



Woodstock Community Unit School District 200

For Immediate Release

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WHS, WNHS students test-driving careers through new internship program

Dozens of students at Woodstock and Woodstock North high schools are trading some classroom time to test-drive potential careers in courthouses, animal hospitals, Realtor offices, City Hall, and other industries.

Woodstock Community Unit School District 200 launched its Micro-Internship and Internship programs in the fall of 2025 to provide students with work-based learning to bridge the gap between academics and the professional world.

Emmanuel Martinez Caballero, D200 internship coordinator, said the program follows a national trend, providing students with work-based learning experiences.

"We often expect high school students to commit to a career path and years of education without ever experiencing that career first," Martinez said. "Our goal is to allow them to test drive careers while practicing essential skills — communication, professionalism, and relationship building—that are vital in any industry."

The program now has approximately 40 micro-interns each semester and 20 students participating in more intensive 60-hour internships across both high schools.

Local employers have been quick to praise the students' readiness. Before stepping onto a job site, students undergo preparation in professional etiquette.

The City of Woodstock has become a key partner, hosting four interns across the Opera House, the Library, and the marketing department. Michelle Thimois, a Woodstock administrative assistant, emphasized that having young people at City Hall brings a "fresh perspective and energy" to the workplace.

For some students, the program provides a launchpad for specific career goals. Cecelia Bertelsman, a WHS senior headed to the University of Kansas for marketing, became an "essential" part of the Real Woodstock new website launch.

"She embraced it. She just took it and ran with it," Thimois said of Cecelia's work, which included coordinating photo shoots at local businesses on the Square and authoring professional blog posts.

Woodstock High School junior Salome Freites-Alvarado said her internship at Animal Hospital of Woodstock further solidified her desire to become a veterinarian.

"The way they took care of the animals after surgery or dental, they treated them with so much care and kindness, it warmed my heart," she said.

WHS junior Melanie Ziemann and WNHS senior Fatima Mendez Hernandez had a memorable internship with the McHenry County State's Attorney's Office.

"It really was a great experience. I had a great time, and I learned so much," Ziemann said.

McHenry County State's Attorney Randi Freese said the educational aspect of the cooperation was more meaningful because of the students' curiosity.

"Their genuine interest in the law and the thoughtful questions they brought us after observing real-life courtrooms made the experience rewarding for everyone involved," Freese said.

Martinez said the feedback from both employers and students has been overwhelmingly positive.

"For some students, the experience confirms their interest in a career they were considering. For others, it opens the door to new career paths they hadn't thought about before," Martinez said.

"Sometimes students realize that a career they were curious about may not be the right fit for them. That kind of clarity is incredibly valuable, and the growth we see in students after these experiences is really impressive.

As the program prepares for its second year, Martinez hopes to expand the variety of available industries to ensure that every student can find a path that interests them.

"We want to make sure the experiences are meaningful, well-structured, and beneficial for everyone involved," Martinez said. "Programs like this succeed when the community gets involved. It really does take a village to prepare our young people for their future."

Any employers who are interested in participating in the program should contact Martinez at emartinezcaballero@wcusd200.org