

2026–2027 Academic & Career Planning Guide Highlights

Navigating Paths to College and Career Readiness

WCSD Mission: Committed to Children, Community, and Excellence

Using Career Clusters to Inform Registration

What are Career Clusters?

- 14 nationally recognized groups of jobs and industries that share similar skills and knowledge.
- Previously 16, but recently updated, and our local ACP model is reflecting the national change.
- Used to connect electives to long-term goals through “Programs of Study”.
- Each cluster includes pathways with recommended courses to build a clear roadmap.

Example: Advanced Manufacturing — Robotics Path

- IDEA, Big IDEA, Digital Electronics
- Computational Thinking, Computer Science I & II
- AP Computer Science Principles: Cybersecurity
- AP Computer Science A, FST, AP Calculus
- Chemistry

Example: Agriculture — Animal Systems Path

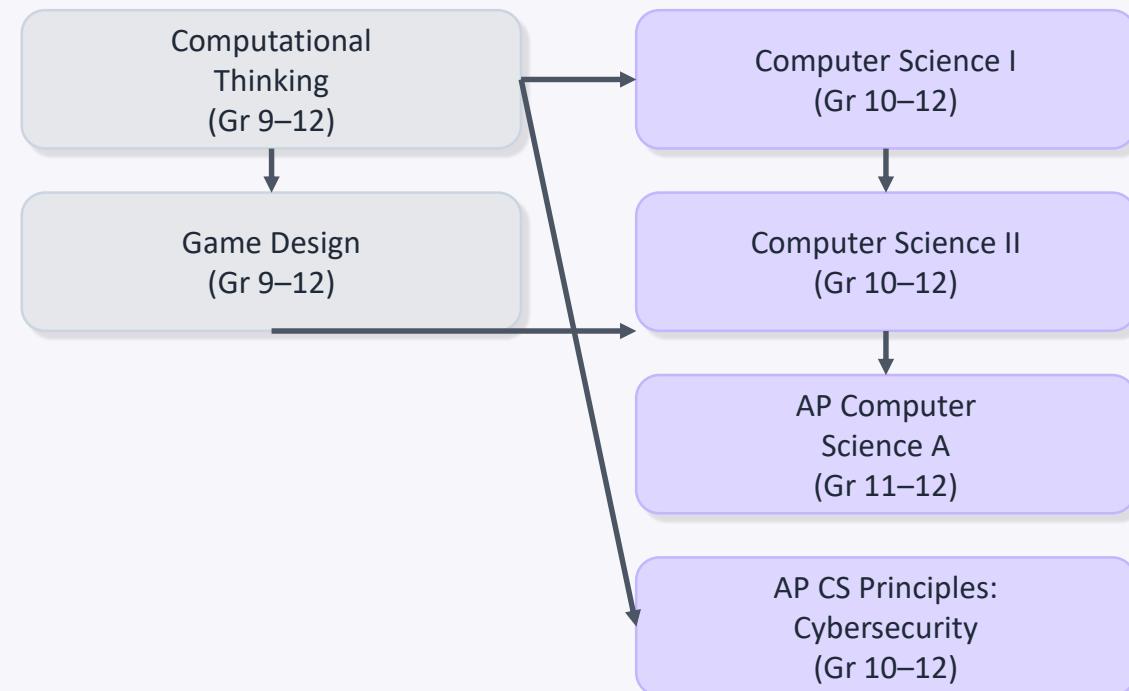
- Intro to Agriculture, Animal Science
- Livestock & Equine Management, Veterinary Science
- Small Animal & Pet Care
- Biotech Career Apps (DC), Biotechnology (DC)
- Medical Terminology (DC), AP Biology

Navigating Content Area Flowcharts

How to read the flowcharts

- Departments provide flowcharts to support course sequencing.
- Connecting lines show prerequisite sequences (what must be taken first).
- Some courses are required for graduation (marked in the guide with a WCSD logo).
- Flowcharts show progression from foundational → advanced options.

