Graduation Support Program Handbook

Welcome Letter

Student and families,

I am excited to welcome you to West Fargo High School's Graduation Support Program, designed to give students an empowering and supportive space they need to make that high school diploma a reality. This program was created by a group of passionate educators determined to assist students in realizing their potential for academic success as well as recognizing what their strengths, values, and willpower could look like in our community.

To accomplish this goal, students, families, and teachers in this program will use the power of connection and collaboration, becoming a powerful team that supports one another in finding pathways towards graduation and beyond. My role is that of a "coach" to students by encouraging and challenging them, planning together, and, most of all, building hope.

To me, hope is having a belief in our abilities to solve problems and knowing that there is always another route towards our goals. Sometimes, the road towards our goal takes a sharp turn or we might feel a little lost in finding which way to go. That's normal! Re-goaling, or, in other words, adjusting our goals based on our needs and new ideas, is a necessary and important step in the process. I want to support students in building these skills and helping them follow their values.

Families are an important part of student success, so I hope to be in regular contact. I look forward to working alongside you all!

Teresa Black Cloud, Graduation Coach

Purpose:

The Graduation Support Program exists to ensure that every student—especially those facing academic, social, or personal challenges—has the support, resources, and relationships needed to graduate from high school and pursue meaningful opportunities after graduation. Grounded in equity, empowerment, and community, this program is designed to meet students where they are and walk with them every step of the way toward achieving their goals.

Program Goals:

- *Increase Graduation Rates:* Support juniors and seniors who are off-track or at risk of not graduating, helping them recover credits, complete additional required credits and meet all graduation requirements.
- *Promote Student Ownership:* Empower students to take charge of their own success through goal setting, progress monitoring, and personalized graduation plans.
- *Provide Holistic Support*: Address not just academic needs, but also social-emotional well-being, mental health, and real-world readiness through individualized and trauma-informed approaches and community connections.
- *Foster Strong Relationships:* Build trust and connection between students, teachers, families, counselors, and community partners to create a supportive and inclusive school environment.

- *Prepare for Life After High School:* Help students explore, plan for, and access post-secondary pathways—including college, workforce, trades, military, or service programs—with confidence and clarity.
- *Break Down Barriers to Success:* Identify and reduce obstacles—academic, financial, social, or personal—that prevent students from reaching their full potential.

Program Mission: The Grad Support Program builds community, fosters resilience, and empowers every student to reach their full potential and graduate prepared for life beyond high school.

Program Vision: We envision a school community where every student—regardless of their personal or academic challenges—has the opportunity, support, and confidence to succeed. In our Graduation Support Program, student success means more than earning a diploma. It means:

- Building the skills, knowledge, and resilience needed to navigate life beyond high school.
- Feeling seen, valued, and supported by a team of caring adults and peers.
- Overcoming obstacles with personalized support and a plan tailored to individual strengths and goals.
- Graduating with pride, purpose, and a clear path forward—whether that's college, career, military service, or another meaningful pursuit.

We believe that with the right relationships, resources, and opportunities, all students can thrive—and we're committed to walking alongside them every step of the way. Through close collaboration among students, educators, families, and community partners

Core Values:

- Equity: We believe every student deserves access to the resources, support, and opportunities they need to succeed—regardless of background, ability, or circumstance. We honor each student's unique story, strengths, and needs by creating personalized plans and supports.
- Empowerment: We help students take ownership of their education by building confidence, setting goals, and making decisions that shape their futures. We demonstrate compassionate accountability, holding students to high expectations while offering the grace, understanding, and flexibility students need to meet them.
- Community: Strong, trusting relationships between students, staff, and families are the foundation of everything we do. We celebrate one another and honor the teamwork necessary to achieve graduation goals.

Program Overview:

The Graduation Support Program is designed to help students who are at risk of not graduating on time by providing individualized support tailored to their unique academic, social-emotional, and post-secondary needs. This program focuses on empowering students to overcome barriers, stay on track with their coursework, and plan for success after high school.

