



Rebecca DeMatteis & BJ Knutson

Becky DeMatteis: [00:00:00] How can we collaborate and really bridge those gaps to keep in mind that it's not about what we are self-serving as an entity need, but it's about the person we are serving? And how can we collaborate to help that person?

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:19] Welcome to Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. This is Annalies Corbin, Chief Goddess of the PAST Foundation and your host. We hear frequently that the global education system is broken. In fact, we spend billions of dollars trying to fix something that's actually not broken at all, but rather irrelevant. It's obsolete. A hundred years ago, it functioned fine. So, let's talk about how we reimagine, rethink, and redesign our educational system.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:53] So, welcome to Learning Unboxed. Today, we are going to have a wonderful conversation about concepts tied to apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship that is happening in lots and lots of places across the US and around the world. And joining us today for this conversation, we have two wonderful guests coming to us from an organization or entity, which they will explain for us called Apprentice Ohio. And joining us as Rebecca DeMatteis. And Rebecca is the Program Administrator for Apprentice Ohio, and she's also the Executive Secretary of the Ohio State Apprenticeship Council. And she is currently charged with overseeing all aspects of the registered apprenticeship program for the State of Ohio. So, Rebecca, thank you for joining us.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:01:43] Thank you for having me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:44] And joining Rebecca is BJ Knutson, who is the Program Delivery Supervisor for Apprentice Ohio, and BJ, thank you for joining us as well.

BJ Knutson: [00:01:54] Thank you for having me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:56] So, I want to sort of dig in and get started with this idea, first and foremost, to set some context for our listeners who come to us from all over the world. And so, may or may not necessarily be familiar with the entity, Apprentice Ohio. So, Rebecca, set the stage for us to make sure that our listeners sort of understand what is this thing, and how does it function within sort of the bigger state ecosystem?

Becky DeMatteis: [00:02:21] Oh, goodness. So, apprenticeship is as old as the tale of time, but the State of Ohio became a state apprenticeship agency state, given that title by the US Department of Labor back in the '50s. So, for the longest time, we're running long operating as just kind of the council office, because every state apprenticeship agency state has to have a council. So, from the '50s until about 2000-ish, '16, we finally got this name called Apprentice Ohio, because they finally decided it was time to have a brand.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:02:59] So, we are housed within the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. That is where the council office is housed, now, Apprentice Ohio. So, I am the Program Administrator. We register all programs, make sure that every program is fully functioning within the administrative code, making sure the regulations are met, making sure that they are quality. We do all the compliance reviews.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:03:23] We run pre-apprenticeship programs, as well as many grants that the US Department of Labor has graciously been giving out since 2016. So, we just are thrilled to see the spotlight being turned on Apprentice Ohio and on apprenticeship in general across the entire state. For the longest time, it's gone from, everybody thought of apprenticeship as your typical construction trades, which it has been traditionally.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:03:53] But in the industrial era, it went from building big buildings, and shops, and machines, and it was quite dangerous to, in today's day and age, it can be anything from IT, and health care, to business services. And folks don't think about that. They kind of look at you and go, really? You can actually do that with an apprenticeship? Yeah, you can. It's kind of cool. Hospitality services, culinary. There are so many different apprenticeships out there that you can have. So, BJ is part of my team.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:04:24] I'm thrilled to have BJ as part of my team. I've actually known BJ for quite some time. So, when she was selected to be part of the team and was the highest passing score, I was just, yeah, she's so cool, great. She's a real go getter. She's very passionate about what she does, and I'm just happy to have her on the team. She's taking on our pre-apprenticeship projects and she's kind of just taking it like both with the horns, and wrestling up to the ground, and making sure that everybody within the education world and within our workforce services world is going to fully understand and implement our pre-apprenticeship projects.

Annalies Corbin: [00:05:03] Absolutely. So, BJ, that's a perfect segue that Rebecca set up for you. So, let's dig in just a little bit and start with this concept of pre-apprenticeship. And then, we're going to talk about apprenticeship with a bigger, overarching ecosystem utilizing Ohio sort of as our example, obviously. But let's sort of talk about, BJ, the notion of this pre-apprenticeship, and sort of the how and why as it relates to that tie back into the K-12 space.

