

EARLY COLLEGE EXPANSION

PROPELLING STUDENTS TO POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS,
AT A SCHOOL NEAR YOU

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

INTRODUCTION: BEATING THE ODDS FOR LOW-INCOME YOUTH

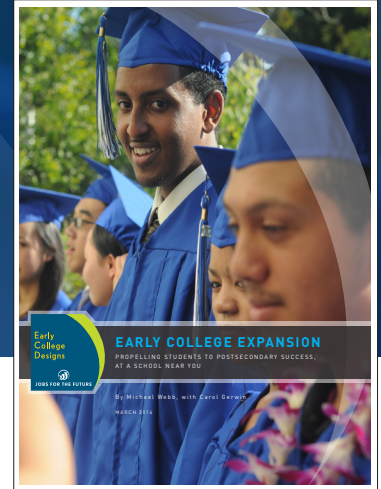
Early college schools are succeeding at our nation's most daunting educational challenge—propelling students from underserved backgrounds to graduate high school and earn postsecondary degrees. These schools combine high school and college in rigorous, yet supportive environments that embrace acceleration over remediation. Their “college for all” culture helps to motivate students from backgrounds underrepresented in higher education to earn an Associate's degree or significant college credit by high school graduation—at no cost to their families. Over the past decade, early colleges have produced dramatic results, beating typical outcomes for the low-income youth, first-generation college goers, and students of color they were designed to serve.

Jobs for the Future and our partners have created or redesigned 280 early colleges, currently serving more than 80,000 students. Today, we are building on a decade of success to spread Early College Designs to 56 additional schools—and more than 50,000 additional young people—through local, state, federal, and corporate initiatives.

A DECADE OF SUCCESS

As national coordinator of the Early College High School Initiative launched by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2002, JFF helped shape and spread common principles of early college to new school developers. JFF was also the designated data collector and developed a Student Information System to track student progress in early college and beyond.

The most recent data, based on outcomes for thousands of students who attended about 100 representative early college high schools, demonstrate the model's success.ⁱ Early college students graduate high school, earn college degrees



or substantial college credit in high school, enter college, and persist in college at rates that surpass students nationwide:

- > Early college students are far more likely to graduate high school:
 - » **90%** of early college students receive a diploma vs. **78%** of students nationally.ⁱⁱ
- > Early college students are far more likely to earn a college degree by high school graduation:
 - » **30%** of early college students earn an Associate's degree or other credential along with their diploma vs. very few students nationally.ⁱⁱⁱ
- > Early college students are far more likely to earn substantial college credit in high school:
 - » **94%** of early college students earn college credit in high school vs. about **10%** of students nationally.^{iv}
- > Early college students are far more likely to enroll in college immediately after high school:
 - » **71%** of early college graduates enroll in college the semester following graduation vs. **54%** of low-income graduates nationally.^v
- > Early college students are far more likely to return to college for a second year—an important early indicator of their likelihood of college completion:
 - » **86%** of early college graduates who enroll in college persist for a second year vs. **72%** of college students nationally.^{vi}

These efforts matter—now more than ever. Individually, a postsecondary credential is increasingly a prerequisite for economic well-being. Collectively, our economy and democracy depend on a well-educated citizenry. But millions of young

people graduate high school unprepared for college or career success, and struggle to become self-sufficient adults who can support a family,^{vii} contribute to the economy, and participate effectively in our democracy. Only 21 percent of entering U.S. high school students graduate on time, enter college immediately, and earn a postsecondary degree within 150 percent of the standard program completion time.^{viii}

The exceptional outcomes of early college students are especially striking given that most are youth who typically fall through the cracks of America's public K-12 schools and our postsecondary education system. About 73 percent are students of color; 61 percent are from low-income families; and 56 percent are the first in their immediate families to attend college.^{ix}

DESIGNING FOR SUCCESS

To what do early colleges owe their success with traditionally underserved students?

Educators who design and operate early college schools often say that the most important feature is a sincere belief that every child can learn—and achieve college readiness. Early college leaders create and foster a “college for all” culture, ensuring that staff encourage each student to develop a college-going identity and to believe that a college education is attainable. Regardless of past achievement, all students are on a college-prep track, and teachers use proven strategies to help them progress academically and socially.

