

Title: From Learning to Careers: Helping Learners Find Their Way

Description: In this episode, Keli Bussell touches on the importance of supporting young people in their discovery of their interests and talents, to adults as lifelong learners and career changers. Keli is a Training and Development Specialist with the Curriculum and Training program at the center. Positioning all types of learners for successful career pathways strengthens individuals, as well as our economy.

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Fara Allen: Welcome to CETE Works, a podcast produced by the Curriculum and Training Team at the Center on Education and Training for Employment—a translational research center on Ohio State's campus. We work where research meets reality. I'm your host, Fara Allen, a Program Coordinator at the Center. This podcast series will focus on the various approaches and supports that our center offers to educators of all learners. How do educators engage, nurture, and support their learners? Listen in on these discussions that highlight how educators can connect with and understand their learners! At CETE, we believe that everyone deserves to experience lifelong learning! To learn more about our work, you can visit our website CETE, that's C-E-T-E, dot O-S-U dot E-D-U. Keli Bussell is a Training and Development Specialist with the Curriculum and Training program at the center. She is also a Certified Career Services Provider, which enables her to support an array of career roles and settings within our center as she collaborates across various projects. Keli has additional interests and expertise in building talent pipelines through career pathway development strategies. As a self-described lifelong learner, Keli has a passion for strengthening organizational culture, talent management strategies, and workforce development. She was a guest in our first series where she elaborated more on the Influence of Organizational Culture and we're so glad to have her back!

Fara Allen: Hi Keli, welcome back as a guest on CETE works, so happy to have you join us today. I feel like career changing, career pathways, and lifelong learning are topics we are hearing more about and we're seeing them surface on many platforms right now. So, I'm excited that we get to listen to your insight today. When you think about learners in the context of careers what comes to mind?

Keli Bussell: So, learners, to me, in the context of careers, is essentially everyone and I don't feel like that's an exaggeration and I'll explain a little bit why. When you think about it, people who exist within the space of careers in their formal education or training, they fall to essentially three categories. You have folks who are attending school in preparation for their first job within their career. You have others who might be continuing their education to enhance their skills related to the career that they're already in. And then you have folks who might be actually looking to switch paths and switch their careers and then essentially go back to school. So that is within the space

of preparing, maintaining, and being a career switcher for formal education and training. But then you have everybody else and typically those individuals are learners under the umbrella of working within an organization, so employees. But this can include every single person from top to the frontline so that's business owners, CEOs, middle managers, line operators, every single person in an organization should consider themselves learner. Because the reality is world and work it's always changing so we're constantly learning, whether we are thinking about it intentionally or not, and because we're always adapting, we're trying to remain relevant and all that requires learning. People have policies to learn within organizations, leaders have leadership skills to gain and to maintain, there are new software programs that folks have to navigate, so learners in the context of careers is a huge scope, when I think about it in my mind. And like I said learners in the context of careers as essentially everyone, even folks who define their career as a stay-at-home parent. There's so much to learn in an ongoing basis in that particular situation so what's the latest in their child's development what's the best way to teach their child, I think you see my point.

Fara Allen: Absolutely, I do see your point. How does your work connect to learners and career development and how did you get involved in it?

Keli Bussell: So, I have a formal education background in human resources and roughly 10 years working in a variety of different roles, but I'm also a certified career services provider and I have a huge interest in supporting career development of individuals. I'm a part of the curriculum and training team at the Center and enjoy bringing my particular lens of career development and also organizational development to the work that we do when we work with clients. But you asked how I got involved. I found my way to this work because I began to consider my own career path and looking back thinking you know I never really had one. And I never had someone sit down with me and help me truly explore, you know what are the possibilities that are out there and then, how do those things align with what I just innately have a talent for. And what's what are the different opportunities to help me find my happiness and the work that I do. So, through our research in the Center in the Middle Years to Careers project at the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center. We have found the middle school years are truly the most impactful time, which was really interesting not necessarily surprising when you really think about it, but interesting. And it is just the most appropriate time for this work to really begin.

Fara Allen: Well, speaking of Middle Years to Careers, this is something that you know well, you've researched it, it focuses on those middle school years, and you've been involved in projects at the Center that create career development access and tools for adults, working with stakeholders to produce a stronger workforce. Keli, can you tell us how this work benefits learners, educators, and organizations?

