



EEDW ECHS INSTRUCTOR SPOTLIGHT – JANUARY 2024

ATHENA TALK – BOND WILSON TECHNICAL CENTER

“THE SKY...IS THE LIMIT!”

Athena never thought she'd be teaching computer science because she originally had no idea what that entailed, considering her education is in environmental and political science. When planning out the future of their school, Bond Wilson came upon the idea of offering Athena a job at CS because she was a quick learner and always up for a challenge. She is forever grateful for the CS community and found through the NM CS Alliance and their summer PD opportunities, unconditional support from her then administrator, Milo McMinn, for putting her onto this pathway as well as all those wonderful individuals who saw a place for her in CS.

She loves teaching computer science because it is challenging and fun and allows students to be creative, engaged, and owners of their learning. Additionally, being an Indigenous person makes

for great connections between our cultures and CS. She likes to joke that Indigenous people have been doing computational learning before it was even given a name. She also loves seeing the triumphs that come after students fully understand a concept, or when they debug their programs and it works without issues. In addition, she loves being a learner alongside her students. Teaching at CS has shown that even though she may be the teacher, she can never stop learning if she wants to help students achieve their possibilities.

Athena has been teaching computer science here for about four years. Some semesters she didn't teach any CS courses at all, and she started to miss them. The lack of interest in resuming school



post-COVID was tough on all aspects of school; whether that was attendance or even sheer interest and enrollment. The thing about Bond Wilson is that they are always looking for opportunities to expand their course offerings based on occupational outlooks for the community. The thing that intrigued her the most about the IT pathway was the thought of the opportunities her students will have by being able to take dual-credit courses and earn certifications without the worry of having to pay for it on their own. With that, they love and appreciate their IT department, which is always willing to help as soon as a request is made, and they share their experiences and why IT is the best. She also thought about having this as her pathway because it was grouped in with mechatronics, and she wanted her pathway logo with a bigfoot and a laptop.

With the move to shut down the coal-fired power plants and the mines in the area, there has been a significant loss of employment for many families in the area. These places served as a beacon for many individuals who did not pursue higher education and without that, people's glimmer of hope seemed to have diminished because they are entering a future that is unknown right now. For Bond Wilson students, they recognize that the life their parents or even grandparents have lived is going to greatly differ from what they will experience. What better way to get a head start than by learning skills in a field? That seems to go unheard of but is quite possibly the most important job in any realm. It is not an isolated industry. It overlaps with every other sector, which makes it a versatile career opportunity. Any of the 16 career clusters will require an IT professional due to the digital transformation that is currently driving change in all areas that allow IT professionals to choose a career that aligns with their interests. Additionally, some students do not see themselves going off to obtain the typical four-year degree and a well-paying job. The great thing about IT is that, although it requires a unique set of technical skills, it is affordable and attainable through certifications.

