

# road to real-life success

WESTONKA STUDENTS GRADUATE PREPARED  
FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND CAREERS  
IN THE 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE



**A parent's guide to the Westonka Public Schools  
post-secondary planning resources**

# postsecondary readiness



## A pathway to the future

### **Education after high school is essential for success in the 21st century**

Westonka students need to be prepared to move successfully from middle school to high school and into an increasingly wide array of postsecondary options.

With new expectations of the 21st century, including global competition, rapidly changing technologies, and the emergence of careers unheard of a generation ago, postsecondary readiness is an important focus for our district to ensure our students are college and career ready.

### **Postsecondary readiness**

Westonka Schools believes that postsecondary readiness is achieved in four key areas:

- Academics
- Habits of Mind - questioning and problem solving, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision and taking responsible risks
- Social Skills - self-advocacy, self image, communication skills
- Emotional Health/Wellness

## Our focus

As students travel along the road to real-life success, our schools support them by focusing on the following:

- Academic scheduling to ensure all students are challenged and well-prepared for opportunities awaiting them after high school
- Career preparation and exploration
- Development and application of 21st Century Skills that include critical thinking/problem solving, creativity, collaboration and communication
- Community and business partnerships
- Experiential learning opportunities
- College credit through 10 Advanced Placement courses, Project Lead the Way engineering courses, College-in-the-Schools Spanish courses and Postsecondary Education Options (PSEO)
- Use of standardized assessment data through Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), PreACT and ACT assessments to measure student college-readiness and ensure proper academic preparation during the high school years
- Students' emotional health and wellness

## Support and encouragement all along the way

Grandview Middle School and Mound Westonka High School have specific programming in place to support student achievement leading to more opportunities and success after high school:

- Student leadership programs to help students with the school transition (WEB at Grandview Middle School and Link Crew at Mound Westonka High School)
- Response to Intervention and paraprofessional support
- Advanced and Accelerated course options
- Authentic learning opportunities

## **Postsecondary planning begins in middle school**

**Middle school students consider the question, "What do I want to do after high school?" and map out the best way to get there**

### **Ramp-Up to Readiness™**

Ramp-Up to Readiness™ is a school-wide program at Grandview Middle School presented in the Post Secondary Skills course and in Morning Meeting advisory time. Ramp-Up features an engaging and interactive series of activities designed to help all students graduate from high school ready for postsecondary success.

The Ramp-Up outcomes are focused on the five pillars of readiness: academic, admissions, career, financial, and personal and social readiness. Ramp-Up helps students advance toward meeting those standards as they progress through school.

### **The Postsecondary Plan**

As part of the Ramp Up Curriculum, all students develop an ongoing Postsecondary Plan. The purpose of the Postsecondary Plan is to connect career, postsecondary and academic planning as students move from one grade to the next. The Postsecondary Plan is an individualized learning plan that takes into account all five Readiness Pillars. Students articulate, communicate, and update their plans for life after high school in their Postsecondary Plans. The Postsecondary Plan helps students ask and answer the question, "What do I want to do with my life after high school?"

## **P.R.I.D.E. Readiness Rubric**

Twice a year, Grandview students complete the P.R.I.D.E. Rubric, which is used to continuously monitor their progress toward being college ready by the end of high school. The P.R.I.D.E. Rubric asks students to assess their current skill level in the areas of Preparation, Respect, Integrity, Discipline and Effort. Teachers also complete the P.R.I.D.E. Rubric twice a year for each of their students. The rubric helps students ask and answer: What do I need to do to reach my goals?

### **5th Grade**

Students take the "Transition to Middle School" survey and have their first introduction to Naviance, an accumulative online portfolio for students in grades 5-12 used to discover and document their individual strengths, learning styles and college and career interests.

### **6th Grade**

Students take the Naviance Learning Styles Inventory and participate in a Q & A panel with current college students.

### **7th Grade**

Students complete the Naviance Career Cluster Finder and Strength Finder and the ACT Engage Assessment and participate in a Q & A with career professionals.