Annalies Corbin: [00:05:34] So, just to sort of set some context for our listeners, so at PAST, we advocate apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship very, very much. We are hands-on, very applied organization. Our listeners are very familiar with what we do and how we do it. And so, it makes sense, I think, from that perspective, for many folks to say, hey, these guys would be embracing and actually utilizing it. And we've had pre-apprentice participants in our office, actually several.

Annalies Corbin: [00:06:01] In fact, we had one who just recently graduated, who is now full-on hired on because of the amazing experience they had with us for a-year-and-a-half. And I think those are one of those sort of big support-winning stories, but lots of folks don't understand why pre-apprenticeship would be meaningful pathway or opportunity, if you will, in a K-12 space, especially when so many K-12s are still pushing, right or wrong, a whole another podcast conversation about, let's track everybody into post-secondary in some capacity and pre-apprenticeship opens the doors for lots of different experiences, no matter what that pathway or that journey from K-12 is going to look like for you. So, why do this here?

BJ Knutson: [00:06:45] So, I think one of the keywords that you just said is experience. And I think that this is an opportunity for your—we actually look at students who are typically around sophomore to junior, so around 16 years of age, up through 24 to register for a pre-apprenticeship. And of course, we want to designate what

is OSAC-recognized, and then what is just an apprenticeship. So, we actually advocate for OSAC-recognized pre-apprenticeship programs.

BJ Knutson: [00:07:13] And what that means is that they've developed that program through the State of Ohio. So, there are many schools out there that are running great apprenticeship programs, but they do not have that OSAC stamp. And whenever they have that OSAC stamp, then we're able to work directly with DOE and help those students obtain a pathway towards graduation. So, that makes sense for registered apprenticeship for them to come through OSAC, which is us, to help them build what they call their operating plans.

BJ Knutson: [00:07:42] And just as Becky was earlier discussing all the different pathways that one can take with registered apprenticeship, you can also do that with pre-apprenticeship. And what we do with pre apprenticeship in the State of Ohio is we actually look at clusters. And so, anything from manufacturing, to IT, to health care, to the skilled trades. So, those schools are going to build operating plans based on those industry clusters and what the needs are within their communities.

BJ Knutson: [00:08:11] So, that school will work closely with us and closely with their community partners, and determine what their workforce development needs are, because whenever it comes down to it, we don't want to train students in a way that they're not going to be able to use, and they're not going to be able to go out into their communities and work. Often, whenever we look at apprenticeship, we have to recognize that typically in education, there are Es, there is employment, there's the education, and then there's enlistment after high school graduation.

BJ Knutson: [00:08:45] And so, we have a higher percentage entering the workforce. And this is an opportunity for the schools to identify those students who are entering the workforce because that is not a bad pathway. That is very realistic and something that most of those students are going to have to do. And it's going to work with those community partners and determine those skill sets. And it's going to allow those students to explore several different industry clusters to determine the pathway that they want to take after they graduate.

BJ Knutson: [00:09:24] We're able to identify employers who are hiring, like yourself. Whenever you were able to bring on a pre-apprentice, allow them to experience probably several different occupational needs throughout your organization, and then you were able to bring them on full time. And so, that's allowing the students to gain workable skills. They're learning workplace etiquette, what's expected of you? Do you show up? How you communicate with your staff, and how you communicate with those who you're working with, how you interact with supervisors. And I think that pre-apprenticeship is just setting somebody up for success.

