

Building a Seamless College and Career Readiness Experience in New Hope-Solebury

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New Hope-Solebury School District is located just outside of Philadelphia in New Hope, Pennsylvania, and serves a close-knit, highly engaged community. With just over 1,200 students across the district and approximately 440 students at New Hope-Solebury High School, the district's small size is a defining strength: it allows educators to know students well and work closely with them throughout their entire K-12 experience. This personalized approach supports strong outcomes, with approximately 92 percent of graduates enrolling in four-year colleges each year.

The district's work is guided by a clear mission to "inspire and empower all students to become passionate, confident, and innovative learners with the ability to adapt to a diverse and global society." This emphasis on adaptability, self-direction, and long-term growth is reflected in how New Hope-Solebury approaches college and career readiness (CCR). The district is intentional about helping students develop a strong sense of who they are, envision meaningful futures, and make thoughtful, well-informed decisions that will allow them to be successful well beyond graduation.

At New Hope-Solebury High School, that work is led in large part by Sarah Reeder, the College and Career Readiness Counselor. Working closely with students throughout their high school years, Reeder is able to support future planning as an ongoing, relationship-based process. From early conversations about interests and aspirations to more concrete college and career decisions later on, the district's size enables sustained, individualized guidance. Reeder has sought out tools that support and strengthen this critical work. For her, SchoolLinks has become a vital resource to enable ongoing, individualized conversations and help students turn reflection and exploration into forward-looking plans with actionable steps to achieve them.

Replacing a Patchwork System with SchooLinks

The district began using SchooLinks at the start of the current school year. Previously, New Hope-Solebury relied on multiple tools to manage different aspects of college and career readiness. One platform was used to send application documentation to colleges, while another housed students' career readiness portfolios, a required component for all Pennsylvania students. Over time, this fragmented approach made it increasingly difficult to maintain efficient workflows. Reeder explained that she spent considerable time searching for a platform that would allow the counseling team to manage the full spectrum of CCR activities in a single system.

Reeder described that her team was thrilled to find SchooLinks because, with it, they "could do both the portfolio and send documentation to colleges and do the college search and plan for futures and career exploration and all of those things, all in one place." The transition to SchooLinks was intentional and carefully planned. The district made the decision to move platforms at the end of the previous school year and used the summer months to prepare for a clean, seamless rollout. For Reeder, that preparation was essential to ensuring students experienced continuity rather than disruption during an already high-stakes phase of the college planning process. In its first year of use, SchooLinks has become central to the district's college application processes. To date, more than 800 college applications have been submitted through the platform, with all associated documentation managed within SchooLinks, and the process has been smooth and reliable.

Driving Student Engagement and Ownership

From the outset, SchooLinks has proven to be highly accessible and intuitive for New Hope-Solebury students, a factor Reeder emphasized as essential to driving consistent, meaningful engagement and long-term CCR success. The district had previously utilized a different CCR platform where students

frequently struggled simply to log in, often requiring in-person troubleshooting before they could begin any meaningful work. Now, with SchooLinks, students are able to access the platform through single sign-on via ClassLink. Once students are logged in, the platform provides immediate direction; students are prompted to take key steps and able to see where they are in the college application process including which applications are incomplete, which are pending, and what steps remain. This reduces the need for repeated reminders and follow-up from counselors and educators, allowing them to focus their time on more substantive conversations with students.

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The platform's clear navigation, combined with a student-friendly design, has made SchooLinks—and the processes it guides students through—feel approachable rather than overwhelming. Reeder shared that students have been eager to log in and explore, in part because of an engaging onboarding experience that immediately draws them in. One early hook is an assessment that compares students' interests and strengths to those of well-known celebrities, sparking curiosity and conversation among peers and helping students to see the platform as relevant to them.

Reeder noted that as students started working in SchooLinks, they quickly began taking ownership of key pieces of their CCR journey. Seniors jumped into researching colleges, requesting teacher recommendations, and tracking application materials in one place. Juniors began completing their profile and many were amazed when they were able to export that information into a polished resume with the click of a button. Reeder explained that seeing their work transformed into something tangible and practical reinforced the value of the platform and helped students recognize how their efforts directly supported their future goals.

Tracking State Indicators: From Spreadsheets to Real-Time Insights

While student engagement was an immediate win, one of the most significant shifts for Reeder came in how the district tracks Pennsylvania's required career readiness indicators. Previously, this work relied on a mix of spreadsheets and Canvas, with data and artifacts spread across systems and teachers asked to upload materials into yet another platform. The process was time-intensive and made it difficult to quickly determine which students had completed required steps. With SchooLinks, that fragmented approach has been replaced by a single, streamlined system. Because the platform came preloaded with Pennsylvania's state standards, the district was able to begin using the Future Ready Portfolio immediately. Reeder could then identify which artifacts mattered most locally, assign built-in tasks, and add custom indicators unique to New Hope-Solebury. As she explained, "The Future Ready platform within SchooLinks was able to be completely customized for what we needed."

