

Sycamore Community Schools

*Connection between the
workforce and the local
economy*





77.9% of Sycamore's graduates enroll in a bachelor's program,
yet 61.4% graduate within 4 years

This trend is not unique to Sycamore

Key factors contributing to college dropout:

1. **Financial Strain**

Many students face financial challenges, including tuition costs, living expenses, and lack of financial literacy, leading to dropout decisions (average \$36,500/year).

2. **Academic Unpreparedness**

Insufficient readiness for the rigors of college coursework can result in students feeling overwhelmed and unprepared, ultimately leading to dropout.

3. **Mental Health Challenges**

College students often encounter increased stress, anxiety, and mental health issues, impacting their ability to cope with academic pressures and social demands.

4. **Lack of Career Clarity**

Students may enter college without a clear understanding of their career goals, contributing to a sense of purposelessness and dropout tendencies.

5. **Inadequate Support Systems**

Insufficient support networks, both academically and personally, can leave students feeling isolated and less likely to persist through challenges.

Current Sycamore Post-Secondary Preparation

5th & 6th Graders
Ohio Means Jobs
Program

7th-12th Graders
SchoolLinks
Program (college &
career planning)

7th Graders “Would
you Rather”
assessment to
understand interests

8th Graders Social &
Emotional Wellbeing
and Choose your
Lifestyle activities

Vocational School
Field Trip (returned
2024)

Current Sycamore High School Post-Secondary Preparation

Guidance Counselors

- Counseling team divided by grade level (2/grade)
- Grade level parent meetings at the beginning of each school year
 - 9th/10th grade: focus on academics/social/emotional development
 - 11th/12th grade: focus on post-secondary education planning
- Annual Financial Aid/Planning parent meeting in the fall/winter with local university representative

SchoolLinks
Grade specific assessments and tasks to prepare for college and career readiness

Synnovation Lab

Vocational Schools
exploration starts in 10th grade (presentation & field trip); opportunity for 11th/12th grade

Counseling page
College fair, student opportunities and financial aid information

College credit classes, AP courses and exams

Voice of Sycamore: Current Challenges

- Guidance Counselors would like to have more time to spend in the classroom with students to talk about post-graduation options, carving out time during the instructional day. With more responsibilities, state mandates and more testing than ever before, this has become increasingly difficult.
- Mental health continues to be a major issue affecting kids and teens. Working through these issues is important and sometimes takes precedence over post-graduate discussions.
- Financial Challenges: Post-Secondary education is expensive, and students and parents are not financially prepared.
- Current Mindset around Post-Secondary Options- Post-Secondary options are now very different from what they were even a decade ago; Not all parents and students consider these new options when evaluating a post-secondary career/education path.

What are our peers doing?

Middletown Community Schools



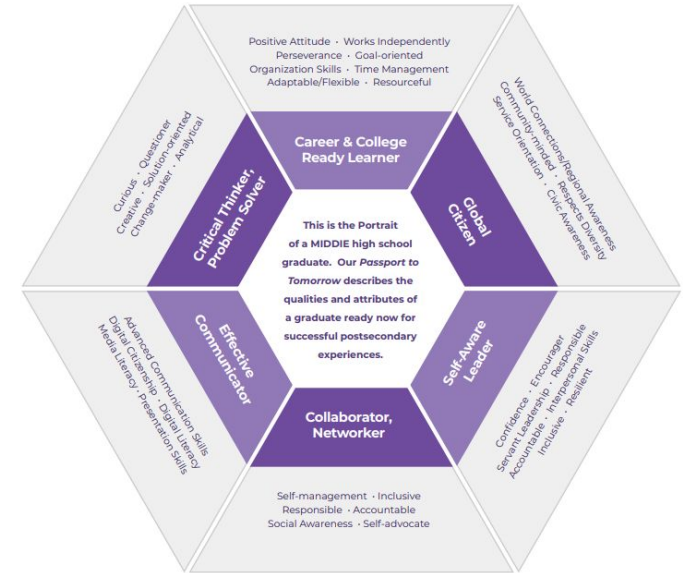
Passport To Tomorrow is Middletown's strategic vision that was implemented to answer the question: What does a successful Middletown graduate look like tomorrow? Through the Passport to Tomorrow pathways created by the Middletown City School District, every Middletown student is provided with a personalized roadmap to be college, career, and life ready.

Along the path toward graduation and beyond, the district has made it a focus to take a personalized and student-centered approach through individual and group guidance as students map out their Passport To Tomorrow. Through this process, Middletown students learn to identify goals, develop strengths, talents, and interests, and eventually, venture on to make healthy and confident decisions about their future.

