

Dexter Early Middle College Graduates First Cohort of Twelve Students



On Wednesday, April 26th, twelve students graduated from the Dexter Early Middle College program, the first group to complete the five-year program since its inception in 2020.

Dexter Community Schools offers several pathways for 9th-12th grade students to earn college credits while they are still in high school, two of which partner with Washtenaw Community College (WCC): Dual Enrollment and the Dexter Early Middle College (DEMC). Dual Enrollment students can take up to ten postsecondary classes at WCC during their high school career. The Dexter Early Middle College is a five-year, dual-credit program designed to allow a student to earn either an associate degree, up to sixty transferable college credits, a professional certification, or a Michigan Early Middle College Association (MEMCA) technical certificate.

The DEMC was founded in 2020. The twelve students that make up this first cohort of DEMC graduates were invited to join the program right before the COVID-19 pandemic closed down schools. These students have been integral in providing constructive feedback to DEMC Head

of School Abby Holland and DEMC Success Coach Erica Ehinger as they develop processes to support students on this new curricular pathway.

There are many benefits and challenges of being a DEMC student. Managing college courses while still in high school requires dedication; however, with this level of responsibility come advantages that will help shape students' character and better prepare them for the real world. DHS teachers, counselors, and administrators identify students who are good candidates for this program and invite them to informational meetings their sophomore year.

Each school year, DHS students and their families are encouraged to attend a Curriculum Night where administrators describe the various learning pathways available. If a student is interested in the DEMC program they can apply in 10th grade, visit WCC on an in-school field trip, and interview for placement in the program. If accepted, they are enrolled and invited to join the Summer Bridge preparatory program. This mandatory summer program held at WCC focuses on college readiness skills such as reading, writing, math, and soft skills. Transportation is provided.

While DHS juniors, DEMC students take one to two WCC classes each semester, attend regular cohort meetings, and complete service hours. As a DHS senior, students take two to four WCC classes each semester, attend regular cohort meetings, complete service hours, and participate in traditional senior activities. DEMC students walk with their class at commencement at the end of their 12th grade year. However, they will not officially graduate or receive their diploma until they successfully complete their 5th year.

DEMC students take all of their 5th year classes through Washtenaw Community College (WCC). Therefore, 5th year students' day-to-day lives look and feel like those of any first-year WCC student, with a few exceptions. Tuition, books, and daytime transportation to/from campus are provided by Dexter Community Schools. Also, 5th year students are expected to maintain regular contact with DEMC staff, attend regular cohort meetings and events with DEMC staff and students, take at least 12 credits each semester, and fulfill any other course selection/scheduling requirements that apply. At the end of the year, students and their families are invited to a Celebration Banquet, where they receive their DHS diploma and degree, certificate, or credit hours.

Dexter Early Middle College provides many support options to ensure high school students thrive in a college setting. This support includes tutoring, counseling and guidance from a District coach and DEMC teachers who want students to succeed in both their high school and college coursework. There is no cost to students or their families to become a DEMC student. Tuition, fees, and textbook costs are paid for by Dexter Early Middle College.

If you would like to learn more about the Dexter Early Middle College, contact DEMC Head of School Abby Holland at holland@dexterschools.org, DEMC Success Coach Erica Ehinger at ehingere@dexterschools.org or speak with your DHS counselor.