

# Ray Allen: Career and technical education in Wisconsin: Looking forward

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“Youth Apprenticeship and RAM Tool have provided me with a great opportunity to learn manufacturing skills while still in high school. I started out doing basic work in the shop, and today I run state-of-the-art machinery. I am so appreciative to DWD for making this program available.” – Youth Apprentice Jacob Yanke

In February the state of Wisconsin recognized Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month, which Governor Walker proclaimed to highlight and encourage CTE programs throughout our K-12 system and higher education. DWD collaborated with the Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Technical College System and other entities to showcase CTE efforts that are building a new generation of Wisconsin’s workforce.

Looking back on the month, it is exciting to see all the opportunities that exist for today’s youth to become career ready while still receiving their education. Under Governor Walker’s leadership, Wisconsin is working hard to expand and strengthen CTE opportunities, and we will be able to do even more under his 2017-19 budget proposal. In addition to supporting current initiatives such as bridging Youth and Registered Apprenticeship programs and advancing Academic and Career Plans, the Governor’s budget adds funding, greater flexibility and new, innovative approaches that will help Wisconsin take CTE programming to new levels for K-12 students in next biennium and beyond.

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DWD is also working with our partners in higher education to support and increase access to demand-driven technical education and work-based learning. One such effort is through the Internship coordination initiative that Governor Walker signed into law last year. The legislation puts DWD at the helm of a statewide system to support and increase internship opportunities in the state.

To this end, DWD is collaborating with the Wisconsin Technical College System, the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities to develop and launch a one-stop online portal that connects Wisconsin employers with students looking for internships in their chosen field of study.

The importance for students to gain valuable and relevant work skills while still in school cannot be overstated. Employers who operate internship programs tell us time and again that internships are a proven talent development solution that allows them to train, hire and retain skilled talent for open positions. With an unemployment rate at a 16-year low and one of the highest labor force participation rates in the nation, Wisconsin cannot afford to miss opportunities to grow, develop and retain highly talented, motivated and skilled individuals.

Career and technical education, along with awareness-building efforts like CTE Month, will go a long way toward meeting employers' long-term need for the talent they need to grow and expand in Wisconsin

DWD is excited to continue on the pathway of expanding career education and opportunities for youth. Under Governor Walker, Wisconsin has come a long way, and we're on strong footing to do even more.

If you are interested in finding out more about DWD's work to develop talent and how you can play a role in CTE, please check DWD's website.

— *Allen is secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.*