

DPHS officials excited to use new college application software

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
NEWS STAFF WRITER

SPENCER — David Prouty High School seniors are benefiting greatly from a new career readiness platform — and soon the entire school district is expected to follow suit.

School officials are excited about the district's purchase of Naviance software, which maximizes convenience and efficiency in the college application process. Seniors created their Naviance accounts earlier this year, and they are working with the DPHS guidance staff to explore the many capabilities of the technology.

"This is a product that will transform education in Spencer-East Brookfield," said DPHS Principal Elizabeth York.

Students can access their accounts remotely and update their information, in addition to researching college offerings. Naviance features a comprehensive database of information on colleges and universities throughout the world, bringing troves of data to students as they compare offerings from different schools. Gone are the days of arduous searches for college information in books and online — with a few clicks, students can instantly view everything

from a list of majors to campus locations.

Moreover, students can now send college applications using the Naviance system if the school they are applying to accepts the Common App program. Guidance counselors are also able to send materials far more efficiently, and they now have more information on students' college ambitions thanks to the complexity of the Naviance profiles.

"Naviance has made it so much easier for our students and guidance counselors," York added.

With the introduction of Naviance for seniors, the school district has only reached the tip of the iceberg in terms of future opportunities, officials said. The Naviance system isn't intended simply for high school students searching for the next venue in their educational journeys. Instead, the account building experience can begin as early as a student's very first day of school — in kindergarten.

By offering fun exercises and activities at the elementary school levels, Naviance begins to construct a unique profile for each user. By tracking students' interests and compiling responses to various prompts and questions, the technology can gradually identify

potential future areas of exploration. The process becomes more detailed in middle school, as students take part in additional activities.

At this point, the Naviance profile for each student is so well-defined that the technology can accurately project areas of success for students in high school. The system can also serve as a roadmap to get students where they want to go.

"If I'm a student who knows I want to take AP calculus senior year, it will tell me exactly which courses to take in grades nine through eleven to prepare," York explained. "If I'm a student who wants to become an engineer, it will show the most helpful courses to take."

For many students, remembering and listing all of their academic, athletic, and service accomplishments in a coherent resume can be a challenge. But Naviance simplifies the process by creating an online resume for students that includes all of the information they have entered over the years. For example, each time they win an award or take part in an extracurricular activity, they can list it in their profiles.

Each student's account is kept active for four years following graduation.

"It will be really important for the staff at every school to get their stu-

dents into Naviance as much as possible each year," York said. "Once we successfully implement this at the middle and elementary school levels, we will have so much more information for each student by the time they reach high school."

By understanding students' strengths and interests before they even step into DPHS, counselors will have a head start on the college and career preparation process. It will also help students develop a clearer academic vision for high school and beyond. Countless students nationwide don't determine which academic route to take until the end of senior year — sometimes even later — resulting in many undecided college students and late switches in major.

But Naviance is putting students ahead in the preparation process, beginning with Prouty's current seniors. DPHS guidance counselors will spend the rest of the year introducing all other students to the technology.

From there, the district will unveil Naviance for younger students in the coming years.

Kevin Flanders can be reached at 508-909-4140, or by e-mail at kflanders@stonebridgepress.com.