## **What parents can do:**

- Encourage post high school education to be part of your child's consciousness, goals, life plan and future. Talking about high school and college careers and exposing your child to events and activities in those settings will increase the likelihood that it will be a part of their plan for after high school.
- Support your child in her/his studies by creating home expectations that give priority to education. Monitor your child's progress, seek resources where needed, create a positive home studying environment, require regular school attendance, attend parent/teacher conferences and other informational meetings and celebrate your child's hard work and accomplishments.
- Start a college savings program. Investigate different ways to save. See [www.mnsaves.org/](http://www.mnsaves.org/) for more information
- Follow you child's school on Twitter, Facebook and school and teacher web pages to stay informed

## Students graduate college and career ready

**The Mound Westonka High School guidance staff uses a personalized approach to help each student meet his/her postsecondary goals.**

### **High school students receive continuous support**

Mound Westonka High School students use Naviance, a post-secondary portfolio tool, throughout grades 8-12. The MWHS guidance counselors complete grade-level activities with all students several times each year, focussed on post-secondary planning.

#### **Grade 8**

- 8th Grade Seminar: designed to assist students with the high school transition and prepare them for academic success and post-secondary readiness
- Naviance: Multiple Intelligences (students identify their unique learning styles in order to maximize their learning potential)
- Guidance Large Group Meetings: review graduation requirements, transcript, GPA and connect to college admission and career exploration
- Link Crew: peer mentorship program that connects 8th grade students with 11th grade mentors to encourage a positive culture
- Registration Fair to learn about high school course options

#### **Grade 9**

- Naviance: Learning Style Inventory, Career Interest Profiler and Career Key
- Guidance Large group meetings: designed to help students make connections between Naviance results and college and career options
- Link Crew: peer mentorship program that connects 9th grade students with 12th grade students to encourage a positive culture

### **Grade 10**

- PreACT Test: assessment linked to ACT college and career readiness benchmarks
- Naviance: Do What You Are Personality Profile completion and interpretation
- College Speaker Series: students are exposed to information from 4-year public/private and 2-year public/private college reps during a monthlong series of college speakers
- Parent Night: PACT Information and ACT Prep Parent Video

### **Grade 11**

- College admission testing: PSAT (optional) and State/District ACT (yields a college reportable score)
- In-school ACT Prep course offering and out-of-school ACT Prep option
- Naviance: College Search Tool and My Colleges
- Guidance Large Group Meetings: graduation credit check, college research, college admission test info. and college application info.
- Parent Night: Junior Parent Night, including a panel of college reps

### **Grade 12**

- Guidance Large Group Meetings: college application process, financial aid information and local scholarships
- Naviance: College Search, Scholarship Search and Senior/Graduation Survey
- Parent Night: Financial Aid Information Night

## **What parents can do:**

- Attend parent information nights and review Naviance portfolio with students on a regular basis
- Expose students to college information and environments whenever possible whether through less formal means (campus drive through, attend a college sporting or performing arts event, start conversations with relatives about their college/career path, etc.) or more formal means (official campus visit, attend a college fair, encourage attendance at college rep meetings, etc.)
- As students reach high school, begin to have direct conversations about post secondary options, individual goals and the plan to pay for college
- Support and be involved in your student's post secondary planning process, but remember that the student should be the one taking the lead
- Follow you child's school on Twitter, Facebook and school and teacher web pages to stay informed

## Resources at your fingertips

### Visit our online portal for more postsecondary readiness resources

Parents and students will find in-depth resources and tools on the Postsecondary Resources website: [www.westonka.k12.mn.us/postsecondaryresources](http://www.westonka.k12.mn.us/postsecondaryresources).

Postsecondary Readiness Portal

- student checklists by grade
- financial aid information
- career exploration resources

### We're here to help!

Contact the Guidance Team to set up an appointment to talk about your child's postsecondary plans.

#### **Grandview Middle School**

JeanAnn Thayer, Guidance Counselor  
[thayerj@westonka.k12.mn.us](mailto:thayerj@westonka.k12.mn.us) (952) 491-8302

#### **Mound Westonka High School**

8th & 9th Grade Students  
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