SCHOOLS IMMERSE STUDENTS IN A COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

The most concrete way that many early college schools introduce and gradually expose students to more and more of the college experience is their location on or near a college campus. Each school is a partnership between a school district and a nearby postsecondary institution. Students start to get a feel for college life from the first day they step on campus—using the college library, going to the gym, and joining college clubs. By the time they begin to take college classes, they are already used to the campus culture and layout. This helps them feel more comfortable in the challenging academic and social environment of a college classroom. Early college schools that are physically separated from their postsecondary partner use other strategies to connect students to the college environment, such as courses taught or co-taught by college faculty, summer bridge-to-college programs, visits to campus, use of mentors and tutors who are college students, and distance learning.

TEACHERS PERSONALIZE INSTRUCTION TO ENGAGE ALL

Early college schools prepare students for success in college courses that frequently bear dual credit, and incorporate an aligned secondary-postsecondary curriculum that also meets high school graduation requirements. Teachers strive to personalize instruction and make lessons engaging and relevant to all students. Early college schools typically incorporate strategies that have been validated through research and practice, including working in small groups of peers and doing project-based and inquiry-based learning. Partnerships with local businesses, including regional offices of major corporations, sometimes offer internships or mentorships in the areas of students' career interests.

SUPPORTS BOOST ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, COLLEGE READINESS

Just as important to academic success are the intensive support services that early college schools provide to all of their students. Many students have the opportunity for tutoring, frequent advising, taking high school classes that parallel college courses for extra instruction, and taking college classes with a cohort of early college students, who often can help one another. Early college schools also incorporate a variety of strategies specifically intended to develop college readiness, such as AVID, a system that helps students develop the discipline, routines, and organization required to be successful. Other ways early college students build “college knowledge” include participating in small seminars and advisories, sometimes with the same teacher and students each year. Classes cover topics such as applying for college admission, securing financial aid, finding academic support, and learning how to use campus resources.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

JFF and partners in the early college movement are building on the success of the Early College High School Initiative and spreading Early College Designs around the country. The expansion includes early college schools, early college STEM schools, some of the country's first early college districts, and designs that integrate career pathways, reengage out-of-school youth, and support large groups of English language learners.

FEDERAL INNOVATION GRANTS SPUR EXPANSION IN COLORADO, CONNECTICUT, MICHIGAN, TEXAS

The U.S. Department of Education has endorsed Early College Designs and boosted expansion plans with competitive grants totaling \$27 million from the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund. The Department praised early college schools as “an innovative model with a proven record of improving student outcomes and closing achievement gaps for high-need students.”^x The first award—for \$15 million—will expand Early College Designs in Denver and two areas of the Lower Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. These regions represent the nation’s changing demographics—both are fast-growing with large populations of low-income and minority youth—and local districts have often struggled to adequately serve high-need students. The partnership will address the challenges of large English language learner populations in all three districts—34 percent in Denver, 41 percent in Pharr-San Juan-Alamo, and 33 percent in Brownsville.^{xi} By scaling up early college efforts in these regions, and making them districtwide school improvement strategies, the partnership will create exemplars for future expansion by districts elsewhere with similar demographic trends.

JFF is also a partner on a separate \$12 million Investing in Innovation grant to increase enrollment of high-need students in STEM disciplines utilizing Early College Designs. The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools & Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University is leading the initiative, which involves the Bridgeport Public Schools in Connecticut and four districts in Michigan. In addition to serving 20,000 students in 34 schools, the goal is to create a blueprint for STEM and early college programs for other school systems.

CHICAGO BUILDS STEM SCHOOLS WITH CAREER PATHWAYS

The early college model was a major building block in the development of P-TECH, Pathways in Technology Early College High School, which has inspired accolades and national attention, including a visit from President Obama. This five-year school—a partnership between IBM, the City University of New York, and the New York City Department of Education—provides STEM pathways that enable students to gain the skills, experiences, practical training, and an Associate’s degree upon graduation leading to high-demand jobs.

With JFF’s assistance, Chicago Public Schools is adopting these same strategies to raise college and career success, working with City Colleges of Chicago and five major U.S. companies—

Cisco, IBM, Microsoft, Motorola, and Verizon Wireless. JFF is helping the district to transform five existing public schools to STEM early college schools. Each school will have career pathways related to the field of information technology.

DAYTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS LAUNCHES EARLY COLLEGE DISTRICT

In Dayton, Ohio, JFF is working with the public school district and Sinclair Community College to transform one of the city’s underperforming high schools into an early college. Dunbar Early College High School officially opened its doors to more than 500 students in August 2013 and became the first early college in Dayton Public Schools. Approximately two dozen 11th- and 12th-graders have already enrolled in a college-level English course. This number will expand as more students become eligible to take college courses.