Through a combination of academic coaching, personalized graduation planning, and targeted interventions, students in the program receive the resources and encouragement needed to complete

their high school education and prepare for their next steps—whether that's entering the workforce, attending college, or exploring other post-secondary opportunities.

The Graduation Support Program is dedicated to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed, feel supported, and graduate with a clear plan for their future.

Key Components:

- Personalized Graduation Checklists that map out the coursework and credits required for each student to meet graduation requirements.
- Academic support and tutoring to help students stay on track with their studies.
- Access to social-emotional support to address mental health, stress management, and interpersonal skills.
- Post-secondary planning to guide students through college applications, career exploration, or vocational training.
- Collaboration with families and community partners to provide a robust support network for each student.

Structure:

Program Leadership

- Graduation Coach: The Graduation Coach leads the program, overseeing its implementation, supporting students directly, and collaborating with teachers, counselors, and families. They serve as the main point of contact for students and staff involved in the program.
- Graduation Support Program Team: A dedicated group of educators, counselors, and administrators who support students enrolled in the alternative education setting. The team works together to ensure that students' academic and social-emotional needs are met, often through regular meetings and ongoing communication.

Student Enrollment & Support

1. Eligibility & Referral Process: Students are identified for the program through self-referral, teacher referrals, or counselor recommendations, based on academic performance, attendance, and/or personal/social challenges. Students must qualify for the Optional Diploma and have at least 8 credits after the first semester of their junior year. Once enrolled, students work closely with the Graduation Coach to create an individualized plan.
2. Intake & Orientation: Each student receives an initial intake meeting to assess their academic standing, credit requirements, and personal needs. They then participate in an orientation where they are introduced to program expectations, resources, and supports.

Personalized Graduation Plans

Goal Setting & Action Plans: Every student develops a Personalized Graduation Checklist that outlines their specific path to graduation. This plan includes:

- Required credits and coursework

- Intervention strategies (e.g., tutoring, credit recovery)
- Social-emotional goals (e.g., stress management, leadership development)
- Post-secondary goals (e.g., college applications, job readiness, vocational training)

Regular Monitoring & Adjustments: The Graduation Coach works with the student on a regular basis to assess progress, update the plan, and make any necessary adjustments to stay on track.

Academic Support

- Tutoring & Study Sessions: Regular academic tutoring sessions are available for students who need extra help in specific subjects. These sessions can be individual or in small groups, tailored to each student's needs.
- Credit Recovery Programs: For students who are behind on credits, credit recovery options are provided, either through online courses or specialized in-school programs that allow students to make up missed or failed classes.
- Flexible Scheduling: Students may have access to a more flexible class schedule to accommodate academic recovery, outside commitments, etc.

Wellness Support

- Advisory Groups: Weekly or bi-weekly advisory sessions where students meet in small groups with a trusted adult to check in on their progress, set personal goals, and discuss any challenges they may be facing.
- Mental Health & Counseling Services: On-site counseling and mental health support for students struggling with personal issues, trauma, or stress. This could include referrals for individual therapy sessions or partnerships with community mental health professionals.
- Family Engagement: Regular communication with families to update them on their student's progress, challenges, and successes. Family meetings may be requested to provide families with the tools and knowledge to support their students.
- Mentorship Programs: Each student is paired with a mentor who provides guidance, encouragement, and accountability. These mentors may be teachers, staff members, alumni, or community volunteers.

Choice Ready Support

- College & Career Counseling: Students work with the Career Advisor to explore post-secondary options, such as college, technical schools, apprenticeships, or entering the workforce. The program provides guidance on applications, financial aid, job searches, and career planning.
- College Visits & Workshops: Students may have opportunities to visit local colleges, attend career fairs, or participate in guest speaker events to explore potential paths after graduation.
- Job Readiness & Internships: For students entering the workforce, job readiness training is available, which includes resume writing, interview preparation, and soft skills development. Internship and apprenticeship opportunities may also be available. It is possible to obtain credit for off-campus employment.

