



# School-based Career and College Readiness Program Guide

2023-24

# Welcome to Our School-based Career and College Readiness Program Guide

## Table of Contents

**3** Welcome and Purpose of Guide

**4** Who We Are

**6** History of Achieve Twin Cities Career and College Readiness Services

**8** Why This Work Matters

**9** Our School-based Career and College Readiness Program Model

- Why Our Program is Unique
- Theory of Change
- Program Strategies
- Program Outcomes

**18** Our Vision for the Future



Whether you are reading this guide as a new Achieve Twin Cities staff member, a current colleague, a partner in this work or a community member, we welcome you as a supporter of Minneapolis and Saint Paul high school students!

Career and college readiness (CCR) requires a thoughtful, student-centered approach and is highly collaborative. This guide provides a philosophical overview of our Achieve Twin Cities school-based career and college readiness program, as well as an outline of our strategies, activities and outcomes. It is designed to build a more clear and cohesive knowledge of this program for our staff, program partners and community supporters.

We want to express our gratitude to the students and Achieve staff – past, present and future – who have informed our work for the past 20 years and will continue to influence our direction in the 20+ years still to come. Thank you!

– Achieve Twin Cities Career and College Readiness Leadership Team

# Who We Are

## ACHIEVE TWIN CITIES MISSION AND VISION

Founded in 2002, the mission of Achieve Twin Cities is to rally community support and deliver best-in-class programs to inspire and equip Minneapolis and Saint Paul young people for careers, college and life. Our vision is that all students have full and equitable access to postsecondary education and career opportunities, creating a more just and vibrant community.

## ACHIEVE TWIN CITIES SERVICES

Achieve provides career and college readiness services through our school-based program in 28 Minneapolis and Saint Paul high schools, the Step Up Youth Employment Program with the City of Minneapolis, and Achieve College Internships. We also host EDTalks and other community engagement events to strengthen support and advocacy for our young people and public education, and serve as the nonprofit foundation for Minneapolis Public Schools, managing district funds and supporting resource development.

## SCHOOL-BASED CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS PROGRAM

The Achieve Twin Cities school-based program works in partnership with Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) to support students in planning for life after high school. Our coordinators deliver student-centered services based in centers embedded in our partner schools. In collaboration with counseling teams in 28 high schools, we connect students with two and four-year college, apprenticeships, training programs, the workforce and other options to discover, explore and plan for life-sustaining careers. Each year, our services are accessible to over 18,000 students, with direct advising for over 6,000 students.

## OUR SCHOOL-BASED CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS PROGRAM TEAM

Our professional CCR staff includes licensed school counselors, social workers, admissions experts, educators and youth workers. Each team member brings extensive experience in helping students develop and pursue the best postsecondary plans for their individual education, career and life goals. Many of our staff are graduates of the schools we serve – including some of our former students – or were the first in their families to attend college.



“Our Achieve Career & College Center coordinator is thoughtful, kind, compassionate, hard-working, knowledgeable and truly outstanding.”

– MPS administrator



## WE ARE

**2**  
school districts

**28**  
high schools

**28**  
career and college  
readiness coordinators

**5**  
program managers

**1**  
director

## WHO WE SERVE

Twin Cities youth are our emerging leaders. We believe in the power of building student agency in the postsecondary planning process. We serve all high school students in our 28 partner schools in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, and also work to close longstanding disparities by prioritizing students with the greatest barriers to postsecondary access.

70% of Minneapolis Public Schools students are youth of color, 60% are eligible for free or reduced lunch and 32% call a language other than English their home language. Nearly 90 different languages are spoken in the district.

In Saint Paul Public Schools, nearly 80% of students identify as non-white and two-thirds are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Over 125 languages and dialects are spoken in the district.

# History of Achieve Twin Cities Career and College Readiness Services

Since its founding in 2002, Achieve has provided career and college readiness programs and services for over 85,000 students.

achievempls

**2002**  
AchieveMpls (now Achieve Twin Cities) was founded through the merger of Youth Trust and the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) Foundation. The organization was created to strengthen community support and engagement with MPS and serve as the district's nonprofit foundation.

