

Verona Area School District

Introduction

Academic and Career Planning (ACP) in the Verona Area School District (VASD) is a dynamic, reflective process designed to foster student agency and a purposeful transition into post-secondary life. Consistent with our district's Strategic Framework and our commitment to equity, where we strive to disrupt systemic inequities and ensure that each student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their personal goals, thrive in a diverse global society, and lead a healthy, self-fulfilling life. ACP serves as a critical bridge between academic rigor and individual student identity. For students in VASD, this means engaging in exploration that honors their unique backgrounds and passions while building a clear roadmap for their future. Our district's ACP plan is guided by the Wisconsin Career Readiness Standards (WCRS), ensuring that all learners develop the essential career, learning, and life-readiness skills required to navigate a complex, global society with confidence and competence. Our plan also aligns with the five key areas of our district's Strategic Framework - Community Collaboration, Inclusive Teaching and Learning, Student Agency, Value and Belonging, and Wellness and Mental Health.

Foundation & Planning: Building a Strong Career Readiness Framework

CAREER READINESS MISSION/VISION

The Verona Area School District's vision for career readiness is rooted in our commitment to student excellence, ensuring that every student develops the agency to navigate a purposeful path toward a meaningful future. Our mission is that "Each student will acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their personal goals, thrive in a diverse global society, and lead a healthy, self-fulfilling life." Additionally, VASD's Journey of a Lifelong Learner skills align with the district's vision for career readiness. In doing so, we emphasize the development of adaptable leaders and effective communicators who are prepared to disrupt systemic barriers and contribute to a diverse global society, utilizing the power of collaboration to center disciplinary literacy across every learning environment.

This vision directly aligns with WCRS LIF.2.A, which prioritizes the communication skills necessary for professional collaboration, and with WCRS LIF.4.B, which cultivates the leadership qualities essential for community and workplace engagement. Furthermore, through the integration of WCRS CAR.3.C, we embed a culture of continuous planning, ensuring that career goals remain a dynamic reflection of each student's evolving identity and potential throughout their time in VASD.

STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES

[VAHS Career Fair](#)
[High School FFA Chapter Visits Sugar Creek](#)
[VAHS Youth Apprentice hired at Findorff](#) - Social Media post
[Verona Press Article - Updates on CTE](#)

[Former VASD Youth Apprentice Awarded UW-Madison Fellowship](#)
[Middle School AVID Student Panel Feedback](#)

CAREER READINESS LEADERSHIP & TEAM

Adam Zingsheim - Director of Pupil Services
 Kelly O'Connell - Lead Secondary School Counselor
 Jenny Johnston - School to Career Coordinator
 Amy Engelkins - Executive Director of Academic Services
 Karyn Stocks-Glover - Director of Teaching, Learning, and Innovation

CAREER READINESS POLICIES

The Verona Area School District's commitment to comprehensive career readiness is firmly anchored in a governance structure that prioritizes both academic rigor and real-world application. VASD Board of Education Operational Expectation (OE): 11 Instructional Program, establishes the foundational expectation for a robust Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, while VASD Board of Education Policy Results (R)3: Exploration Academics, sets an expectation that students achieve proficiency in technical and academic skills that are directly transferable to life and work in a global economy, applying them to real-world experiences that prepare them for careers and lifelong learning. These policies also hold the district accountable for fostering the self-direction and planning competencies necessary for a purposeful post-secondary transition. Finally, VASD Administrative Rule 507: Equal Educational Opportunities, ensures that students with disabilities and English Learners have equitable access to high-rigor CTE programs and career exploration.

CURRENT PROGRESS AND FUTURE GOALS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

VASD is committed to a whole-school approach to career readiness, ensuring that every student, regardless of their academic pathway or course selection, has equitable access to high-quality planning and exploration. We are currently in a pivotal transition toward a fully aligned 6th-12th-grade system. This evolution is driven by recent collaborative engagement in our secondary Counselor role-alike meetings and secondary Principal Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), focused on successfully bridging between our middle and high school experiences.

