



## GMCS STUDENT VOICES: BUILDING SKILLS THAT OPEN DOORS

### Gallup-McKinley County Schools Career Pathways

In recognition of **International Economic Development Week**, Gallup and McKinley County are bringing together community partners to strengthen the connection between education, workforce, and industry along the Route 66 corridor. Gallup-McKinley County Schools is proud to support this effort and play a vital role in building the region's future workforce. For many students, the idea of choosing a career path can feel overwhelming, especially before they fully understand what is possible. At GMCS, that mindset is shifting. Career pathways are not about locking students into a single direction. Instead, they are about helping students build skills that carry forward into any future they choose.

What if preparation was not about choosing early, but about building skills that travel anywhere?

Across GMCS schools, students are discovering that their pathways are not endpoints but starting points. Their experiences are shaping confidence, expanding opportunities, and opening doors.

### Finding Confidence Through Creativity Lillian – Miyamura High School, School of Media

"I'm in Media, but I want to be a social worker. When I

was in eighth grade, I was really quiet and shy. I really stuck to my drawings, so when I saw Media was a choice, I chose it without hesitation because it felt comfortable and safe."

What began as a familiar space quickly grew into something more.

"But when I entered, I was exposed to a lot of things besides drawing. I got into writing. I learned photography. I even made some films. And because of that, it changed me as a person."

Through hands-on projects and storytelling, Lillian found her voice.

"Working on film projects helped me gain a lot of confidence in myself."

Her experience reflects a powerful truth. When students are given space to explore, they begin to see themselves differently and more confidently.

### Learning Responsibility in the Real World Jazliyah – McKinley Academy, Internship at RMCH

For Jazliyah, learning extends beyond the classroom into real-world experience.

"I feel like for my internship, I have learned a lot of responsibility. Here at RMCH, I am the CEO assistant helping

with documents. I have my own little office where I contribute.”

Through her internship, she is developing professional skills that cannot be taught through textbooks alone. She is learning how to manage time, communicate effectively, and take ownership of her work.

These experiences are building confidence, independence, and a sense of purpose. These are skills that will serve her far beyond high school.

### Carrying Legacy, Building Resilience Aiden – Tohatchi High School, Engineering Dual Credit

Aiden’s journey is rooted in both determination and family legacy.

“It did help me prepare for life, and it showed me even though times get challenging, there’s a way if you work for it. If you work hard enough, the hard work will pay off eventually.”

Through the engineering dual credit program, Aiden has gained more than technical knowledge.

“I wasn’t locked into one answer. I learned how to figure things out.”

For Aiden, engineering is not just a pathway. It is a continuation of generations of work and dedication.

“The reason why engineering is very important to me is because I come from a family of engineers. I will be the fourth-generation engineer in my family. It goes back to my great grandfather, Eugene Denison, and now onto me.”

### Learning by Doing Kelton – Gallup High School, Construction Pre-Apprenticeship

Kelton’s pathway reflects the power of hands-on learning. “What made me interested in construction was just the environment I grew up with. It just feels right to follow in what my father has been doing with his electrical company.”

Through his pre-apprenticeship, Kelton is gaining practical, real-world skills.

“We learned how to use pneumatic tools. We’re building sheds, learning wall frames, floor joists, and installing OSB and drywall.”

For Kelton, the experience brings clarity.

“Just knowing that I have this opportunity to come learn, I truly believe that’s what is meant for me.”

### Skills That Move. Skills That Last

At GMCS, these student experiences are not accidental. They are intentional. The district’s College, Career, and Civic Readiness approach ensures that every student builds a



foundation of transferable skills, no matter which pathway they choose.

Through Schools of Business, Engineering, Health, Media, and Technology, students engage in learning that connects academics with real-world application. Core classes align with pathway experiences, allowing students to apply what they learn through projects, collaboration, and industry partnerships.

Students are not being asked to decide their future too early. Instead, they are given opportunities to explore, practice, and grow.

They learn to:

- Think critically and solve problems
- Communicate clearly and confidently
- Collaborate across teams and disciplines
- Adapt to new challenges and environments

These skills are reinforced through real experiences, including presentations, internships, dual credit courses, and career training programs.

### Expanding What’s Possible

These are more than student stories. They are examples of what happens when education focuses on skills, opportunity, and growth.

When students leave Gallup-McKinley County Schools, they leave with more than a plan. They leave with the ability to navigate what comes next with confidence.

When students build skills that transfer anywhere, they do not just prepare for the future. They expand what is possible.

### BUILT ON SKILLS. DRIVEN BY OPPORTUNITY.

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