**2003**  
Achieve began its partnership with the City of Minneapolis in managing the Step Up Youth Employment Program for Minneapolis youth.



**2016**  
Achieve created the Career Readiness Initiative, marking a new programmatic focus on supporting all postsecondary pathways and expanding career advising and exposure activities.



**2006**  
With the generous support of the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce and local businesses, Achieve launched its school-based CCR program through Career & College Centers in several MPS high schools. Over the next 10 years, Achieve expanded programming and centers to all MPS comprehensive and specialty high schools.



**2019**  
Achieve began providing school-based programs in four Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) high schools. SPPS district leaders invited Achieve to partner in this work because of its extensive experience in MPS and alignment with the "SPPS Achieves" strategic plan commitment to developing career and college pathways for all students.



**2020**  
Achieve launched the pilot for the new Achieve College Internships program. While the program initially served participants of the Minnesota Private College Fund Black Men's Success Initiative, it quickly expanded to serve alumni of Step Up, MPS and SPPS.



**2021**  
Achieve began delivering its school-based CCR program in eight MPS Contract Alternative Schools and the MPS Online School. It also expanded CCR programming to four additional SPPS high schools.



**2022**  
AchieveMpls rebranded to Achieve Twin Cities to officially recognize its expansion to SPPS, its strong commitment to students in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul, and its vital partnerships with hundreds of Twin Cities metro employers, government agencies, nonprofits and other organizations. It now provides its school-based career and college readiness program in 28 MPS and SPPS high schools.





“If I didn’t go to the Career & College Center or if I didn’t talk with the coordinators, I would have never found the opportunity that I’m in right now. So I guess in a way, knowing them and just being there at the right time at the right place just kind of really changed my life.”

– High school senior, Class of 2023

## BARRIERS TO CAREER AND COLLEGE SUCCESS

Historic and systemic oppression of BIPOC, immigrants, English language learners and people with disabilities has led to large disparities in access to postsecondary credential attainment and high-wage professions for students of these identities.

Current systems of college and career access heavily favor students whose families are higher income, have higher levels of educational attainment and can navigate predominantly white culture and spaces. These factors continue to heavily influence the options students have access to and the ultimate educational and career attainment they achieve.

## OUR OBJECTIVE

The Achieve Twin Cities school-based career and college readiness program provides student-centered, postsecondary planning support to all students within our partner schools. By prioritizing students who face the most barriers to career and college success, we strive to reduce disparities in postsecondary education and high-wage career attainment.

Our team supports a wide variety of postsecondary pathways to meet individual student interests, skills and needs. These include two and four-year college, apprenticeships, career certificates, entering the workforce, military service, gap years and many other opportunities.



“I would like to express how grateful our community is about the work Achieve Twin Cities does to benefit our community. The work, expertise, patience, empathy and resources of our Achieve coordinator make our students’ learning experience successful.”

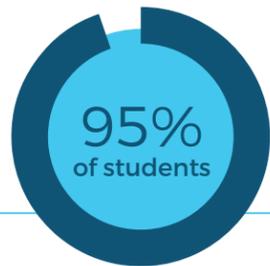
– MPS administrator



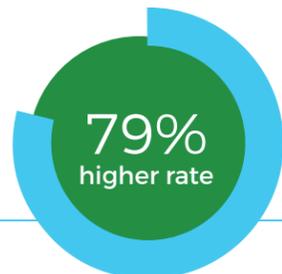
## OUR IMPACT

**x5**

Since 2017, the number of seniors selecting high-quality non-college pathways has increased by more than five times.



95% of students who use our school-based services graduate with a postsecondary plan.



Lower income students who use our school-based services enroll in postsecondary programs at 79% higher rates than those who do not.