- Life Skills Workshops: Regular workshops focusing on skills like time management, stress management, decision-making, conflict resolution, and building healthy relationships.
- Community Partnerships: The program may collaborate with local businesses, non-profits, colleges, and other community organizations to provide students with additional resources, mentorships, internships, or volunteer opportunities.

Program Evaluation & Continuous Improvement

Data Tracking & Reporting: The program uses data to track student progress, including academic performance, attendance, and social-emotional well-being (Panorama). This data helps inform program decisions and ensures that interventions are effective.

Student Feedback: Regular surveys or check-ins to gather student feedback on the program's effectiveness, ensuring that it is meeting their needs and adjusting as necessary.

Program Reviews & Adjustments: The Graduation Support Program is evaluated at regular intervals to ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness to student needs.

Student Eligibility & Enrollment:

Our goal is to create a smooth, supportive entry process that ensures students are set up for success from day one.

Criteria for Program Participation: Students may be considered for enrollment if they qualify for the Optional Diploma. Additional criteria can include:

- Are behind on credits needed for graduation
- Have inconsistent attendance or chronic absenteeism
- Are struggling with passing core academic classes
- Have experienced personal, social, or emotional challenges that impact school performance
- Are identified as at-risk through academic data, behavior records, or counselor input
- Are seeking a more personalized, supportive alternative school experience

Referral Process: Students can be referred to the Graduation Support Program in the following ways:

- School Counselor Referral: Based on academic review, credit status, or social-emotional needs
- Teacher Referral: When a student demonstrates signs of disengagement or academic risk
- Administrative Referral: Through response-to-intervention or discipline-related supports
- Self-Referral: Students may advocate for their own participation if they feel they would benefit from additional support
- Parent/Guardian Referral: Families can request a meeting to discuss placement if they feel the program may better support their student's needs

Intake & Onboarding Procedures: Once a referral is made and approved, the following steps are taken:

1. Academic Review: A credit audit and transcript review are completed to identify gaps and determine a path to graduation.

2. Initial Meeting: A conference is held with the student, family/guardian, counselor, administrator and Graduation Coach to review needs and goals.
3. Personalized Graduation Checklist: The student works with the Graduation Coach to build a custom plan outlining classes, interventions, and support services.
4. Orientation Session: The student is introduced to program expectations, resources, and the supportive staff who will guide them.

Consent & Family Engagement

- Consent Forms: Families must sign a program contract outlining expectations and the supports provided.
- Ongoing Communication: Regular updates will be provided to families regarding student progress, attendance, and goal achievement.
- Family Support: Families will be invited to attend meetings, workshops, or events to stay informed and involved in their student's success.
- Partnership Philosophy: We view families as essential partners in the success of our students. Their insights and advocacy are always welcomed.

Roles & Responsibilities:

The success of the Graduation Support Program depends on strong collaboration between students, school staff, families, and community partners. Each member of the team plays a unique and vital role in supporting student achievement, growth, and graduation.

Graduation Coach: The Graduation Coach serves as the primary point of support and accountability for students in the program. Their responsibilities include:

- Build trusting relationships with students and families
- Develop and monitor Personalized Graduation Checklists
- Track academic progress, attendance, and credit completion
- Provide one-on-one academic and social-emotional coaching
- Connect students with tutoring, credit recovery, and external resources
- Communicate with teachers, counselors, and families
- Facilitate transitions into post-secondary pathways (college, career, etc.)
- Make referrals to additional supports as necessary
- Coordinate program celebrations

Students: Students are active participants in their own success. They are expected to engage fully and take ownership of their learning journey. Their responsibilities include:

- Attend school and scheduled support sessions regularly
- Actively participate in developing and following their Graduation Plan
- Communicate with the Graduation Coach and staff when challenges arise
- Set goals, track progress, and reflect on growth
- Show respect, responsibility, and a willingness to improve

- Follow school and program expectations

Teachers: Teachers are essential instructional partners in the Graduation Support Program, providing academic support and helping monitor progress. Their responsibilities include:

- Identify students who may benefit from the program
- Provide feedback on academic performance and progress
- Offer tutoring, re-teaching, or assignment modifications when needed
- Collaborate with the Graduation Coach and counselors to support student needs
- Maintain open communication with students and families
- Celebrate student progress and success

Counselors and Career Advisor: School counselors work alongside the Graduation Coach to ensure students' academic, emotional, and post-secondary needs are met. Their responsibilities include:

- Support student referrals and enrollment into the program
- Conduct credit audits and assist with course scheduling
- Offer guidance around post-secondary planning (college, career, etc.)
- Provide emotional and mental health support or referrals as needed
- Participate in student support team meetings and check-ins

Families: Families are essential partners in student success. Their involvement, communication, and encouragement play a major role in helping students graduate. Their responsibilities include:

- Attend intake, planning, and progress meetings
- Stay informed through regular communication with the Graduation Coach and school staff
- Support students in meeting academic and behavioral goals
- Encourage attendance, accountability, and positive routines at home
- Advocate for their student's needs and strengths

Community Partners: Community organizations and partners expand the support network for students, offering real-world opportunities and resources beyond the classroom. Their responsibilities include:

- Provide mentorship, job training, internships, or workshops
- Offer social services such as counseling, housing support, or food access
- Collaborate with school staff to support students holistically
- Participate in career fairs, panels, or enrichment programming
- Serve as positive role models and champions for student success

Support Services Provided:

The Graduation Support Program offers a range of services designed to address the academic, emotional, and future-planning needs of students. These supports are tailored to meet each student where they are and help them move confidently toward graduation and life beyond high school.

Individualized Graduation Planning (IGPs): Each student works closely with the Graduation Coach to create a Personalized Graduation Plan (PGP) that maps out their unique path to earning a high school diploma. This includes:

- Transcript and credit review
- Identification of required courses
- Milestone tracking and graduation timeline
- Goal setting for academics, attendance, and behavior
- Post-secondary planning (college, career, vocational training, etc.)

Credit recovery options: For students who have fallen behind on credits, we offer opportunities to make up coursework and get back on track. This may include:

- Online or blended learning platforms
- In-school credit recovery labs or support classes
- Flexible scheduling for failed/missing credits

Tutoring and academic interventions: Students receive targeted academic support to strengthen understanding and improve performance in key subjects. These supports include:

- One-on-one or small group tutoring
- In-class support and modified assignments
- Study skills coaching and organization help
- Homework help sessions and quiet study spaces

SEL & mental health resources: Recognizing that academic success is deeply connected to emotional well-being, we offer SEL support and access to mental health care. These resources could include:

- Individual and group counseling
- SEL curriculum or advisory circles
- Referrals to school-based or community therapists
- Crisis intervention and trauma-informed support

College & career readiness support: Students receive guidance and resources to help them explore and prepare for life after high school. These supports could be:

- College exploration and application assistance
- Financial aid (FAFSA) workshops and scholarship guidance
- Career interest assessments and goal-setting
- Resume building, interview prep, and job search tools
- Access to CTE (Career & Technical Education) program

Community-based supports: We can partner with local organizations to extend learning beyond the classroom and connect students with real-world opportunities. This may include:

- Mentorship programs with caring adults or professionals
- Internships and job shadowing experiences

- Volunteer and service-learning opportunities
- Access to basic needs (e.g., food, housing, transportation resources)
- Connections to youth employment and training programs

Daily Expectations:

The Graduation Support Program provides a structured, flexible, and student-centered environment designed to help students succeed both academically and personally. To make the most of this opportunity, all students are expected to meet the following daily expectations.

Attendance & Participation: Consistent attendance is one of the strongest predictors of success. Being present—physically, mentally, and emotionally—helps students stay on track and build momentum toward graduation.

Expectations:

- Arrive on time to all classes, meetings, and support sessions
- Check in daily with the Graduation Coach
- Actively participate in discussions, lessons, and academic tasks
- Communicate in advance when you will be absent or need support

Behavior and Community Norms: The program is built on respect, trust, and positive relationships. Every student is a vital part of this community, and we all contribute to creating a safe, welcoming space.

