
National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION SINCE 1982

Henry Ford Early College
Dearborn, Michigan

Accelerating Student Pathways Through an Early College Partnership Video Transcript

Lisa Stevens, ELA Teacher: The Henry Ford Early College is a five-year program, and we are specifically geared for the health system. Our partners are the Henry Ford Health System in downtown Detroit, as well as Dearborn Public Schools and the Henry Ford College.

Majed Fadlallah, Principal: And the idea behind it is to complete both the high school diploma and an associate degree from the college. Get this, for free. The district pays for everything, tuition, fees, books. Our students go to the hospital once a week on Wednesdays, attend their consultations, they do their science lab, they listen to professionals because these are the health careers that they are interested to pursue.

Marva Brooks, Ph.D., R.N., Early College Program Coordinator, Henry Ford Health: The partnership works well for us because the, we have three partners, and everyone is invested in the student learning outcomes. So that's the primary goal of the partnerships, and no one loses sight of that when they come to the table. Students get to spend time in different careers, such as radiographer, surgical technologist, registered nurse, ophthalmic tech. We try to make it fit so that they get a wide variety of experiences, so they can make really informed decisions about the career that they would like to pursue.

Micah, 9th Grade Student: I'm really excited, because I want to go into the mental health field. And when I graduate here, I'll have my associate degree, and I'll have all of these transferrable credits. So, I'll be a little bit ahead of the game for whatever university I choose to go to. So, this is a different type of high school. It's not for everybody, but when you come here, you're really going to build your integrity and your time management skills and your work ethic that you're going to need in the workforce.

Laurie Smikowski, Science Teacher: We're trying to get kids ready for college. So sometimes, we have to bring that college level down to them. So, you have to get very creative, you have to scaffold, you have to model. We have to teach them how to be a college student, but then how to study, how to learn like a college student.

Janine Hussein, M.P.H., Epidemiologist, Henry Ford Early College Graduate: The teachers at early college are really there to support you. And I really was really fond of that, after school, activities, and the availabilities that they had. And they would actually help me excel in my classes, because they were always available and open onto meeting and, and no matter what question I had or if I needed more, they were always there.

Laurie Smikowski: When the kids come to campus and they see the traditional college students on campus, I think they get that sense of, "Hey, I'm on a college campus, I'm learning how to be a college student," and I think that kind of empowers them a little bit. So, it makes them want to do better and it makes them want to achieve.

Ali Lakhani, Physical Therapist Assistant, Henry Ford Early College Graduate: As a, 14, 15, 16-year-old sitting in a classroom with people in their 50s and other college students who are going through it just as well as you are. It was definitely eye opening and a sense of okay, well this is what I want to do with my life and knowing that you're working towards a goal and having all the resources available to achieve that goal.

I remember doing surgical technology rotations. So, it was a group of three and we were actually going in and out of OR's and at the age of 14, 15, we were standing in front of an open brain, and I mean what other school allows you to do something like that? So, it was a pretty memorable experience.

Majed Fadlallah: Ten years ago, we were very small, and we had challenges and so I realized, the first thing I wanted to do is allow my teachers to do what they're best at, which was teach the students. So, I think, my first order of business was to remove all the barriers, that were preventing my teachers from doing the best they are. And they delivered.

If another community wanted to do this, my advice for them is, go for it. Start establishing the relationship. Start making those phone calls. Go visit the partners that you seek. If you don't ask, you won't know what their answer is going to be. They're out there, they just need someone to come up and approach them. So, do it!

Glenn Maleyko, Dearborn Public Schools Superintendent: It really does take an entire community to have a successful Blue Ribbon School program from the teachers, to administration, to the parents, and the students. And, the reason we're so happy when we get the award is because then we know that our students are really benefiting and they're doing well in our educational programs.

Russell A. Kavalhuna, President, Henry Ford Early College: One part of this program that I really enjoy is graduation. These students have spent five years on our campus in their high school and in college. And at their graduation, it's such a pride point for me to say, "You're on your way to a career", and you have in some instances 60 and 90 credits at no cost, which if you obtained in another institution, you would have paid \$20, \$30,000 dollars, and the sky is the limit going forward for you, with no debt and real skills.