The goal is to enable every high school student in the district to receive a minimum of 12 transferable college credits and develop a clear path to postsecondary education and a career. Dunbar will serve as a model for redesigning all of Dayton’s high schools to incorporate early college. District leaders are seeking other postsecondary partnerships to help with the expansion, including Central State University, a historically black college, as well as several business partners, including some in the medical community.

CONCLUSION

Across the country, states and school districts are increasingly viewing Early College Designs as a strategy for accelerating the academic and personal development of a wide range of students in a variety of settings, including large comprehensive high schools and entire districts.

Early College Designs can be particularly valuable for the many school districts implementing the Common Core State Standards. Adopted by almost every state, the standards require schools to improve teaching and learning in ways that encourage all students to master high-level problem solving and gain a deep understanding of subject matter, in order to prepare them for college and careers.

As early college is scaled and adapted, further research will examine the impact of variations in design. What is evident today is that early college represents a potent new paradigm for blending secondary and postsecondary education to lead to improved career and life opportunities for thousands of students.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Much of the information in *Early College Expansion* comes from the Early College High School Initiative Student Information System (SIS), which includes demographic, transcript, assessment, and other information for more than 100 early college schools.

ⁱⁱ The early college graduation rate is compiled from State Education Agency public data and includes 88% of schools with graduates. The national overall averaged freshman graduate rate (AFGR) for 2009-10, the most recent year for which there is data, was 78.2%. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, "State Dropout and Completion Data File," 2009-10. *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 125.

ⁱⁱⁱ SIS 2012. A national rate of high school students earning Associate's degrees is not typically tracked, but 1% of a small sample of students tracked earned a postsecondary degree compared with 21% of a similar sample size of early college students (Andrea Berger et al. 2013. *Early College, Early Success: Early College High School Initiative Impact Study*. Washington, DC: AIR. Available at <http://www.air.org/resource/early-college-early-success-early-college-high-school-initiative-impact-study-2013>).

^{iv} College credit earned in high school usually counts for dual credit. Early college data are compiled from the 2010 and 2011 ECHS/SIS Integrated Surveys. National data are from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2005 and 2009 High School Transcript Study (HSTS), table 163. Table prepared October 2011.

^v SIS Percentage based on three-year average: 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 Annual ECHS/SIS Integrated Surveys. National Student Clearinghouse. Early college graduates" indicates "four-year early college cohort graduates."

^{vi} 85.5% of early college graduates who enroll in postsecondary education return for a second year. "Early college graduates" indicates "four-year early college cohort graduates." National Student Clearinghouse Report on Early College Student Enrollment, October 15, 2013.

71.7% of first-time, degree-seeking college students, at all degree-granting institutions in the United States (two-year and four-year public, private, and nonprofit) return for their second year in college. "Retention of First-Time Degree-Seeking Graduates at Degree-Granting Institutions, by Attendance Status, Level and Control of Institution, and Percentage of Applications Accepted," 2006-2011, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2008 and Spring 2011, Enrollment component, table 378. Table prepared November 2012.

^{vii} Further, young adults with postsecondary credentials earn considerably more than those without. College graduates with a Bachelor's degree had median earnings of \$45,000 in 2011, while Associate's degree holders had median earnings of \$37,000. Both were significantly higher than high school graduates, who had median earnings of \$30,000. Students without a high school diploma fared much worse, with median earnings of \$22,900 (U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1996 through March 2012, table 439. Table prepared November 2012).

^{viii} 2010 data from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) Information Center for State Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis. Postsecondary degree refers to Associate's degrees and Bachelor's degrees. For an Associate's degree, 150% of standard program completion time is three years. For a Bachelor's degree, 150% of standard program completion time is six years.

^{ix} SIS. Percentage based on three-year average: 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 Annual ECHS/SIS Integrated Surveys.

^x U.S. Department of Education. Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) Highest-Rated Validation Applications, 2012. See "Abstract" for Early College Expansion Partnership by applicant Jobs for the Future. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/2012/applications.html>

^{xi} U.S. Department of Education. i3 Highest-Rated Validation Applications, 2012. See "PDF" for Early College Expansion Partnership by applicant Jobs for the Future. <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/2012/jobsforthefuturear.pdf>

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Jobs for the Future works with our partners to design and drive the adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today's economy.



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