

# Work-based program pays off for Wahpeton student

Heitkamp Construction pleased with the efforts and results

BY CAMERON SUTPHIN

Reporter

willing to learn and he stays busy, he works hard," Heitkamp Construction Manager Gary Page said.

Merrick has been working with Heitkamp construction for over a year and is the first student to work with Heitkamp Construction.

Merrick has been able to build his resume as he is considering different certification programs and apprenticeships. He enjoys welding and is considering over the road welding as a career.

Merrick will be staying with the company after he graduates at least through the summer.

Merrick's supervisor, Les Swenson, talked about the need for work-based learning

programs in public school.

"The problem is there's such a short-fall in today's world for skilled labor that if the schools don't bring the skill trades back into our schools we're going to have a real problem," Swenson said. "We've taken the skills side of school out of the program ... Those programs build a good health work base, ability to problem solve and to think outside the box. Without those programs we're going to be in trouble."

In order to participate in work-based learning, an employer creates a compass profile to inform students they are looking for a work-based learning hire. Then a student applies, logs hours, evaluates the employ-



**Les Swenson and Wahpeton High School student Jayden Merrick, right, working at Heitkamp Construction.**

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er and completes a final presentation. The employer does two quarterly assessments on the student. The coordinator does a safety check, media

recognition and gives the student their final vestment if they stick around after school, it helps out. We would be hopeful to do it again in the future."

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