College for All: Early College Designs and Practices for Districts and Schools

College Board New England Regional Forum
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JFF Overview

• 25 years of experience working to improve the educational and economic outcomes for low-income youth and adults
• JFF produces research and implementation tools for states, and analyzes and promotes state policies to support early college designs
• Coordinates the Early College High School Initiative with 13 intermediary organizations
• JFF supports a portfolio of early college designs that prepare and graduate students “college- and career-ready”
• Early Colleges: National Overview

• Research Findings on Early College

• Accelerating College Readiness: Strategies from Early College

• How Districts Can Apply the Practices of Early College: A Look at Hidalgo ISD
Early college high schools focus on broad student populations underrepresented in postsecondary education, including:

- Low-income youth
- First-generation college-goers
- English language learners
- Students of color

• Early college high schools provide students with an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and a substantial number of college credits, up to an Associate’s Degree, by the time they graduate from high school.

• Typical early college models use a small-school approach
  – 100 students per grade
  – 400 students total in each school

• Today, there are 200+ early college high schools throughout the country
WHO DO EARLY COLLEGE SCHOOLS SERVE?

Early college schools are committed to serving students underrepresented in higher education.

70 percent of early college students are students of color.

59 percent of early college students are eligible for free or reduced lunch—a conservative estimate of the number of students from low-income families.

Nearly one-third of early college schools receive Title 1 funding, based on the high percentage of low-income students served.

32 schools serve students who previously dropped out of traditional high schools or were at risk of dropping out.

7 schools serve Native-American youth and are located in the communities where native students live.
Experimental and Quasi-experimental Research Findings:

- Early college students are enrolling and progressing in key college preparatory classes at a higher rate compared to control group students.
- The ECHS design is closing the achievement gap for students of color.
  - No gap in course progression rates between early college minority students and non-minority 9th graders; not true for control group students.
- Early college students outperformed their peers in comparison schools.
  - 2x more likely to pass TAKS in all four core subject areas
  - 2x times more likely to pass geometry or Algebra II
Research Findings on Early College

• On average, early college graduate earn more than **20 college credits**

• **39 percent** of graduates at early college schools open for four or more years earned more than one year of transferable college credits while in early college

• **25 percent** of graduates at early college schools open for four or more years earned two years of college credit or an Associate’s degree

• **86 percent** of early college graduates in 2009 went on to some form of postsecondary education in the fall of that year
In our most effective early colleges, we see:

1. **Each staff member embraces responsibility for preparing every student for college success.**

   *These schools:*
   - Develop caring relationships between students and staff that provide the basis for high academic expectations
   - Avoid tracking students to ensure that academic history does not determine their future trajectory

2. **Teachers use a consistent set of instructional strategies proven to accelerate learning.**
   - Collaborative Group Work
   - Writing to Learn
   - Literacy Groups
   - Questioning
   - Classroom Talk
3. **Students receive intensive and individualized supports to overcome academic barriers.**

*These schools:*
- Formally structure time in daily and weekly schedules so all students can get the individualized supports they need
- Use data on student learning needs to target support efficiently.
- Gradually increase student independence, while making sure that students are anchored to supports for easy access

4. **Students are coached to take full ownership of their learning over time.**

*These schools:*
- Give students formal opportunities to reflect on themselves as learners and evaluate what they still must master to become college ready
- Create a culture in which students are responsible for helping peers learn
- Develop projects with increasingly challenging aspects, providing the scaffolding students need to step up their learning over time
- Teach students explicit skills for navigating college experiences

5. **Staff collaboration extends beyond institutional borders.**

*These schools:*
- Build in formalized, regular opportunities to reflect on staff practices
- Build relationships between early college and college instructors in the same discipline
Why Early College Designs?

• **For Students:** Free college courses with support motivates students to accelerate: completed college coursework is a strong signal of college readiness; already college students by high school graduation

• **For Schools, Districts, and Postsecondary Institutions:** Alignment of high school college- and career-ready standards with college courses; students enter college without need for remediation

• **For States:** Return on the investment in lower cost to degree completion, more college graduates

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Our Aim: Move from small early college schools to district early college designs. All students supported to achieve at least 12 college credits by the end of high school (including college math and composition).
WHAT IS AN EARLY COLLEGE DISTRICT?

- College credits for all students
- College-going culture
- Academic alignment and rigor
- Career and technical pathways
- Comprehensive student supports
- Supportive policies
THE HIDALGO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rural district encompassing 36 square miles.

Spanish is the home language for over 85% of residents.

Southern boundary parallels the Rio Grande River.

Includes 4 elementary schools, 1 middle school, 1 high school, and 1 alternative high school

Total Enrollment: 3,519 students

Student Demographics [2008-09]:
- 99.5% Hispanic, 0.2% African American, 0.2% White, 0.1% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 89% Economically Disadvantaged
- 72% At Risk
- 56% Limited English Proficient

Sources: Hidalgo Independent School District and Texas Education Agency [TEA], “2008-09 Academic Excellence Indicator System,” 2008-09 District Profile for Hidalgo ISD.
• More than **95 percent** of the Class of 2010 earned college credit during high school.

• In total, the students in the Class of 2010 earned a combined **3,743 college credit hours**.

• **Two thirds** of the students earned at least a semester of credit.
Transformational Strategies

Creating a College-Going Culture

Aligning Courses and Career Pathways

Developing Strong College Partnerships

Building Comprehensive Student Supports
## Creating a College-Going Culture

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<th>College Becomes a Visible Presence</th>
<th>Parent Engagement</th>
<th>Emphasis on College-Career Connection</th>
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<tr>
<td>• College banners line the walls of the schools</td>
<td>• District shares with parents best ways to support students academically</td>
<td>• All eighth graders take a course focusing on career explorations</td>
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<td>• Students wear college T-shirts on select days</td>
<td>• Districts help parents advocate for their children’s college and career goals</td>
<td>• Students select a career path for high school</td>
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“Many people fear college. They think it’s going to be a completely different level and that you’re not going to be able to do it. We learned that we can do it.”

- Robert, 2010 HISD Graduate, 59 college credits by graduation
Aligning Courses and Career Pathways

Course Alignment in Middle School

- Better aligned and more rigorous courses in core subjects to prepare middle school students for high school.

Intensive Summer Academy for Rising Ninth Graders

- All ninth graders are expected to participate in an four-week summer math and language arts session to prepare for Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA).

Course Alignment at Early College High School

- Most ninth graders take course on “University Success.”
- Juniors/seniors take college level classes on campus and at partner universities.
- Non-THEA cleared students may take college courses along career pathways.
Developing Strong College Partnerships

- Developed a range of postsecondary options to enable a broad student population to earn college credits.
- Achieved support of college administrators who could champion cause and leverage the necessary resources.
- Created aligned coursework and comprehensive supports for students.
- Encouraged professors to incorporate high-engagement strategies into their instruction.
- Incenticized Hidalgo teachers to pursue adjust status on at the local universities to reduce costs.
The district emphasizes a personal, hands-on approach with students and families and provides a wide range of counseling options and academic interventions.

**Individualized Counseling and Educational Planning**

- Counselors provide a wide-range of support and connect students to a variety of services in counseling, teaching, and administrative functions.
- Role of the counselor has expanded to included career and educational planning and each counselor specializes in specific career pathways.

**Comprehensive Academic Tutoring and Accelerated Learning**

- Student and teacher schedules allow for flexibility for tutoring and other accelerated learning opportunities.
- Advisory periods, used for tutoring and enrichment activities, are built into the official school day.
- Teachers provide tutoring every afternoon and on Saturdays.