Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Montgomery County Public Schools' Approach to College and Career Planning

1. Why is College and Career Planning vital for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) students?

MCPS strongly believes in supporting all students with College and Career planning in Grades Prekindergarten-12. Our vision for career readiness emphasizes programming that is embedded in instruction and incorporates real-world work experiences for students. To assist our schools with fulfilling this vision, we have a multi-faceted approach including classroom instruction delivered by counselors about post-secondary career and college options, integrated curriculum based on state and national standards, real-world information about income, budgeting, and credit through Finance Park (a partnership with Junior Achievement), dual enrollment, internships and use of a technology platform to explore, develop, and refine a High School Graduation, College and Career plan for each student. In addition, MCPS complies with the Maryland College and Career Readiness College Completion Act that requires all students be assessed for college and career readiness in English and Mathematics by the end of Grade 11, using one of several college and career readiness assessments. This MCPS approach to college and career readiness is aligned with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), MCPS strategic plan, and the MCPS School Counseling Student Standards.

2. In what grades is College and career Planning required in MCPS?

MCPS aims to embed career readiness in the curriculum for all grades. In elementary school, this includes career exploration opportunities, and beginning in Grade 6, all students are exposed to college and career planning as a required component of the curriculum. In middle school, students receive classroom lessons on careers, attend career fairs and begin learning about graduation requirements. In high school, students begin the process of postsecondary planning. Because students' interests change, students in high school continue to receive lessons on careers and career pathways offered in MCPS to help plan for their future.

3. Why does MCPS require students to have a college and career readiness plan that covers 6 years from Grade 8 through the first year post high school graduation?

It is important for students to plan ahead. We realize student interests change over time. To assist students with learning and exploring careers, our student planning process begins in Grade 7 with Junior Achievement Finance Park. In Grade 8, students begin creating their high school graduation, college and career plan. All students complete, review and revise their high school graduation, college and career plans throughout their four years in high school. This includes being thoughtful about course selection, earning the correct number of credits for graduation and building the right foundation for life after high school. The plan is designed to
1) help students explore and schedule courses in high school that meet their needs and interest including Career Technology Education completers (CTE), Advanced Placement (AP);
2) plan for postsecondary options including two or four-year college, entering a field where they have earned a certification in high school, entering the work force, and joining the military.

4. **How can parents/guardians learn more about the MCPS College and Career Readiness and Naviance?**

School counselors can assist parents/guardians with learning more about the college and career readiness in MCPS. In addition, MCPS created a website to provide parents/guardians and students with information about college and career preparation and our use of Naviance as a tool to support our career readiness curriculum. The website is located at https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/career-readiness/naviance-family-connection.aspx. Parents/guardians may create their own Naviance accounts, linked to their child's account, and can access the platform at any time. Accessing this portal allows parents/guardians to review the work their child has completed in Naviance, see postsecondary institutions their child is interested in attending, track their child's progress towards completing applications, and see where they may need help.

5. **What student information is collected through Naviance?**

To enable students to utilize Naviance, MCPS provides Naviance with student unique ID numbers to create student accounts. The purpose of collecting the required data elements is to allow the student to log into Naviance, and to allow MCPS staff to support students' activity within Naviance. For example, a school counselor may log into Naviance to review how a student has progressed in achieving a stated goal. Under the Data Sharing Agreement between Naviance and MCPS, personally identifiable student information is—at all times—under the direct control of MCPS, and Naviance is prohibited from using personally identifiable student data for any other purpose. There are no click-wrap or other user agreements for MCPS students to utilize Naviance's core services. In addition to the student information that MCPS provides to Naviance to enable student accounts, students also provide individual responses as they use the educational tools in the Naviance platform to explore and plan for college and career opportunities. Here are some examples:

- **StrengthsExplorer from Gallup:** This is an in-product feature that allows students to take this survey to help them identify their strengths beginning in Grade 7.