BIPOC students who use our school-based services enroll in postsecondary programs at 69% higher rates than those who do not.

## WHY OUR PROGRAM IS UNIQUE

- **Achieve CCR coordinators are fully embedded** in our partner schools and we work closely with district career and college readiness leaders. This unparalleled level of partnership and integration with our two school districts allows us to provide comprehensive and aligned services to all students.
- **Achieve is a universal service provider** for both districts and utilizes an intentional, student-centered approach.
- **Our coordinators provide individualized postsecondary planning guidance** for students of all ages, all interests, and all backgrounds, while focusing on the students who face the most barriers.
- **We support students with all postsecondary plans**, including both college and non-college pathways.
- **Achieve has a unique advising model** and data tracking system to capture all students’ postsecondary plans.

**PROGRAM OBJECTIVE:** Achieve Twin Cities’ school-based career and college readiness (CCR) program provides student-centered, postsecondary planning support to all students within our partner schools. By prioritizing students who face the most barriers to career and college success, we strive to reduce disparities in postsecondary education and high-wage career attainment.

**KEY STRATEGY:**

We partner with Minneapolis and Saint Paul public high schools to provide dedicated, professional CCR expertise and capacity.

**OUTCOME:**

Cultivate a strong CCR culture and increase alignment in CCR strategy.

**KEY STRATEGY:**

We provide individualized, student-centered advising to foster student self-discovery and agency in their postsecondary transition.

**OUTCOME:**

Students select a postsecondary pathway toward a career aligned with their interests, strengths and goals.

**KEY STRATEGY:**

We coordinate both targeted and universal resources and opportunities for students to increase career and college pathway knowledge.

**LONG-TERM**

**OUTCOME:**

All MPS / SPPS graduates enter into postsecondary opportunities that lead to purposeful, life-sustaining careers.



“I met my Career & College Center (CCC) coordinators because I was like, ‘I need help, but I don’t want to go all the way to the University of Minnesota.’ I just wanted to come to my high school. And I heard about the CCC. So I booked a meeting and ever since then I’m here almost every day.”

– High school senior, Class of 2023

# Program Strategies

## PARTNERSHIP

We partner with Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) high schools to provide dedicated, professional CCR expertise and capacity.

Collaboration and partnership are key to our programming at both the school and district levels. Our coordinators are members of their school counseling teams and collaborate with other school staff to deliver high quality school-wide CCR programming.

Our leadership team also works closely with district career and college readiness leaders to create a cohesive CCR strategy that aligns with best practices and is informed by data.



"I am so thankful that our coordinator is here. She has brought our school into a whole new level of college and career-related focus. I am grateful every day that she's part of our department!"

– SPPS school counselor

## ADVISING

We provide individualized, student-centered advising to foster student self-discovery and agency in their postsecondary transition.

It is important that all students have support to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to create a solid vision of their future. Moving through postsecondary transition stages in one-on-one conversation with coordinators helps students build agency and feel confident in their individual postsecondary plans.

The postsecondary transition process is not linear. We meet students where they are, whether through a conversation to identify their interests or their career goals, connecting them with an opportunity to see a career in action, or supporting them with the tangible steps of applying to a postsecondary program.

**Our coordinators support students through these different phases of the postsecondary transition process:**

- **Self-knowledge:** Through individualized advising, coordinators help students identify their interests and skills. Students build decision-making, problem-solving and self-advocacy skills that foster agency and allow them to navigate wherever their future plan takes them.
- **Career knowledge:** We work one-on-one with students to help them do research and exploration to connect their interests, skills and strengths to a future career that is fulfilling and meets their goals.
- **Postsecondary plan development and completion:** Each plan has a series of discrete steps students must complete to make that plan a reality. We take a student-centered approach to help each student achieve their goals and develop a postsecondary and financial plan that aligns with their interests and strengths.



