



# DUAL CREDIT

## STUDENTS ARE WORKFORCE READY IN STARK COUNTY

BY DAVID KAMINSKI

Ten years ago, Stark County educational leaders saw a problem. The world required more and more educated workers, and Stark County's post-high school educational level was low. Something had to be done.

Actually, several things were done. And many of them revolve around dual credit, a set of varied opportunities that allow high school students to take college-level courses and earn college credit.

With the support of business leaders, Stark County's public high schools, the county Educational Service Center, the privately funded Stark Education Partnership, and the county's colleges and universities began to knit together a system of dual-credit opportunities.

Dual credit produces many good outcomes. It shows students, and their parents, that they are capable of college work. It offers this opportunity for little to no expense to the student.

And it can dramatically reduce the cost of college for students.

Early on, dual credit created a few concerns, but none of them materialized, according to Dr. Adrienne

from taking career tech courses, and it did not."

As The Repository reported earlier this year, less than half of the students graduating from Stark County high

schools in 2001 attended college. Now 63 percent pursue higher education. In large part, dual-credit programs stimulated students to realize college was a real possibility in their future.

According to data compiled by the Stark Education Partnership, Stark County

has the second highest dual-credit enrollment of any county in Ohio. Last year, more than 1,500 students took advantage of the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school. Another 560 high school students enrolled in courses on college campuses.

Two-year associate degrees, which can lead to well-paid technical occupations, are on the rise. The county's two major cities, Canton and Massillon, and the county overall exceed state and national averages on associate degree attainment.



“With a 3 percent gain since 2000, today 21 percent of Stark County residents have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher,” O’Neill said.

O’Neill, president of the Stark Educational Partnership. “People thought dual credit would deter students from taking Advanced Placement courses, and it did not. People thought it would deter students



256 students have graduated from high school under the Early College program, and 144 of them earned a two-year associate degree from Stark State during that time.

And associate degrees can be bridged into four-year bachelor's degrees.

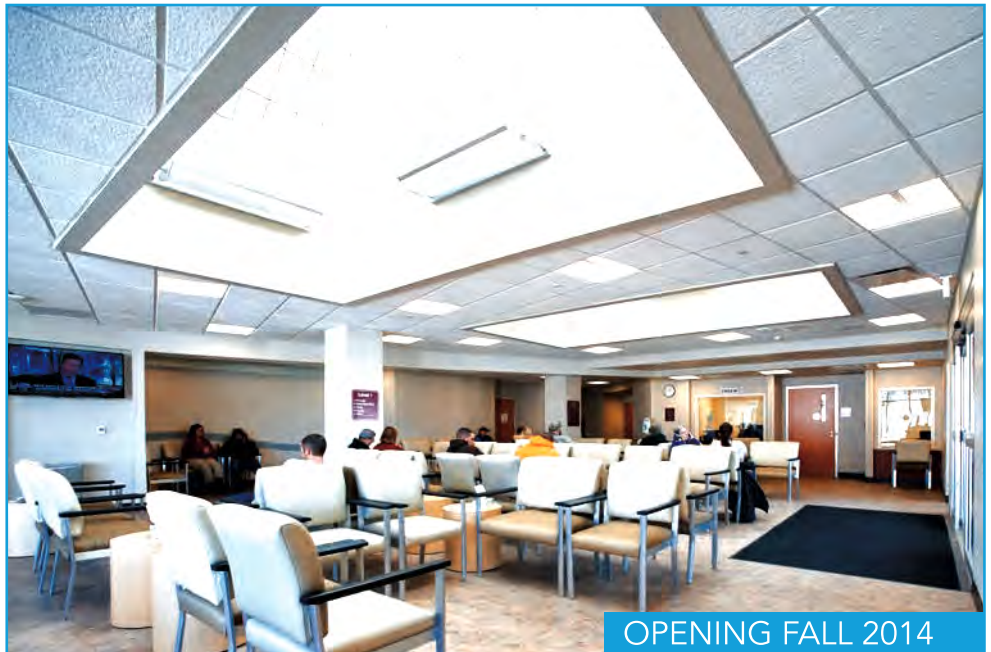
"With a 3 percent gain since 2000, today 21 percent of Stark County residents have earned a bachelor's degree or higher," O'Neill said.

In addition to dual credit, Canton established Early College High School in 2005 on the Timken Senior High campus in downtown Canton. Partners were the Canton City School District, Stark State College and the Stark Educational Partnership. It is one of the most successful early college high schools in the country.

According to Canton City Schools, 256 students have graduated from high school under the Early College program, and 144 of them earned a two-year associate degree from Stark State during that time. One hundred percent of the students earned at least one semester of college credit.

From the first graduating class, some Early College graduates of Stark State have gone to four-year colleges and universities and have started as juniors, saving two entire years of time and money.

All this has led to "a huge change in expectations" for students and their parents, O'Neill said. And it has created a community in which young people are increasingly workforce-ready. ■



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