Keli Bussell: I would argue that everyone benefits. And it's just really important to help individuals find what their unique combination of natural talents and skills and overlay that with their interests as when you find that just that right combination, it can have a

very, very significant impact on an individual's career outcome in their overall happiness. But supporting employees in the career development can also be of a great benefit to the organization, so I mean it's a two-way street. They can be very strategic and planning for this and what programming they offer they can provide just be very intentional about the career development and what sort of career pathways do they offer to the employees yeah, it's just a win, win for everybody, I think.

Fara Allen: A win, win for everyone, indeed, seems like the best outcome, I agree. What recommendations, do you have for educators and organizations when thinking in the context of careers for their learners?

Keli Bussell: So, I do I do like that question. For educators, I think, looking at the needs of the various industries just really being intentional about creating strong partnerships is just super important. It's really important that the educators understand what the industry needs and therefore aligning the curriculum that they offer to meet those needs. And then ask questions like what's the future outlook of this work, what is the future work within maybe occupations that don't even exist yet just being very intentional about that, ask what potential skills are they going to need, what do they need to be teaching, really try to get in front of it, don't be reactive. And I would love to see more dedication to helping students and their career development, I think that that is a really valuable allocation of resources. And like I said, especially in the middle school years and high school years it's just that that time of development in this space for kids it's just it's just really critical. And then for organizations, I think you asked that too, I would say similar message, be intentional with their employees dedicate time and resources to their employees' career development, I, they will not be sorry if it's done well. And it's just it's really worth the investment and can only make their company stronger so supporting their career development can help meet the goals of their organization, you know no doubt.

Fara Allen: I definitely agree that leading with intention and dedication are motivators for all learners, all ages, but what motivates you to do this work?

Keli Bussell: Like I said, reflecting back on sort of the crazy path that I took, and the time it took, and that college debt it took, I just I wish I would have been very a little bit more thoughtful. But I also I just I want that for everyone, I want them to have the opportunity to be their absolute best self in their career, reach the highest potential, you know, get where they want to be, and then just find the happiness in it. There is absolutely nothing worse well there are worse things but it's, for sake of the matter, there's nothing worse than like finding yourself in a job that you just don't you just don't want to be there it's hard it's hard to get up go to work and it's miserable I mean I've been there, it it stinks So, finally finding where I am today and being excited about it and happy about what I'm doing, I just, I don't know, it's a great place to be, I wish I would have found it earlier but, yeah, that's what I want for everyone, that's what motivates me, and I want to help them get there.

Fara Allen: Well, now we know what motivates you, and I think you've kind of touched on, you know, how do you inspire and support others in your work, but how do you how do you do that, or how do you help them be their best self to reach that highest potential?

Keli Bussell: I just think you have to challenge them ask them good questions and don't stop asking the questions engage with them early. Starting with my niece, who is entering the seventh grade, and I'm already trying to talk with her about careers and try and create opportunities to expose her to different things. So, she can start to get on track for what she wants to do potentially when she gets older at least find out what her strengths are you know and help build on those or figure out a plan. If there are things that maybe she's just not innately, you know, talented and she needs to work on a little harder that's fine but finding those things out early, I just want to do my best to inspire her and other folks that I encounter, who might be struggling and trying to find their path. And then I love, I've had a couple encounters where I've done those things with a couple of folks and it's so fun to see them, you know go off on their way and keep tabs on them and see, you know, what are they doing and are they enjoying it, so I enjoy it.

Fara Allen: That's awesome, I love watching that journey, too, it's inspiring. Keli, thank you for taking the time to share your expertise and insights with us today, I appreciate it.

Keli Bussell: Thank you, I appreciate it as well, and maybe we'll talk again in the future.

Fara Allen: On behalf of the Curriculum and Training team at The Center on Education and Training for Employment, we'd like to thank our guest today. If you would like more information on this topic, please contact us at go.osu.edu/OhioState4Work. We would be happy to hear from you and share more information about our services and our work. Follow us on Twitter at [OhioState4Work](https://twitter.com/OhioState4Work). See our description for details. Thank you for listening to CETE Works, we hope you enjoyed this episode. Be well and bye for now.