

Building Upon a Track Record of Success

SchoolLinks Expands CCR Engagement in Wilton, CT



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Wilton, Connecticut, is located an hour's drive from both New York City and New Haven and serves just under 4,000 students. The district draws from a community where education is a top priority and a shared value. Wilton Public Schools embodies this deep commitment to academic excellence and student success through its mission statement, which affirms the district's purpose "to inspire and prepare all students to contribute meaningfully to a globally interdependent society," guided by rigorous, student-centered instruction and a clear vision of the 21st-century skills and attributes students need to thrive.

This districtwide commitment is evident at Wilton High School, which is ranked among the top 1% of high schools nationwide by U.S. News & World Report. As Associate Principal, Brian Keating plays a central role in leading Wilton High School's counseling, student support, and academic teams, bringing together a community of educators deeply dedicated to student success. With approximately 95% of graduates attending four-year colleges, the district's college and career readiness (CCR) programming plays a critical role in helping students identify and pursue their goals.

When Wilton school leaders began seeking a new CCR platform, their hope was to find a comprehensive system that could match the district's commitment to student support and achievement. The team had grown frustrated with their previous platform due to its inconsistent customer service and fragmented tools that made it difficult to streamline common CCR processes. After learning about the breadth and depth of SchoolLinks' capabilities, the district determined that the platform could address the comprehensive needs of students and staff while supporting its strategic goal of embedding career-connected learning more fully within academic coursework. Keating shared that SchoolLinks offered a true "one-stop shop" that brought together scheduling, course planning, community events, transcript requests, and college recommendations within a single, intuitive system that aligned seamlessly with Wilton's vision for a robust college and career readiness ecosystem.

A Strategic, Student-Centered Rollout

Wilton Public Schools took a thoughtful and strategic approach to its SchoolLinks implementation. Rather than rushing adoption, the district established a clear, phased deployment designed to ensure a smooth transition

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for both staff and students. The district first introduced SchoolLinks two years ago, beginning with course selection and planning for 9th-11th graders. This initial rollout demonstrated SchoolLinks' ability to streamline complex scheduling and planning processes. To minimize disruption for graduating seniors, Wilton opted to continue using its previous CCR platform for one year for college applications and transcript requests, since those students had already entered essential information and were in the midst of their application cycle. Now, SchoolLinks serves as the district's sole CCR system, fully integrated into the student experience across all grade levels.

Keating pointed out that while any technology transition comes with an initial learning curve, students adapted incredibly quickly to the new system given how "user-friendly and intuitive it is." He also noted that having "everything in one location—on one platform—with SchoolLinks" makes the process far more efficient and cohesive for students, families, and counselors alike. As students began using SchoolLinks more frequently, they became comfortable navigating the system and were empowered to take greater ownership over their CCR planning.

Streamlined Systems and Early Course Planning Success

From the staff perspective, Wilton's transition to SchoolLinks has been notably straightforward and smooth. The district's counseling and IT teams worked closely with SchoolLinks to ensure that data integrations functioned flawlessly. Keating shared that this year marks the first time students are submitting college applications and requesting letters of recommendation directly through SchoolLinks. With the first major deadlines approaching, he noted that he has not heard of a single glitch or issue, a strong indicator of how stable and dependable the system has been during a critical time in the college application cycle.

The course planning process has also seen significant improvement. In the past, counselors distributed multi-page sets of instructions for families and students to navigate course selection through the district student information system; this process required numerous manual steps and was not always straightforward. Last January, Wilton allowed students to complete their course requests directly through SchoolLinks. The district's IT department initially approached the change with caution, concerned about how easily student requests could be transferred between systems. However, after direct collaboration with the SchoolLinks technical team, those concerns were quickly alleviated. Keating summed up that the process "was seamless."

Shifting to SchoolLinks for course planning has brought immediate benefits for students and families. The platform allows them to see which classes have been completed, understand prerequisite requirements, and visualize how their selections align with future course options and graduation requirements. With this streamlined system, students, families, and staff have greater visibility into academic planning and progress.

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Strengthening Collaboration and Student Engagement in CCR

Since implementing SchoolLinks, Wilton has seen a meaningful shift in how counselors collaborate with students. The district's weekly advisory period has become an important venue for college and career readiness activities. Counselors now use this time to deliver their curriculum directly, guiding small groups of about 25 students through key features and tools in SchoolLinks. During these sessions, students log into their accounts, explore planning resources, and

engage in guided discussions about their postsecondary goals.

Beyond the classroom, Wilton's College and Career Center coordinator has used SchoolLinks to publicize college visits more effectively than ever before. Keating noted that attendance at these events has surged, calling it "a great success." He reflected that utilizing SchoolLinks for communication and coordination for these events to reach students is easy for staff and highly effective in driving engagement.

Expanding Pathways and Shifting Mindsets

While Wilton High School has long maintained a strong tradition of academic excellence with the vast majority of graduates attending four-year colleges, the district is now beginning to broaden how it frames readiness beyond college preparation alone. Keating explained that historically, students gravitated toward the most advanced or competitive courses: "Being in a competitive school, students naturally sought the courses colleges were looking for."

With the implementation of SchoolLinks, this conversation has started to evolve. The district has begun highlighting how its existing courses align with specific career pathways, helping students make more intentional connections between their academic choices and potential future professions. Keating shared that, with SchoolLinks, the district has "turned a corner and started to advertise the courses we have that will prepare students for certain career interests and pathways."

The use of SchoolLinks has sparked new discussions among staff about how to map course offerings to college and career pathways. Counselors and department leaders are now thinking more deeply about where each course fits within broader readiness goals. He shared that "everyone has warmed up to the idea that there are certain courses students can take to better prepare for what they

might be interested in." He emphasized that academic rigor and career-connected learning need not be mutually exclusive; it is possible to maintain a traditional curriculum that meets state requirements while also helping students see which courses align to their interests and future plans. SchoolLinks has served as a catalyst for these reflections, creating opportunities for the district to analyze its offerings at a macro level and identify next steps for developing more defined pathways.

A recent state mandate requiring all students to complete a personal finance course has further accelerated these conversations. The requirement resulted in an influx of student enrollment in the course, far more than in previous years. With this, school staff is contemplating how they can design updated, state-of-the-art courses that both meet the requirement while also offering meaningful certification opportunities. Keating shared that SchoolLinks has played an important role in helping the district explore these new ways to connect state standards with student interests and emerging career skills.

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"SchoolLinks Has it All"

When asked what advice he would give to other districts considering how to enhance their college and career readiness systems, Keating brought it all back to the students: "You need to choose a platform that is going to serve the students well." For Wilton, that choice was SchoolLinks. He explained that it makes the complex and often overwhelming CCR

process “understandable and less daunting.” He praised the platform’s user-friendly design, which empowers students to take an active role in exploring their postsecondary options and creating actionable plans to achieve their goals.

Keating emphasized that SchoolLinks provides a truly comprehensive approach to CCR support: “If you’re looking to make your students’ lives easier when it comes to courses, when it comes to college recommendations, when it comes to thinking about pathways, transcripts—just the entire postsecondary experience—SchoolLinks has it all in one place.” For Wilton, the positive impact for students and staff has been clear: a single, dynamic platform that simplifies administrative processes, eases the workload of documentation, streamlines timely application completions, and enables each student to have a

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powerful and personalized resource to access postsecondary opportunities for admissions, scholarships, employment, and a fulfilling life beyond graduation. In reflection, Keating declared, “SchoolLinks has it all.”

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