Core Norms:

- Show respect to peers, staff, and yourself
- Practice honesty, kindness, and accountability
- Take responsibility for actions and choices
- Use language and behavior that promotes inclusion and safety
- Be open to feedback and willing to grow
- Celebrate others

Restorative Practices:
When conflict or disruption happens, we aim to repair harm through restorative conversations rather than punishment whenever possible.

Use of Time and Space

Students in the program often have access to 112C and a flexible schedule. This is not blanket “free time”- this is a powerful tool for success.

Expectations:

•Communicate **respect** – we all will respect all people, the space, and any materials with respectful language, actions, and listening

•Be **productive and proactive** – we will make progress towards our goals and values, one step at a time

•**Learn** from our mistakes – we will make sure this space is **safe** for trying and learning

Other specific expectations include:

- Check in with staff before leaving designated areas
- Students outside the program are not allowed within workspace
- Communicate with Graduation Coach in-person/email regularly

Communication & Progress Monitoring

Ongoing communication and regular progress checks are at the heart of the Graduation Support Program. By staying connected and tracking key milestones, we ensure students stay on track, get the support they need, and feel confident about their path to graduation.

Progress Reports and Goal Tracking: We believe students succeed when they can see their own growth. The program uses simple and effective tools to help students track where they are and where they're going. This can include:

- Mid-quarter and end-of-quarter progress reports
- Updates on credit completion, attendance, and class grades
- Ongoing review of Personalized Graduation Plan (PGP) progress
- Short-term goals for academics, behavior, or personal development
- Celebrations and shout-outs when students hit key milestones!

Family Communication: We view families as essential partners in student success. Keeping them in the loop ensures support continues at home and that everyone works as a team. This engagement includes:

- Welcome/intake meeting at program entry
- Regular phone calls, emails, or text updates (based on family preference)
- Invitations to parent-teacher conferences or progress meetings
- Family workshops on topics like graduation requirements, college planning, or mental health support
- Access to language translation or interpretation services, if needed

Data Tracking Tools (credit audits, transcripts, graduation checklists): The Graduation Support Team uses a range of tools to monitor progress and identify when students need extra support or interventions. These tracking tools could include:

- *Credit Audits*: A breakdown of credits earned, missing, and in progress
- *Transcripts:* Reviewed each term to ensure alignment with graduation goals
- *Graduation Checklists*: Personalized checklists showing required tests, service hours, applications, etc.
- *Choice Ready Dashboard:* Visual trackers that students and families can view together
- *RU Ready Platform:* Review course planning and completion

Our approach is proactive, not punitive. When students fall behind, the team responds quickly with care, collaboration, and solutions—because we believe every student can cross the finish line.

Celebrations & Milestones

We believe in celebrating growth, effort, and achievement—big or small. Recognizing student progress builds confidence, boosts motivation, and reminds students that their hard work matters. The Graduation Support Program is committed to honoring the journey as well as the destination.

Recognizing Academic Progress: Success looks different for every student. Whether it's completing a credit, passing a tough class, improving attendance, or demonstrating leadership—we take time to acknowledge these wins. Celebrations may include:

- Shout-outs during advisory or group meetings
- Certificates of achievement
- Incentive rewards (e.g., snacks, gift cards, field trips)
- Recognition boards or "Wall of Progress" displays
- Positive calls or notes home to families

College/job application workshops: We celebrate the journey to life after high school by supporting students through major milestones that prepare them for what's next. Workshops and events may include:

- College application and FAFSA days
- Job fairs and resume-writing sessions
- Interview skills workshops
- Field trips to colleges, training programs, or employer partners
- Guest speakers from colleges, trades, or community partners

Student showcases or spotlights: Students have talents and stories worth sharing. The Graduation Support Program creates opportunities for students to shine, reflect, and be celebrated. Some of these events may be:

- End-of-semester Student Showcases (presentations, projects, portfolios)
- "Student of the Month" or spotlight features on bulletin boards or school newsletters
- Storytelling or senior legacy projects
- Community celebration events with family and partner organizations