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:06] Yeah, we would definitely agree with that. And I think that the other thing that's really a key component here that I want to make sure that our listeners understand, especially those listeners that are either in Ohio or in the US, because many states do this in a sort of similar fashion, and hopefully, we see some similarities in other parts of the world. And I really encourage listeners to let us know if it's very different in your area, because I'd be really curious, we could all learn something from that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:32] But the partnership between the state and the K-12 schools, and then the local employers or the businesses. Because that's sort of where we come in, right? So, because we have partnerships with our K-12 schools. And so, it was through that school that reached out, and said, hey, we've got some students that need an internship. That's often the call that I think businesses get, when schools are trying to place students. And it's really a key and important distinction, I think, for a local business to be able to say, yes, we would love to work with you.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:07] And internships are great, but hey, what if we could do this as a pre-apprenticeship or that could then become an apprenticeship, which is exactly how we sort of crafted ours, because I don't necessarily think that the business is always fully understand, and I am not convinced that the schools are always fully understand that they can have multiple sort of opportunities even tied to the same experience with the same students that can be crafted and crafted a number of different ways to give that student credit, experience, opportunity, and some creative ways. So, Rebecca, talk to me a little bit about sort of that synergy from that sort of industry workforce side, and the why, I guess, if you will, as BJ was sort of explaining the K-12 component, but there's a similar aspect from the industry side of this, where there's that tangible benefit that comes back in. Help us understand that.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:12:06] Absolutely. And as you can probably tell, the whole entire time you're speaking, I'm like smiling and nodding, because I get so passionate about this part of it. One of the parts of our policy is that anybody that's creating a pre-apprenticeship plan. Whether it's for you, whether it's for adult, doesn't matter, you have to work with a registered apprenticeship sponsor. That is an absolute key.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:12:27] And the reason that's key is that sponsor knows what skills they need. That sponsor knows, and that's what we call the employer or group of employers as a sponsor. Sorry to throw in just a little bit of one of those terms that we toss around, but that employer knows what they need. That employer is the one who's helping to design the curriculum for the registered apprenticeship program. So, to develop a pre-apprenticeship, you're developing those skills to be successful in the registered apprenticeship.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:12:59] So, it makes perfect sense for that registered apprenticeship to be part of that pre-apprenticeship development and process, and sign off, and say, yes, this pre-apprenticeship plan is going to make this person successful and able to go into this registered apprenticeship. And, oh, by the way, if this person is successful and if we have openings, it could potentially create a direct entry pathway into this registered apprenticeship program, and it's not just going to lay flat. They're not just going to get trained, and then say, well, see, you later, have fun trying to find a job.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:29] Yeah. What am I supposed to do with this now? Right?

Becky DeMatteis: [00:13:32] Exactly. So, the industries are getting the training that they want and need, and they're customizing it rather than searching for a diamond in the rough, because diamonds in the rough, let's face it, don't necessarily always exist. That's why they call it diamond in the rough. So, why not train to retain?

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:51] I like that. Yeah, absolutely. And that's a really key thing. And I will say that it may be different in really big entities, big businesses or industries, but for the small, local, family-owned businesses or organizations, nonprofits like we are, there's a space. There is an opportunity for those smaller companies and organizations to be able to participate in these programs. And I think that that's one of those things that, a lot of times, these companies don't realize.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:24] They believe that these programs are geared towards these big giant industries, large scale manufacturing, automotive, IT. And while all of those are absolutely true, that's one of the things that I really like about this opportunity is that it has multiple fits, I guess, is the way to put it, right? So, I do want to talk just a little bit about that, BJ, because as you're working across this K-12 space for the pre-apprenticeship piece, I assume that there are some industries, some key industries where you're seeing a greater need or want for a pre-apprenticeship program, because the apprenticeship program opportunity, on the flip side, is so dire.

BJ Knutson: [00:15:09] It is. So, one of our fastest growing registered apprenticeships that we're seeing is in health care. And we're absolutely seeing that need to fulfill some of those occupations. We call them ladder occupations, where you start at a beginning level, and then you're building your career. And you can work up or stop wherever you feel comfortable. And so, we do see ourselves working with—we see many more opportunity within the health care field, and that's amazing.

BJ Knutson: [00:15:42] We're also seeing great growth and opportunity in IT. And what we also have to encourage here is that whenever you look at apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship is that opportunity whenever those students are engaging with those community partners and those employers to get feedback. And so, they know what they need to work on, skills that they need to work on, or things that they're doing great, and continue their growth and encouragement within that area.