Our current focus involves norming ACP work across our district, while acknowledging the unique strengths of our individual sites. We have found strong alignment in our emphasis on grade-level academic standards and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks; however, we recognize that further alignment is needed, specifically within the Career Readiness strand. To address this, our Counselors and Administrators are collaborating to intentionally plan for the 2026-27 school year to ensure consistent student experiences across the district.

As we look toward the summer of 2026 and beyond, VASD is moving toward a 5-year planning model that begins in the 8th grade. Our goal is to shift the conversation from "What classes do I take next year?" to "What is my next step, and how does this journey support it?" Key future milestones include:

- **Integrated 8th Grade Bridge:** Starting in 2026, 8th graders will attend the annual VAHS Career Fair and engage in interest-based reflections throughout the Fall to inform their course selections. High school counselors will also lead engagement sessions in December and January

to support a more intentional 9th-grade transition.

- **Common Student Artifacts:** We are exploring creating a universal 6-12th-grade artifact/portfolio that all staff will support and use to help students curate their growth and career evidence.
- **District ACP Team & Data Literacy:** We aim to grow our dedicated District ACP Team to manage our scope and sequence. This team will also focus on student data literacy, ensuring all learners, particularly those from formerly marginalized groups, understand their own data (such as grade point average (GPA) to make empowered, informed decisions about their future.

ACP Process & Student Supports: Implement structured career planning tools and resources

ACP FORMAL PROCESS

Our high school Pupil Services staff meet with students quarterly in grade-level meetings to provide updates on students' progress in the ACP process. These staff members, along with Administration, meet individually with each student once a year to review an ACP plan and provide resources based on each student's responses during the meeting. Caretakers are given sentence stems along with responses to deepen conversations with their scholar about ACP plans. We partner with the translation team to connect with multilingual students.

ACP CURRICULUM, SUPPORT, AND SERVICES

Our KG-12th-grade Education for Employment (E4E) and ACP activities are aligned with our VASD Journey of a Lifelong Learner, which identifies the skills and dispositions we will develop in every student during their time in our district.

- [VASD Journey of a Lifelong Learner Skills](#)

6-8: E4E and ACP Activities

Academic Readiness

- Standards-Based Learning: Instruction across all sites is aligned to grade-level standards, ensuring rigorous core content for all learners
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Organizational Framework: Universal use of AVID-inspired routines, including the supported use of binders, planners, and organizational sheets to build self-management
- Data-driven Reflection: Students engage in regular "Minute Meetings," planning conferences, and weekly data-focused reflections to take ownership of their grades and progress.

Career Readiness

- Exploration Software: Standardized use of platforms like Xello to facilitate interest inventories (Matchmaker) and career research.
- Community Connections: Annual participation in Career Fairs, guest speaker series (Science Quest), and industry-specific field trips (e.g., Promega, [FutureQuest](#), Engineering Expo).
- Future-Focused Visioning: "Hopes and Dreams" writing assignments and post-grade visual planning to help students connect current efforts to long-term aspirations.
- AVID implementation certification of "schoolwide" or higher at multiple middle schools.

Social Emotional Readiness

- Evidence-Based SEL Curriculum: Weekly delivery of structured SEL lessons through programs like Second Step and 7 Mindsets.
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Alignment to school-wide PBIS matrices and incentive systems (e.g., “Core Cash” or “Oaks Values”) to foster a sense of belonging and community responsibility.
- Executive Functioning: Explicit universal lessons on time management, goal setting, and the Zones of Regulation to support emotional and academic self-regulation.

9-12: E4E and ACP Activities**Advisory Curriculum:**

- 4-Year Plan Creation/Editing - Grades 9, 10, 11
- Resume & Cover Letter Creations - Grade 11
- Senior Class Meeting - Applying for Scholarships
- Junior Class Meeting - Applying to College and Financial Aid Application
- Xello Personality Styles Inventory - Grade 9
- Xello Work Values Inventory - Grade 10
- Xello Choosing a College - Grade 11
- Xello Exploring Career Factors Lesson - Grade 9
- Xello Careers & Lifestyle Costs Lesson - Grade 10
- Xello Career Demand Lesson - Grade 11
- Xello Job Interviews Lesson - Grade 12
- Xello Getting Experience Lesson - Grade 9
- Xello Workplace Skills & Attitudes Lesson - Grade 10
- Xello Defining Success Lesson - Grade 12
- Xello Entrepreneurial Skills Lesson - Grade 11
- Xello Study Skills & Habit Lesson - Grade 9
- [Xello Lesson Alignment with CCRS Standards](#)

