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Unique future teacher program gets underway

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A group of students from Nelson County Schools listens to Western Kent information about WKU while guiding them on a tour of campus Tuesday.

PHOTOS BY Grace Ramey/grace.ramey@bgdailynews.com

Nelson County School District high schoolers participating in a unique teacher education program with Western Kentucky University got a taste of the college experience Tuesday.

The busload of future educators received a tour of campus, learned about WKU's College of Education and Behavioral Sciences and grabbed a bite in Fresh Food Company.

The students made up the inaugural class of a program Dr. Corinne Murphy, dean of CEBS, called the "first and only" of its kind in Kentucky.

Students in the program can earn 2.5 hours per day of place-based learning beginning in the ninth grade. Throughout high school, students can earn up to 59 hours of dual-credit enrollment through Elizabethtown Community and Technical College and WKU, with 24 of those hours counting toward teacher certification.

A select few of those high schoolers will be chosen for the apprenticeship leg of the program, where they will be paid and employed as educators by Nelson County Schools while they finish their degree on the Hill.

"This gives us a mechanism to formalize the concept of education as a profession and that teaching is a great next career for students in the high school setting," Murphy told the Daily News when the program was unveiled in March.

A desire to help others was the running theme across program participants.

Hunter Henderson, a freshman at Thomas Nelson High School, said this need to help others is his purpose in life.

“I really love helping people, as I grew older I realized it became a lot more rare to see people openly going out of their way to help someone,” Henderson said. “... People have always been there for me and I want to be that person for them.”

Henderson hopes to be chosen for the apprenticeship because it would let him go “straight into an environment where I can be the teacher.”

His teaching subject of choice would be English.



“I love English, as a freshman I’m already at like a 12th grade, 11th grade reading and writing level,” he said. “I love it, it’s like my passion.”

He said he wants to teach middle schoolers, “because they’re crazy and I’m crazy, and you have to be crazy to teach middle schoolers.”

Grace Cox, a 10th-grader at Nelson County High School, wants to be a teacher her students remember.

“I want to go into education because I had so many amazing teachers, and I want to be that teacher for my students,” Cox said.

Cox said she likes observing classrooms and wants to be a preschool teacher.

Kennedy Owens, an 11th-grader at Nelson County, wants to go into special education. She said she wants to help other kids in the same way that she helped her younger sibling.

“I want to make an impact on a child like I did with my little brother. He had cancer and I was teaching him things while he was in the hospital,” Owens said. “Then when he got to school he was on a first-grade level when he got into kindergarten.”

Hailey Braun, a sophomore at Thomas Nelson, is open to a couple of options: working with special education students or becoming a preschool teacher.

She said being chosen for the apprenticeship would mean a lot to her.

“It was hard work getting in (the program), first of all, and starting it, and then if I got in it would be able to help me get farther,” she said. “I would have good people to look at and show me what to do.”

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