BJ Knutson: [00:16:11] So, this is truly a unique opportunity for maybe a student to start out as a medical assistant or an STNA, and move up to the medical assistant, and from the medical assistant, move up to an LPN, from an LPN, move up to an RN. And we're seeing where health care providers are wanting to utilize that source as far as students being able to enter in high school level at an STNA. And once they complete that, then they're employed. Of course, the whole entire basis of registered apprenticeship is earn while you learn.

BJ Knutson: [00:16:46] These students are earning a wage. They're actually participating in creating their pathway. And so, it's really exciting to see those occupations that you typically would not see in registered apprenticeship. If we're talking back to the '50s, where we had started with Ohio, as far as being considered, you were looking at skilled trades. So, now, we're actually expanding into manufacturing, into IT, into health care, into teaching. We're looking at teaching. We're looking at hospitality. So, those are all these great, different occupational pathways that these students are able to identify with, and then engage in.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:29] Yeah, absolutely. And we've definitely seen that. So, we've had, I'm going to stop and think, maybe three or four over the last few years of students participate in one aspect or another, whether it be at the entry level internship that then translates into a pre-apprenticeship that then translates into an apprenticeship with our school partners. And I can say without question that the students that have actively engaged in the opportunity.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:57] And that is not just planning, but literally helping make decisions and determining sort of the breadth and depth of the experience that they're going to engage in that has been incredibly meaningful, right? And the fact that they can earn and learn all at the same time, that's a win for our community without any question, whatsoever. And we have one in particular who's with us. He's now transitioned, like I said, into a job, but he's also college, just finished community college, and is getting ready to start at a four-year institution.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:29] And so, we've been able to sort of journey with this young person at several different points of iteration, and it's been incredibly powerful for our organization is what we have benefited as much from that experience with this individual as hopefully he has as well. And so, that's really incredibly meaningful. Yeah, absolutely, Rebecca. So, that leads me to this question, because not all pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship opportunities or experiences are the same, right? Some are more successful than others. And so, what makes an outstanding pre-apprentice or apprenticeship program? What's the magic? What's the secret sauce? Because some could just be par for the course and others can be absolutely spectacular, and what's the differentiator there?

Becky DeMatteis: [00:19:19] I would think my personal experience. My personal experience is when you have the right mixture of leaders, those that truly believe in what they're doing and aren't doing it, just checking a

box, they truly are engaged in who they're teaching, and wanting to see them succeed, and wanting to say, wow, I actually helped contribute to this person's life and see how successful they have become. And it's the combination of the leaders that you have creating the programs, and not just creating a high level, you have to get down to those that are actually implementing. So, you can have success and all the passion in the world at the top, but if you don't push that passion down to those that are implementing, you're going to fall short.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:21] Yeah, absolutely.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:20:22] But you truly need to have that passion really down at the level of the implementation. And if you don't have the passion at the top, where it's being created, then bring in those that are implementing, bring those that have the passion that are wanting it up with you to help create it, because like you said, it doesn't have to just stop. It doesn't have to stop. It can be a complete pathway. Pre-apprenticeship can lead you into an occupation, where, yes, you can get a registered apprenticeship completion certificate.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:20:52] You can earn some college credit, and that's wonderful. You can start working. You can have an amazing career. Not just a job, I said, a career. You can support your family. You can have benefits. You can have your own home. You can be debt-free, because you don't have to pay off college debt. But you also don't have to stop there. You can continue. You can become even more if you have this foundation of a career, and you think, oh, wow, I like even deeper into this career field. I think I could do even higher up and become X. It's endless. It's just a stepping stone or it's an opportunity.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:35] Exactly. It absolutely is. And I also think that the other thing I would sort of throw out as part of this conversation is that these relationships go both directions if you are willing to embrace how wonderful that can be, right? And I think about my own staff and watching them over the years, like I said, we've had several, just that mentorship, right? And we learn as much from the students as hopefully we teach them, and that is probably the single greatest joy.

