

## **Plainville Citizen Op-Ed, February, 2020**

One of the primary goal areas of the school district's Strategic Plan is *"to develop a student centered curriculum with an emphasis on the master of power standards and essential skills that ensure students are college and / or career ready upon graduation."* As such, Plainville Community Schools' believes that all students must be afforded a variety of opportunities to master skills that support a successful transition to higher education, the military or the workforce.

Vocational exploration begins at the elementary and middle school levels, and as students transition to high school, there are a wide variety of supports in place to ensure career readiness, including a comprehensive career day program, vocational field trips, guest speakers, job shadow opportunities, assistance in securing part time employment, and workshops focused on everything from interview skills to resume writing and beyond. To enhance these efforts and maximize opportunities for Plainville High School students to prepare for a vocational path, this year the new "Fieldwork Experience Program" was launched. This program offers high school students the opportunity to investigate vocational areas of interest, providing a rich learning experience to those who already have a clear career path in mind and also those who are still exploring career options. Students who participate in the Fieldwork Experience Program receive academic credit for completing 55 hours per semester as an intern in a local vocational setting. In addition, student participants complete an ongoing reflection log about their internship experience, conduct research on the vocational field, and create a presentation of learning at the conclusion of their internship placement. Through the program, students have the opportunity to intern at a local business or organization to learn first-hand about a career in a particular field or line of work. Students and their host sites are supported by Fieldwork

Advisor and Plainville High School faculty member Deb Pikiell, Career Center Coordinator Sue Bradley, and Director of Community Relations, Lynn Davis.

The Fieldwork Experience Program is aligned with and certified by the State of Connecticut's Department of Labor and Department of Education's Unpaid Experiential Learning Program to ensure that it meets the guidelines and criteria for an external student internship model. The Fieldwork Experience Program is open to Plainville High School juniors and seniors, and to date, 13 students are currently enrolled in the program. Key to the success of the Fieldwork Experience Program is the strong partnerships in place with the vocational host site companies and organizations. These partnerships provide unique, real world, hands-on learning opportunities for our students, in which they are able to work side by side with professionals in a variety of vocational settings and gain first-hand knowledge and valuable experience for the duration of the internship placements. We are grateful for the local businesses and organizations that support vocational exploration for our students.

As we look to expand the Fieldwork Experience Program, Plainville High School is currently seeking additional "Vocational Hosts" for student placements. If your company or organization is interested in serving as a Fieldwork Experience Program host site for a Plainville High School student, please contact: Director of Community Relations, Lynn Davis at (860) 793-3210 ext. 6111 / [DavisL@plainvilleschools.org](mailto:DavisL@plainvilleschools.org) or Career Center Coordinator Sue Bradley at (860) 793-3210 ext. 6110 / [BradleyS@plainvilleschools.org](mailto:BradleyS@plainvilleschools.org).