"My experience with the Career & College Center was that for a long time I didn't think I was gonna go to college, and then when I finally did come to them and tell them that I was gonna go, they were super supportive and they showed me all the college lists and scholarship lists and stuff like that. You know, they're just super helpful because they're super nice. And even if I didn't want to go to college, they would show me trade options as well."

– High school senior, Class of 2023

Achieve Coordinators provide a wide range of opportunities for students, including career and college fairs, worksite tours, visits from postsecondary representatives, information sessions with college access programs, financial aid nights, classroom lessons, family events and more.

## COORDINATING

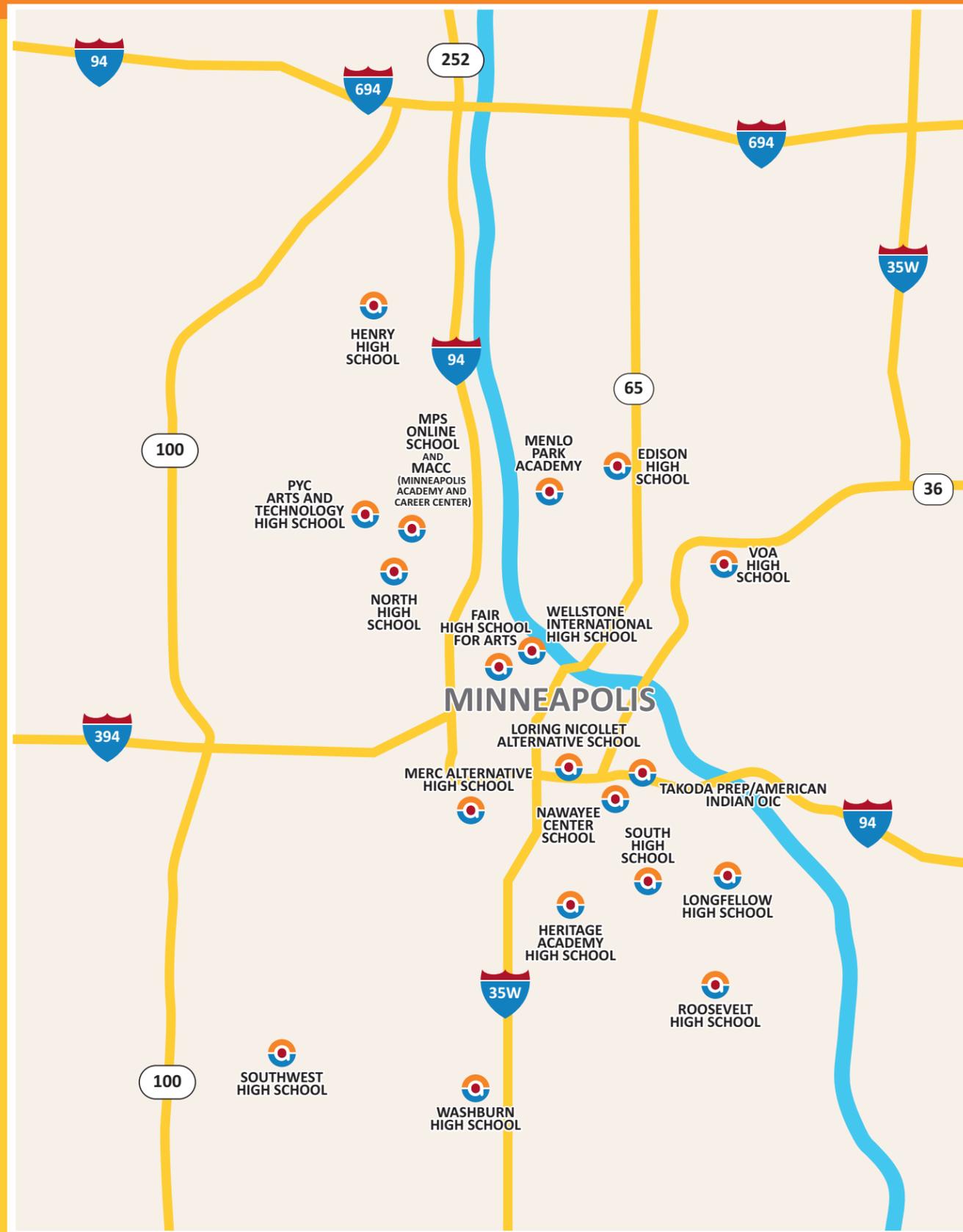
We coordinate both targeted and universal resources and opportunities for students to increase career and college pathway knowledge.

