

South High's Internship Program

BY KARA KUPFERBERG, GREAT NECK SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT AND REPORTER FOR THE SCHOOL'S NEWSPAPER, *THE SOUTHERNER*

While seated at her cubicle, the phones ring. She quickly grabs a legal pad and starts jotting down information to give to the paralegal. Christine Wong, however, is not a lawyer, paralegal or secretary. She's a South High School student interning at the law offices of Kiley, Kiley & Kiley, PLLC, through the program at her school.

The Internship Program at South High offers incredible opportunities for both students and professional mentors. Close to 100 students participate in this program per year and intern at over 30 different placements. This program gives students the unique chance to get a head start in experiencing the professional world. The program is primarily for juniors and seniors, but there are opportunities for younger students if they are very interested.

Students with specific career interests are given the ability to pursue them and understand what it would mean to have a career in that field. They also learn what type of qualities and experience they would need to make them successful. It enables them to have a more realistic perspective about that area of interest early on. However, this program also benefits kids who may not have such a clear idea as to what area most interests them. In this situation, internships give the student more information to help them focus their career exploration and realize what they do and do not like.

Such opportunities are vital because many students think they know what they want to do with their lives, yet they do not know what it would really mean to be in that industry. This program provides important experience that helps students see the realities of certain paths before fully committing themselves. For example, some students who enjoy science say they want to be a doctor, yet once they see what it really means to work in that field beyond the glamorous way it is depicted on television, they may change their minds. Internships allow for this realization before one applies solely to pre-med programs instead of after the fact.

This program is also essential because our school activities focus heavily on working with other students. Internships, however, focus more on collaboration with adults and real-world experience. This prepares students in a valuable way. Students learn what it is like to have real

responsibilities outside of an academic environment, which is not common for most high school students. In addition, while internships can be impressive on résumés, this program has the additional benefit of giving school credit to students who participate.

Students tend to forge strong connections with their mentors at their internship placement, which may benefit them later in life when they need to find a job in the field. The mentors also gain tremendous value from this program. Not only do they gain an extra set of hands to help with their workload, but they also have the opportunity to share their wisdom and expertise in the field with young people who are considering that occupation.

Students can find internships in almost any field they want depending on accessibility. There are students working at hospitals, web design firms, firehouses, public television networks and local politician's offices, to name a few. Aaron Brenner interned at Northwestern Mutual in Great Neck. In addition to performing administrative tasks he learned a great deal about business, teamwork and insurance. "Insurance turned out to be much more complex than I had ever imagined," Brenner said.

Internships are mostly located in the Great Neck area, although a few students go as far as New York City to intern. Typically an intern will report to their placement twice a week for a couple of hours at a time after school, but the exact scheduling is flexible. Over the course of a semester, each student works a minimum of 50 hours.

The Internship Program is coordinated by director Nicole Kinsey. Ms. Kinsey helps match up students with workplaces and manages the student's progress at the job. South High is always looking for new internship opportunities for its students. Any business wanting more information about the program should contact Ms. Kinsey at nkinsey@greatneck.k12.ny.us.

As the clock strikes five, Christine packs up her things and says goodbye to her mentor. She is done with her internship work for the day, but unlike her fellow co-workers, she has another three hours of homework ahead of her. Nevertheless, she has gained invaluable experience that she will never forget.

The Internship
Program at
South High
offers incredible
opportunities.
