

How Maquoketa High School Engaged Students with Future Planning Remotely

Administrative efficiency and future readiness learning is not on hold at Maquoketa High School—even though school is.

When school counselors Julie Kinrade and Amanda Dewulf transitioned Maquoketa High School from Career Cruising to Xello last fall, they had no idea what a profound effect this decision would have in the spring.

As the spread of coronavirus sent students home to [learn remotely](#), the counselors found themselves with an important tool to continue to engage students in future readiness activities and keep class scheduling on track.

Maquoketa High School, located in Maquoketa, Iowa, officially closed on March 16. Kinrade and Dewulf had been in the middle of scheduling fall classes for all 500 students and registering 8th graders from neighboring schools.

“We had to do all registration virtually and it was such a relief knowing that we didn’t have to come up with another solution from scratch,” says Dewulf.

All the information was already in Xello, so we didn’t have to create a form and go through hundreds of responses. When I think about if we didn’t have this and were doing it by hand somehow... it would be difficult.

The counselors managed to register everyone for next year in the same timeline they would have had everyone been in school. In the process, Kinrade and Dewulf created opportunities to hold individual Zoom meetings with parents and students to go over course selections and their original four-year plans.

With everyone logged into a student’s Xello account, they were able to have meaningful discussions about the short and long-term future of individual students.

“It was great for parents to see which classes their child had planned, and we were able to update and change things too,” says Kinrade.

Dewulf says this communication with parents allowed them to share more information than the usual newsletters they used when school was in session, facilitating meaningful family discussions.

Parents have definitely been able to see the value of Xello firsthand in a way that they probably wouldn't have if the school wasn't closed.

“I could see us offering a webinar-type Zoom session on Xello in the fall. It's one-stop shopping for future planning,” she says.

Xello fuels future readiness—before and after school closures

When Maquoketa High School made the switch from Career Cruising to Xello in October, they noticed immediate benefits for future readiness preparation.

“The juniors in particular were doing a lot of career research. They got more excited and engaged in Xello than they ever did before in Career Cruising. Doing things like the Matchmaker, personality and learning style quizzes and getting their 10 career matches and related careers really sparked their interest,” says Kinrade.

Not wanting to lose momentum when Maquoketa transitioned to virtual learning, Kinrade quickly posted how-to videos in Google Classroom. The videos walked students through completing the course planner for next year and doing other future readiness activities in Xello.

“Some students set up Zoom meetings with us so we could share our screen and go through the course planner with them and talk it through,” says Dewulf.

The district policy is that all academic activities are voluntary from March 16 through the end of the school year. To keep future readiness top-of-mind for students, the counselors have assigned Xello lessons for each grade level as voluntary or enrichment opportunities.

“Sometimes when students are sitting at home, they forget what they could be doing. We send out an email blast every week and sometimes we'll say, “Don't forget about Xello!” and include some of the features and visuals. We sent one out recently and we saw on the Xello dashboard that 36 kids popped in. That's been really neat to see.”

I anticipate more special education teachers using it. They just need a little more training, which we can hopefully do in the fall.

The future of Xello at Maquoketa High School

Some of the important ways Kinrade and Dewulf are integrating Xello throughout the school, administratively and academically include:

- **Tracking college applications and sending transcripts electronically.** The counselors are excited to bring this feature to life in the fall. “We had a few kinks in our system, but we plan to implement this next year,” says Dewulf.
- **Special education.** Kinrade is looking at ways Xello can be integrated into IEPs. She helped two students in the special education program go through Matchmaker and other Xello activities and then showed their teacher how to take the information from Xello and put it into their IEP.
- **Resources for seniors.** Dewulf says another important aspect of Xello is the space where they can put links and resources related to scholarships for seniors. “It’s great to have one place to store all of this information. All students need to do is log in to their Xello account and it’s at their fingertips.”
- **A resource for academic classes.** Kinrade says she sees the potential for Xello to be an important tool in everything from English to business classes. “A research and technical writing teacher jumped on board with Xello when they realized that their students could find information about careers there. And a business instructor teaching financial literacy could use Xello as a resource for researching careers, the job market and how much money can be made in specific jobs.”
- **Reporting and analytics.** The counselors have noted that Xello tracks things like which careers and colleges students show the most interest in. “This is a good way to pull data to potentially bring in speakers or schedule field trips or activities within the community that students would value,” says Dewulf. When it comes to colleges, they can make sure the students who demonstrated an interest in Xello are signed up for the right college rep visits.
- **Social-emotional learning.** At Maquoketa High School, freshmen focus on student success skills, sophomores on self-management and juniors on careers, as part of their social-emotional curriculum. The counselors plan to dive deeper into the Xello lessons that are appropriate for each grade level.
- **Make future readiness part of the school day.** Without their own classrooms, counselors often find themselves short on time to provide future readiness learning for students. Xello helps them get straight to the point when they drop in on classes. “It helps us get a lot done in a short amount of time,” says Kinrade. They’re even thinking about training teachers to supervise students as they do Xello lessons during daily study hall classes.

What educators need to know about Xello

The Maquoketa counselors are quick to admit that they jumped into the transition from Career Cruising to Xello with both feet—and not a lot of planning. “We made the choice

to do it in late October and we were using it in November,” says Dewulf.

In hindsight, they’re glad they did it swiftly.

“If you’re hesitant or scared about putting the work into setting up Xello, you should know that it’s doable. We were able to get it set up and have webinars and training very quickly.” says Dewulf.

Kinrade says the most important thing to know about Xello is that it’s an intuitive solution for students.

“If kids don’t enjoy a program, they won’t see the value of it or use it. But our kids really saw the value,” she says.

The fact that our students have bought into Xello is a huge plus for us. We have not had students complain about having to do Xello like they had with previous systems.

Dewulf recommends presenting it to students like a hub, not a one-off program.

“Help them understand that Xello is a place where they can do future readiness lessons, register for classes, document the colleges they’ve applied to, send transcripts. I think they find it useful because they use it for a variety of things.”

With an uncertain future, the Maquoketa High School counselors are encouraged by the way they can pivot to remote future readiness and administrative functioning. Xello helps them get the job done in new and efficient ways.

Further Resources for Virtual Learning

[Making the Switch to Remote Learning: Your District’s Guide to Preparing K-12 Students for Future Success](#)

[Free Resources for Schools, Educators & Parents During COVID-19](#)

[How to Use Xello for Remote Learning](#)

[5 Ways to Facilitate Remote Learning Successfully During Uncertain Times](#)



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