A Focus on Our Career Pathways
We are educating a generation of innovators, students who are driven and inspired by ideas, and preparing them for jobs that don’t yet exist.

Not only did we provide her with an authentic workplace learning opportunity, we ensured she left our schoolhouse doors with a clearer sense of her interests, career path and postsecondary goals. As educators, we have a profound responsibility to prepare our students for success after graduation.

At High School District 214, we are committed to doing just that. Our robust Career Pathways program provides all students with rigorous academic courses, access to early college credits and industry certifications, and personalized and career-specific learning experiences.

High school graduation cannot be an endpoint. We know we are part of the cradle-to-careers pipeline and that our Career Pathways program leads to the next step, whether it be enrolling in college, entering the military or going straight into the workforce.

Our nationally unique program gives students exposure to coursework directly related to a future career that can lead to an industry credential, allowing them to be immediately employable upon graduation. Our Career Pathways program guarantees students who choose one of the 16 Career Clusters by the end of their sophomore year will receive hands-on workplace learning experiences, such as internships, that enable them to explore their career interests while still in high school.

All the components in our Career Pathways program are in line with the national Redefining Ready! campaign, a multi-metric approach initiated by the American Association of School Administrators – The School Superintendents Association that measures whether students are college ready, career ready and life ready.

We believe success should not be defined by just a number or a score students earn on a standardized test. Our students learn in a variety of ways. They should be able to demonstrate readiness in a variety of ways.

The Redefining Ready! indicators, developed from research by world-class organizations, provide a comprehensive picture of student potential.

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Our Career Pathways program, which I believe can be replicated and scaled in schools across the country, gives our students the academic skills to make them college and career ready and also instills grit, perseverance and resiliency so they can tackle and achieve their goals. I am so proud to share the work of our educators in the following pages.

We are educating a generation of innovators – students who are driven and inspired by ideas – and preparing them for jobs that don’t yet exist. It is our obligation to help every student who walks through our schoolhouse doors build skills to succeed in this ever-changing global economy, break down barriers and provide opportunities so they can discover their futures.

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— Dr. David R. Schuler

* see page 15 for Redefining Ready! Indicators

Dr. David R. Schuler
Superintendent

A few years ago, I met one of our students who had just completed an engineering internship coordinated by our District. When I asked what she thought of the experience, she told me it helped her decide which kind of engineering career she wanted to pursue. How amazing is that?
In 2007, then-Wheeling High School Principal Lazaro Lopez met with manufacturers, business leaders and the local department of economic development. It was clear there was a shortage of skilled workers to meet the workforce demand for manufacturing jobs—and the answer, they believed, didn’t have to start in college. It could start in high school.

That team forged an early partnership to envision a facility within the high school’s walls that would expose students to the manufacturing industry, equip them with industry credentials and prepare them for real employment opportunities. It became a reality, and so too did a reimagined high school curriculum, with an eye on ensuring relevancy well beyond graduation.

Rather than asking “What do you need to graduate?” counselors began asking their students what they wanted to do with the rest of their lives—and then focused on getting them there, steadily forming more community partnerships to build tangible career pathways that help every student progress from high school to college and real, 21st century careers.

Those first steps led to great change.

District 214 now works closely with more than 900 partners—a number that grows every year—who help drive and enhance teaching and learning, offer internships to students and work in classrooms with students as speakers and mentors. Those partnerships ensure our career pathways are in line with industry trends and demands, and that students are prepared for success. The partnerships have led to the creation of unique in-school healthcare labs and Certified Nursing Assistant training, providing college certifications before high school graduation; state-of-the-art manufacturing laboratories; and a first-of-its-kind nanotechnology laboratory filled with equipment typically found in America’s top higher education research institutions.

Our educators receive guidance from advisory boards comprising professionals in various industries; most recently, more than a dozen experts in law enforcement and legal affairs convened to shape a law and equity pathway for District 214 students.

With a focus on research that shows students entering college with 15 or more credits are poised for greater success, District 214 has partnered with Harper College toward a goal of ensuring all students have access to crucial early college credits; the District also works with National Louis and Northeastern Illinois universities to create no-debt, low-cost college opportunities for students pursuing a variety of specific credentials, including education.

