The road to the future takes a turn through the zoo

By Collin ruane | Posted: Wed 3:54 PM, Oct 03, 2018 | Updated: Wed 5:57 PM, Oct 03, 2018

OMAHA, Neb. (WOWT) -- There's more than exotic animals at the zoo. You just have to know where to look.

With the right guidance, you can work your way through the jungle on a path that can lead to a career in architecture, construction or engineering.

A number of metro high school students got the chance to blaze those trails Wednesday.

Dylan Sales said, "There are lots of different fields in engineering, so it could help narrow down exactly where you want to go. I want to go into construction management."

That's the lure that brought students like Dylan and Jesus Villalobos to the Henry Doorly Zoo as part of the ACE Mentor Program. ACE stands for Architecture Construction and Engineering.

The program lets students step out of the classroom and onto the road to the future.

"In a book, you just read about it," Dylan said. "You don't get to learn much, but you get hands on. That's the fastest way to learn, I think."

The experts are working on projects at the zoo. They are helping the kids learn a little more about the wide range jobs in their line of work.

Villalobos said, "I want to be one of the guys in the office, not out here. But it is better hands on so I can see how it works."

Whether it's in the office or out in the field we're told it's all about the experience, "bringing the kids so they can

really see real world situations, real-world examples," Elizabeth Mulkerrin said, "and then applying the knowledge they're getting in the design of their own exhibits."

The end goal is designing their own mock exhibits. The seniors we spoke with said this experience has them well on their way.

Dylan said, "It's really helpful."

Students will present a plan in which they select their building site and what animals it would house. They'll show off their final building designs in April.

In the past, students have worked on restaurant and school building designs.