



Building a Foundation for Early College in Grades 9 and 10

An Education Powerhouse: Massachusetts Early College High Schools

AT A GLANCE

Massachusetts's education agencies support expanding early college high school programs based on their initial success. In fact, think tank MassINC is calling for annual early college enrollment to increase to 45,000 students. This report outlines strategies for reaching that ambitious target: expanding access to early college programs to students in grades 9 and 10, retaining those who do enroll, and ensuring that these younger students are ready to choose an early college career pathway. It provides guidance and examples to support early college partnerships in expanding their reach to older middle school students and younger high school students.

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About JFF

JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For nearly 40 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. www.jff.org

About the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation

The Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation invests in organizations that improve human health, raise educational attainment, increase economic security, and meet community needs. Its mission is to effect permanent positive change in the lives of individuals and families across Greater Boston, especially in economically disadvantaged communities. The Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation provides funds to JFF to support the growing movement for early college high schools in Massachusetts.

About the Massachusetts Early College High School Community of Practice

Massachusetts launched its Early College Initiative in 2017, encouraged by almost two decades of national research showing that early colleges have a track record of success in ensuring that young people from low-income households prepare for and earn college degrees. In 2018, the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation provided funding to JFF to lead a community of practice to support the growth and ensure the quality of six of the state's 26 early college partnerships. Early college high school programs enable students in grades 9 through 12 to earn at least 12 transferable college credits—and up to an associate's degree in a career pathway—by the time they graduate from high school. Early college accelerates college and career readiness for students from low-income households, English learners, and those whose prior academic experiences may not have prepared them well for a collegiate path.

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Introduction

All families want their children to have successful lives, and for many that aspiration includes a college degree as the route to a good career. However, for far too many families, this dream appears to be too costly and thus out of reach—that is, until they hear about early college.

Early college high schools enable young people to start earning college credits in a career pathway as early as grade 9, at no cost to families.¹ Data collected over two decades across the United States confirm that early college high school is an effective path to a college degree, especially for young people who are often excluded from higher education opportunities. Enrollment leads to increased rates of high school graduation, immediate postsecondary attendance, and college graduation compared with the rates for peers who do not attend an early college high school.²

Early College in Massachusetts

Encouraged by strong initial results from early college programs, Massachusetts's Departments of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education are supporting their further expansion throughout the state. MassINC, a think tank dedicated to providing information to the public, is calling for the annual enrollment of 45,000 students in early college high school programs—an ambitious proposal, given that close to 3,500 students were enrolled in Fall 2020.³ This report outlines strategies for reaching that target: expanding access to early college programs to students in grades 9 and 10, retaining those who do enroll, and ensuring that these younger students are ready to choose an early college career pathway.

The heavy burden of meeting this goal lies with those who introduce early college high school to 9th and 10th graders. While early college programs are still at an early stage of implementation within Massachusetts, the strategies outlined here are intended to provide guidance and examples to support new early college partnerships in expanding their reach by connecting with older middle school students and younger high school students.

Data from the 26 designated early college high school programs in Massachusetts are consistent with or more positive than national early college high school outcomes. In Massachusetts this school year, nearly 3,500, early college students are expected to earn a total of 24,000 college credits, saving their families \$5.2 million in tuition and fees.⁴ It should be noted that Massachusetts requires designated programs to target students who are underrepresented in higher education and those with varying degrees of readiness for an accelerated program. The state's early college designation guidelines also explicitly require that all early college programs engage English learners, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities.⁵

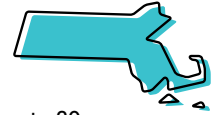
Despite the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, among this year's early college high school graduates are students who completed a full associate's degree in time for their June 2021 high school graduations. Given this strong early data, education leaders and policymakers are eager to open early college high school to the thousands of students who might benefit.

Who are early college students in Massachusetts?



- Approximately two-thirds of early college students in Massachusetts are Black or Latinx.
- Nearly half are from low-income households.

Massachusetts early college students succeed at higher rates than their peers.



- Early college graduates enroll in college at a rate 20 percentage points higher than their school and state peers.
- Black early college graduates enroll in college at a rate 22 percentage points higher than state peers.
- Latinx graduates enroll in college at a rate 23 percentage points higher than state peers.
- 77% of early college graduates from the class of 2019 are still in college, compared with 69% of their school peers.

