

on Michigan's Communities

April 23, 2012

The goal of this publication is to profile child advocacy efforts of one or more of Michigan's communities to encourage networking and sharing of advocacy strategies. This issue highlights programs presenting as part of a KidSpeak® session presented at the 2012 Governor's Education Summit.

KidSpeak®: Flexible Learning Environments and Timelines

THE NEED FOR OPTIONS THAT LEAD TO EQUITY

Too many young people in Michigan aren't making it to high school graduation in 4 years. More than 32,000 Michigan young people did not receive a high school diploma in the spring of 2010 – nearly one-quarter of the students who began high school four-years earlier. In 2007, 155,000 young adults aged 18-24 did not have a high school diploma in Michigan. Young people of color or those from economically disadvantaged families remain the least likely to graduate “on-time” with their peers.

Many young people need more time or different paths to reach a diploma. Of the 32,000 students who failed to graduate in 2010 within four-years in Michigan, fully 16,700 were still on a path toward high school completion. The share of students in this group who are not getting through in the traditional time-frame has increased more than 50 percent since 2007, illustrating the need for increased attention to programs that serve young people who may need more time or different paths to graduate.

The economic consequences of dropping out are high. Adults with no high school credential have significantly less earning power, and much higher likelihood of unemployment, substance abuse, incarceration and poor health. Communities, which lose tax revenue and take on higher monetary and social costs, can be economically vibrant only when their residents are engaged in life-long learning beginning with a high school diploma. Employment rates of high school dropouts 16-19 years old in Michigan are substantially below their peers who graduate from high school. Their annual earnings will be less than half of what their peers with just some college can expect, and they will not be in the labor market for as many years.¹

Michigan is poised to make great strides in improving the educational success of all children. The unprecedented attention and engagement of the private sector, supporting research, innovation in Michigan and around the nation, and renewed public sector attention provide an opportunity. It is in everyone's best interest to succeed in graduating more young people from quality high schools, and we have many models of this success around the state and nation.

There is strong research that allows us to predict which students are at-risk of dropping out. Young people who fall behind in credits are much more likely to not complete school, yet there are very limited options for credit recovery for these students. Once young people fall behind in school, or when they face significant personal and educational obstacles, a traditional high school setting is not always successful in reengaging them, yet few alternatives exist. In addition, school discipline policies often contribute to disengagement and lost credits.

¹ Sum, A. (2008). Center for Labor Market Studies, Boston, Mass.

Once students have left school before diploma, for whatever reason, they need different options to re-engage. Program models that seek to recover dropouts are being developed to meet students' needs across Michigan and the nation. The barriers to success vary for students across Michigan depending on their circumstances, and communities are best positioned to formulate options that address local needs. Innovative programs seek to work around the barriers students encountered in the traditional school setting by including options like flexible scheduling, online courses, smaller classes, mentoring, and career and workforce training options that include a path towards a high school credential. Although program structure varies, a common goal remains consistent throughout programs: all students should have the opportunity to enter adulthood ready for post-secondary success in either college or a career.

Additional time and varying strategies improve equity – programs that encourage students to stay in school until they graduate – often with a 5th and 6th year of high school – is more important for low-income and students of color, improving their overall graduation rates significantly.

LANSING COMMUNITY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA COMPLETION INITIATIVE

Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties

The High School Diploma Completion Initiative (HSDCI) at Lansing Community College (LCC) has developed program for disconnected youth to complete their high school diploma while preparing them for additional post-secondary education leading to a career. The college's partners include the Ingham, Eaton, and Clinton County Public Schools and various local and regional businesses. Enrollment is open to any student in the college's service area with the cost of enrollment paid by the student's home school district supplemented with funds from LCC and the Mott Foundation. The home school district issues the student's diploma upon completion of required credits.

