



## GOOD NEWS ACROSS 'R' DISTRICT

June 2025

### BEI students prepare for business world

The idea came to life during a Small Learning Community (SLC) meeting among 11th grade Business, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation Academy team members. The 10th grade BEI team had planned the cross-curricular food trucks, now in its third year, and the 12th grade BEI team made significant progress with its Cakes for Blake's project, having developed, tested and packaged a product called Hometown Apple Cakes with the help of Blake's staff last year. This year they achieved their goal of selling the cakes at the popular cider mill.

The 11th grade team wanted to create a project that would benefit the entire grade while involving all the teachers at the same time. They came up with the idea of a mock interview fair.



"We wanted an authentic experience for our students," said Laurin Crenshaw, BEI team lead teacher. "Recently, at least after COVID, we hear a lot about high school students in general lacking those soft skills, not being able to talk to adults and look them in the eye and shake their hands."

The initial concept was to invite business partners to participate in mock interviews, but the logistics of doing this

with 150 students was tricky. The solution? Split the students into three groups and rotate them through three sessions – a resume building session, alumni panel, and mock interviews.

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The focus on creating a resume was a natural fit and the CTE teachers in the pathway classes played a foundational role in this. Business and marketing teachers Shelly Bartolotta and Julia Lengemann worked with the students to help them develop their resumes.

“CTE teachers are on the front lines, connected with the business world and what people are looking for,” Mrs. Crenshaw said. “We also relied on our business partners to help determine what should be on a resume.”



The team recruited 15 business partners to participate in the mock interviews. The morning began with a meeting with breakfast treats prepared by the culinary students and a briefing for the business partners on what to expect.

“It looked like speed dating,” said BEI Principal Amber Fountain, who admits that she felt like “a proud mom” when she saw the students in the hallway dressed for success in their business attire.

Some of the business professionals were so impressed with the students, they “said they would hire that person today,” she added.

One of Mrs. Fountain’s favorite parts of the morning was the alumni panel.

“To watch former students tell current students the value of their education here was so powerful,” she said. “One student said: ‘I’m going to back Romeo Schools till I’m old and gray. I firmly believe I’m where I am today because of Romeo and the experiences with the Academies.’”

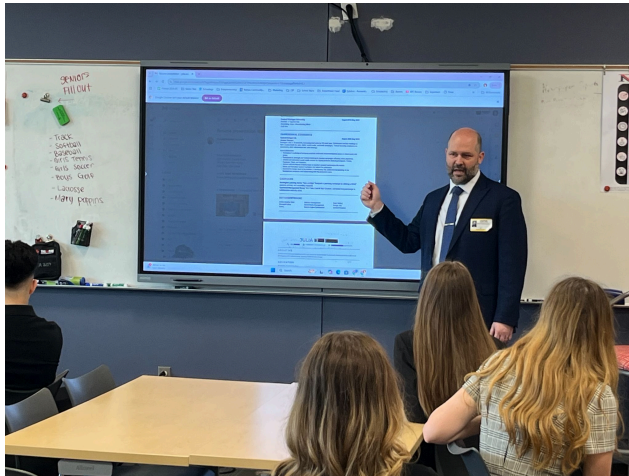
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"I couldn't have asked for more," she added. "They were like a Romeo commercial."

The alumni panel ranged from students who went into the workforce from high school to those who are still in college or graduated recently. They shared tips for getting along with roommates and surviving dorm life, how to stay motivated, and ways to set oneself up for success.

"The kids asked our alumni questions they wouldn't ask the adults," Mrs. Fountain said.



In the resume building room, business partner Ryan Kuchenmeister, president and CEO of K/E Electric Supply Corp. in Mt. Clemens, shared resumes with the students, pointing out strengths and weaknesses. In the second half of the session, he critiqued the resumes of students who were willing to share theirs.

When the sessions concluded, the teachers debriefed with the business partners to get a sense of how they could improve the event next year.

One suggestion was that the students come prepared with questions for the business professionals, demonstrating an interest in the company and that they had done their homework.

"One business professional said, 'I want the students to understand that they are interviewing us as much as we are interviewing them,'" Mrs. Crenshaw pointed out. "It gives them a sense of empowerment."

While there are some improvements they can make for next year based on feedback from the business professionals, alumni and the 11th graders, both Mrs. Fountain and Mrs. Crenshaw agreed the event was a bigger success than they had even imagined. The key was overcoming the fear of trying something new.

"You've got to try it," Mrs. Crenshaw said. "Our biggest mistake was thinking it's not as good as some other project or it doesn't check these boxes. If you have an idea, just go for it. Time and time again in education I've learned that students will surprise you. They rise to the occasion."

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The presence of the business professionals and alumni also contributed to the success of the event.



"I think it helped that it was such an authentic audience," Mrs. Crenshaw said. "The students see us every day; it's wonderful that they're comfortable with us. A large portion of our jobs is building those strong relationships with our students. But the more time you spend with them, what we say maybe doesn't matter so much. The students ate up everything these business professionals and alumni told

them. It means so much more to be acknowledged and recognized from someone who is in the real world. The students want a relevant experience. I am so grateful for our business partners and alumni who came out."

She also expressed pride in the students.

"I loved watching them flourish and get out of their comfort zone," she said.

"As proud as Laurin is of the students, that's how I feel about the BEI grade 11 staff," Mrs. Fountain added. "Shoutout to the whole group. It wouldn't happen if they all were not open-minded and willing to give it a shot. Everybody pitched in. This doesn't happen if you don't have a team."

*Any business professionals who are interested in participating in resume building or mock interviews for next year's Mock Interview Fair, please contact Amber Fountain, BEI Principal, at [amber.fountain@romeok12.org](mailto:amber.fountain@romeok12.org).*

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