

Delivering CCMR Best Practices in Southeast Texas



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Lamar Consolidated Independent School District (CISD), located just outside Houston, Texas, serves more than 44,000 students across a wide geographic area. As one of the region's fastest-growing school systems, the district is guided by a deeply student-centered mission: "To equip every student with the knowledge and skills to pursue meaningful opportunities—boldly shaping futures filled with purpose, possibility, and impact." With this vision at the forefront, Lamar CISD has worked intentionally to build cohesive systems that expand opportunity, strengthen postsecondary readiness, and empower students to plan and pursue futures aligned with their strengths, interests, and aspirations.

Anthony Yim, the district's Coordinator of College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR), helps lead this work across Lamar CISD. Now in his third year in the role and his 23rd year in education, he brings extensive experience as both an educator and administrator. With a background supporting CCMR initiatives in multiple districts, Yim approaches the work with a systems-level lens and a deep commitment to ensuring every student graduates fully prepared for college, career, or military service. SchoolLinks has become a pivotal tool in advancing that goal.

A User-Friendly Platform Supported by Strong Training and Customer Service

When Yim arrived at Lamar CISD, SchoolLinks was already in use, and he quickly recognized how effectively the platform streamlined CCMR processes and served as a comprehensive, student-friendly hub for postsecondary planning. He had also seen the platform in action at his previous district, which was beginning its own implementation as he transitioned to Lamar. That experience gave him an early appreciation for the platform's intuitive design and ease of use compared to their prior system; when he joined the Lamar team, he saw those same strengths reflected in how readily staff and students engaged with the platform.

In his current role, Yim has seen how the platform's usability is strengthened by the ongoing support provided by the SchoolLinks customer success team, whom he described as "amazing." He noted that their consistent engagement has been one of the most important factors in helping the district train staff and deepen use across campuses. The district regularly utilizes SchoolLinks webinars for professional learning, and Yim

encourages teams to experiment within the platform to build familiarity. Looking ahead, he anticipates using additional training videos and resources as Lamar CISD continues expanding its implementation.

Transforming the College Application Process

SchoolLinks has been particularly significant in how it has brought structure and clarity to the complex college application process in Lamar for both students and staff. The platform's application management system allows counselors to monitor where students are applying, track acceptances, and analyze postsecondary trends across campuses, giving staff real-time visibility to provide timely, data-driven support.

The Task Manager feature has been integral to this effort. By offering a shared, transparent checklist, SchoolLinks helps students understand exactly what they need to complete and when, while enabling counselors to quickly identify gaps and offer targeted assistance. These insights prompt timely interventions such as reminding a student to request a recommendation letter or encouraging them to register for an SAT retake and create a built-in layer of redundancy and awareness. As Yim emphasized, successful postsecondary planning depends not only on student initiative but on a coordinated network of individuals who can verify progress and guide students at each step. SchoolLinks provides a common platform for this coordination.

Beyond supporting districtwide processes, SchoolLinks has expanded what is possible for students exploring truly personalized postsecondary goals. Yim recalled a student athlete who hoped to continue playing volleyball in college—a goal that required navigating academic fit, athletic opportunities, and geographic considerations. Using SchoolLinks, she was able to research options both in and out of state, compare programs she could not easily visit in person, and ultimately connect with a coach at a small school in Nebraska where she now attends. The platform gave her the tools to identify her priorities, explore opportunities, and make a choice that aligned with both her athletic and academic goals.

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Early Career Exploration to Inform Decision-Making

As part of their implementation, Lamar CISD has prioritized early introduction of SchoolLinks in 8th grade so students can enter high school ready and prepared to make intentional decisions about their futures. This early access to the platform allows students to engage with interactive lessons, interest inventories, and goal-setting tools that help them understand how their unique strengths and preferences connect with long-term pathways. With this information, students are able to make well-informed choices about courses, certifications and pathways from the very beginning.

Throughout high school, SchoolLinks plays a key role in helping Lamar students refine and deepen their career exploration and planning over time. Students participating in programs like AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) use the platform to research careers, compare pathways, and evaluate how their skills align with specific opportunities. As students evaluate the results of their assessments and complete additional college and career activities, Yim noted that many begin moving from general ideas about the future to plans that feel more focused, concrete, and aligned with who they are and what they hope to achieve.

Empowering Students and Deepening College & Career Conversations

As familiarity with SchoolLinks has increased, Lamar CISD administrators and counselors have seen many more students take ownership of their postsecondary planning. Yim explained that, with the ability to visualize their goals, monitor their progress, and explore opportunities on their own, students are increasingly able to be proactive in researching colleges, identifying scholarships, and engaging with the tools that can help them make a tangible plan to achieve their future goals.

This sense of ownership is complemented by a strong system of support across the district. Each high school campus has a dedicated College and Career Facilitator (CCF) who uses SchoolLinks to track student engagement including monitoring completion of interest inventories, virtual tours, college search activities, and career exploration tools. Yim shared that these insights spark meaningful conversations, whether in small groups or one-on-one meetings, as CCFs are able to ask deeper questions, clarify misconceptions, and help students determine whether they are on the right path.

Yim highlighted that the robust CCMR data SchoolLinks provides further enhances this work by offering real-time insights into key CCMR metrics and milestones. This data-driven approach enables the readiness team to identify patterns, anticipate student needs, and make strategic adjustments each year. Yim explained the connection between

the data and the district's ability to plan strategically: "SchoolLinks allows us to have a clear set of data for us to make future plans to better support our students."

A Significant Return on Investment

Reflecting on his experience with other CCR tools, Yim noted that "SchoolLinks is the most user friendly of the platforms that I've worked through." The breadth of features has created a true one-stop shop for the district's CCMR work. Looking ahead, Yim plans to continue to expand the ways the district utilizes the platform. He hopes to introduce SchoolLinks even earlier in middle school so students can begin exploring interests and building familiarity long before they enter high school. Earlier exposure, he believes, will help students make more intentional decisions about their coursework, pathways, and long-term aspirations, ultimately maximizing what they can gain from the platform in high school.

When advising other districts considering SchoolLinks, Yim emphasized the importance of evaluating both immediate impact and sustained value. Yim acknowledged that budget constraints are a reality for many districts. However, he urged decisionmakers to weigh the long-term benefits for students: access to reliable information, earlier career and college exploration, more equitable opportunities, and a robust framework of support. He affirmed the value he has seen with his students, saying, "SchoolLinks is definitely the one platform that...will provide you the best return on investment moving forward." By investing in a system that fosters proactive planning and supports every student's unique postsecondary journey, districts can create the foundation for lasting success and opportunity.



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