The program is designed for high school dropouts ages 16-19 who have been out of school for six months or more who wish to complete their high school diploma and begin career training and their college education. Each student's program is guided by a Life Development Plan (LDP) which is an action plan for completing a high school diploma with the opportunity to work toward attainment of a certificate or associates degree concurrently; career and employability preparation; and personal development skills. The academic coursework designated in the LDP is comprised of English Language Arts Science, Social Studies and Mathematics for students needing to attain grade level skills and opportunities to meet high school graduation requirements through taking select LCC coursework.

The curricula are made up of existing LCC courses and students earn LCC credit for their HSDCI work. They have an LCC transcript that reflects course work identical to the transcripts of traditional college-age students taking similar programs on the main campus. The uniqueness of the program is the partnership that exists between the community college and local school districts (27) which provides an early college high school experience. This proven model and process is a template that community colleges and school districts can adopt; a model that offers concurrent high school and college enrollment leading to a high school diploma and / or a technical certificate or associates degree.

In addition to coursework, work experience is an integral component of the HSDCI program, which incorporates business, industry, and labor into the curriculum and the daily lives of students. Students have the opportunity to engage in mentorships, internships, apprenticeships, and other employment training offered through LCC. Students can also participate in job shadowing, field trips, and special job skill seminars as part of their learning experience.

For more information about the High School Diploma Completion Initiative, please contact Toni Glasscoe, Director of K-12 Relations via e-mail glasst@lcc.edu, or phone (517) 483-9909

MARSHALL ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL – THE OPPORTUNITY ACADEMY
Calhoun County

Marshall Alternative High School opened in 2003 with the sole purpose of helping students get back on track and recover credit in order to obtain a high school diploma. As the program grew from 36 to 90 students during the first 5 years, it became evident that students needed to be better prepared for college or career after graduation. Many students were the first in their families to graduate from high school and had never considered themselves college material – nor had they considered being able to attend college.

The Opportunity School, located at the Kellogg Community College Eastern Academic Center in Albion, was conceived at a Marshall Chamber of Commerce visioning retreat, by a group discussing ways to increase success in the community through collaboration. Meeting attendees included administrators from Marshall Public Schools (MPS) and Kellogg Community College (KCC) and they discussed the need for a program where non-traditional students attending the Marshall Alternative High School (MAHS) could see themselves as furthering their educational pathway beyond high school graduation and attending college. The Opportunity School would act as a bridge between the Marshall Alternative High School and Kellogg Community College – allowing students to step slowly into the college experience while continuing their high school courses and still receiving the support of counselors and tutors available through the Marshall Alternative program. With generous support of a 3-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The Opportunity School started with its first round of students in the summer semester of 2011.

The Opportunity School has filled a need, not only for area students, but for Marshall Public Schools and Kellogg Community College as well. The Marshall Alternative High School program was housed in a former elementary school – which was slated to be torn down – and the Kellogg Community College Eastern Academic Center (EAC) was underutilized. Moving the Marshall Alternative High School program to the EAC meant that students are in an environment where they take their academics seriously and the EAC now has a feeder program, assisting KCC with enrollment.

The Opportunity School provides access to tools, often unavailable in traditional schools, which mitigate barriers to success:

- Tutoring – Regularly an expense incurred or foregone by students' families, tutoring is offered through a partnership with Albion College's School of Education, which eliminates finances as a barrier.
- School Counselors – Oftentimes unable to work on academic issues due to other responsibilities in traditional school settings, the counselors at the school are able to utilize students' Educational Development Plan and Compass test results to guide their High School and Kellogg Community College course selections – as well as assisting them with family-life issues that could impact their success through traditional counseling and connections to other community resources.
- Credit Recovery – Traditional high schools provide limited opportunities for credit recovery, and do not serve the needs of many over-age or under-credited students. Removing time toward completion of subject mastery as a barrier keeps more students on a diploma and post-secondary path.
- College Access – The opportunity to slowly transition into college allows post-secondary education to be part of a path, instead of a giant leap into an unknown.
- Transportation – Moving the Alternative High School from Marshall to Albion caused transportation issues for Marshall Public School students - they are now bused directly from Marshall High School to the EAC.

