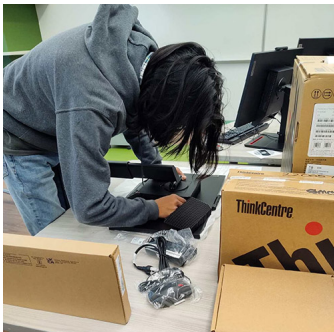


## Getting real-life experience

Written by Gallupsun Staff  
Friday, 04 March 2022 04:00

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## GMCS opens an internship program to seniors

By Molly Ann Howell  
Sun Correspondent

Gallup-McKinley County Schools has found another way to try and prepare its students for their future. This school year was the first year of the Career Pathways Internship program.

The school district has been working with Pathways for some time. The seven pathways that the internships revolved around this year entail art, business, education, health sciences, human services, information technology, and transportation. Only seniors can participate in the internships.

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During the Jan. 31 school board meeting, GMCS's Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum/Instruction, Wade Bell, explained why the district started this program.

"[If] they do [go into a two or four-year college] they'll have [this] experience behind them, but they can also get out to the workforce, and I think that'll put them a little bit better ahead than others because they had the experience behind them....," Bell explained.

The district is paying the students \$11.50 an hour to create a more real-life experience. They must accumulate 154 hours of work to get full credit.

"We wanted to treat this as a true experience of a training for them to get out there and really understand and get involved in the internship they're going into," Bell said.

The students had to fill out pre-employment paperwork, and the supervisors will evaluate them multiple times throughout the semester.

Rihanna Warner was one of the students involved in this semester's internship program. She is on the education pathway and is working with elementary students in the library at Jefferson Elementary.

In an interview the district conducted, Warner explained why she chose the education pathway.

"I'm good with little kids and when I was raised I was around little kids all the time like my little brothers and my cousins," Warner explained. "That sparked an interest [in education]."

Warner said she has really learned how to be patient with the kids.

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She spends her time at the library checking out books to the kids and reading to them, which she said is her favorite part of the job.

“I like reading to the little kids because they really listen to you, and they laugh ... and they’re really into the story,” Warner said.

Meanwhile, Ross Analla is on the technology pathway. He is working on updating some of the district’s computers and installing applications.

“What I’m hoping to get out of this is to get a better understanding of how computers, laptops, and mostly just how technology around us works,” Analla said. “I hope it can benefit me in the future too.”

Analla said he got into technology because when he was growing up his dad worked on computers.

Right now, the interns are only working within the district. But according to Bell, there are plans in the future to branch out to businesses in the community.

“We started in our district first because we wanted to get a good grasp of what we can do with internships before we put it out to the businesses,” Bell said. “Right now we’re working with the businesses this semester so we can expand into our communities and businesses next year.”

School board Vice President Chris Mortensen acknowledged that getting local businesses involved in the program could prove challenging at first.

“I know from experience it can sometimes be a logistical struggle for a business owner to have interns,” Mortensen said. “Some businesses are set up for that, some not so much.”

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Bell said 27 students are currently involved in the program, and that he's hoping 50 to 70 students will be involved next year.

***Students interested in the program should contact their school's administration office.***