



Meet Myra James-Fernandez Future Pediatrician



Myra James-Fernandez, 14, dreams of becoming a pediatrician, and the SuccessBound approach in Marion is helping her get a jump-start on that dream.

Marion City Schools' early college high school model allows students like Myra to take advantage of College Credit Plus to earn an associate degree in her career field of interest before graduating high school. Beginning in ninth grade, students can take classes at Marion Technical College for free and earn college credits toward associate degrees. Additionally, the district's partnership with OhioHealth Marion General Hospital [include link to partnership] will help Myra earn a medical assisting certificate, so she can get started in her field as she continues her education.

"I think this will prepare me to be responsible later in life," Myra said. She believes the program is good for all students. "It would get them ahead, and there's no cost to it. It's an advantage to them."



Myra is just one of many students benefitting from the district's effort to work with community and business partners to prepare students for college and careers. Only 8 percent of Marion residents have bachelor's degrees, so

the school built programming to help students experience the rigor of college and earn the certifications they need for high-demand jobs. They also can explore various careers and pathways before they commit. Students experience jobs at the hospital and see what doors

education and various credentials will open. While they are attending college or technical schools, they earn valuable skills to secure jobs that pay them more than minimum wage, so they can offset college debt costs or work in the field before pursuing additional education or industry-recognized credentials. Ohio ranks 16 in student loan debt for public colleges and universities. About 65 percent of Ohio's graduates borrow money, and the average debt load was nearly \$30,000. The industry-recognized credentials they earn also can provide students with a backup plan.

Myra's mother, Santos Fernandez, thinks the program is very beneficial for her daughter, and she's proud that Myra is taking steps to achieve her dreams. "She says her goal in life is to see me reach my goal of becoming a pediatrician," said Myra as she translated her mother's comments from Spanish.

