

## High schoolers skip to college

*More getting jump on higher learning*

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Robert Karl, a sophomore at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, doesn't like to talk about grades with his buddies.

In the past year, Karl has earned a 3.8 grade average with a full-year class load of 31 semester hours. Included were physics, trigonometry and biology.

But dwelling on the fact he's on the dean's list sounds like bragging, Karl said. Instead of talking about his studies, he'd rather engage in street hockey on roller blades, drive his dad's car or play trumpet.

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PAULINE LUBENS/Detroit Free Press

Fifteen-year-old Robert Karl — "the Doogie Howser of Livonia" — just graduated from high school but is already a sophomore in college.

## More high schoolers get jump on college

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Karl is 15.

He is among a growing number of students who are getting a taste of college life while they're still in high school.

Karl, who lives in Livonia, graduated a couple weeks ago from New Life Christian Academy in Westland, a private school that permits students to advance at their own pace. During his senior year, Karl attended Schoolcraft full time.

"He's the Doogie Howser of Livonia," Schoolcraft official Sandra Florek said of Karl, who plans a career in the medical field.

While Karl's situation is rare, thousands of Michigan high school students completed at least one college course during the 1992-93 school year, state education consultant Mary Bailey-Hengesh said Monday.

Easing young students into college courses is a hot topic facing the state Board of Education. Among the issues: When is a student socially ready for college? And should tax dollars be used to pay for college credits for high school students?

For Karl, the transition was easy.

"I feel like I'm 17 or 18," he said. "No one knows how old I am unless they ask. When that happens, their mouth drops open . . . some people ask

**"No one knows how old I am unless they ask. When that happens, their mouth drops open . . . some people ask me for proof. I show them my driver's permit."**

**ROBERT KARL, who is already a college sophomore at 15.**

me for proof. I show them my driver's permit," he said with a laugh.

Karl played trumpet for the Livonia Youth Philharmonic for 3½ years and performed in the All-State Orchestra at Interlochen during the summers of 1990-91. He has won a scholarship to the University of Michigan, where his sister, Caroline, is a senior. She's 19 and also took college classes while at New Life.

The most popular way for high school students to experience college-level class work is in advanced placement courses in subjects including math, sciences and languages. Students take the course at their high schools and can receive college credit, depending on college policy.

In the 1991-92 school year, 11,129 state students took an advanced class. That was 500 more than in 1991.

Public high school seniors who attend classes at a college are entitled to

be reimbursed \$50 a credit hour from their districts, under state law. The student can take one college course per semester.

When this dual enrollment program began early last year, 191 students participated. This year, thousands have taken advantage of the tuition break, but the exact numbers have not yet been compiled, Bailey-Hengesh said.

Some school officials question whether districts should be paying for students' college education without considering financial need.

The state school board is looking at a proposal that would allow high school-age students to move on to college as soon as they pass a proficiency test and meet graduation requirements. For some, that could come as soon as the 10th grade.

Whether a student moves on to college now is up to the college and the

school district.

"If they've outgrown the high-school curriculum, it might be best to move them on," Bailey-Hengesh said.

But school districts must be careful to avoid pushing students out of high school prematurely, according to educators.

Karl said it was time for him to move on. So far, only one thing has interfered with his studies — hockey.

"It's exciting, it's fast, it's physical," he said. His bedroom features a poster of Red Wing Steve Yzerman near a Chicago White Sox batting helmet that rests atop a computer.

Karl said he occasionally watches a hockey game on television before finishing homework.

His parents, Julius and Yvonne Karl, aren't worried that college courses will prove too taxing. Nor do they care that their son has lots of older friends.

"He's not a nerd," laughed Julius Karl.