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In line with Redefining Ready! and District 214’s Career Pathways program, the District’s Center for Career Discovery was created to expand on our mission to prepare students for life beyond high school.

America’s public schools have a profound responsibility to ensure our nation’s students are college, career and life ready.

Standardized test scores – traditionally the primary readiness indicator – do not always provide an accurate or complete representative of our students’ potential to succeed once they leave our doors.

The Redefining Ready! initiative is a multi-metric approach that more appropriately assesses students’ postsecondary potential by allowing them to demonstrate readiness in a way that is supported by research and fits their learning style.

These indicators, * supported by research from highly regarded institutions, include Advanced Placement success, early college credits, industry credentials, internships and community service, among other metrics.

In line with Redefining Ready! and District 214’s Career Pathways program, the District’s Center for Career Discovery was created to expand our mission to prepare students for life beyond high school by assisting them with career exploration through programs, events and authentic workplace learning experiences, such as internships and mentoring.

These opportunities support students’ career skill development, decision-making and postsecondary goals while also giving industry partners the ability to recruit and develop a future pipeline of potential employees.

Here are several stories of college- and career-ready students who discovered their passion and futures through their personal interests, choosing a Career Cluster, engaging with professionals from different industries, learning specific job tasks and improving their skills.

* see page 15 for Redefining Ready! Indicators

Hannah DeGraff | Senior Career Cluster: Health Science

A summer internship at a physical therapist’s office affirmed Wheeling High School student Hannah DeGraff’s decision to pursue a career in the field.

The internship – coordinated through District 214’s Center for Career Discovery – gave Hannah a better understanding of what physical therapists do every day. It also provided her a behind the scenes look at running a healthcare business, from calling insurance companies to cleaning medical supplies and the importance of taking detailed notes to track patients’ progress.

Additionally, Hannah, an AP and honors student, credits the hands-on experience for helping her realize she enjoys a fast-paced environment and is interested in pediatric physical therapy. “The internship definitely confirmed I like getting to know patients on a deeper basis.”

District 214’s health science pathway provides students a competitive edge when applying for direct admission programs with early college credit, industry credentials as well as early work experiences that inform their postsecondary decision-making and choices.

Now in her senior year, Hannah has been directly admitted to pre-physical therapy programs at three universities, meaning she can graduate in six years with a bachelor’s and doctorate’s degree. She also wants to study finance to better understand the business side of the industry.

Oscar Gonzalez | Junior Career Cluster: Manufacturing

Oscar Gonzalez didn’t know what manufacturing could offer until he took a course at Elk Grove High School.

In just one year, Oscar learned how to work with high-tech tools and complex industrial equipment, such as lathes and mills, and met with manufacturing professionals through numerous industry site visits. He also earned an industry-level safety certification from a national organization verifying his qualifications in the field.

Oscar credits these classrooms and career-specific opportunities – offered through District 214’s robust manufacturing pathway – with showing him he can combine his advanced math skills and desire to work with his hands. The District program also works with the local manufacturing community to provide students early college credit and internships.

Students like Oscar can earn up to 24 semester hours of early college credits toward Harper College’s associate of applied science degree in Advanced Manufacturing Technology while in high school.

Now a junior taking honors and AP courses, Oscar is applying for internships to gain more hands-on experience. He is leaning toward a career in CNC-based manufacturing or tool and die making, and plans to attend college to strengthen his skills.

“I have gained so much knowledge about what the industry looks like. I am always learning something new.”
Kelly Helmer | Junior
Career Cluster: Arts, Audio/Video Technology and Communications

Kelly Helmer found her calling within a few weeks of taking her first media technology class at John Hersey High School. Through the course, she discovered she could pair newly learned skills – such as filming, interviewing and editing – with her passion to tell stories that make an impact.

The District’s onsite studios provide students with real world opportunities to investigate careers in digital media fields including broadcast journalism, film and television production.

Kelly and her classmates created a digital segment, HTV Monthly, that goes beyond morning announcements and delivers relevant news. As part of that production, Hersey students participated in 74 industry experiences in under one year, gaining press credentials to cover events like the Taste of Chicago and the Chicago Flower & Garden Show.