Source: Early College Joint Committee meeting, February 18, 2021



Strategies for Introducing Early College in the Early High School Years

Most early college high schools start by providing college coursework to high school juniors and seniors to help them get a head start on college. Now, as early college partnerships are seeing success with older students, they are widening the pool of potential participants in such programs by starting in grades 9 and 10.

To succeed in early college, students need to be ready for an enhanced and more academically demanding version of high school. They will earn college credits in a career pathway to accelerate their attainment of a college degree that will lead to a good job.

How do schools encourage 14-year-olds who may not have had strong prior academic experiences or who may not see themselves as college goers to try a high school program that is even harder than the traditional 9th or 10th grades? And once students signal their interest, how do schools provide new early college students with engaging learning activities and the supports that can help them thrive?

Individuals who design courses for grades 9 and 10 take into account the developmental stage of the adolescents who must be reached. They are also guaranteeing that the course material is college-level and is selected and presented in such a way that younger students can see the relevance of what they are learning for the future. High schools' early college leaders can make that guarantee because these courses are codesigned with college deans, advisors, and faculty members.

The Four Strategies

JFF led the national Early College High School Initiative, first funded in 2001 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and has helped build hundreds of early colleges nationwide. Today, JFF facilitates the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation early college high school community of practice in Massachusetts, drawing on lessons learned over the past two decades.⁶

As part of this work, JFF developed four strategies for introducing early college in the first years of high school. Those strategies, listed below, draw from

JFF’s two decades of experience with early college implementations and are in keeping with the broader guidelines that Massachusetts developed as criteria for awarding early college high school designations and startup funding to partnership applicants across the state.⁷

1. Start early college preparation in middle school or before grade 9, if possible.
2. Codesign first-year early college courses with college partners.
3. Develop equitable assessments of readiness for college coursework.
4. Assemble a team of high school and college instructors and administrators to codesign and lead the early college program.

Strategies 1 through 3 describe emerging practices to jump-start awareness of early college, beginning with outreach in middle school and programming in the summer before grade 9. The next step is to enroll students in college and career readiness courses. The final stage involves administering equitable assessments to ensure that as students move on to three-credit college courses in grades 10 through 12, they are college-ready or receive preparedness support. Strategy 4 is the foundational requirement for success: a committed high school and college planning and implementation team that is in it for the long term.

In the four sections that follow, we describe each of the strategies in detail, focusing on the challenges they address and the ways early colleges in Massachusetts are putting them into practice.

1 Start early college preparation in middle school or before grade 9, if possible.

The Challenge

As adolescents make the transition to high school—a notoriously challenging time—they face an initiation into a more adult world with higher expectations for independent learning, more consequential course choices, and the looming college and career question: “What do I do after graduation?” In addition, many early teens are setting foot in a bigger building with unknown peers and teachers along with experienced 17- and 18-year-olds who already know the ropes and often set the tone. These many factors can lead to academic failure, an increase in students who must repeat the year, and poor attendance. Failure in grade 9 is a key predictor of failure to complete high school at all.⁸

Research has shown that the obverse is also true: A smooth transition from grade 8 to 9 can lead to student success in high school and beyond.⁹ The challenge of early college high school is not only to ensure

a smooth transition but to introduce the early college high school option with these developmental, academic, and social challenges in mind.

The Early College Approach

During the first decade of national work on early college high school programs, JFF concluded that middle school through the first two years of high school was the right time to get students thinking about college and careers. In smaller districts where all middle schoolers transition into one or two high schools, early college activities can start in grade 8 and extend through the summer before grade 9. In larger districts that have many schools, families typically have multiple choices for which high school their children will attend. Consequently, early college high schools do not know which students will enroll until late summer or fall. In this case, although students may be provided with information about early college programs in grade 8, activities do not start until grade 9.

MetroWest College Planning Collaborative

Established in 2014 by Mass Bay Community College and Framingham State University, the MetroWest College Planning Collaborative (MetroWest), located on the Framingham State

“We begin in 8th grade, so students and families can look at this pathway at an earlier age when they are still developing and making decisions about what kind of high school experience they want to work toward. We want to cement students’ identity as college bound even before high school.”

