

## OVERVIEW

In St. Clair County, only about one third of high school graduates complete the requirements to earn either an associate (2-year) or bachelor's (4-year) degree as late as six years after high school. Too many students are missing out on the benefits associated with attending college and completing a college degree.

Reasons for not enrolling or completing college include:

- Unfamiliarity with college-going processes, such as applying for admission and financial aid, choosing and registering for classes, and developing and following a program of study that leads to a degree.
- Lack of knowledge, skills, and strategies required for success in college. These are not necessarily the same knowledge, skills, and strategies that lead to success in high school.
- Lack of academic, family, and peer support; especially if students move away to college.
- Lack of money and/or awareness of the financial aid that may be available.

Middle colleges minimize or eliminate the reasons that limit success in college by working closely with students as they make a gradual transition from high school to college.

The Blue Water Middle College Academy is the result of a unique partnership between educational institutions in St. Clair County, including St. Clair County Community College, the Algonac, Capac, Memphis, Port Huron and Yale school districts, the St. Clair County RESA, St. Clair TEC and the Virtual Learning Academy; all working together to achieve the following goals.

### Goals of the Blue Water Middle College Academy:

- Increase the number of St. Clair County students enrolling in college
- Increase the number of students *completing* college with either an associate or bachelor's degree
- Reduce the financial burden on families sending students to college
- Expand the traditional view of high school and increase opportunities based on interests, talents and ability
- Provide an opportunity for students to engage in early experiences with college in a supportive setting.

### ***Program Design***

Students in the Blue Water Middle College Academy gradually transition to full time college students over the course of three years; from 11<sup>th</sup> grade through year 13. They continue to complete their high school graduation requirements, usually at their home high school, while building a college transcript at SC4 that can result in an associate degree and up to 62 transferable credits by the end of year 13. The cost of the college courses, including textbooks, is paid for by the middle college.

The BWMCA is designed to be flexible. Students are free to pursue their individual academic goals and interests within a structure of support and guidance provided by middle college and SC4 staff. The ability of students to begin clarifying and realizing their academic and career goals is exciting and motivating and helps them meet the increased challenges of college coursework.

## **The Transition**

Here is a general look at the transition a BWMCA student makes from high school to college during the three years they are in the program. Most students enter the middle college at the beginning of their junior year in high school. Their remaining high schools classes are taken at one of the six high schools partnering with the BWMCA: Algonac, Capac, Memphis, Port Huron, Port Huron Northern, and Yale. Below is a breakdown of how each year will look for BWMCA students. A sample program of study with specific examples of classes is found at the back of this document.

### **Junior Year**

Fall semester: Students take 4 high school courses and 2 college courses (5-8 credits).

Winter semester: Students take 4 high school courses and 2 college courses (6-8 credits).

### **Senior Year**

Fall semester: Students take 3 high school courses and 3 college courses (9-12 credits).

Winter semester: Students take 3 high school courses and 3 college courses (9-12 credits).

### **5<sup>th</sup> Year Senior (Year 13)**

Fall semester: Students take 14 – 16 credits (~ 4 – 5 college courses).

Winter semester: Students take 14 – 16 credits (~ 4 – 5 college courses).

Students need a minimum of 62 credits to earn an associate degree. More information on SC4 degrees offered and their requirements is found on pages 7-9.

## **Benefits of Enrolling in the Blue Water Middle College Academy**

Students choosing to enroll in the BWMCA can expect to take advantage of the following opportunities:

- Students begin college early with supports that will help them succeed.
- The cost of tuition, fees, textbooks and other required learning materials for courses at SC4 are covered by the BWMCA.
- Just one year after their traditional high school graduation date, students have earned *two* years' worth of college credits. They can then go on to earn a bachelor's degree in only two additional years.
- Spending only two years at a four year college or university will result in saving tens of thousands of dollars for the student and his or her family.
- Support is provided to students in many ways (see the Support Section) as they face the new challenges of college coursework and navigating the college environment.
- Students are excited about school, because they have greater choice in their coursework and are taking a big step closer to their academic and career future.