Middletown's Passport to Tomorrow

“If you can see it, you can be it!”

- Passport To Tomorrow gives students exposure to various skills and careers and assists each student in their development of the applicable skills needed to be successful at those jobs.
- Business and community partners are encouraged, and depended, on to help design and lead lessons.
- The idea behind these experiences are “you don’t know what you don’t know” so when kids learn about different careers, their horizon broadens and preparedness for the real world expands.



Passport to Tomorrow: Readiness for College, Career, and Life

PILLAR A <i>Teaching and Learning</i> Equitable Access to Rigorous, Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning	PILLAR B <i>Schools Can't Do it Alone</i> Safe Culture for Learning and Strong Relationships with Families, Community, and Staff	PILLAR C <i>Investing in People</i> Effective Teacher For Every Student; Effective Leader For Every School	PILLAR D <i>Managing the Whole</i> Results Focused Culture of Continuous Improvement
<p>Build a K-12 system of individual student portfolios that include college and career goals and milestones.</p> <p>Ensure vertical alignment in math classes in Grades K-12 by aligning standards, assessments, and materials resulting in accelerated success for students of color in Algebra I.</p> <p>Plan and implement culturally competent lessons utilizing the UDL framework for a viable curriculum in all subjects in every school and every classroom.</p> <p>Develop a network of staff to support the creation, monitoring, and revision of My Passport to Tomorrow plans.</p> <p>Develop college and career pathway experiences accessible to all students in every school and classroom.</p>	<p>Provide every student with community experiences and/or work-based internships prior to graduating from high school.</p> <p>Establish the "Ready Now 100" initiative seeking 100 regional academic institutions, businesses, and organizations to endorse the Ready Now-Passport to Tomorrow.</p> <p>Form regional partnerships with academic institutions, businesses, organizations, and students to design and implement K-12 career interest-driven pathways to advance students' development of the My Passport to Tomorrow qualities.</p>	<p>Connect teachers, leaders, and staff to effective strategies, professional development, and data driven instruction for maximum success for students in Algebra I, and particularly for students of color.</p> <p>Provide staff with culturally competent professional development to ensure high expectations of all students' intellectual capabilities and create a culture of inclusivity, equity, and accountability.</p> <p>Connect teachers, leaders, and staff to effective strategies, professional development, and resources for facilitating career interest-driven experiences that amplify the curriculum in ALL subjects.</p>	<p>Ensure that master schedules provide clear pathways for students to complete rigorous courses based on their passions and interests.</p> <p>Conduct family and student-scholar surveys/forums to measure student-scholar engagement and empowerment (student focus groups, summits, advisories, fishbowls).</p> <p>Activate a system to gather student feedback on their K-12 pathway experiences, and evaluate post-secondary graduate data to inform improvement opportunities.</p>



Recommendations

Financial Strain



Integrate financial literacy education into hs curriculum equipping students with skills to manage finances



New legislation around 529s at federal level



Create financial literacy opportunities for parents starting in kindergarten. Financial planning translates to a monthly contribution of:

- Birth: \$350
- First Grade (Age 6): \$675
- Freshman (Age 14): \$2,750

Lack of Career Clarity



Implement comprehensive career counseling programs to help students explore and understand potential career paths, fostering informed decisions about post-secondary education.



Discover: Strong Interest Inventory (Gold Standard – Meyers Briggs), You Science, LEAP



Explore: Reverse Job Fairs, Internships, Partnerships with local businesses

Mental Health & Life Preparedness



Additional resources for mental health at lower grade levels



Contract with 3rd party organization before or after school times as to not interfere with school day



Develop and strengthen mental health resources, providing counseling services, awareness programs, and coping mechanisms to prepare students for the emotional challenges of college life.

Recommendations

Encourage Vocational Participation



Create exposures to vocational work in high school that connect to a traditional college experience

Leverage Community Support



Collaborate with local businesses and industries to create internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship programs, giving students real-world exposure and reinforcing the relevance of their education.



Montgomery Chamber



City of Montgomery

Alumni Ambassador Program



Current High School Students visit a local college or adult vocational program with a recent Sycamore graduate



Alumni Coordinator connect with alumni to encourage them through college years and encourage to come back to SHS to share post graduate experiences/career exposures ☺

Recommendations

College Readiness Program



Establish initiatives that simulate college-level coursework, ensuring students experience the academic rigor they will face in higher education, thereby enhancing their preparedness.

Parent Engagement



Foster a culture of parental involvement by providing resources and information on supporting their child's educational journey, including financial planning and emotional well-being.