



## High School District 214

High School District 214 is the largest high school district in Illinois with six high schools and one specialized school, serving 12,163 students. It offers a comprehensive academic program with more than 600 separate courses, including multiple programs and services for students with special needs. Its Community Education program records over 30,000 interactions annually with lifelong learners of all ages taking more than 1,000 classes in multiple program areas. Consistently ranked among the best in state and country ratings, the district has received multiple honors that include national recognition by the Washington Post and U.S. News and World Report. Its articulated values include offering an education that is student-centered, equity-focused, and future-driven.

The district has been awarded Lighthouse Designation by the AASA Learning 2025 for the quality and range of its services and programs, including its demonstrated commitment to the Whole Learner and anti-marginalization. Its high school programs consistently reflect a focus on defining student readiness for college, careers, and life-long learning. District 214 is especially noteworthy for its comprehensive approach to creating active learner engagement in experiences that stretch students toward their futures through embedded career-connected learning. The district also demonstrates a deep commitment to using multiple metrics to monitor student progress, including Advanced Placement coursework, early college credits, industry credentialing, attendance, and community service.

Educational redesign to prepare students for 21st century success includes a range of programs, strategies, and processes. Practices include a creative approach to flexible block scheduling (allowing 83% of students to enroll in seven or more courses, including career-connected electives). The district is also committed to anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion— addressing racial disparities and inequities related to opportunity, achievement, and outcomes. Strategies include ongoing analysis and modification of policies and procedures; use of affinity groups to address problems of practice; and ongoing professional development (including systemic Courageous Conversation training).

Instructional design and implementation emphasize academic disciplines being taught in an integrated way with staffing processes modified to support this integrated approach. This process is complemented by District 214 providing personalized student learning opportunities throughout its educational system. Options include Micro-Internships, Traditional Internships, Youth Apprenticeships, and Career-Embedded Experiences with a team-based focus. Educating the Whole Learner also stresses a consistent approach to Career and Academic Support, including orientation seminars, introductory elective career course at the freshman level, a growing career portfolio worked on from students' sophomore year to graduation, and senior products and presentations (including resumes, portfolio artifacts, completion of industry credentials, off-site career experience summaries, and finalization of students' post-secondary plans).

The district is also exemplary in its reinforcement of an organizational culture that embraces a future-driven mindset, helping all educators to change instructional practice. Highlights include a Design Lab

Program for teachers supporting them in designing relational, literacy-based, responsive, and innovative classrooms (with cohorts of teachers participating annually). These instructional and support practices extend to a systemic approach to ensuring that all learners reduce gaps between the social, emotional, and cognitive skills they will need for future success and the present reality they are confronting. The district's Specialized Schools offer intensive support for students in need of English Language skills (Newcomer Center), therapeutic approaches (Academy at Forest View), and individualized attention and mentorship (Vanguard School). Finally, District 214 is exceptional in its approach to preparing students for post-secondary and career opportunities. The rich range of offerings include: Discover Your Future, the Next Generation Pathway to Completion, Dual Credit Programs, a rich range of internship and apprenticeship programs, and an integrated approach to career development embedded in students' academic coursework.