## **Considerations for Students and Parents**

Middle college students are putting one foot into the college environment while keeping the other planted in high school. This is one of the benefits of the program, but it also means that things will be different for BWMCA students than students in high school full time. Before deciding whether or not to enroll in the BWMCA students and parents should consider the following:

- Students become Blue Water Middle College Academy students and receive their high school diploma from the BWMCA.
- BWMCA students do not receive their high school diploma until the end of year 13.
- Students must follow both the SC4 class schedule and calendar for their college courses **and** the high school schedule and calendar for their high school courses. *Note: There are differences in start and end dates and spring vacation dates.*
- Students will likely need to take one or more of their college courses outside of the traditional high school day schedule.
- Students are required to attend a two-day orientation (half days each) at SC4 in August.
- Participation in all academic and college support sessions is required. Optional support opportunities (group and individual) will be available or required as needed.
- Students are required to take SC4's ACCUPLACER assessment to provide placement information for English and math courses. Students may be required to take developmental courses in reading, writing or mathematics prior to 100-level courses. **The BWMCA cannot pay for these courses. Students must pay for all development education courses needed.** (~\$400 - \$700 each)
- BWMCA students will be in regular SC4 classes open to all SC4 students. Discussions, assignments, and research requirements are at the discretion of the college instructor and may include adult or controversial subjects. The BWMCA administration does not oversee SC4 instructors or those of our partner high schools.
- Students must provide their own transportation to and from SC4.

## **Can I do the work? Two key factors to consider**

There are no minimum grade or assessment criteria that must be met to be accepted into the Blue Water Middle College Academy. However, not all students are ready for college level work and the increased level of responsibility and freedom that comes with college courses.

BWMCA staff members will meet individually with all students who apply along with at least one parent or guardian. We will discuss the student's grade and assessment history as it relates to the student's readiness for the program.

- Grade point average is one indicator of the strength of a student's study skills and work habits. A 2.75 or higher high school grade point average indicates a student should be capable of introductory college level coursework.
- Some characteristics that will lead to success or failure are not easily measured. A willingness to work hard and seek help when needed can offset academic struggles in particular areas. In contrast, a student who has normally earned A's with very little work may struggle or even fail in college courses.

Ultimately, the decision to enroll in the middle college is up to a well-informed student and his or her parents or guardians.

## **BWMCA Support for Students**

Probably the most important benefit to students enrolled in middle colleges is the support they receive as they begin college coursework and transition to full time college students. The types of support provided to BWMCA students include the following:

- Cohort specific Success Sessions that address the components of being “college ready” and planning to achieve academic goals. Topics include:
  - o Note-taking strategies
  - o Organizing information from textbooks, lecture notes, and other resources into meaningful study materials
  - o Studying strategies
  - o Learning to register for SC4 classes
  - o Planning a program of study that leads to a degree and successful credit transfer
  - o Preparing for college applications and paying for college in the future
- Connecting students to the many support centers and resources for students at SC4.
- Completion of “College Success (SD 140), a 2-credit SC4 class designed to help students succeed in college courses.
- Assistance with scheduling, SAT preparation, career and college research, and the financial aid and application process for a student’s next steps.
- Personal mentoring and academic counseling from Blue Water and SC4 staff as students create a program of study to meet their academic goals.
- Development of a supportive face-to-face and online network of middle college classmates
- Partnering with parents as students design and work to complete their plans of study
- Home support: Parents, siblings, and relatives provide an excellent support network that is not present when students go away to college right after high school.

## **The High School and College Curricula**

The Blue Water Middle College curriculum meets all requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum as well as allowing students to earn a college associate degree, two years’ worth of transferable college credits, including fulfillment of the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) requirements, and/or certification for employment from its higher education partner, St. Clair County Community College. The combined high school -- college curriculum meets or exceeds all High School Content Expectations.

Students must be in full time attendance based on a combination of high school and college courses. Full time attendance for students taking only college course (grade 13) requires taking 12 or more college credit hours each semester.

## **St. Clair TEC and the Blue Water Middle College Academy**

Students can attend TEC and the middle college if a slot for the program in which they are interested is available at the partnering high school they attend. It is likely that a BWMCA student who attends TEC will need to have one or more of their high school graduation requirements met with an SC4 course(s) due to very limited time at the partner high school in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

## 2019 – 2020 Enrollment Process

Enrollment for the 2019 – 2020 school year begins in January (2019). All students who will be high school juniors in the fall of 2019 are eligible to enroll. There are several steps to the process. They are outlined below:

### 1. Learn about the Blue Water Middle College Academy

Students and parents gather information about the Blue Water Middle College Academy. A series of information meetings will be held in January and early February. One will be held at each of our partner high schools. You can attend whichever one is most convenient. Specific dates and times of each session will be available on the BWMCA website: [bluewatermiddlecollege.org](http://bluewatermiddlecollege.org).