Flowchart Example (Computer Science)



NOTE

Prerequisite lines in the guide show what must be taken first.
The guide uses a WCSD logo to mark graduation-requirement courses.

The Laude System Overview

Purpose & Eligibility

- Recognizes seniors for both academic rigor and success.
- Minimum eligibility: cumulative GPA ≥ 3.0 after 1st semester senior year.
- Laude scores are posted each spring for seniors to review.
- Laude scores are also calculated at the end of 11th grade for the purposes of the Wisconsin Guarantee designation.

How the Laude Score is calculated

$$\text{Laude Score} = (\text{Cumulative GPA}) \times (\# \text{ of advanced semester courses completed across all 4 years})$$

“Advanced” courses are defined by the WCHS Laude Courses list and include 2nd semester senior courses.

Sample (from the guide):
GPA 3.685 \times 12 advanced semesters = 44.22 \rightarrow Magna Cum Laude

Laude Award Levels & How Points Are Earned

Award tiers (no rounding)

Award	Recognition	Score
Summa Cum Laude	Purple cord	56+
Magna Cum Laude	Silver cord	40 – 55.999
Cum Laude	White cord	24 – 39.999

How students earn Laude points (examples)

- Laude-designated WCHS courses (e.g., AP Biology = 2; Biotechnology (DC) = 1).
- World language upper levels (e.g., Spanish V = 2).
- Computer science (e.g., AP Computer Science A = 2).

Other ways points can be earned (in addition to the WCHS course list)

- Youth Apprenticeship: 1 Laude point per semester while participating (up to 4 semesters).
- Early College Credit / Start College Now: points are based on earned college credits (e.g., 1–2 credits = 1 point; 3–5 credits = 2 points).
- Online AP courses may also earn Laude points (semester = 1; year-long = 2).

Specialized Planning: Grade 9 & Grade 10

Grade 9 Foundations (required planning anchors)

- Biology
- World History
- English 9 (or Advanced English 9)
- Intro to Physical Education (required before upper-level PE)
- Math course (per placement)

Grade 10 Milestones

- Career Workshop (required, 0.25 credit): explores career clusters and begins an academic/career plan.
- Health & Wellness (required, 0.25 credit): paired with Career Workshop.
- English 10 or AP Seminar English 10; continue math/science/PE sequencing.

NEW

Personal Finance is a graduation requirement starting with the Class of 2028.
Recommended to take in Grade 9 or Grade 10.

Specialized Planning: Grade 11 & Grade 12

Grade 11 Opportunities

- Increase post-secondary rigor: AP, Dual Credit (Madison College), and CAPP options where available.
- School to Career: Employability Skills, internships, and Youth Apprenticeship pathways (application-based).
- Consider pathways-aligned electives and advanced coursework to strengthen Laude Score and readiness.

Grade 12 Transition

- Law is required for graduation (Grade 12 planning anchor).
- Seniors in good standing may substitute a release period for a study hall (criteria-based).
- Finalize postsecondary plan: college, technical college, apprenticeship, military, or workforce.

Work-Based Learning Spotlight: Youth Apprenticeship (YA)

- Open to juniors and seniors (application + interview + info session).
- Students earn elective credit (1.0 per semester) with on-the-job hours + skills portfolio.
- YA participation also earns 1 Laude point per semester (up to 4 semesters).

Summary & Resources

Key takeaways

- Graduation requirement: 24 total credits (plus required courses such as Law).
- Use Career Clusters + Programs of Study to align electives to long-term goals.
- Use department flowcharts to map prerequisites and keep options open.
- Laude recognizes rigor × performance; check eligibility and advanced course counts.

Wisconsin Guarantee (class rank via Laude system)

- Top 5% of class (end of junior year): guaranteed admission to UW–Madison.
- Top 10% of class (end of junior year): guaranteed admission to other Universities of Wisconsin.
- Students must still apply and meet campus course requirements.

Where to go for help

- Student Services (counselors, Pathways, School to Career)
- Department flowcharts and course descriptions in the Planning Guide
- WCHS website resources and program contacts