that gap not only of expectations but also of knowledge that a high-skilled job demands," Mink said.

Pauli said he believes any district in the state can replicate Edgerton's Pipeline to Employment program, "The key is to identify businesses that might work with your school and form partnerships," Pauli said. "It's a matter of looking at what your community has to offer. It's amazing, even in little Edgerton, how many businesses are out there if you start looking."

Pauli and Coombs hope that eventually the program will develop to the point where participation can become a graduation requirement. For now, they are happy that students like Dylan have had success and are out in the community and successfully working a high-skilled job. Pauli admitted that when they started the program, and even now in its early steps, he isn't sure where it will go. He said that school leaders shouldn't be afraid to have a vision and take some risks.

"I'm comfortable having a vision in place and only some of the answers," Pauli said. "I'm sure there will be something that we will look back on that we could have done better but the important thing is to just do it and get started." ■

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that might work with your school and form partnerships."**

— Dennis Pauli, district administrator