Connecting students with experiences and opportunities helps them build their knowledge of different career and postsecondary pathways and ensures that they are fully aware of the options available to them.

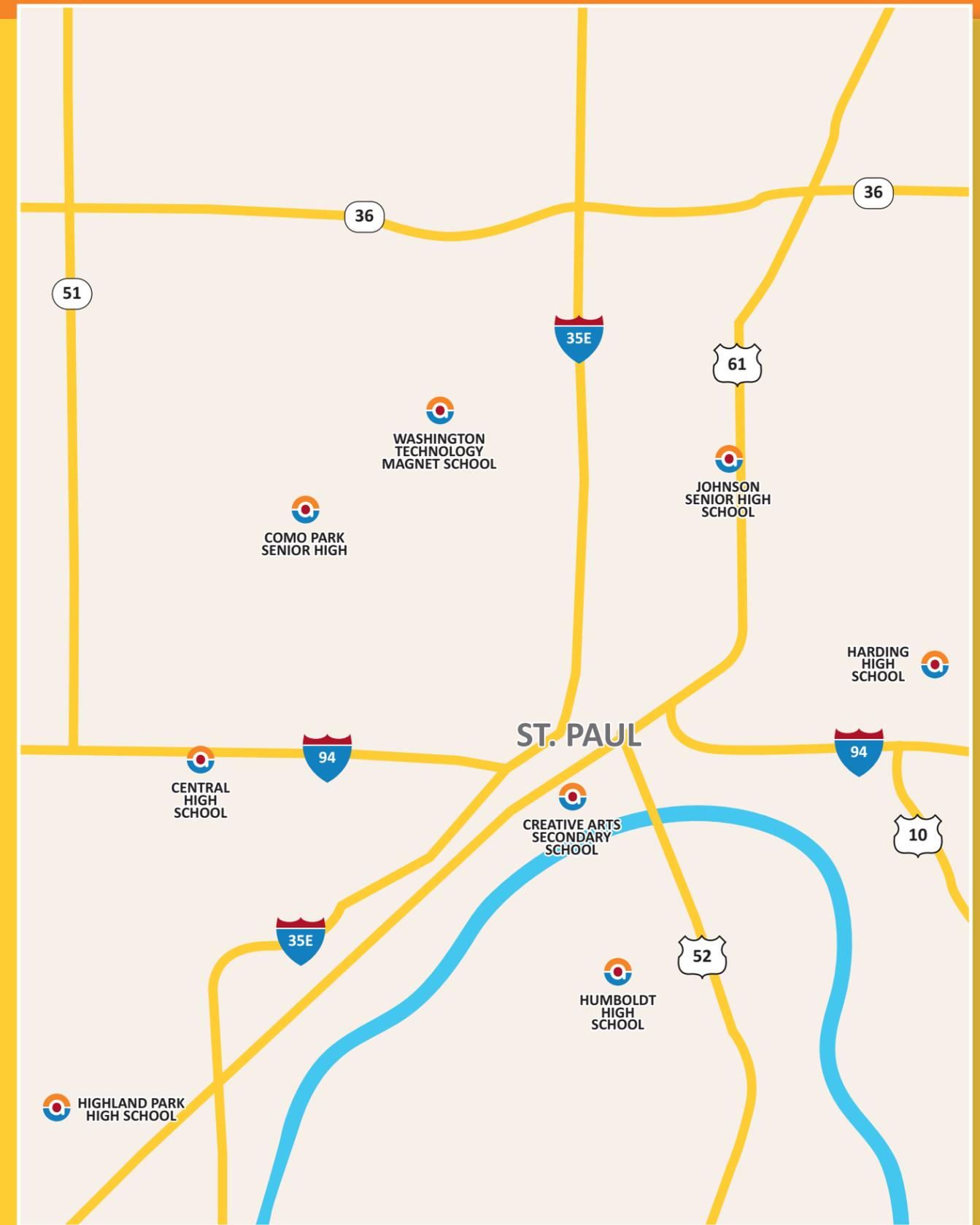
Our coordinators plan and host both small-scale workshops and school-wide events to share career and college readiness information with students and families.



