

## **Summary**

**1. All honors, college preparatory foundational curriculum for all students, built on the idea of students as powerful thinkers:**

Starting in grade 9, all students will take an all honors curriculum designed to help students read, write, discuss, problem-solve, create, and collaborate towards mastery of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills. The school's curriculum will combine the same foundational core for all students and clear paths of early college and career coursework for students to follow as their interests emerge and they progress in their academic work. Grade 7 and 8 will be part of the preparation for the all-honors curriculum.

**2. Personalized inventory, preparation, and assessment of each student to ensure college, career, and civic readiness throughout their experience at Claremont Academy:**

Each student will develop a College, Career, and Civic Readiness Plan. Students will be able to chart their progress towards college readiness, including early college experiences, and towards career readiness, making adjustments as interests emerge and as they gain more exposure to post-secondary opportunities. The school will use the WPS Guidance Curriculum and guidance software to have students take career and interest surveys. They will use these surveys to conduct research about their interest and generate a personal plan towards college and career readiness. Claremont will give special attention to career fields where historically, minorities are underrepresented: science, engineering, technology, and math. Students will also set and strive to meet goals for civic work in the Claremont community and beyond.

**3. Gateway performances at grades 8, 10, and 12 to assess, measure, and develop college, career, and civic readiness:**

Students will conduct quarterly assessments and projects based on college, career and civic-readiness development. Culminating Gateway Performances at Grades 8, 10 and 12 will be public and assessed using defined rubrics; data from these Gateways will help students refine their goals and make adjustments for the future. The Senior Gateway will be a component of successful high school completion and a demonstration of readiness for college, career, and civic life beyond Claremont Academy.

**4. Early college experiences, career-related internships, and civic-minded community service integrated into the curriculum to give students a full view of postsecondary life:**

To prepare students for college, career and civic life, all students will be given opportunities, such as AP coursework and actual college classes, to learn what college readiness truly means, to participate in an internship related to a career interest, and to complete community service designed to build understanding of their role as a citizen. Clark University, our primary partner, will anchor the process of supporting early college experiences, providing opportunities for auditing and taking courses, as well as offering neighborhood students who qualify a tuition-free education at Clark. Quinsigamond Community College will offer courses within our building for students as well as Accuplacer testing.

**5. Integrated social emotional learning and mentorship that is aimed at helping students cope with trauma, poverty, and the challenges of being a first generation college student:**

The parents of Claremont students generally support the idea that their child, who in all likelihood would be the first in the family to complete a postsecondary degree, should have a college education. In realizing this dream, Claremont students are challenged by a number of factors including regular exposure to poverty and trauma. To help students meet these challenges, Claremont must and will integrate social and emotional learning, giving attention to health and physical wellness, mindfulness, mentoring, and restorative practices as much as possible throughout the curriculum.

**6. Strategic partnerships that will help build a Pre-K through 16, cradle to college Innovation Zone that will ensure a first-class educational experience for Main South neighborhood kids:**

Claremont is fortunate to have key partners who will help ensure the success of our Innovation School Plan. Clark University is at the center; it has demonstrated for years a true and genuine commitment to the students in Main South. There are three other Innovation Schools in our neighborhood, among them the only other 7-12 middle/high school in the city, a national model for college preparation of first generation college goers, and two Pre-K through 6 elementary Innovation Schools, one of which shares our building and is our most significant feeder school. We plan to take advantage of this neighborhood configuration, in particular our close connection with our primary feeder, Woodland Academy, aligning professional development and other opportunities with these partners to help build an integrated, cradle to college experience for Main South students. With Woodland, we will coordinate math learning in the coming year, thanks to a Clark-supported position, coordinate some professional learning based on common professional development time, and work together on the transition from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. We expect to have the support of other key partners as well, including the Boys' and Girls' Club, the Main South Community Development Corporation (CDC), and National Grid. We expect over time that opportunities from our strategic partnership will take such forms as college courses at Clark and Quinsigamond Community College; opportunities for parents such as English as a Second Language and General Education Development, now referred to as the High School Equivalent Testing Program (HiSET), along with classes in valued areas such as technology use, financial management, and parenting. We also hope to work with our Innovation School partners in the neighborhood to increase educational opportunity by attracting Worcester Night Life, thus building the neighborhood as an Innovation School Zone.

**7. Support and tracking of Claremont alumni to ensure that students are persevering through post-secondary experiences towards productive citizenship:**

Since success beyond high school is our aim, it will be critical that we support students beyond their senior year. We will need to track and learn from students' first year college experience and progress towards college completion to inform our work in preparing students for college, career, and citizenship. To do this means re-conceptualizing the boundaries between secondary and the post-secondary world, and it will mean using surveys and social media to get feedback from graduates long after they graduate from high school.

**8. A powerful collaborative professional learning culture:**

We recognize that a powerful and coherent college-going learning culture for students will be sustained by a parallel culture for adults. As an Innovation School, Claremont will incorporate practices of professional learning focused on building strong academic learning communities and engaging all students in powerful learning. To achieve a powerful learning culture for adults, we will focus not on external inputs, but rather on a structured process in which teachers learn *in* and *from* as well as about practice, collaboratively, reflectively, and inquiringly, in the place where it matters most: in their own classrooms and schools. Our practice-based approach to professional learning is represented in what we call "reflective practice cycles." Reflective practice cycles engage collaborative groups of teachers in: (1) *collaborative lesson planning*, (2) *teacher rounds*, and (3) *looking at student work*. Reflective practice cycles will play a central role in building the professional community by drawing together teachers from within and across grade-levels, sometimes in discipline-specific groups and sometimes in multidisciplinary groups which work with the same students, and incorporating specialists in English language learning and learning disabilities. The "vertical" (multi-grade level) and "horizontal" (same grade level) teaming of the reflective practice cycle will help structure learning so that it permeates and builds coherence throughout the school. In addition, teachers will act as researchers in their school, using available data and generating new data as part of a collaborative inquiry process, with support from their Clark University partners.

## Autonomies Requested:

**Professional Development** – allow students to be dismissed one day a month to give us time to work together as a Claremont community in continuing our growth in mindfulness and helping to improve both the adult (professional learning practices) and the student culture of our academic institution

**Staffing** – build our staff with like-minded and caring teachers who have the same vision and mission we do through a three-tiered hiring system

**Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment** – create a “Gateway” performance assessment (Grades 8,10 and 12) which will follow from the yearly Personal Reflection and Progress Report, which over the span of time allows us to help students demonstrate their understanding of how their college and career readiness has blossomed over the years at Claremont.

**District Policies and Procedures** – Create a Graduation requirement through the Gateway Project. Create meaningful pathways that connect internships and course opportunities to better support our students’ decisions for life beyond our walls. Create more structured supports for mentoring students new to our community.

**Schedule and Calendar** – Design an opportunity to increase the number of elective courses taught along with the flexibility to handle both early college courses and courses taught within our building with college partner’s support. Create opportunities for summer academies where exploring learning opportunities directly connected to students in the Main South community are understood.