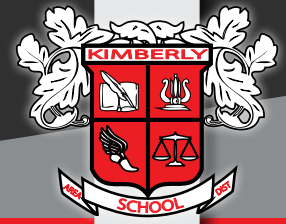


School Matters



Special Insert
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School News for Residents of the Kimberly Area School District



Robert S. Mayfield, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Welcome to this Special Insert section to our School Matters newsletter. In this story, you will hear more about how we are using our culture of continuous improvement to better prepare students for college and careers. Academic and Career Planning, also known as ACP, is something you will start to hear more about in the coming year. By the 2017-18 school year our new ACP resources and processes will help us ensure that every student is given opportunities to reach their potential through academics, the arts and co-curricular activities. All students will graduate with an attainable plan to reach their goals. It is an ambitious plan, please continue reading to learn how we are going to reach our goal.

-- Bob Mayfield

How KASD is Using Continuous Improvement to Enhance Academic and Career Planning

Students in Wisconsin's public school districts will soon have access to a new comprehensive process to help them set goals that are authentically theirs and take steps to achieve them. In a Wisconsin law passed in 2013, all students in grades 6-12 must receive Academic and Career Plan (ACP) services by 2017-18. This new State mandate aligns with the Kimberly Area School District's mission to ensure that every student is given the opportunity to reach their potential through academics, the arts and co-curricular activities.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, ACP is a student-driven, adult-supported process in which students create and cultivate their own unique and information-based visions for post-secondary success, obtained through self-exploration, career exploration, and the development of career management and planning skills. Public school districts must create an educational environment that takes students through a process and allows them to produce a plan for academic and career success.

This process will help students plan for their future in a meaningful way that involves school staff, their family and community mentoring. Each student's plan is fluid and dynamic as their interests change over time. For example, a student may have an interest in being a nurse but after participating in a medical mentorship, realizes the administration side of health care is more interesting to them.

In order to implement ACP in a strategic and meaningful way, the Kimberly Area School District pulled together a team dedicated to the task. In the past, a project of this scope would be developed by a work group and shared with all schools for implementation. Now, the District takes a strategic approach through its continuous improvement processes to research the current state, identify goals for the future, trial potential solutions to reach the goals, and, if needed, adjust the process, then share for District-wide implementation.

"We wanted to look at our expectations for ACP and the State's expectations," said John Schultz, Principal of Mapleview Intermediate School and Continuous Improvement Coach.

"We are using the continuous improvement process to analyze the gap between where we are and where we want to be so that we have a proven system to best prepare our students for life after graduation."

Last summer, KASD launched a concerted effort to study ACP resources being used across grades 5K - 12. Each school collected information on what is currently available to their students. The middle and high school held student focus groups and feedback was sought from parent representatives.

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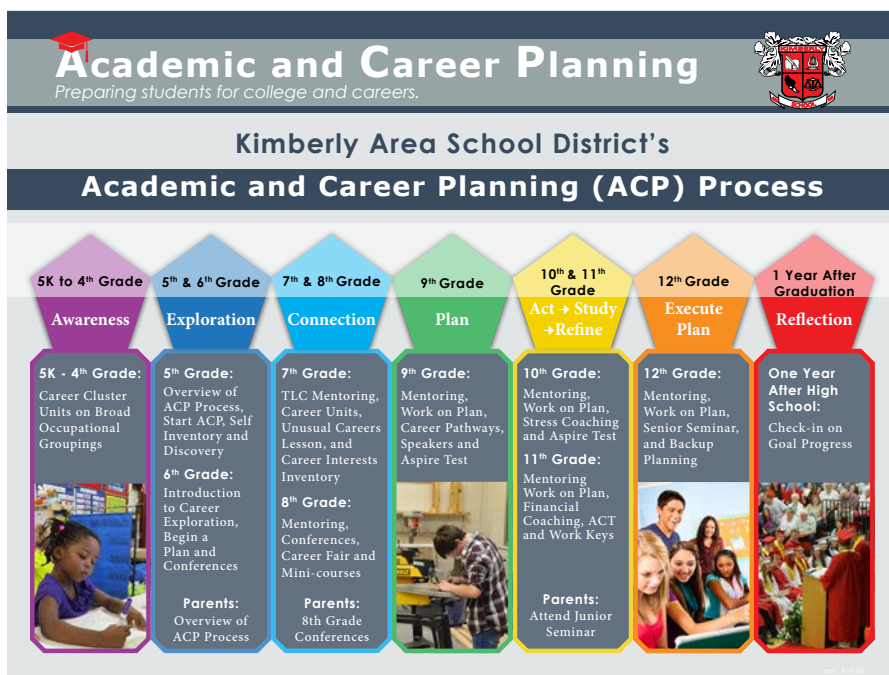


Academic and Career Planning resources currently available at Kimberly schools.

So far, the group has identified areas that will help students create an attainable post-secondary plan. For example, the group found that most career education at the elementary and intermediate levels was happening during class instruction by the school counselor and only took place a few times each year. “It was eye-opening to see what a small percentage of a students’ education is spent learning about careers in any capacity, and that the majority of the career education currently comes from a small amount of staff,” said Tiffani Gelhar, a counselor at Woodland Intermediate School, who has been working closely with John Schultz on the ACP implementation process.

Older students were not clear on what classes to take for the careers they are interested in. At the high school, there are many opportunities for students to explore post-secondary options but there is no follow up with students to talk about what they learned and how it will help them plan for their future. There are many ways students can gain career experiences, but only a small portion of students are taking advantage of these opportunities.

“Through this process, continuous improvement has caused us to establish metrics so we can determine if everything we implement is making a difference toward the goals,” said Schultz. Trials are taking place at all school levels to determine the most effective way to help students at different stages of their education.



A student’s knowledge and understanding of career opportunities builds incrementally as they progress through school. Resources will be available to younger children that will help develop an awareness of career clusters, such as agriculture or business. At the intermediate level, they will begin to have more opportunities to explore careers they are interested in and start to discover their own interests and skills.

As they progress to middle school, they will develop a connection to careers that interest them through educational units, a mentor, mini-courses and career fairs. During the transition to high school, students will keep working on their plan to reach their goals, continue to collaborate with mentors, participate in skills tests

and continue to update their plan as they learn more about themselves and the career pathways that interest them. By their senior year, students will have their primary plan and a backup plan as well as participate in a senior seminar.

A year after they graduate, the District will begin a new process of checking in with students to reflect on their progress toward reaching their goals. This information will be combined with post-graduate data to help the District evaluate the success of ACP.

Past research shows notable changes over time between what students indicated to be their intentions and what they actually do after high school graduation. Uncovering the reasons for the changes in reported student aspirations is key to understanding better ways to prepare students for life after graduation.

The purpose of Academic and Career Planning is not to have a plan set in stone at a young age. ACP is intended to help students learn more about their interests and skills, to explore career pathways and educational opportunities, and to develop their own plan to pursue their goals.

“As we continue to improve and develop our process in Kimberly, we will see an increase in the amount of time students will be given to learn about, explore, and plan for their career,” said Gelhar. “This will be possible because we will also increase the amount of staff who play a role in this process. I am excited about how these changes will help students to make their learning more personal and how all staff will be able contribute to this process in a meaningful way.”