



What the students say

By David Wallace
C & G Staff Writer

WEST BLOOMFIELD — Students enrolled in Oakland Early College know they sacrifice some positive aspects of traditional education, but feel confident that the opportunities are worth the sacrifice.

Some of that sacrifice kicked in right away, as students hit the Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus Aug. 28-29 for orientation while their peers enjoyed the last few days of summer vacation. Students in the program come from across Oakland County, so just about everyone this year is the new kid in school.

And while Oakland Early College students can play sports at West Bloomfield High School, college schedules may make that unrealistic.

“They’re giving up a lot, but the opportunity is worth it for them,” said Gary Weisserman, the head of Oakland Early College.

Brianna Adkins, a junior from South Lyon, essentially spoke on the same theme.

“I mean, it’s a little disappointing to think that you’re not going to graduate with the class that you’ve been with, and that you’re not going to have a prom, but at the same time, you’re gaining so much more by coming here,” said Adkins.

They might have a prom, if they decide that a prom is something they want. On Fridays, students in the program will have meetings to decide such issues.

“We’re going to let the kids have a lot of input, because that’s the best way to get the participation, is that they tell us what they want to do and then we help make it happen,” said Michelle Campbell, counselor and social worker at Oakland Early College.

Eric Tidwell, a junior, accepts that he won’t play sports.

“Me being an extreme sports fan, especially in football and basketball — I played sports previously — I know that this is a sacrifice I have to make regarding my education. And it’s not saying that I can’t play sports on the weekends or after school, but I can’t play it competitively right now,” said Tidwell.

What have the students excited are the opportunities they have to pursue something they want.

“I found out about Oakland Early College over the Web, and when I looked at it, it sounded interesting. It sounded like a new opportunity for me to grow as a student and as a person,” said Tidwell.

“My goal is to one day become a computer-design architect,” he said.

To that end, one of the college courses on his schedule is basic design, a course he said will help him with computer-aided drafting.

Adkins said she struggled in the ninth-grade, and one of her mom’s friends recognized Oakland Early College as a good opportunity.

“And on top of that, they’re taking away a lot of art and theater classes in normal high schools, and here they have so much stuff like that, and that’s kind of my field I want to go into,” said Adkins.

She said she’s already taken all of the art classes her old school offered.

Adkins figures the high school and college program will give her a leg up.

“There’s not many opportunities where you can get a college education and a high school (education) at the same time, which makes it really cool,” said Adkins.

Alex Aleman and her parents decided she would leave her private school for Oakland Early College.

“We both agreed on it. I want to become, like, (a doctor) or a lawyer or something like that,

Ads by Google

[High School Sports](#)

High School Sports Profiles and Sports Performance Info.

www.stack.com

[Oakland Community College](#)

Request information from top online schools. Financial aid available.

www.EducationDegreeSource.com

[International friendship](#)

Promote it in your school and community.

Welcome an exchange student

www.pax.org

[Get College Information](#)

Flexible Hours, Distance Learning Wide Range Of Degree Programs

Phoenix.edu

[Online College Degrees](#)

View & Enroll In Online University Degree Courses. Sign Up Now!

College.Education-Advancement.co

so we figured this would be a really good opportunity,” said Aleman.

“I think it’s going to be, like, hard, but I’m definitely excited for it. I’m pumped up to do this, so I think I have the drive to succeed,” she said.

The students seem confident that despite coming from different schools and backgrounds, they will find a way to mesh. While one might think an early college program would cater only to elite students, that’s not the case.

“A lot of our kids have a ton of promise, but haven’t found their niche. And for me, the growth that they experience is going to matter a lot,” said Weisserman, who interviewed every student for the program.

“We have students that socially struggled; we have students that academically struggled; and we have students that academically succeeded. So it’s a nice mix of students that want an opportunity,” said Campbell.

They might not be academically elite, “but it’s highly motivated students,” said Joey Spano, the West Bloomfield School District community relations director.

The students admitted to some trepidation about the new school and tackling college courses, but they also trust the program.

“I feel that it’s going to be challenging, but the Oakland Early College staff, they made good decisions as to students who could handle it. And we have a lot of other students here who can help us along the way,” said Tidwell.

You can reach Staff Writer David Wallace at dwallace@candgnews.com or at (586) 498-1053.

Copyright © 2008 C & G Publishing
Advertiser Times • Birmingham-Bloomfield Eagle • Eastsider • Farmington Press • Fraser-Clinton Chronicle •
Grosse Pointe Times • Journal • Macomb Chronicle • Madison-Park News • Rochester Post • Royal Oak Review •
St. Clair Shores Sentinel • Shelby-Utica News • Southfield Sun • Sterling Heights Sentry •
Troy Times • Warren Weekly • West Bloomfield Beacon • Woodward Talk