**Please submit applications for the 2019 – 2020 school year by February 8<sup>th</sup> for earliest consideration. Applications received after March 31<sup>st</sup> will not be accepted.**

### 2. Apply to the BWMCA

The BWMCA application will be available at the information sessions listed above and will be posted on the middle college web site ([bluewatermiddlecollege.org](http://bluewatermiddlecollege.org)). Students interested in the middle college must submit the one-page application to trigger the next step in the process.

Interested students should submit a completed application.

**Mail** applications to:

Blue Water Middle College Academy  
ATTN: Pete Spencer, Director  
323 Erie St.  
Port Huron, MI 48061

**Fax** applications to: 810-989-5848. (Call or email to confirm we received the fax.)

**Drop off** applications in the BWMCA offices in Room 123 of the Acheson Applied Technology (ATC) Building on SC4's Port Huron campus. Note: ATC is the building with the windmill and solar panels outside of it. The BWMCA is right next to SC4's bookstore.

**Apply online** at <http://tinyurl.com/bwmc2019application>.

### 3. Student and parent/guardian meet with BWMCA staff

Each student who submits an application will be scheduled for an interview with a BWMCA staff member. The goal of the meeting is to make sure the student and his/her parent or guardian are clear about what it will mean if the student enrolls in the middle college. We discuss the student's academic and career goals, extra-curricular activities, and academic achievement. We discuss the challenges students face by taking college classes as well as the many new opportunities the middle college provides. We want to be sure that students and parents have as much information as possible before making the decision to enroll in the BWMCA.

### 4. Students commit to enrolling in the BWMCA

Once students have all of their questions answered, they must decide whether or not to enroll in the middle college. This decision must be made and communicated to the BWMCA by late winter.

### 5. Apply to SC4

Students who decide to enroll in the BWMCA must then complete an Early Admission Application for St. Clair County Community College (SC4) and give that to the BWMCA staff for submission to SC4.

**6. Complete all necessary requirements prior to the fall of 2018.**

These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- ACCUPLACER placement testing at SC4
- Complete the BWMCA's online new student survey
- Update immunization status to meet state requirements
- Attend the BWMCA new student 2-day orientation in August
- Begin SC4 courses in August, 2019

Questions may be directed to Pete Spencer at 810-989-5805 or Matthew Ruiz at 810-989-5800. Information is also available at the BWMCA website: [bluewatermiddlecollege.org](http://bluewatermiddlecollege.org).

The following page includes information about earning a degree at St. Clair County Community College

## **Earning a Degree at SC4**

Below is a brief introduction to the type of college degree a BWMCA student can earn at SC4. More information is available on the SC4 web site, by visiting the college in person and speaking with an SC4 advisor, or from a middle college staff member.

### **What is an Associate's Degree?**

- Earning a “degree” means that you have fulfilled specific requirements to complete a program of study.
- An associate degree is often considered a 2-year degree, because it takes approximately 2 years to complete if a student attends full time.
- A bachelor's degree can be completed in 4 years.
- 62 credit hours are required to earn an associate degree at St. Clair County Community College (SC4). Bachelor's degrees at 4-year colleges and universities generally require 120 – 128 credit hours.
- College courses usually count for 3 or 4 credit hours each, so you need to take and pass approximately 17 – 20 college courses to earn an associate degree.
- Successful completion of the Blue Water Middle College program will allow a student entering in their junior year to complete an associate degree by the end of year 13. Earning an associate's degree at the end of the program requires designing and carefully following a program of study and passing all SC4 courses the first time.

St. Clair County Community College offers several associate degree programs of study:

- **Associate in Arts**
- **Associate in Science**
- **Associate in Business (transfer)**
- **Associate in General Education (for undecided students)**
- **Associate in Applied Arts and Sciences (more career-oriented)**

Please visit the SC4 web site ([www.sc4.edu](http://www.sc4.edu)) for information on all degree programs of study and available courses.

In addition to earning one or more associated degrees, middle college students planning to enroll in a four-year college/university after high school graduation can complete the requirements for the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA) as part of the associate degrees in Arts, Science, Business (Transfer), and General Education. The satisfying the requirements of the MTA at SC4 fulfills the General Education requirements at virtually all public and private colleges in Michigan.