

Michigan

School district estimates Middle College graduates saved \$723K

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GRAND RAPIDS, MI - The Kenowa Hills Middle College students who graduated in May from Davenport University with an associate's degree - as well as a high-school diploma - saved \$723,533 in college expenses, according to the school board.

The 21 students earned degrees in business, technology and health. This is the second consecutive group of Kenowa Hills students to attend a fifth year of school to earn the degree.

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A handful of districts in Kent and Ottawa counties have or will launch similar programs in the fall. As a result of their community college or university partnerships, there is no cost to the student, providing a savings for families. State per-pupil funding covers the tuition cost.

"The Middle College program affords our students the opportunity to pursue interests in a planned undergraduate program while parents avoid the debt associated with the cost of attending college," said Kenowa Hills Superintendent Gerald Hopkins. "Middle College is a win-win-win-win for students, parents, Kenowa Hills and Davenport University."

Tamera Powers, director of finance and human resources for Kenowa Hills, said the district arrived at the total savings figure by calculating the number of credits the students were enrolled in and multiplying that by the cost per credit for the years they were enrolled.

On average, she said \$33,085 was saved per Kenowa Hills student.

Shiane Crow, who received an Associate of Applied Science in Medical Assisting last spring, told MLive, "I have no student debt and I am halfway to my bachelor's degree. I don't know too many people who can say that."

2016 Middle College graduate Lexi Dengate said because of the program, she's built a career, confidence, and couldn't be happier with her decision to join the program.

Students take a blend of high school and college courses for three years in grades 11 to 13.

The programs are gaining popularity in the state. More than two dozen new early/middle college programs and schools opened this school year in Michigan, including in Cedar Springs in partnership with Grand Rapids Community College.

GRCC graduates its first Middle College students in April from Wyoming High School.

Dan Clark, GRCC's dean of academic outreach, said of the 29 students who were eligible for commencement, 25 indicated plans to continue at a four-year college or university.

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GRCC also will launch programs this fall with Grand Rapids Public Schools' Ottawa Hills High School and the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District.

The program with the OAISD, which will start with nine seniors, is unique in that it integrates a corporate partner, Herman Miller, so students can participate in internships while earning a professional industry certification.

In their fifth year, the Careerline Tech Center students will continue their work at Herman Miller for up to 20 hours per week and attend GRCC classes for up to 12 hours per week. Successful students will graduate with a high school diploma, an Industrial Maintenance Certificate, and an official transcript with up to 30 free transferable college credits.

"This is a win-win partnership," GRCC President Steven Ender said May 19 at the official announcement. "It provides access to 21st century work force skills and college credits for students at no cost while also giving them exposure to the workplace."

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Coopersville Public Schools has its partnership with Muskegon Community College.

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