Annalies Corbin: [00:22:08] And I would argue to some extent the value add as to why we as an organization or as a company would choose to participate in this. It takes time. It takes effort. But the benefit and the rewards go multiple directions. But I do think that to your point, that's because that's something that we've embraced. And so, BJ, how do you as that sort of interface between the K-12 and some of the industry component pieces, how do you help the industry folks, those businesses, where these students are going to find themselves pre-apprenticing? How do you ensure that they are ready to actually make that experience a positive one?

BJ Knutson: [00:22:49] So, the great thing about apprenticeship is it's voluntary. You're not going to get people who want to participate in this program. And whenever I refer to people, both apprentices, pre-apprentices, employers, or sponsors participate in this program unless they have a need and they have a workforce development goal. With pre-apprenticeship, our pre-apprenticeship in the State of Ohio does not have to be a pay-to-experience. It can be, those students doing career days.

BJ Knutson: [00:23:17] It could be, those students engaging with those employers and doing an onsite work visit. It could be, those students doing job shadowing. So, it's those employers truly investing with those pre-apprentices. And again, it just comes down to the simple basic of, they want them there. And so, whenever you want somebody there and you have a need for them to fulfill, then you're going to put effort into developing that person as a potential employee, as somebody who's benefiting, and somebody who is coming in and going to contribute to that employer.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:54] Yeah, absolutely. And I guess the same question as sort of a follow up, BJ, is how do you prepare the students? What does it look like other than, hey, you want to go do this thing? There's got to be more to it than that, to ensure that the student is actually, A, ready to do whatever the opportunity is or take advantage of it, but also that they are socially and emotionally ready to say, I'm going to step outside of my comfort zone.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:21] And that's one of the hardest things that we have seen for the students that have come is getting them to have enough confidence to recognize that, hey, I can actually have a meaningful role in whatever this thing is. I'm not just sort of a minion doing X, that I actually have some control over my destiny. But that's a tough thing, as you know, teenage teams, it's tough to be a teenager anyway, right? And so then, we throw you into this very professional setting, whatever that happens to be, and it can be daunting. So, what's the care and feeding for the student?

BJ Knutson: [00:24:57] So, that's a great question and that actually comes within our operating plan. So, our operating plan, we work very closely with our schools or with our areas that are developing that plan and we identify classes that they need, the students' need in order to be successful and successfully transition over into that workplace. And so, that may be a career readiness class. That may be in communications courses.

BJ Knutson: [00:25:24] That may be anything that they need in order to have that successful transition into the workforce. And what's really great about pre-apprenticeship is they're also evaluations. And the evaluations come from the student, the school, and the employer who's participating. And so, those three entities are able to work together, and say, these are strengths or these are things that we need to work on.

BJ Knutson: [00:25:48] And then, that student goes back and he or she is able to work on some of those areas that need to be developed. And so, there's very much a very strong relationship between the school, the student, and the sponsor, or the employer that the student is participating with. And all of that is designed by the school. And of course, the apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship program that the student ultimately enters is decided by them.

BJ Knutson: [00:26:16] And this is an interest that they've determined that they want to explore. This is not something that they're thrown into or that they're saying, this is your only option in life. It's actually, what are your interests? Let's take a step back and evaluate what your goals are in life. And then, that's where that school and that student work together to identify the correct pre-apprenticeship that they belong in.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:40] Excellent. Excellent. So, Rebecca, now, for the really tough question in this conversation. So, there is an imaginary divide, I guess, if you will, between school, and training, and workforce or career. So, there's a gap there. And we hear this all the time. So, post-secondary tells us there's a gap. Business and industry tells us there's a gap. And even K-12 says, yes, there are gaps from a whole variety of perspectives.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:12] And so, how do you recommend that we sort of change that dynamic or bridge the perceived gaps, real or imaginary, that are there as it relates to student opportunity to gain confidence and experience into choosing a future potential? Because that's the hard part, right? We've got these kids wandering around, and we say, hey, you have to choose a major, or, hey, you have to choose a career right here, right now. And other than a basic, generalized education, there's no experience, there is no experience on which they're basing some of these decisions. So, how do we change that?

