

Pathways to Teaching aimed at training future educators

Evers visits new Pewaukee High program

By Lauren Anderson

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PEWAUKEE — Inspired by a particularly influential sixthgrade English teacher, Pewaukee High School junior Molly Lutes has known for a while that she wanted to follow suit and become one herself.

This semester, Lutes has gotten her feet wet in teaching and it's reinforced her professional plans.

Ashley Hohnstein, a senior at Pewaukee High School, thought perhaps a career in education was for her. She loves history and social studies, and figured becoming a teacher would be a good fit.

She, like Lutes, has now spent some time in the classroom, and is rethinking whether it's for her.

Both are enrolled in Pewaukee Insight's Pathways to Teaching, a program designed to give juniors and seniors firsthand experience with the teaching profession.

Insight was launched in 2015 as a capstone program that allows students to complete real-world projects in a corporate office while working with area business representatives. The program began by offering just a global business track, and now includes Business Innovation, Engineering Innovation and Pathways to Teaching.

The new teaching program on Tuesday hosted state Superintendent Tony Evers, who visited with students and district officials, and observed the aspiring teachers in action as they taught Pewaukee Lake Elementary School students. The visit came a week before Evers vies for a third term as the state's school chief in the April 4 election, challenged by Lowell Holtz.

'It's like training wheels'

Nineteen students are participating in the Pathways to Teaching program, which includes coursework on the general theory and practice of learning and teaching, basic principles of human development, and the art of teaching, combined with observation of classrooms

"How many students change their majors?" Nies said. "The program is good because it will develop other important skills, but you may be surprised as to who may change their mind once they get a better idea of what teaching is about."

In fact, just two months into the program, one student has already made such a switch, from wanting to go into the medical field to teaching.

Either way, Nies said, the program exposes students to the professional path before they are in their second or third year of college, when the stakes are higher.

"It's like we have training wheels," Hohnstein said. "It's like we're exploring before we have to pay thousands of dollars."

The hard work of teaching

Students in the program said they have gained a particular appreciation for all that goes into teaching.

Many students thought teachers were simply given all the curriculum, lesson plans and instructional resources — and then just had to deliver a lesson.

"I don't think many realized that we actually have to design our own curriculum and our own lessons that we teach," Nies said. "They have really gotten an appreciation for what goes on behind the scenes."

Hohnstein agreed.

"Designing a lesson plan was crazy," Hohnstein said. "It's all on you. If you don't execute a good lesson, it's all on you. It's a lot of pressure."

Meanwhile, that kind of hands-on experience is exactly what has reaffirmed Lutes' desire to become a teacher.

"I think this process has assured me I do want to go into teaching," Lutes said.

Chloe Sherman, a junior at PHS, likewise plans to go into teaching after college, but says the program has opened her eyes to what that will really be like.

"I can't fathom how much work a teacher has to put in every single year, year after year after year," Sherman said. "It really makes me think how important it is that we have teachers."

and opportunities to execute a lesson plan on their own.

At the end of the course, they will partner with a teacher to develop a project that will serve his or her classroom.

Students who complete the course will take a 3-credit Foundations of Human Development course through the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

The program comes amid a widely-reported teacher shortage, with districts reporting challenges filling certain staff positions.

About half of the 19 students enrolled in the program actually envisioned themselves going into teaching at the semester's outset.

PHS senior Kendall Schoenike, for example, knows she wants to become a physical therapist, but saw the value in developing her leadership skills through the program.

But Pathways to Teaching instructor Cheryl Nies said students' professional plans could change.

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Pewaukee High School student Tori Johnson speaks with state Superintendent Tony Evers during his visit to Pewaukee Lake Elementary School on Tuesday.

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