

GREATER  
JASPER  
CONSOLIDATED  
SCHOOL CORP.

# THE END IN MIND: Confidence and Clarity

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8th Grade Career Fair

**A**re the graduates of Jasper High School future-ready? Do they receive their diploma with confidence and clarity of choice about their future? Are they empowered to pursue a post-secondary career pathway through informed engagement during their educational experiences at GJCS? Finding the answers to these questions has become the mission of the Greater Jasper Consolidated Schools. With that goal at the forefront, along with new statutes in the state of Indiana that would affect graduation requirements, the leadership team and staff at GJCS know there is work to be done. Much of this work centers around students gaining improved college and career awareness and readiness skills, individualized planning around Indiana Graduation Pathways, integration of employability skills standards and engaging with community partners to most appropriately guide students to clarity and confidence about their post-secondary choices and readiness.

The leadership team, consisting of guidance counselors, administrators and a newly added career counselor, went to work identifying current programs and services that effectively addressed student readiness and preparedness. Prioritizing counselors' time to focus on student guidance activities was necessary in order to effectively meet the college and career needs of all students. In addition, the district adopted Naviance as a technical tool to assist with individualizing the college and career guidance needs for students and staff. The program, which will be fully implemented in the 2019-2020 school year, focuses on six core competencies (Social Emotional Learning, Interpersonal Skills, Academic Skills, Career Knowledge, College Knowledge and Transition Skills) which represent the skills, abilities and knowledge researchers and educators have identified as crucial to long-term success after high school. The career counselor has spent the majority of the current year focusing on competencies and experiences within the program in the area of career and college knowledge, as well as transition skills for sixth through twelfth grade students.



Preparing students for their individual “end in mind” requires the involvement of all staff. Teachers must also be part of the collective efforts to ready students for their personal pathway. Intentional collaboration within classroom lessons solidify the importance of achieving the vision. Integrated approaches with the career counselor and English Language Arts teachers, has afforded Jasper Middle School eighth graders targeted and specific research focus in the sixteen national career clusters in order to have a better understanding of available careers. Students were guided to take Naviance assessments that would gauge their interests and skills as a means to learn how these two categories alone can help lead to careers best suited for each individual student. They have learned much about themselves and begun linking their personal attributes to careers in which they can picture themselves being happy and successful (two terms one Jasper High School guidance counselor uses often when articulating his hopes for students). Through the ELA standards, students conducted research on their top three

8th Grade Guidance Session



career cluster choices, compiled and presented in an electronic presentation. In addition, students participated in a career fair showcasing their research project and viewing the work of others to learn more about additional careers.

Naviance software is also being utilized with sixth and seventh grade students in order to help them become more aware of careers that exist in today's world, careers of the future and how they might begin to see themselves fitting into and becoming a contributing factor in the local, state and national economy.

Selection of the appropriate high school educational pathway married with career interests is at the forefront of the work of guidance counselors and the career coach do with students. As students prepare to enter high school, they are faced with diploma tracks, course selections and extra-curricular involvement choices all meant to prepare them for their personal next steps. With a multitude of options, it is imperative for students to focus on opportunities that will be pertinent to their future goals. Through individual graduation planning meetings, course and program teacher

presentations, orientation experiences and an annual community job shadowing event, eighth grade students are better prepared to transition to the high school.

An apparent truth is that much of the focus has currently been on the graduating class of 2023 cohort. As the first class required to graduate 100% of its students in the state of Indiana on the new Graduation Pathways plan, a concerted effort has been made to making sure these students are fully prepared as they enter Jasper High School under the new plan. It is the sincere hope that they fully understand the changes and just how beneficial the new graduation pathways can be to each of them. Gone are the days of a cookie cutter, one size fits all graduation plan for Indiana's students. Thankfully, a great deal of research and thought has gone into developing a plan that allows for individual pathways toward graduation based on a student's personal pursuits.

As an option, students in graduating classes of 2019-2022 are choosing the new graduation pathways plan as their graduation qualifier. One senior who has chosen the new plan said, "This is the first time in my years in school where I feel like what I am really good at and what I love to do actually matters to someone". Indiana's graduation pathways are a step in the right direction for educating and lifting up the individual student to be confident in his/her future.

Community partnerships are key to readying students for future careers. Countless local organization and business partnerships give students the most authentic possible experiences including training and work experience in their areas of skill and interest. Numerous community partners host students for job shadow days, onsite rotation experiences and internships that all take place during the school day. Seniors interested in Health Science careers, for instance, have the opportunity to spend much of their day on rotations at Memorial Hospital and various other healthcare organizations in the community. At the same time, seniors

interested in fields such as Marketing, Finance or Engineering have the opportunity through the Professional Career Internship program, to be placed in local industry for hands on experiences in the areas they are wishing to pursue.

Another community partner, Hub 19, a career and innovation hub for Dubois County was established this year as a result of Dubois County schools being awarded a Ready Schools grant through the al Opportunity Initiative. Initiatives of the hub are a collaborative effort between the four Dubois County school corporations, Vincennes University Jasper and community business partners. Current strategies being prioritized through Hub 19 committee work include Teacher Innovation, Employability Skills, Career Exploration and Awareness, Engaged and Relevant Learning Environments and Advanced Manufacturing. One current committee is the Dubois County K-12 Career Framework team which began by taking an inventory of all Dubois County school educators to learn more about what we are already doing in regard to Career Awareness and Exploration. This team utilized Indiana's Roadmap for Student Success as a guiding document. Members of the team are pouring over survey results and searching for the gaps in programs in order to find areas for improvements and next steps. Another sub group is working on the development of a Dubois County Graduate Profile while, yet another group is working on metrics, assessments and measuring impact. Forward thinking for Hub 19 work to be done includes diverse items such as a



High School CTE Teacher Presentations

financial literacy K-12 framework and a county wide work ethic certification program. Along with the work being done through Hub 19 to improve programs and outcomes of our county schools is the fact that grant dollars are being awarded to support educators. Grant funding has already been allocated within GJCS to support the Naviance program mentioned earlier, our Jasper Middle School Project Lead the Way Gateway program needs, The Leader in Me leadership and character education program expansion at 5th and 10th street schools and Project Based Learning training for teachers through Magnify Learning. Hub 19 and the al Opportunity Initiative will continue to have a positive impact on the students of Greater Jasper as the work toward improving programs continues. The work of Hub 19 aligns with the goals of the Greater Jasper staff to ensure confidence and clarity in postsecondary choices for all graduates.

Greater Jasper has also partnered with the Indiana Youth Institute to work with our K-5 administrators, educators, parents and community partners. The vision of the group of



GJCS leaders working with IYI is: “Every child in Jasper will be supported to achieve self-actualization in life and career. School and community champions will ensure youth are whole socially and emotionally in order to pursue a pathway they are proud of and prepared for.” One overarching goal of the IYI steering committee that aligns with all other initiatives being carried out is “to ensure all supporters will be able to articulate and demonstrate the

shared mindset regarding their role in a student’s pathway to postsecondary success.”

In a few short years the leadership and staff in the Greater Jasper Consolidated School Corp. will see young adults leaving Jasper High School to pursue postsecondary options with confidence and clarity. Those same students will have a vast understanding of the impact they can have and what their contribution can be to their community, state, country and world. If these kids are the future, the future looks bright! 🎓