# Our Minneapolis Partner Schools



# Our Saint Paul Partner Schools



# Program Outcomes

We regularly review outcomes and indicators that track our program success. Our outcomes inform every aspect of our program. From advising practices to coordinator professional development and district partnerships, having concrete, measurable outcomes allows us to keep student success at the center of everything we do.

Our **short-term outcomes** describe the skills and knowledge that participants (including students and school partners) learn through interacting with our program.

Our **medium-term outcomes** capture the resulting actions that those participants take.

Finally, our shared **long-term outcomes** are the ultimate impact of our program.

	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
PARTNERSHIP	<p>Shared understanding of CCR goals and priorities at the school and district level.</p> <p>School and district staff are knowledgeable about students' postsecondary outcomes.</p>	<p>School and district leadership cultivate a strong CCR culture.</p> <p>Increased alignment in CCR strategy at the school and district level.</p>	
DIRECT SERVICE: ADVISING AND COORDINATING	<p>Students learn decision-making and self-advocacy skills related to postsecondary transition.</p> <p>Students identify personal strengths and career interests that are informed by their identity and cultural context.</p> <p>Students understand relevant career paths and the required college or training.</p> <p>Students with the most barriers to postsecondary success are confident in their plans.</p>	<p>Students select a postsecondary pathway toward a career aligned with their interests, strengths and goals.</p> <p>Seniors complete postsecondary plans – including application and financial plan – that align with skills and career interest.</p> <p>Students with the most barriers apply to college at increasingly higher rates.</p>	<p>All MPS and SPPS graduates enter into postsecondary opportunities that lead to purposeful, life-sustaining careers.</p> <p>Reduced disparities in postsecondary education and high-wage career attainment.</p>



“Our career and college readiness coordinator has done an exceptional job of fostering a culture of interest in postsecondary education that was previously unimaginable.”

– MPS school counselor

# Our Vision for the Future



“The Career & College Center coordinators are there to help you. It’s part of their job. No question is a bad question. They will answer anything that they can, and in my experience, if they don’t know it, they’ll find somebody else who does know it and they’ll answer the question for you. They’re there to help—always go to them! My CCC people—they’re really cool. I love them.”

– High school senior, Class of 2023

**The vision of our school-based career and college readiness program is that all Minneapolis and Saint Paul public high school students—regardless of race, income-status, ability, language, and immigration status—attain purposeful, life-sustaining careers.**

# Research and Resources that Support our Model

[Addressing Non-Financial Barriers to College Access and Success: Evidence and Policy Implications](#) (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2023, Dynarski, Nurshatayeva, Page, Scott-Clayton)



[Minnesota Department of Education Career & College Readiness Resource Guides](#)



[Minnesota Office of Higher Education – College Planning Checklists](#)



[National Association for College Admission Counseling Resources](#)



[National College Attainment Network Resources](#)



[Postsecondary Advising: Characteristics and Conditions for Expanding Access](#) (Bellwether Education Partners, 2020, Bankert, Schulz, Dalton, Fuller, McNamee)





To learn more, contact our team at [info@achievetwincities.org](mailto:info@achievetwincities.org) or visit [www.achievetwincities.org](http://www.achievetwincities.org).

Find out how you can get engaged with Achieve Twin Cities:



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