- Colleen Coffey, executive director,
MetroWest College Planning Collaborative



University campus, provides a range of college access and success programs. One of these, the MetroWest Scholars Early Start program supports early college programs in Framingham and Milford and is beginning work in Waltham.

MetroWest coordinates with Framingham and Milford High Schools and their feeder middle schools to ensure that each cohort of rising 9th graders receives information on and preparation for Scholars Early Start before beginning their early college program. Any student in grade 8 who is interested can participate; admission is open to all. The 8th grade program includes six modules, three career excursions, a variety of corporate guest speakers, a family career fair, and a two-week summer high school bridge program.

MetroWest is unique among early college partnerships in Massachusetts. It functions as an intermediary, or linking organization, that brings partnering high schools and colleges together, designing, and running the early college program. Other early college partnerships are designed and led directly by high schools and their college partners. MetroWest works with its partner colleges to select appropriate college-level courses, support instructors in working with younger students, and, most important, recruit and engage young students.

The MetroWest Scholars Early Start program familiarizes students with in-demand professional fields and career pathways, including business, sociology and criminology, STEM, and education. In grade 9, students take exploratory classes and connect with experts in different fields. In grade 10, students pick a specialized pathway and begin focusing on a career track. Ultimately, students in the program will graduate from high school with a minimum of 12 college credits from Framingham State University and/or Mass Bay Community College.¹⁰ The first cohort of students is just completing grade 10, and MetroWest expects that many will have earned two full years of college credit by the time they graduate from high school.

The program also provides students and their families—many of whom speak Spanish or Portuguese as their primary language—with a welcoming community. A big believer in building community through the arts, MetroWest also offers fun activities that draw out students' creativity.

2 Codelign first-year early college courses with college partners.

The Challenge

Most high schools take steps to prepare entering 9th-grade students for the opportunities, choices, and challenges of high school. In general, teachers and guidance counselors focus on providing just-in-time answers to students' questions about classes, extracurricular activities, rules for behavior, and how to seek help for social, emotional, and academic issues.

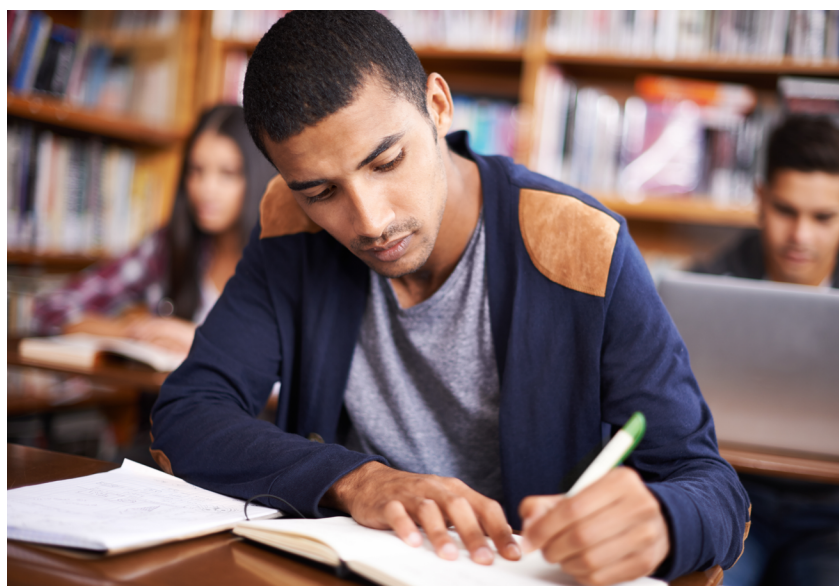
To open access to early college for 9th-grade students, schools must help them understand why earning college credit in high school is a good bet. To create early college orientation programs, high school teachers need to work with their college counterparts to design College 101 courses that will intrigue 14- and 15-year-olds as they begin their high school and college journeys simultaneously. In most cases, high school and college faculty members, counselors, and administrators have not worked together before and rarely know one another. This is often true even when a high school sends large cohorts of seniors to the closest public community college or state university. Thus, they all enter the codelign process with much at stake and much to learn about academic standards, course content, pedagogy, and student supports.