An iOS app development course at Prospect High School taught Jimmy McDermott cutting-edge programming that has impressed peers and even professionals in the computer science industry. Jimmy enrolled in District 214 and MobileMakersEdu iOS app development class, which piloted in 2014 to give students the tools to build apps using Apple’s new programming language, Swift, and expose them to careers in the IT field.

Freshman students in District 214 begin their hands on experience in the networking systems pathway by learning to code and continue through a sequence of courses that allows them to earn up to 26 hours of early college credit, three CSCO industry credentials and opportunities for relevant workplace learning experiences.

Jimmy interned at a development shop in Chicago and ultimately helped the company write coding standards for Swift. Jimmy, who first built websites in junior high, says the company still uses his contributions to the project.

Since then, Jimmy has created several apps for niche markets, and owns his own development shop that builds mobile apps and digital websites.

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They’ve honed this presentation and the details of their business over the school year in a District 214 entrepreneurship classroom, working consistently alongside a professional mentor who coached them through the building of a business. By the time they get there, for the District’s annual Startup Showcase competition, they are well-versed in the details: the finances needed to run their business, the marketing strategy to reach target audiences and the rationale behind the materials they chose for packaging.

These students, in partnership with the nonprofit INCubatoredu, will go on to become America’s next generation of entrepreneurs, building a business and a revenue stream they manage through college.

Since the inception of the entrepreneurship program and the Startup Showcase pitch night, students have created numerous successful businesses and products, including SnapClips, a clip used on weightlifting equipment; Hoodie Hoop, a tool to restring garments; and Skunk Aid, a product to help clean dogs that have been skunked. Skunk Aid has been featured on WGN-TV and is currently sold in Ace Hardware locations locally.

“There is an energy that just becomes so contagious and exciting,” says Karen Roberts, an entrepreneurship instructor at Buffalo Grove High School. “Everyone is striving toward a final goal.”

On a brightly lit stage, a small group of high school students shows off the next big idea, built on a simple concept: a device that quickly and efficiently rethreads strings that have been pulled out of hooded sweatshirts, sweatpants and drawstring bags.

Such innovation is at work daily in District 214 classrooms.

In mobile app development classes piloted by the District in 2014, students have designed apps to solve real-world problems posed to them by staff and students: A basketball coach wants to know how to determine the best lineup on any given night of competition in real-time; students want an app that delivers a bell schedule reminder, and another app that explains to them the District courses available that will lead them to the career they want.

Elsewhere, geometry classrooms have been transformed into construction centers, with walls of faux houses rising from the floors as students learn mathematical concepts by practicing something they enjoy.

An Italian class partners with an olive oil company in Italy to research and market the firm’s products globally. Students create real things — from entire houses to award-winning robots and high mileage vehicles. Students across the District enroll in a Medical Academy that positions them for success in healthcare careers by completing internships in partner hospitals.

The District has advanced through a fail-forward mentality: Educators are empowered to take risks and try new things with the idea that if everything is always working flawlessly, we’re not pushing the boundaries of success.

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More than two dozen students took the stage at Rolling Meadows High School in May of 2016 amid applause and cheers to sign their letters of intent – not for a specific college sports team, but for the career they were acknowledging they were ready to work toward: a career in education.

The District’s next generation of teachers were lauded at that signing ceremony, which served as the formal launch of Educator Prep, a District 214 program to encourage and empower students for careers in teaching. The program guarantees students who are interested and qualified to become teachers will have a real opportunity to do so, with District 214 doing everything possible to eliminate potential barriers to that success.

“We have a crisis in this country in terms of teacher recruitment,” said Dan Brown, co-director of Educators Rising, a partner in the Educator Prep program. “The eyes of the teaching profession are on this District.” The program comprises a sequence of courses and experiences developed in cooperation with community partners across primary, secondary and postsecondary education.

High school students in Educator Prep can complete relevant education coursework, spend time in real classrooms observing and teaching and obtain early college credit in education courses. They’re then able to earn their bachelor’s degree in an abbreviated time with low-cost, no-debt options through major university partnerships, and receive continued professional support.

Those completing the program through college will be guaranteed a student teaching placement in District 214 or a partner district and, following successful completion, be guaranteed interviews with primary and secondary partners if openings exist within those partner schools.

“We are impacting public education in this country,” Superintendent Schuler said at the program’s launch. “We are being that incubator to change the world.”

