

'Co-ops' helping students find a career

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Trying to choose a career as a high school student can be a difficult task.

With so many different occupations to choose from, it can be quite overwhelming for some students to find a career path that suits their needs.

To help high-schoolers determine their interest in certain careers, Fort High runs a co-op program each semester in which students get first-hand experience at a workplace to earn school credits.

"It's an opportunity for students to test drive a career," noted co-op teacher Sarah Arpin.

A large group of the 45-plus students who took the program this semester were set up in the school cafeteria last Wednesday for "Co-op Display Day."

They spoke to staff, students, and teachers about their experience so far.

"Students get to show what they've been learning while out on their placement," Arpin explained.

"It might focus on a certain topic they found interesting or it might be an actual aspect of the career that they would like to pursue."

The feedback from the students after completing their placements generally is quite positive, Arpin noted.

"Students do enjoy their placements and often like the experience that they get out of it," she remarked.

"A majority of the students actually do confirm a career path that they wish to pursue when they finish their co-op."

The placements also provide students with the opportunity to network, build references, and potentially secure



Fort High student Janissa Judson was set up in the school's cafeteria last Wednesday morning with her display that looked at heat therapy and her co-op placement at La Verendrye Hospital here. She found the physiotherapy aspects of her placement to be the most interesting.

—Sam Odrowski photo

a part-time job when they graduate or return from post-secondary education.

While some find it beneficial for confirming a field that interests them, others find it helpful for weeding out a career path that isn't a good fit.

"Some students complete a placement and they come back saying they now know that's not a job that they want to pursue," Arpin said.

"It's still a good placement for them, though, because then at least they didn't waste time going away to post-secondary pursuing a career they don't really like," she reasoned.

The placements also have been great for helping students build life skills.

"I learned how to be more confident in the things that I do," said Mackenzie Taylor, who is doing her placement in a Grade 9 music class.

Having played an instrument since Grade 7, she had to learn to have a lot more patience when teaching students who were trying music for the first time.

Although Taylor said she won't pursue a music career past high school, she plans to always keep music in her life.

"It is a very big passion of mine," she smiled. "I've always

been a big fan of doing it."

Tori Sheppard, meanwhile, is doing her placement at La Verendrye Hospital, which has helped to confirm her interest in the medical field.

"I definitely want to go away to college and study radiology," she enthused. "I would really like to go to Cambrian College."

"I'm really grateful that I had the opportunity to be able to go to the hospital and learn," Sheppard added.

Janissa Judson, a fellow co-op student at La Verendrye Hospital, has reaffirmed her interest in a career relating to health care since starting her placement.

"The hospital has given me perspective on my future and where I want to take it," she remarked.

"I'm hoping to go into kinesiology, which is kind of like the basics of the human body," she noted.

"After that, I can kind of branch off into what I want to do and right now I'm hoping to go into physiotherapy."

Judson found the placement to be very beneficial and would recommend it to any other students contemplating an interest in health care.

"It's a really good way to see where you want to go and what you want to do, especially if you're interested in the medical field," she reasoned.

"I would recommend this co-op placement to anyone who doesn't really know what they want to do yet but thinks they might want to go into a health-related field."

It gives people a better understanding of what working in health care is like, Judson added.

Moving forward, the co-op students will be continuing their placements until January before wrapping up with a "Demo Day."

During the "Demo Day," Arpin and fellow co-op teacher Marla Knutsen visit students placements and watch them give demonstrations of their roles.

"It's a time where they can showcase exactly what they've been doing and how they've been spending their time at their placement," Arpin said.

She is happy to see how excited the students are when talking about their placements for "Co-op Display Day," and looks forward to seeing the demonstrations in the new year.