For more information about The Opportunity School, contact Marshall Alternative High School Director, Bob Vaught at 517-629-7549 or bvaught@marshall.k12.mi.us. For more information about the Kellogg Community College Eastern Academic Center, contact Director Colin McCaleb at 517-630-8169 or mccaleb@kellogg.edu.

MOTT MIDDLE/EARLY COLLEGE

Genesee County

Now in its 21st year, Mott Middle/Early College (MMC), in Flint, Michigan, provides an alternative education option for students in the Genesee Intermediate School District (GISD). Among the first of its kind in the country, MMC started as an experiment to help students at risk for dropping out to stay in school. MMC has since graduated over 650 students and is a dropout prevention, general education high school with an “early college” design and requirement. Students attempt to overlap up to 60 Mott Community College dual enrollment credits with a five-year high school graduation plan, starting in their freshman year.

Mott Middle/Early College is devoted to breaking economic and social barriers for youth. With one of the nations’ highest unemployment rates, negative crime statistics, high infant mortality rates and failing schools, MMC is attempting to provide successful work and educational futures through the integration of high school, community college and workforce experience for their students. MMC has grown from 120 students in its first year (1991) to over 400 per year. Transitioning from a traditional middle college to an early college in 2002-3 school year, MMC has grown from 14 students dual enrolling and earning 68 college credits upon graduation to 348 students dual enrolling earning 1,595 college credits upon graduation. MMC has a goal of 70 percent of its graduating class earning at least 24 or more college credits. The graduating class of 2011 earned an average of 23.7 credits per student with an average of a 2.9 GPA in those courses.

The structure of the traditional school is a problem for many students – school hours, lack of personal connection, time on task, length of the semester, and health, family or learning issues can all lead to loss of credit. MMC has structured the school such that:

- All students commit to a 5 year high school graduation plan.
- The school year is divided into five marking periods that are approximately eight weeks in length.
- Students have the opportunity for a fresh start toward a successful future by the practice of wiping their 9th grade GPA clean.
- The school subscribes to the Mastery Learning concept that grades students with A, B, C, I (Incomplete) or N/C, (No Credit). Students who receive an Incomplete grade have four additional weeks to earn a passing grade. To replace a No Credit, students must successfully retake the class. This grading system assures that no grade lower than a 2.0 is ever awarded.
- The school's grading system is based on two principles: Grades are never used as punishment, and grades reflect cumulative learning.
- The school is research-driven and uses instruments that measure personal and academic growth. These instruments are given as pre- and post-assessments (post-assessments are required to graduate) to measure student growth over the duration of their attendance in the school, and to provide data to the school's ongoing research to identify best practices.
- The school assesses all students individually to determine their learning style and left/right/whole brain tendency. This helps them better understand how they think and learn, and assists teachers in designing and delivering appropriate curriculum and instructional approaches.
- Every staff member is a teacher, and every teacher serves as an advisor for a small group of students.

For more information about Mott Middle/Early College, please contact Chery Wagonlander, Ed.D, Principal, via e-mail cwagonla@geneseeisd.org or phone 810-232-8531.

EARLY COLLEGE OF MACOMB

Macomb County

Early College of Macomb (ECM) is a public, tuition-free, three-year early college program serving students throughout Macomb County. It represents an extraordinary partnership among the participating Macomb

County school districts, the Macomb Intermediate School District (MISD) and Macomb Community College (MCC). Early College of Macomb students attend high school classes in their home schools, as well as on MCC's campus, and engage in an exciting college preparatory, career-focused curriculum taught by both high school and college instructors. The ability to select extensive, fully-embedded dual enrollment courses related to the student's career pathway is a defining feature of each student's educational experience.