A recent Learning Policy Institute study suggests the United States is facing its first major teaching shortage since the 1990s. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped from nearly 700,000 in 2009 to 450,000 in 2014 nationally; at the state level, 60 percent of districts surveyed by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools in 2015 reported difficulty finding qualified applicants. According to Educators Rising, there will be a need for 1.5 million new teachers by 2020, and there is simultaneously increasing demand for skilled bilingual teachers and teachers of diverse backgrounds to reflect changing demographics.

Educator Prep prepares today’s high school students to become tomorrow’s teachers in our own communities, ensuring we are actively working together to identify, empower and develop the next generation of high-quality educators who will continue to transform public education.

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As educators in High School District 214, we believe it’s our responsibility to encourage every student to explore academic and co-curricular opportunities that will inspire them to find their passion and reach their potential.

We believe high school graduation is not an endpoint, but an important step toward a student’s future. And yet we recognize that preparing students for the future is a growing challenge – evolving industries, changing technologies and shrinking economies require us to prepare students for a future we can’t imagine.

To engage students as active stewards of their education and encourage lifelong learning, we work hard to ensure our curriculum is relevant beyond high school and meets students where they are – intellectually, socially and emotionally. Toward that end, we’ve developed career pathways that expose students to a wide range of opportunities and challenge their intellectual curiosity. We’ve created collaborative learning environments that allow students to share ideas, learn from their peers and develop the communication and interpersonal skills necessary for college and careers. Our teachers are challenged to use technology to transform learning, take risks, share what they’ve learned and be innovative instructional leaders. Our administrators collaborate with teachers, staff, parents and students to make authentic and purposeful decisions that result in the high-quality education our community has come to know and expect.

As an active member of the national education community, we work to develop instructional models that are scalable and replicable across our District, as well as across the country. We are a leader in transforming the national conversation on public education. We proactively establish community partnerships to enhance instruction, build educational spaces that inspire learning and provide substantive, relevant professional development opportunities to our staff.

We invite you to join us.

We believe outstanding public education is the most reliable vehicle for economic mobility, and we believe the best way to empower our schools and communities is to recognize that, working together, we can make a difference.

To become a mentor or partner in student education, or host a student intern, contact Krista Paul at the Center for Career Discovery 847-718-7947 or krista.paul@d214.org

To make a tax-deductible financial contribution toward student success and innovation, contact the District 214 Education Foundation, 847-718-7708 or foundation@d214.org

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**College Ready Indicators**

Students are College Ready if they meet either the academic or standardized testing benchmarks listed below.

GPA 2.8 out of 4.0 and one or more of the following benchmarks:
- Advanced Placement Exam (3+)
- Advanced Placement Course (A, B or C)
- Dual Credit College English and/or Math (A, B or C)
- College Developmental/Remedial English and/or Math (A, B or C)
- Algebra II (A, B or C)
- International Baccalaureate Exam (4+)
- College Readiness Placement Assessment (Standardized test benchmarks minimum score)
  - SAT Exam: Math (530)  |  Reading and Writing (480)
  - ACT Exam: English (18)  |  Reading (22)
  - Science (23)  |  Math (22)

Additional Factors that Contribute to College Success: Earning As, Bs, Cs; FAFSA completion; enrollment in career pathway course sequence; college academic advising; participation in college-bound bridge programs; senior year math class; completion of a math class after Algebra II.

**Career Ready Indicators**

Students are Career Ready if they have identified a career interest and meet two of the behavioral and experiential benchmarks listed below. In addition, students entering the military upon graduation must meet the passing scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) for each branch of the military.

Career Cluster Identified and two or more of the following benchmarks:
- 90 percent Attendance
- 25 hours of Community Service
- Workplace Learning Experience
- Industry Credential
- Dual Credit Career Pathway Course
- Two or more organized Co-Curricular Activities

For more information, visit www.D214.org
High School District 214 is the second-largest high school district in Illinois, serving more than 12,000 students from eight communities. Our nationally recognized district includes six comprehensive high schools and four specialized learning programs, offering more than 600 academic courses and 140 co-curricular opportunities. Our students come from diverse backgrounds, with more than 77 languages spoken at home. Our Community Education program is one of the nation’s largest, serving more than 50,000 lifelong learners with more than 500 classes.