School District U-46

Postsecondary and Career Expectations

At the middle school and early high school level, the Illinois Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework is designed to provide students with guided exploration of postsecondary planning and options in a manner that is consistent with adolescent development. Meaningful participation in postsecondary preparation programs requires that students perceive college and/or career as possible and probable. Too often, programs are designed to serve only students who already have a college-going or career-oriented identity. The developmental work in the middle school framework is intended to prepare students to more fully engage with the PaCE Framework throughout the critical high school years.



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By the end of 6th grade

Implemented in School Year 2026-2027

- Be supported to articulate aspirations
- Be supported to explore their habits
- Be supported to record their progress
- Be supported to explore their interests
- Be exposed to information about and example of wide range career goals
- Be supported to create or change habit

Be exposed to practices that develop growth mindset

- Be supported to develop their confidence in their abilities
- Be supported to develop their confidence in their abilities
- Be exposed to practices that develop growth mindset

By the end of 7th grade

- Be supported to explore barriers to aspirations
- Be supported to complete a career cluster survey
- Be exposed to the concept of career clusters of interest
- Be supported to explore career interests
- Be supported to compare possible financial futures
- Be exposed to a financial literacy unit in a course or workshop
- Be exposed to the relationship between community service/extracurriculars and PS/career goals
- Be supported to articulate personal strengths
- Be supported to understand a growth mindset

By the end of 8th grade

- Be supported to develop an educational plan for at least one career interest
- Be supported to attend a career exploration day
- Be supported to create SMART Goals
- Be supported to complete a unit on education planning
- Be exposed to the relationship between community service/extracurriculars and PS/career goals
- Be supported to demonstrate a growth mindset
- Be supported to engage in guided self-reflection
- Be supported to identify sources of motivation
- Be supported to envision a positive future
- Be supported to explore how you learn best
- Be supported to practice their strengths

Aspiration | **Planning** | **Self-Advocacy**

School District U-46

Postsecondary and Career Expectations

Each student should have an individualized learning plan to help make decisions about career and postsecondary (PS) education or training, to plan a course of study, and to make financial aid assessments with family members.

By the end of 9th grade

- Complete an elective course to explore career interests
- Know skills related to career interests
- Know how career pathway courses and experiences articulate to degree programs at postsecondary options
- Know one or two careers for further exploration
- Complete a career interest survey
- Complete a unit on education planning
- Enroll as appropriate in early college credit courses
- Outline a plan for community service and extracurricular activities related to postsecondary plans
- Select course work for postsecondary/career plans aligned with the ISBE College and Career Readiness Indicators (CCRI)
- Know the relationship between high school coursework, attendance, and grades to postsecondary plans
- Understand that taking the right courses in high school can reduce the cost of college

By the end of 10th grade

- Identify two related postsecondary paths and/or college majors strongly correlated with career area of interest
- Create a postsecondary goal
- Attend a college fair
- Connect and build relationships with 2-3 adults to support the postsecondary and career selection process
- Know different types of postsecondary credentials and institutions
- Attend a postsecondary options workshop
- Enroll as appropriate in early college credit courses
- Select course work for postsecondary/career plans aligned with the ISBE College and Career Readiness Indicators (CCRI)
- Attend a basic financial aid presentation with a trusted adult
- Know general cost ranges of various postsecondary options

By the end of 11th grade

- Create a resume and personal statement
- Participate in a mock job interview
- Visit at least one workplace aligned with career interests
- Compare and contrast personal strengths and weaknesses with career choice
- Review and update postsecondary goal.
- Know entrance requirements, including application deadlines, for expected postsecondary programs of study
- Complete a college fit/match inventory
- Know 3-5 match schools, one safety, one reach school for postsecondary program of study
- Enroll as appropriate in early college credit courses
- Select course work for postsecondary/career plans aligned with the ISBE College and Career Readiness Indicators (CCRI)
- Complete a Postsecondary Plan Workshop

By the end of 12th grade

- Attend a career exploration day, activity, or presentation
- Participate in activities related to their career cluster of interest
- Ensure all steps in the postsecondary/career processes are completed on time
- Complete 3 or more admissions applications to postsecondary institutions
- Visit at least 3 postsecondary institutions
- Secure letters of recommendation for college and scholarship applications
- Enroll as appropriate in early college credit courses
- Submit a postsecondary plan
- Complete a financial aid application.
- Know estimated cost of chosen postsecondary options
- Understand the student loan process and available loan options
- Know the difference between need-based, merit-based, and self-help financial aid
- Complete a thorough scholarship search and application process
- Know how to find scholarships
- Understand the various aspects of personal banking and financial wellness
- Know how salary impacts standard of living
- Understand how to be a responsible borrower
- Understand W-4s, pay stubs, and income taxes

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Career Exploration and Development | Postsecondary Education Exploration, Preparation, and Selection | Financial Aid and Literacy