ECM provides another opportunity for Macomb County students to attend college and to acquire the tools for success in college through tutoring, mentoring and study skills instruction. Early College of Macomb students participate in an integrated sequence of high school and college courses during grades 11-13 with no out-of-pocket cost to students and their families for books, fees and tuition. They graduate with their high school diplomas having innovative career-focused experiences in a small school environment. They may earn up to 62 college credits required for an Associate's Degree or Technical Certificate. These credits also can be transferred to a four-year college program.

Students at the Early College of Macomb select an area of study identified in their Educational Development Plans (EDPs) that is connected to the six Career Pathways. MCC offers programs in many up-and-coming/emerging careers including, but not limited to:

- Animation Arts and Communication Pathway
- Business Management, Marketing and Technology Pathway
- Mechatronics Engineering/Manufacturing and Industrial Technology Pathway
- Medical Assistant Health Sciences Pathway
- Hotel Management Human Services Pathway
- Renewable Energy Natural Resources and Agriscience Pathway

ECM bridges the gap between K-12 and higher education and enrolls students who are ready to take on the challenges involved with a unique high school experience that includes college coursework. Students are eligible if they meet the following criteria: registered in one of the Macomb County public high schools housed within the participating districts and about to enter 11th grade; approval by their home high school; satisfactorily completed the Early College admission process, which includes MCC's placement testing and the MCC online early admission application; and submitted an application packet including the student's Educational Development Plan (EDP).

Student schedules are highly individualized to allow for extensive college coursework in each student's chosen career pathway. Many students opt to take coursework at non-traditional times including evening and weekend courses. In creating their academic schedules, students are guided by high school counselors and college advisors. Most students take high school classes in the morning, and their college classes are scheduled according to availability and personal commitments.

For more information about the Early College of Macomb, contact ECM Dean Susan Meyer via e-mail at smeyer@misd.net or phone 586-228-3437.

HOUGHTON LAKE COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Roscommon County

Houghton Lake Community Education (HLCE) was founded in 1987 and is an adult and alternative education school which offers enrichment classes for the community and have a childcare that is open to all of our students and to the general public. Alternative education is available for students who are between the ages of 15 and 19 and who have experienced a lack of success in the traditional school setting, but still have the desire to obtain their high school diploma. Consistent with our mission statement, students are provided vocational training and employability skills while completing their high school requirements. Vocational training focuses on computer skills. The hardware and software used is consistent with current business and industry standards.

Students 18 years and older may enroll in evening GED and/or ABE (Adult Basic Education) classes. Students attempting to get their GED, attend class 4 nights a week where they prepare for the five tests they must take to acquire their GED. Students whose reading and writing skills are below eighth grade level can enroll in ABE classes. ABE classes are offered 4 nights a week and students spend time building up their math and reading skills so they will be successful in passing the GED.

In addition, the school daycare that operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This daycare is available, free of charge, to all teen parents while they attend classes to earn their high school diploma or GED. The daycare is available to the public in order to fill the 24 slots available.

For more information about Houghton Lake Community Education program, contact Theresa McMunigtal at mcmunigt@hlcsk12.net or 989-422-6161 x2413.

WIDENING ADVANCEMENT FOR YOUTH – WASHTENAW

Washtenaw County

Widening Advancement for Youth (W-A-Y) -Washtenaw is a year-round voluntary educational program for 16-19 year old youth who have either dropped out or are falling behind in the traditional high school because of many issues, including health or behavioral problems that affect school attendance. Washtenaw County sees 650 students dropping out annually with even more students in jeopardy of not graduating within four years based on their age and number of credits earned.

The W-A-Y model was developed in 2007 after an extensive international search for effective methods of educational personalization for disenfranchised youth. The United Kingdom-based NotSchool model is a 100% virtual learning experience and services disengaged students who are reluctant to learn, have dropped out of school, pregnant or parenting, in care, those that are phobic, sick, or can no longer attend school due to traveling or exclusion.

