

GPS program gives students an early start to college

Marion City Schools is giving incoming Harding High School students a chance to have an early start when it comes to college.

Graduate Pathways to Success is a program that lets high school students experience college for free. They can take college classes starting their ninth grade year.

Ohio's College Credit Plus program lets any college-ready student in middle and high school take college classes. The difference with Graduate Pathways to Success, an early college program, is that students receive extra coaching and support along the way.

They start out taking a summer course before their ninth grade year that prepares them to take classes at Marion Technical College. They take two courses their ninth grade year and four their 10th grade year, then spend the majority of their 11th and 12th grade years at Marion Technical College.

Marion City Schools and Marion Technical College provide additional support for students enrolled in the program. Any student whose grade point average for a high school or college class falls below 75 percent receives additional help after school.

Students admitted into Graduate Pathways to Success, also known as GPS, get help choosing the right courses that lead to both high school and college credits.

Students can earn either an associate of arts or associate of technical studies degree. Starting with the 2017-18 school year, they will also be able to earn a medical assisting certificate. That's two years' worth of college classes for free.

"The GPS program is an accomplishment in life that pushes me to my dreams earlier," said Jaden Smith, a Harding student enrolled in the program. "After high school, I can use my associate's degree in college to start me off."

Jaden wanted to be in the program to experience the college lifestyle. That included adapting to each teacher and teaching style.

Graduate Pathways to Success is a partnership between Marion City Schools and Marion Technical College. Grant Middle School works with the Marion City Schools Office of College and Career Success to recommend students who may be college ready. The screening process includes an interview with students and parents/guardians.

For more information on the Graduate Pathways for Success program, call the Office of College and Career Success at 740-223-4413.