School Events:

- Annual Programs and Pathways Showcase: This is an opportunity for students to connect with teachers and staff in all subject areas at the high school to discover what VAHS has to offer and how it relates to their future goals. In addition, we have local college admissions representatives available for students and families to visit, host a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) night, and offer many presentations for our incoming 9th-grade class as they prepare to select their courses for the Freshman year.
- Career Fair: VAHS students can connect with local professionals across a wide variety of career clusters. Students practice speaking with adults in a professional manner and learn about careers and the pathways to them.
- WI Education Fair: In March, VAHS hosts the WI Education Fair (WEF). WEF hosts nearly 100 colleges, universities, military branches, and specialty schools for students to connect with. Students can ask questions and explore options to narrow their search for post-high school opportunities. All Juniors and our AVID 10th-grade students attend.
- FAFSA Completion Nights: Twice a year, VAHS partners with Madison College to host FAFSA completion nights. This allows families and students to get direct support from college financial aid experts in completing the FAFSA. Madison College staff are multilingual to ensure access for our multilingual families. Madison College staff also share other financial supports with families who may not qualify for FAFSA.

CAREER READINESS/ACP SOFTWARE TOOL

VASD utilizes Xello as our software tool. Additional resources, such as College Board BigFuture and EverFi, are also used. At VAHS, EverFi is integrated into the Personal Financial Literacy course, which is a graduation requirement for all students in the class of 2028 and beyond. Xello lessons are integrated into weekly Advisory lessons throughout the school year.

Ensuring Equity and Access: Make career readiness opportunities available to all students

INDIVIDUALIZED ACP SUPPORT

At VAHS, Pupil Services staff meet with students quarterly in grade-level meetings to provide updates on where students are in the ACP process. These staff members, along with Administration, meet individually with each student to review an ACP plan and provide resources based on each student's responses during the meetings. Caretakers are given sentence stems along with responses to deepen conversations with their scholar about ACP plans. We partner with the translation team to connect with multilingual students. Many of the school-wide ACP lessons are delivered in Advisories by classroom teachers, with the hope of expanding them into our core classroom curriculum.

ACCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

If a pupil has a disability, the pupil's Academic and Career Plan shall be made available to the pupil's Individual Education Program (IEP) team. The pupil's IEP team may, if appropriate, consider the pupil's academic and career plan when developing the pupil's transition services.

The ACP plan is co-created with the student, case manager, and families, with consideration of their disability. In transition plans and services, career aspirations are discussed during accommodation meetings, such as IEP and 504 Plan meetings.

Career Pathways: Align preparation with real-world outcomes

LABOR MARKET INFORMATION

Labor Market Information (LMI) helps our school districts develop cutting-edge Career and Technical Education programs by uncovering the skills students will need in the future. In addition, LMI can help students understand which jobs are most likely to be available and well-compensated. Students look at the LMI as they explore possible careers, analyzing future growth opportunities and return on investment. Staff use LMI as they develop new courses and career-connected opportunities for students.

Some ways Labor Market Information for our area is accessed are through:

[Dane County Employment Statistics](#)

[Job Center of Wisconsin - Dane County](#)

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The ACP program at VASD ensures every student is prepared for life after high school, no matter what path they plan to take. This includes:

- VASD Resources for students, staff, and caregivers
 - [VAHS Course Guide](#)
 - Career Pathway Programs provided in the school district: [VAHS Career Pathways](#)
 - [VAHS School to Career Newsletter](#)
- Advanced Placement/Advanced Standing Courses at VAHS
 - [Dual Enrollment](#)
 - [Advanced Placement \(AP\)](#)
- Early College Credit Program and Start College Now:
 - Students have enrolled in various courses over the years. Most consistently, students have enrolled in advanced math courses and the NextGen Academy - Fire Recruit & Emergency Medical Responder.
- Postsecondary education preparation: Advisory lessons on college & career planning, Career & College Readiness course, Personal Financial Literacy
- Work-based Learning Programs:
 - [Youth Apprenticeship](#)
 - Employability Skills Program
 - Internships
- Instruction in skills related to employment:
 - Students have the opportunity to earn Industry-Recognized Credentials through courses at VAHS. Credentials include:
 - NC3 Precision Measurement Instruments
 - NC3 Multimeter & Battery Charging
 - Sawblade & Core
 - Microsoft Office Specialist
 - Certified Nursing Assistant
 - ServSafe Food Handler
 - Servsafe Manager
 - OSHA 10
 - First Aid
 - IT Specialist: HTML/CSS
 - IT Specialist: Java
 - IT Specialist: JavaScript
 - ASK Fundamental Marketing Concepts