- **Counselor-created surveys:** Naviance provides secondary school counselors (Grades 6-12) the ability to create their own surveys for their students. Some examples include, gathering information from students on the success of school events or what type of events they would like to have in the future, student information forms used for counselor recommendation letters, etc. Naviance does not review the content of these surveys, as they are done at the sole discretion of MCPS.

- **Career Interest Profiler:** This is an in-product feature that allow students to take a survey to help identify career areas that may be of interest. The career interest profiler helps students identify postsecondary options that match career interests. The career interest profiler is completed in Grade 10.

In all cases, the survey results are only made available in the system to the student and their high school counselor. They are not shared with higher education institutions. In addition, the surveys provided in Naviance do not include sensitive information covered by the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment ("PPRA").

6. **How does Naviance utilized MCPS student data?**

In all cases, MCPS data, including any survey results, are only made available in the system to the student and their high school counselor. They are not shared with higher education institutions. Under the Naviance privacy policy, Naviance may not sell or use personally identifiable student data for commercial purposes. In addition, a comprehensive Data Sharing Agreement is in place between MCPS and Naviance to further ensure Naviance abides by the data security and privacy requirements outlined in the contract.

7. **How does Naviance assist students in the college exploration and application process?**

Naviance provides a number of tools to streamline the college exploration and application process. Beginning in Grade 11, students are able to explore colleges based on their interest. For example, type of college, location, etc. using the Supermatch tool in Naviance. In Grade 12, students are able to use Naviance eDocs. Naviance eDocs is an electronic college application tool, allowing high schools to prepare and send college application documentation electronically to more than 3,000 electronic destinations including all Common Application destinations. Please note that the college application tools in Naviance do not require students to complete a questionnaire.

8. **What is Active Match and how is it utilized in MCPS?**

Active Match is a tool provided by Naviance to enable students to choose to participate in the part of the college application process where they can request information, send information like SAT or ACT score to colleges, and communicate directly with colleges. Active Match is able to link colleges to the students that may be the right fit. Students make the choice to communicate with schools by completing a form to request more information.

9. **Does Naviance utilize other companies or third parties to provide services to MCPS?**

Naviance offers MCPS the option to choose from a select list of third-party tools that are embedded into the Naviance platform to support their students' college and career goals. All the third-party partners providing features within Naviance are publicly available here. MCPS has access to a dashboard within Naviance that allows MCPS to control the product features that are available to students, including the features provided by third parties. Examples of features provided by third parties include serving videos about different careers, sending transcripts to a college as part of an application, providing preparation for college admissions tests and providing information about scholarships. The district and schools may turn these features on or off at any time, at their discretion, via a dashboard within Naviance. At present, MCPS has enabled the following third-party features: Gallup, Human eSources, Roadtrip Nation, and Teenlife Media. However, the district has turned off the Sallie Mae features.

10. **Are third parties operating within Naviance required to protect student personal information?**

Many of the third-party tools simply provide information on potential career paths or help students explore learning styles. These third parties do not require, and do not receive, any personally identifiable information. There are some third-party tools that some schools enable that do require minimal personally identifiable information in order to properly function. Each of these has been configured by Naviance to ensure that only the minimally required personally identifiable information is sent to the third party and utilized only to fulfill the functionality that the school has chosen to enable.

When information is not required by the third party in order to operate the feature, it is not provided. Like Naviance, its third-party partners are legally obligated to only use students' personal information to provide their services to the school and for no other purpose. All of Naviance's third party partners are contractually required to comply with applicable laws, to use the personal information only to provide the feature to the school on our behalf, to not share the personal information with any other parties, to delete the personal information when no longer needed or when we request that it be deleted on behalf of one of our school partners, and to comply with the Naviance privacy and security policies. In addition, the Data Sharing Agreement between MCPS and Naviance requires all third-party providers to abide by the terms that meet or exceed those in the Data Sharing Agreement including but not limited to the following:

- Compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations for data collection, privacy, and security;
- Limited use of student information for the sole and limited purpose of providing services to MCPS and its students and the use of only the minimum information required to provide such services;
- Prohibition against any additional use of student information, including selling, sharing, transferring, analyzing, repurposing, or making derivative works from such confidential information;
- Requirement that all of student confidential information be stored in the United States;
- Requirement that all student confidential information remains under the direct control of MCPS;
- Requirement that (1) upon completion of the third-party service provider's services to MCPS, or upon request of Naviance, the third party service provider will destroy all of the confidential information from its primary and backup systems and from any of its third party service providers, using industry standard methods for data destruction appropriate to the type of data provided; and (2) the third party service provider will provide written certification that such destruction has been completed;
- Requirement that with respect to the third-party service provider's handling of MCPS confidential information, the third-party service provide must review and meet, or exceed the standards of privacy and security as set forth in Naviance's privacy and security policies.

11. How long is student information retained by Naviance?

Under the Data Sharing Agreement between MCPS and Naviance, MCPS has authority to request deletion of student data maintained by Naviance, and Naviance is permitted to maintain data only so long as it is under contract with MCPS. In addition, consistent with student record retention requirements, MCPS deletes individual student accounts three years after the student graduates from MCPS, unless the student opts to keep their account active for post-graduation college and career opportunities.

12. Can families opt students out of participation in MCPS career readiness program and/or Naviance?

No. MCPS career readiness program is an integral part of the curriculum. MCPS staff assist students with exploring college and career pathways that will allow students to realize their strengths, goals, skills, knowledge, values, and interests in future careers, and to help them make better academic decisions. MCPS' approach to college and career readiness is aligned with ESSA, MCPS strategic plan, Board Policy IGK, Career and Technology Education and the MCPS School Counseling Student Standards.

The Naviance College and Career Readiness online platform is a critical tool in MCPS' career readiness program. It provides a variety of tools for students to explore careers and also facilitates the college search and application process. MCPS students are required to utilize the tools provided by Naviance as part of classroom lessons provided by MCPS counseling staff in Grades 6-12.

13. What if families do not want their student's information in Naviance?

There are significant advantages to these accounts because students can save and build their profiles throughout their middle and high school careers. However, MCPS does allow parents/guardians the option to choose for their child to use a de-identified account.
If parents/guardians choose for their child to have a de-identified account:

- The student will continue to participate in classroom lessons that make use of the Naviance online platform. The student's identifying information, such as the student's name or MCPS student identification number, and select academic elements will not be uploaded to the Naviance System. The student will be provided a de-identified account will be deleted at the end of each school year.

- The de-identified account process will continue only for the school year in which it is requested. The parents/guardians will need to submit another request for subsequent years in which the child is enrolled in MCPS.

Students and parents/guardians can request a de-identified account by completing a de-identified account form located on the MCPS website or by contacting the school counselor. Students receiving a de-identified account will use the account to participate in classroom lessons that include Naviance content.

It is important to understand that your decision to eliminate access may significantly affect your child's ability to access educational resources and opportunities. For example, a de-identified account might impact a student's ability to gain valuable information needed for choosing a career pathway in high school as well as educational and potential scholarship opportunities as students prepare for their post-secondary careers. Students with de-identified accounts are still required to complete the assignments that are given during each lesson.

If a parent/guardian or student do not want their information in Naviance, the following steps will need to be followed:

1. Contact the school counselor to request a de-identified account. The school counselor will discuss the process.
2. Complete the de-identified account request form located here: https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/forms/detail.aspx?formID=3617&formNumber=427-1&catID=2&subCatId=5.
3. Return the form to the school counselor.

At the end of the school year, MCPS will have the student account deleted by Naviance. The MCPS Form 427-1, *Request for a De-identified Naviance Student Account* must be submitted each year if a parent/guardian or student wants a Naviance de-identified student account.