

WAUKESHA FREEMAN

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PEWAUKEE HIGH SCHOOL

Students give Kleefisch Insight into professional experiences

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PEWAUKEE — Presenting in front of their peers and professionals has become a part of the regular routine for Pewaukee High School Insight students. Those who have chosen to focus on the business track within the program have had to speak before local investors, professional mentors and corporate professionals. But Wednesday morning's presentation was on a different level for a handful of Insight students as they had the chance to share their educational experiences with Wisconsin Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch.

The Insight program, in its third year, aims to give students an immersion into real world, personalized experiences that put them in professional settings.

"We can't just feed them information and then, at 17, tell them they're on their own," said Pewaukee School District Superintendent Mike Cady. "We have to build them up the entire way so they are actually capable of doing it on their own."

Inspire students spend the first two hours of their day at their own unique professional settings. Business students come to the office, health and medicine students may head to Waukesha County Technical College for lab time and other students may head out into the community for experience.

"For me, the best part of the program is the person to person interaction," said senior Patrick Cullen. "That's what business is. Interacting with professionals is what's going to help me thrive in the business world."

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Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch talks with Pewaukee High School Insight student Jaden Davantes about a project his global business group is working on.

Ashley Haynes/ Freeman Staff

Kleefisch

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Cullen also touched on another important aspect of the Insight program — each of the more than 100 students has a professional mentor tailored to their specific career interests. Last year, Cullen was interested in law and matched with a lawyer, but this year, as his interests shifted, he was matched with a professional in marketing. Other global business students have been matched with professionals who work at Kohl's and with the Milwaukee Bucks. "My mentor knows that I'm really torn between two career paths and he's really been able to help me out and give me advice," said Cullen.

Kleefisch was interested to learn that it was really the Insight teachers who used their community connections to find each student a mentor and that some students had! mentors in different states like California. Eventually, administrators hope that each student at Pewaukee High School will be able to connect with a mentor. Mentors meet with their pupils on a monthly basis to provide career and life advice. Some mentors have carved out a career path for the next few years of their mentee's life.

"That is a true mentor," said Kleefisch. "You are all so blessed to have a mentor who truly cares."

Kleefisch also heard from the Insight nursing students, who have already passed their Certified Nursing Assistant tests. Their career path involves a lot of early mornings, as they are in class at 6:30 a.m. every day. Their daily routine may involve diagnosing hypothetical patient cases or performing clinicals out in the community. At the end of their presentation, Kleefisch took some time to find out how she can help make it easier for surrounding school districts to integrate similar programming.

"It's true that not every school district has a WCTC in their back yard," said Kleefisch. "Not every student is going to get a huge amount of funding either, but that's the middle class dream, to have your child attend school."

Kleefisch and Cady discussed different state funding programs that have worked for Pewaukee, such as CTE Technical Incentive Grants. Another concern voiced was making such programming guidelines more flexible for students so the number of hours and credits could vary.

"To put all the cards on the table, this is an expensive program to run," said Cady. "But we happily do so, because it's the right investment."