



School–Industry Partnerships: Creating Career Readiness Pathways to Undiscovered Talent

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■ About Me



Robyn Mixon-Davis, PhD
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- Special Education Teacher (17 years)
 - Core Replacement & Resource
- Adjunct Psychology Professor at
 - Claflin University
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- President of non-profit SOUL
 - (Sanctuary of Unborn Life)
- Author of the book *For the Love of Maddie*





Objectives

Identify strategies for establishing and sustaining effective school–industry partnerships that enhance student career readiness.

Design opportunities for students to demonstrate real-world skills and employability, including those with unconventional or undiscovered talent.

Implement practical approaches for connecting local businesses and schools to create pathways to discovering and developing future employees.

Questions to Consider...

Industry	Schools
<p>How many employers in your community are struggling to find reliable entry-level employees?</p>	<p>How many students have abilities that don't show up on a transcript?</p>

Career Readiness Research

(Conley, 2012; Casner- Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Morningstar et al., 2018; Symonds et al., 2011; Mixon, 2015)

- Career readiness requires more than academic knowledge
- Soft skills are best developed through authentic experiences
- Work-based learning experiences improve post-secondary outcomes
- Partnerships create pathways to workforce success
- Family support strengthens career development

Career Readiness Skills

Most Important Employability Skills Cited by Industry Leaders

Professionalism/ Work Ethic (Reliability)

Oral and Written Communications

Teamwork / Collaboration

Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving

Typical Hiring Process

Because of...

- Experience
- Generalizations
- Communication barriers
- Automation flaws
- Technology barriers
- Countless other reasons...

Overlooked potential

- Students with disabilities
- Quiet or less confident leaders
- Hands-on learners
- Students without work experience
- Students with unconventional strengths
- Soft Skills

Application



Resume



Interview

Collaborative Partnerships



Shared Values Based Training

Committing to aligning all staff and community partners on the same core beliefs and acknowledging their value



Mutual Recognition of Expertise

Acknowledging that each professional contributes a unique and valuable skillset



School Leadership

School leaders must commit to collaborative models, create buy-in, establish a clear vision, and remove barriers to teamwork



Established and Flexible communication

Establishing formal and informal communications provides the opportunity for community partnerships and collaborative monitoring of students' needs



Appropriate Staff Resources

Ensure there is enough resources to fund quality, properly trained individuals available to support the goals



Beneficial School - Industry Partnerships



Collaboration

- Prioritizing the creation and implementation of legally sound training agreements that outline exact learning objectives, working hours, safety protocols, and compensation models.
 - **Benefit to Schools:** Students are safe, experiences are academically relevant, and students are engaged.
 - **Benefit to Businesses:** Defined legal and operational expectations, establishes clear productivity expectations, and ensures interns arrive prepared to contribute.



Mutual Learning Goals

- Developing shared mutual learning goals for participants
 - **Benefit to Schools:** Helps to keep classroom curricula relevant with workforce demands
 - **Benefit to Businesses:** Reduces training costs needed for future employees

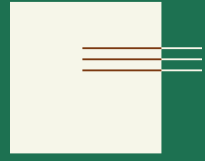
Beneficial School - Industry Partnerships (cont'd)

Program Tracking and Evaluation

- Demonstrating the success and effectiveness of the program
 - **Skill:** Ensuring that the program developed meets the academic and industry needs
 - **Benefits to Schools:** Provides measurable goals and objective data to secure state funding, maintain program accreditation, and recruit future participants prepared to enter the workforce.
 - **Benefits to businesses:** Delivers metrics on intern productivity, and justify return on investment and *monitoring students' needs*

Professional Development and Mentorship

- Students need to learn hard skills to get employed, and soft skills to maintain employment
 - **Benefits to Schools:** Increases graduation rates, closes equity gaps for disadvantaged students, and boost post-graduation employability metrics.
 - **Benefits to Businesses:** Provides mid-level employees the opportunity to gain leadership and mentoring experiences and maintaining diverse perspectives among company's long -term talent pool.



5 Minute Interview

■ Woodland High School Events

- ☑ **Life After Woodland(L.A.W.)**
- ☑ **Gig Wars**

Gig Wars Training



Logistics



Culinary



Carpentry

Gig Wars Event



Logistics



Agriculture



Carpentry

Gig Wars Event Summary

- **Approximately 40 students**
- **15 activities**
- **11 businesses**
- **4 career school classes led activities**
- **4 Centers for Independent Living**
(AccessAbility, ScipSec, DDSN, VR)
- **USC - Carolina Family Engagement Center**
- **3 students were hired**
- **90 % reported increased confidence**
- **Participants were recognized for their**



Partnerships

- Centers for independent living (Vocational Rehabilitation, AccessAbility)
- Grocery Stores
- Restaurants
- Logistics companies
- Manufacturing Companies
- Career Centers
- Custodial Service
- Dorchester County Offices (human resources)
- Chamber of Commerce

Career Interests

- gardening
- cooking
- logistics
- manufacturing skills
- carpentry
- painting
- cleaning
- interviewing
- personal training
- assembling furniture
- stocking
- bagging grocery
- customer service
- filing



Parental Support

(Weiss, Lopez, Caspe, Carnegie Challenge Paper, 2018; Doren, Gau, & Lindstrom, 2012; Mixon, 2015; Bergman, 2014)

Perceived parental support serves as a protective factor and encourages positive career exploration and development.

Benefits of Family Participation

- Increased student confidence
- Stronger school-family relationships
- Career conversations at home
- Community engagement



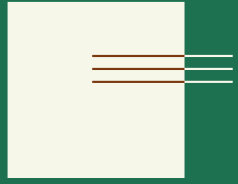
Why do Businesses Participate?

- Early access to talent
- Reduced recruiting costs
- Community visibility
- Future workforce development
- Opportunities for employee mentorship
- Opportunity to identify undiscovered talent



School - Industry Partnerships

- Identify workforce needs
- Find your dream team
- Start small
- Create authentic skill demonstrations
- Invite families
- Celebrate successes publicly



Thank you

[Feedback Link](#)



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Contact Info

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