Becky DeMatteis: [00:27:52] And you're right. You are absolutely right. And again, it's communication, but also, it's mentoring each other. I mean, it could be as simple as mentoring each other and having cohesive

groups. I know I have partner groups between Department of Education, Department of Higher Education, and myself with Apprenticeship Ohio, where we come together and we discuss our registered apprenticeships and our pre-apprenticeships, and how they work together, and how even some of our own policies can be tweaked to better serve some of our other agencies, or not just the agency, but with the person that's serving.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:28:33] So, it's a conversation and it's a continuous conversation. And it's always about not just what I need and what this person needs, what this person needs, but what can we do to help the person that we are serving. I think that's mainly what we need to keep in mind. How can we collaborate and really bridge those gaps to keep in mind that it's not about what we are self-serving as an entity need, but it's about the person we are serving. And how can we collaborate to help that person? And I honestly think it's as simple as that. It's conversations and collaborations on a higher level, where we can bring entities together, whether it's through roundtables, whether it's through local area, workforce development board conversations, and just take someone to start them. I really think that's where it's at.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:27] Yeah. I'm also deeply curious as the whole world of sort of, fingers crossed, coming off of a massive disruption in the form of a global pandemic, so what did that collective global experience teach us or inform as you move forward? Right? So, because the reality is, we sent a bazillion people home for X period of time, right? And now, what we're seeing is some real strife, for better and worse, in workforce as a result of a lot of folks having a moment to take a step back, to think about what they want, where their opportunity is, where they're going, what their family needs were. It's a very, very complex, yet intriguing opportunity that's going to have profound impact on the workforce of the future. So, what did we learn? And I toss that out to either one of you, but what did we learn from this shared experience that you think is going to radically impact the way that you do your work at Apprentice Ohio?

Becky DeMatteis: [00:30:34] I actually love that question. I love that question, because I've said it since the since the pandemic started to take the turn, actually, for the worse, I've said that apprenticeship is going to be the key, one of the main keys to helping us turn and get people back, because so many people are going to say, you know what, I don't want to go back to doing this, I want to try something else, but I'm scared or I don't have the skills.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:31:00] Well, apprenticeship, you don't have to have the skills, you can start at level zero, and you can learn and learn your way up, or you can say, you know what, I used to do this a long time ago, I just have a little bit of an experience, and that's okay. You can come in, and we'll brush off those skills, and we'll get you retrained, and back to where you want to go. It's all in your hands. It is customizable and moldable, and I think apprenticeship truly is where it's at.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:31:25] And if you don't feel comfortable jumping straight into an apprenticeship, a pre-apprenticeship. And our agency is working diligently on projects, where we can expand the pre-apprenticeship opportunities statewide, where we can expand registered apprenticeship statewide. And not only expand but also put it out there, where it's known, where we can have it at a click of a button, where you can go to our Apprentice Ohio website, and say, you know what, I want to find a program or I want to find out information about this pre-apprenticeship, where can I go?

Becky DeMatteis: [00:31:57] Who can I talk to? We're working very hard on some major projects that are going to have some impact. One of the projects we have right now is an expansion grant, where I'm like, okay, we've created programs. Wonderful. We've done some excellent job-creating programs, now, we need to take those programs, flip the narrative, and we need to help them recruit, because they have such a need. And it's okay, we've created the programs, now, let's do some boots on the ground work, and talk to these programs, and say, you've created these programs, what are your recruitment needs?

Becky DeMatteis: [00:32:33] What openings do you have? Let's work with our local workforce partners. Let's put out some newsletters. Let's get our workforce development folks to help us recruit these individuals that are coming off of unemployment, recruit these individuals that are trying to change careers, because I really do think that can change the narrative for Ohio and flip the switch even nationally.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:53] Yeah. No, I think you're absolutely dead right about that. And I think it's going to be a really, really intriguing thing to watch over the next 12, 18, 24 months. And I think it's going to probably go pretty quick as we start to see this churning that's happening. So BJ, with that in mind, then as you're thinking about the work, especially as it relates to the pre-apprenticeship and the relationship of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship in K-12, what's the next big thing? What's the thing on the horizon that we haven't really stopped to contemplate? But based on what you're seeing in the ecosystem, you know it's coming, what should K-12 be thinking about in this space?