The result has been a far more transparent and responsive process. From the counseling side, Reeder can view completion rates in real time and quickly identify which students still need support, without running reports or managing spreadsheets. That shift marked a turning point. "I was so thrilled with the process—it felt like a pipe dream at first," she shared. "I was so used to having a huge spreadsheet where I would have to manually go in and see which students were missing every single item." For students, the experience is equally clear: when they log in, they see actionable to-do items, and completed tasks are automatically added to their portfolios.

SchooLinks has also strengthened how Reeder reaches students when action is required. Built-in messaging allows her to communicate directly with students about incomplete tasks, reinforcing the prompts they already see when they log in. When additional support is needed, the same information can be easily shared with teachers, creating a coordinated approach to follow-up. Parent communication adds an additional layer of accountability. As families are invited into the platform, parents receive the same reminders and notifications

tied to student tasks. While the district continues to onboard families, Reeder has already seen the value of this collaborative approach. When parents are included in the communication loop, students are far more likely to notice messages and follow through, helping ensure important steps are completed without repeated, manual outreach.

Freeing Up Time to Focus on More Meaningful CCR Work

Reeder reflected that the move to SchooLinks—through streamlined systems and automated processes—has "saved so much time," a commodity that is in short supply in education. That reclaimed time has allowed her to think more intentionally about the full scope of the district's college and career readiness programming, ensuring lessons are coherent, well sequenced, and truly relevant to students. As she described, this work has centered on "making sure our programming and curriculum is making sense and isn't repeating itself."

That focus has been supported by SchooLinks' scope-and-sequence framework. By clearly showing which tasks are required at each grade level, the platform makes progression easy to visualize and communicate across the district. This visibility has also informed broader planning as New Hope-Solebury prepares to expand SchooLinks beyond the high school and into the middle school. By starting with long-term outcomes and working backward, the district has been able to ensure students build skills and self-awareness intentionally over time.

Career exploration and preparation remain central to the district's approach, and SchooLinks has helped reinforce that priority within the curriculum. Rather than simply checking off required tasks, the emphasis is on building a strong foundation that evolves as students mature. Students begin with broader assessments and are gradually guided toward more targeted exploration, giving them opportunities to reflect, refine their interests, and rule possibilities in and out. As Reeder noted, this progression helps ensure that by graduation, students have developed thoughtful, individualized career plans.

Increased Efficiencies Leading to Lower Stress

For Reeder, the shift to SchooLinks has fundamentally changed the rhythm of her work during the busiest parts of the school year. Tasks that once required constant troubleshooting and workarounds now run smoothly and automatically. She shared that “the greatest thing has been the lack of troubleshooting that we’ve had to do,” noting that issues which once consumed time and energy have largely disappeared. That reliability has been especially meaningful during the early fall, when college planning accelerates and counselor workloads peak. Routine processes such as submitting required forms or managing counselor documentation are now faster and more intuitive, eliminating extra steps at a moment when every minute matters. As Reeder put it, “Any number of clicks that can be reduced and any amount of troubleshooting that can be reduced is so incredibly helpful.”

Beyond efficiency, the shift has changed how the work feels. With support readily available through a dedicated Customer Success Manager and on-demand chat, questions are resolved quickly when they do arise. More importantly, the platform’s intuitive design has minimized confusion across the school community. Reeder said that one way she gauges the success of new initiatives is by how seamlessly it is adopted, and by that measure, the transition has been successful. “I have not received a single complaint or concern from a student or teacher,” she said. “It is definitely intuitive enough that they are all able to figure it out very easily.” Reeder reflected that her “stress level has been so much lower after we moved to SchooLinks.” The move to SchooLinks has allowed for deeper and more sustainable CCR work at scale.

Reducing Complexity and Building Engagement for Years to Come

Looking forward, Reeder is excited about continuing to expand how New Hope-Solebury uses SchooLinks to support students during high school and beyond. One area of particular interest is the platform’s alumni features. The district has not previously tracked alumni in any systematic way. They are eager to use SchooLinks to stay connected with alumni and track their progress beyond graduation. As the district builds out its career pathways program, Reeder sees strong potential in using SchooLinks to better understand alumni postsecondary journeys. She explained that she sees SchooLinks as “a great way to keep [alumni] informed about things and also to keep us connected with what they’re doing.” Reeder is also excited to use SchooLinks as they introduce a new state-required financial literacy course.

For Reeder, the value of SchooLinks lies in its ability to bring everything together for educators and students alike. “Finding a product like SchooLinks where it really is a one-stop shop for everything is incredibly useful and efficient for us,” she said. “From career guidance and exploration all the way through submitting documentation, SchooLinks has all of that.” But just as importantly, the platform supports the district’s commitment to student-centered decision-making. Students can see how their profiles connect to resumes, college searches, and required documentation, helping them understand how each step fits into a larger, purposeful plan. Reeder said: “We want to do what’s best for students. SchooLinks is that site.”

By consolidating systems into a single, coherent platform, SchooLinks has reduced complexity while deepening engagement across the school community. For New Hope-Solebury, that alignment—between systems, programming, and the student experience—has both created efficiencies and built a stronger foundation for helping students navigate the transition from high school to a future they are excited about, with the skills to be successful.



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