

# PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

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Ryan Silvola/Beloit Daily News (From left): Columbia College of Chicago representative Marty Kane speaks to Emily Eliasson and Shayla Wilhite at the Wisconsin Educational Fair on Wednesday at Beloit Memorial High School. Eliasson and Wilhite are both juniors at Monroe High School.

BELOIT - Students from the School District of Beloit and six neighboring districts got the opportunity to start thinking about their future.

Juniors and seniors attended a career fair and Wisconsin Educational Fair on Tuesday at Beloit Memorial High School. School counselor Erin Wolf said the district has been hosting a Wisconsin Educational Fair for the last six years and the career fair for the last five. She said the district decided to have both fairs on the same day, so students can learn about possible careers at one fair then find out what education is needed to pursue that career in another.

Wolf said there were more than 100 representatives from two-year technical colleges, vocational schools, four year colleges and the armed service at the educational fair.

Mitch Briesemeister, director of career and technical education, said the career fair has a two-pronged approach: students can both learn about youth apprenticeships and internships while exploring different career clusters such as manufacturing, health, hospitality and more.

"We're exposing kids to career options so they can structure their learning for the future," Briesemeister said.

That way, he said students are immersed in future careers during their junior and senior years before they invest in college and discover it's not the right fit.

Students also build up relationships, some of which may even lead to apprenticeships and internships from connections at the fair. He said Wisconsin laws allow for students to be more active at younger ages in apprenticeships, which has allowed Beloit to expand its own internship and apprenticeship programs.

Senior Keegan Meiers actually has an internship already at Finley Buick GMC and is interested in pursuing a career in mechanics. He enjoyed the opportunity to explore other career fields, such as medical and culinary careers.

Senior Juan Chavez is considering getting a degree in civil engineering or business management at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater or the Milwaukee School of Engineering. He enjoyed the opportunity to find out more about the tuition and financial aid for college.

The School District of Beloit also invited students from neighboring districts to come out and learn more about potential careers and educational paths.