

WINDOWS INTO UNSEEN WORLDS

How Chesterfield County Public
Schools accelerates students'
self-discovery

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MajorClarity 

in partnership with WGU Labs.

Executive Summary

Career and technical training, in the eyes of Chad Maclin, CTE Director at Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS), is often focused on the *where* — that is, the college or career students want to pursue. But arriving at the right destination first requires that students know *who* they are and *why* they want to follow a given path.

Through its collaboration with MajorClarity to map course pathways and provide career path “test drives,” CCPS is helping students answer all three of these critical questions, preparing them to thrive in a rapidly evolving workforce. This joint effort has featured:

Digitization of course pathways. With the aid of MajorClarity’s implementation team, CCPS mapped course pathways for tens of thousands of students across dozens of schools. This allowed students to track their own progress from grade to grade, while providing CCPS with data-driven insights, including the ability to forecast student needs and trajectories.

Consistency throughout the education journey. Rather than start anew each year, MajorClarity’s platform consistently aligns

students’ explorations with their own skills and interests, from career investigations in middle school to coursework and experiential learning in high school.

Windows into “unseen worlds.” In Maclin’s experience, students are often only aware of the careers of their parents and close family friends. MajorClarity’s career exploration offerings allow students to transcend their social networks to explore previously hidden paths.

About CCPS

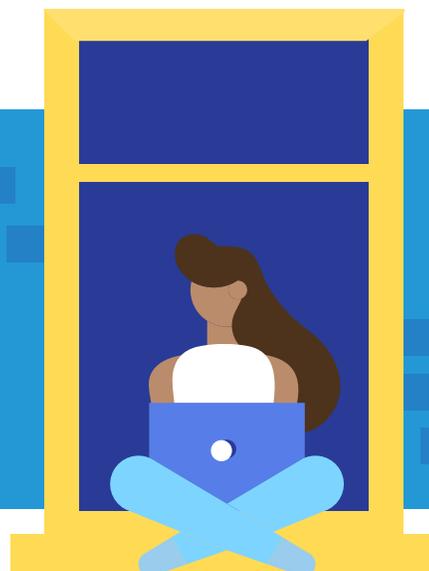
Chesterfield County Public Schools, which serves more than 62,000 students across 64 schools, is routinely cited as a model for excellence in public education. As a community leader, CCPS is preparing students for successful futures and creating a better tomorrow. And its award-winning school division – which includes six National Blue Ribbon Schools, seven National Title I Distinguished Schools and six Middle Schools to Watch – is preparing every student to be college and career ready.

21,000

student logins
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54%

of activated
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reengaged with
the platform after
their initial use.



Challenges

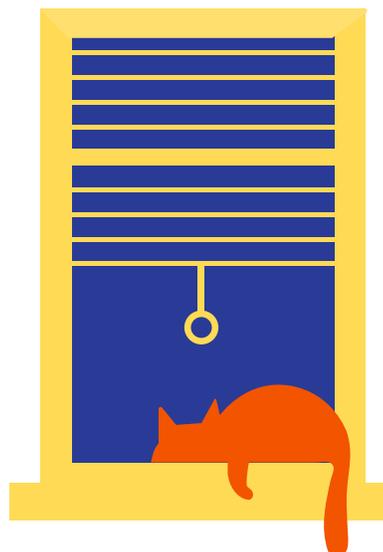
While COVID-19 has posed a number of challenges for his district, Maclin notes that the pandemic only poses a short-term hurdle. Once the public health threat wanes, Maclin says the “next crisis facing the country will be a workforce pandemic.” And he believes that career-oriented education is the cure.

To prepare the district’s students for long-term success, Maclin sought to meet three primary CTE goals. These include helping students: (1) Identify their own strengths; (2) explore where they’re headed after graduation; and (3) articulate why they’ve selected their chosen destination.

In his experience, a lack of systematized, accessible data hindered students’ ability to draw connections between their work across elementary, middle and high school. Mapping course pathways across dozens of schools, however, would require a partner willing to build a complex map — accounting for the variance in available courses across different schools — while allowing for flexible exploration as students’ interests evolved.

To help students discover their “who, why, and where,” Maclin looked for a tool that could meet these technological demands. And he wanted students to engage in self- and career exploration in low-stakes environments while retaining the knowledge gained from prior discoveries. In his words, he sought “one tool to rule them all.”

“What I like most about MajorClarity is that they listen. They are responsive and always open to feedback.”



The Solution

Rather than spread the district’s energy across multiple technology platforms, Maclin and his team worked with MajorClarity to create a user-friendly, intuitive platform that allowed students to learn, explore, and modify their pathways from elementary school to high school graduation.

Many schools in the district offer unique pathways, which added complexity to the project. Nevertheless, the team seamlessly mapped CCPS course pathways, which provided “a consistent tool throughout” each student’s journey, notes Maclin. And while each facet of the platform is helpful, “over time, the collective benefits are huge.”

“Students start in elementary by creating their portfolio, and when they arrive at middle school, they begin to explore 17 different career clusters,” says Maclin.

“As a middle school student, “I can see a ‘straight line’ based on my current interests, as well as alternative pathways,” says Maclin. “By the time students are in high school, they’re encouraged to go and try things out.”

The Results

Thus far, the platform has proven its ability to guide students along this “go and try” model of exploration, which helps students “narrow a sea of interests by pursuing what they’re naturally good at,” says Maclin.

In its first semester, the platform saw 21,000 student logins at the middle school level (grades 6-8) alone. Fifty-four percent of activated students reengaged with the platform after their initial use. Of the returning students, many reengaged with the platform more than 20 times, with one motivated student accessing the platform 53 times.

By clearly mapping students’ course pathways across each level of secondary school, CCPS offers a window into their current trajectories, while allowing students to pivot to new interests “without missing a beat,” says Maclin.

And by taking MajorClarity’s self-assessments, students begin to identify their natural strengths. In Maclin’s view, this knowledge often has a “transformative”

effect, as it helps students build a sense of their own gifts and spot the most compelling components of potential careers.

Finally, MajorClarity offers a wealth of resources that help students identify their “why” and “where.” The platform connects students and employers with relevant experiential learning opportunities. And its career explorations give students a “safe space” to explore jobs in and outside their communities, while building a bridge between their coursework and potential careers.

“Students might be raised in an area with few industries, and they should know what other options are out there,” says Maclin. “MajorClarity helps students escape the bounds of their ‘normal’ and offers a window into previously unseen worlds.”

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