BJ Knutson: [00:33:33] So, what we've really, and this is a great segue into what we're currently doing in Ohio, and I think one of the biggest things that we've done since Becky has taken over with leadership is we've identified that we cannot be working in silos, that we have to work together, that we have to use those community partners, that we have to use our resources out in our communities and really connect.

BJ Knutson: [00:33:57] So, that's us connecting with community colleges. That's us connecting with four-year traditional universities. That's us connecting with our CTEs. That's us connecting with our workforce development boards. And so, that's kind of where our pre-apprenticeship has kind of evolved to. And we recently, with this grant that we have, have launched what we call area hubs. And so, this is a source that we're looking at for our area workforce development agencies to be able to take hold of what their needs are, what their workforce needs are in their communities.

BJ Knutson: [00:34:33] And we have 20 of those areas within the State of Ohio, and we're going to be able to help them stand up what we call pre-apprenticeship hubs. And that's not only going to help them just as a workforce development board, but that's also going to allow them to connect with every school district in their area, every charter school, every interest group for pre-apprenticeship and build one program.

BJ Knutson: [00:34:57] So, those individuals have one resource to come to, and be able to say, you know what, our school has a need for manufacturing, and we're going to be able to help that workforce area to develop that program and manufacturing. It may have another school in a different area that comes to them, and says, you know what, our need is IT. So, we're going to be able to help that area develop that program in IT. And I think that's really where we're heading, as far as pre-apprenticeship, registered apprenticeship goes, it's just working together, working collaboratively, working cohesively with one another, and recognizing that we cannot do this alone.

BJ Knutson: [00:35:36] We're a unit of eight ASPs, which are called area service providers in the State of Ohio. So, we have eight individuals who service 88 counties, and we can't do that alone. So, once we made that recognition that, you know what, let's pull in all these different groups that should be working together anyway, and let's work towards one goal, then we're seeing our apprenticeship take even more stronghold and developing even quicker.

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:06] Yeah, absolutely. That's fabulous. Love to hear that. So, Rebecca, I always like to end the program recognizing that there are folks that are listening, they're sitting out there, they're like, oh, my gosh, what Rebecca and BJ are talking about, what the State of Ohio is doing, that's spectacular, but I don't have anything that looks or feels like that in my own area, or I do, but I have no idea how to tap into that.

So, what's that sort of final lob, that recommendation for folks that are sitting there thinking, hey, I want to engage in this somehow, but I don't even know what to do. How do I get started?

Becky DeMatteis: [00:36:38] So, if you're in Ohio, contact us, you can find our contact information at apprentice.ohio.gov. If you're not in Ohio, and you're in another state or another country, contact your labor forces, your labor workforce development boards, your Department of Labor, whatever entity that might be. Find out where apprenticeship is housed, and just do a little digging, and find out how you can get involved, find out how you can develop a program, find out how you can get into a program. But it's all going to start at that labor level, and where is your apprenticeship housed?

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:21] Yeah. Perfect and great advice. So, ladies, I want to thank you both for taking time out of your day to join us on, and have a conversation, sort of share with us the best practices and things you've learned about the value of apprenticeship. And I, for one, certainly want to tell you, thank you so much, sort of at that state level and the work that you're doing, because we have seen the direct benefit and we have watched individual lives change. And we're super, super proud to have had the opportunity to be part of those kinds of journeys. And that's the story we need more of in our community. So, thank you for what you do.

Becky DeMatteis: [00:37:59] Thank you. We're standing on the shoulders of our previous leaders, so we're just continuing on to carry the flag. And it's just going to continue to grow from there. So, thank you for having us and letting us share.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:12] Absolutely. Thank you, ladies.

BJ Knutson: [00:38:14] Thank you.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:16] Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. I want to thank my guests and encourage you all to be part of the conversation. Meet me on social media @AnnaliesCorbin and join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to reimagine education.