Building School and Community Connections – Strengthen educator, family, and industry engagement

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF -

The VASD is committed to supporting our entire staff in becoming engaged in the career-readiness process. We provide the following professional development to staff:

Professional learning around ACP is currently focused on our high school, where it is delivered through communities of practice twice a month. As a part of this professional learning, teachers are supported in developing standards-based curriculum and tasks. This allows students to make meaning of the material in relation to their own lived experiences. Teachers frequently reference ways that classroom content can be applied to advanced courses or in career paths. Staff have the opportunity to collaborate in their PLCs to strategize ways to make content both accessible and meaningful when developing lessons.

VAHS also offers Programs and Pathways Night, which allows staff to interface directly with students and families to discuss the programs and pathways offered by their department, helping students make informed course selection decisions. Teachers are coached on the importance of ensuring students are aware of all the course offerings available at VAHS.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

VASD engages families and caregivers in academic and career planning each year by:

- Providing families and caregivers with multiple opportunities during each school year to participate in their child's academic and career planning.
- Updating families and caregivers throughout the school year on the progress of their child's academic and career planning.

Specifically, at VAHS:

- Every scholar meets in a 1:1 meeting around ACP. The information scholars share with Counselors and Administrators is then merged into a document that is mailed home so families can engage in a deeper discussion about career interests and formulate plans for funding the scholar's post-high-school training options, such as college, career, military, or the trades.
- Families are informed through frequent newsletters and email about upcoming events. Each family is given an ACP checklist for their Seniors, itemized with monthly to-do activities for each of the post-secondary pathways (College, Career, Military, and Trades).
- FAFSA nights throughout the school year, with support for families to coordinate with the school around ACP. Career and College Fairs are held twice a year at our facility for local access, as well as the Wisconsin Education Fair.

- Communications are sent home during the traditional grading windows and when students take assessments that support their ACP Plan. We assess all Freshmen using the PreACT to establish a baseline and better support students in selecting their career path and applicable coursework.
- All students, starting in 8th grade, complete a 4-year plan that maps potential course pathways that meet graduation requirements and allow them to explore their passions and interests. Each year, these are edited as student interests and possible career paths change.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

VASD is proud to collaborate with many area businesses and community partners.

- Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin
- Madison Area Technical College
- Youth Apprenticeship and other Work-Based Learning Employers, such as:
 - *Tailwaggers, Cherokee Kennels, Sloan Implement, UW Veterinary Care, Mount Horeb Animal Hospital, UW Health, Findorff, Once Upon a Time, RC Detailing, Felly's Greenhouse, The Goddard School of Verona, Dream House Dream Kitchens, Edgerton Contractors, UW Housing, Once Upon a Time, Kelsch Machine Corp, Bright Child Learning Center, Bethke Heating & AC, Verona Electric, AMCSI, SSM Health, UW Health, The Caring Center of Verona, Empower Recovery, Verona Aquatic Center, Escapology*
- Verona Area Chamber of Commerce
 - Superintendent serves on the Verona Area Chamber of Commerce Board to develop and maintain relationships with local businesses.
 - Staff attend the Verona Area Chamber of Commerce monthly luncheons to share information about the VASD, specifically highlighting Youth Apprenticeships and related opportunities.
 - Staff place information in the Verona Area Chamber of Commerce Weekly Update to invite and engage businesses and organizations to participate in events such as our Career Fair and to raise awareness of activities in the VASD.

MOST RECENT DATE OF BOARD REVIEW: February 20, 2026