

Williamsburg High School Wins 2020 Pacesetter Award

School preps students for success through career exploration and relevant studies

June 30, 2020 — Williamsburg High School in Williamsburg, Ohio, is the winner of a 2020 Gene Bottoms Pacesetter School Award from the Southern Regional Educational Board. The award will be presented on July 6, 2021, at SREB's Making Schools Work Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, due the cancellation of the 2020 conference in New Orleans.

Pacesetter School Awards recognize schools that are implementing one of SREB's Making Schools Work school improvement frameworks and are achieving success in meeting bold goals related to increases in student graduation rates, readiness for college and careers, and credential attainment.

Williamsburg High School implements [High Schools That Work](#), SREB's school improvement design for high schools. WHS leaders and teachers recognized that students find relevance in school and perform better in classes when they see the connection between academic success and career success.

Staff talk early and often to students about the importance of earning credits, staying on track for graduation, identifying their interests and exploring careers. Although these conversations make a difference, the school takes college and career prep a step further by zeroing in on students during the critical transition from the middle grades to high school.

In the fall, eighth graders take a day-long field trip to the local career center to explore 14 career options offered there. In the spring, Williamsburg High School assists eighth graders through the Individual Academic Career Planning Process. Students and parents visit the high school, learn about transitioning and the importance of earning credits that advance them toward their career goals, and begin forming relationships with high school teachers. Students leave the event with a schedule for ninth grade and a plan for the following years.

In the summer prior to ninth grade, all incoming ninth graders are invited to a kick-off event in which they play games, engage with junior and senior mentors, and talk about school. In the spring of their ninth-grade year, students attend an interactive career fair during a field trip to Junior Achievement Inspire. Afterwards, students discuss what they learned during the field trip and engage in lessons about planning for the futures.

Strategies like these are having an impact. Teachers and leaders report that students better understand why they need four years of English and how science prepares them for careers.

SREB's [Making Schools Work Conference](#) is held annually and provides educators with opportunities to participate in professional development, network with colleagues from across the country and build school and district leadership capacity.

The Southern Regional Education Board works with states and educators to improve education at every level, from early childhood through postsecondary education. Learn more about SREB at sreb.org.

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