Opened in 2010, W-A-Y Washtenaw is one of 11 W-A-Y programs in Michigan and Florida serving over 70 school districts. Now in their second year of students, W-A-Y Washtenaw currently enrolls 409 students (up from 233 in 2010), of whom 27 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch and over half identify as non-Caucasian. A third of the students enrolled in 2011 had previously dropped out of school and two-thirds were either recommended to the program because they were off-track to graduate within four years or have health issues that impact their ability to attend a traditional school. Of the 233 students enrolled in 2010, almost 200 completed the school year.

W-A-Y Washtenaw is a blended, project-based learning model allowing students (called researchers) access to learning 24-hours per day, 365 days per year. Students are assigned to a support team consisting of an online mentor and a team leader: both certified teachers with whom the researcher communicates every day. Additionally, students have ongoing communication with highly qualified subject matter experts. Each student is equipped with an iMac computer workstation and internet connectivity in their home, and must schedule time in the on-site learning lab a minimum of two days a week. Student projects and courses are individualized to meet their learning needs in order to achieve their high school diploma.

The program offers project-based on-line learning experiences. Students must access a technology center, at Stone School in Ann Arbor, a minimum of twice a week, and have additional face-to-face meetings with project managers and mentors, to ensure students remain engaged their learning. Students are responsible for their education and collaborate and negotiate meaning with peers and experts to broaden their understanding, to construct individual knowledge, and solve real-life problems. Students determine their pace and how they will accomplish their learning activities. Mentors and experts serve as facilitators of student learning rather than a dispenser of information. With their mentor, students develop standard-focused learning plans and projects.

Experts evaluate the student's progress and work each week based on the Michigan High School Graduation Requirements.

For more information about W-A-Y Washtenaw, please contact Monique Uzelac, Program Director, W-A-Y Washtenaw via e-mail muzelac@wash.k12.mi.us or phone 734-719-0321.

The Oakland Opportunity Academy

Oakland County

Oakland Opportunity Academy (OOA) offers students an alternative way to complete credits for their high school diploma. Built for the needs of students, OOA runs afternoon and evening hours, accommodates individual learning styles and pace, and fulfills the requirements for their district diploma. Student learning at OOA is a unique combination of online, direct instruction, and career focused opportunities. Each student has the opportunity to earn their credits in a variety of ways, learning in the style that works for them. Certified teachers and staff work closely to ensure all students find success.

OOA serves students enrolled in districts in the southwest quadrant of Oakland County, including Clarenceville, Farmington, Huron Valley, Novi, Walled Lake, and West Bloomfield. OOA has a unique schedule and calendar, built with the high school student in mind. Operating Monday - Thursday, 1:30 - 8:00pm, OOA students have their morning free for additional online work, jobs or just relaxing. Students receive personalized assistance, including tutorial sessions for basic skills as well as individualized projects for relevant learning. Courses are taught by certified teachers, assisted by Instructional Techs and tutors. Online curriculum is in place to allow a self-paced individualized learning, supported by real teachers, real projects and real applications of learning.

Students have the opportunity to complete high school in a warmly supportive academic program, designed to help them complete their core and elective requirements as defined by the home high school. OOA students retain enrollment in their home high school and are subject to all district requirements. Upon completion of their high school graduation requirements, they will receive their diploma and may participate in the graduation ceremonies from the home high school.

Local school districts utilize OOA in order to offer a place for students to complete their credits required for graduation in a setting that can accommodate their individual learning needs. The OOA afternoon and evening hours accommodate students with later starting hours. Flexible scheduling and additional tutors provide additional assistance for credit completion. Career Technical Education (CTE) classes offer students engaging and relevant hands-on learning for college and careers.

For more information about Oakland Opportunity Academy, please contact Marlana Krolicki, Ed. D, Principal, via e-mail Marlana.Krolicki@oakland.k12.mi.us or phone 248-668-5678.

If you would like to find out how your community can be profiled for your work in any arena of child and family services, contact Michigan's Children VP for Programs, Michele Corey at michele@michiganschildren.org or 517-485-3500