



John P. Cleary | The Herald Bulletin

Madison-Grant senior Jon Pyle works on his computer project as he works toward earning certification in Photoshop through a grant the school has received to better prepare students for their post-secondary experiences.

Preparing for the future

Madison-Grant receives \$250,000 state grant to help students plan their post-graduation lives

REBECCA R. BIBBS
THE HERALD BULLETIN

FAIRMOUNT — Blake Westerfield, 16, remembers the moment he became interested in technology.

“All the way back in seventh grade, I learned about robotics, and I said sign me up,” he said.

That love has been nurtured throughout the junior’s time at Madison-Grant Jr.-Sr. High

School with specialized classes in infomatics and networking, an internship for a period each day with the district’s tech staff, and paid internships with outside businesses.

As a result, Westerfield is certain he will want to pursue a career in technology once he graduates.

“It really helped me realize I am

See **FUTURE** on A2

FUTURE

CONTINUED FROM A1

good at things, but it helped me realize I want to go into online, maybe online security.”

Officials with Madison-Grant United Schools hope other students will leave with a similar kind of knowledge and certainty about their chosen careers.

Toward that effort, the district, like most others throughout the state, is fine-tuning its career pathways.

An Indiana Employability Standards Innovation & Implementation Grant valued at more than \$250,000 from the Indiana Department of Education, should go a long way toward meeting that goal, said Madison-Grant’s superintendent Scott Deetz.

“Our counseling team, led by career specialist Gwen Hodson, is incredibly good at navigating individualized pathways for our students,” he said. “Thanks in part to our small size, we can craft plans to meet each student’s goals.”

That starts with meetings and industry visits in the seventh grade, the critical year when Westerfield was introduced to his vocational possibilities, Deetz said.

Students are ushered through individualized programs that prepare them for post-secondary education through College Core, dual credits and advanced placement or the workforce with vocational training that leads to industry-recognized certifications, he said.

“We know how to save the most money for our families, while at the same time putting our students in the best possible place to take advantage of all the partnerships out there.”

The grant money will be used to realign the curriculum, expand existing programs and help teachers pay for classes and test-

ing required to receive the advanced certifications they need to teach specialized courses. Money also will be used to pay for student certifications and gas money to get back and forth to internships.

“We’re really excited to leverage this grant to expand that even further,” he said. “This grant allow Madison-Grant to solidify and expand on the infrastructure already in place.”

Career specialist Gwen Hodson, formerly a grade 10 to 12 counselor at the high school, said she is working with the teachers to determine the best way forward in developing the programs.

“It dovetails very nicely with what Hinds is doing and our partnership with Ivy Tech,” she said. Madison-Grant students have an option of taking vocational classes at Elwood Community Schools’ Hinds Career Center.

Like Westerfield, seniors Jon Pyle, 17, and Chloe Putnam, 18, already have taken advantage of the pathways Madison-Grant has to offer.

Pyle, who is working on a PhotoShop certification, is immersed in artistic pursuits.

“Here at Madison-Grant, we have some of the best art classes offered,” he said. “My goal is to become an architect. I would like to go to Ball State.”

Putnam is preparing for a future as a registered nurse through medical assistant training at Madison-Grant.

“It will give me an idea on what I will expect going in,” she said.

Having the certification and possibly starting a medical career as an assistant also has the potential as a stepping stone in another way.

“I can use that job to pay for my college.”

Follow **Rebecca R. Bibbs** on Twitter at @RebeccaB_THB, or call 765-640-4883.