The Early College Approach

The six partnerships in the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation early college community of practice are approaching the College 101 challenge in a variety of ways. Two of these partnerships— Lynn English and Lynn Classical High Schools with both North Shore Community College (NSCC) and Salem State University, and Lowell High School with Middlesex Community College (MCC)—are relatively far along in their design and implementation.

High school and college teams are addressing core early college high school questions, such as:

- What do 9th graders need to know about taking college courses?
- What are the academic expectations and skills required?



- What information about high-demand fields like health, information technology (IT), and engineering is engaging for 14-years-olds and will help them understand college majors?
- How is course content best delivered so that it is interactive, engaging, and worth the extra work for a 14-year-old?
- What do students and their families need to know at this early point about college affordability?

Lynn English and Classical High Schools

Lynn English and Lynn Classical High Schools offer four college career pathways: IT and business at NSCC, and education and health at Salem State University. Because early college high schools in Lynn have two higher education partners, like the MetroWest Scholars Early Start, the program design challenges are greater.

The high schools begin to recruit students for early college starting in grade 8 and continue to provide information and invitations to join the early college program through grade 10. Students are welcome to take courses from both colleges through grade 10, but at the end of that school year, they select a pathway and begin to take career-specific courses in grade 11.

Students who identify themselves as potential early college participants when they enter grade 9 are enrolled in Writing Today and Global Voices, both designed to strengthen their writing skills in preparation for college coursework. In the spring of grade 9, early college students enroll in a three-credit NSCC course, Understanding Higher Education and Career Pathways. To increase students' awareness of the benefits of higher education, NSCC also provides workshops about college and careers during the college's intersession.

In grade 10, all early college students take two college courses: Introduction to Public Speaking and Ethics. Courses for grades 9 and 10 are cotaught by high school and college instructors, with the college instructor present two days per week and the high school teacher leading on the other days.

In grade 11, students begin taking career courses in the pathway they chose. All early college students who take at least one course per semester in grades 11 and 12 will graduate with a minimum of 21 college credits.

In addition, Lynn's high schools are developing activities within the framework of My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP). Developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,

MyCAP is a planning tool that starts as early as 6th grade and covers three domains: personal/social success; career development; and academic success, including college and career planning.¹¹ The approach is student-directed and student-centered and leads to a “personalized path towards postsecondary success.”¹² Lynn’s high schools provide the MyCAP tool to all students; a special section of MyCAP for early college students explores careers and regional employment data in the four career pathways.

Lynn’s early college team also recognized that English learners were not adequately represented among 9th graders who chose early college and made changes in response. The schools have increased their efforts to recruit English learners and opened additional sections of the Understanding Higher Education and Career Pathways courses. They are also planning with NSCC to provide additional supports to help students thrive.

Lowell High School

The College 101 course at Lowell High School is a second example of an introductory curriculum codesigned by partners: Lowell High School and MCC. In the 2023-24 school year, Lowell High School will graduate the first cohort of students who will have received the



full early college experience in grades 9 through 12.

That experience starts with a spring 9th-grade one-credit college course called Career Explorations, followed by the 10th-grade one-credit college course called First-Year Experience. Lowell High School is scaling the courses so all 9th graders will be able to take Career Explorations and all 10th graders the First-Year Experience course. That’s nearly 800 freshman in 36 sections who will be in the pipeline to become early college students should they choose this option. Lowell is also creating a 10th-grade college knowledge course to be taught by high school teachers.

Curriculum alignment teams, including MCC’s director of interdisciplinary studies and Lowell High School’s chair of the Freshman Academy program, codesigned the 9th-grade Career Explorations course to introduce students to career paths and help them explore their work interests, personality, skills, values, and life goals to help them find relevance and purpose in their academic choices. The course also helps students understand the academic and student support services available to them from the college partner as soon as they register for their first college course.

The grade 9 course sequence is as follows:

Week Taken	Course Name
Week 1	Understanding the Course
Week 2	Learning About Ourselves
Week 3	Career Clusters
Week 4	Career Exploration Project
Week 5	Credit Union Activities
Weeks 6 and 7	Action Plans and Pathways
Week 8	Career-Based Professional Organizations
Weeks 9 and 10	Economic Outlook of Specific Careers
Week 11	Resume Writing and Cover Letters
Week 12	Applying for a Job
Week 13	Interviewing
Weeks 14 and 15	Putting It All Together

3 Develop equitable assessments of readiness for college coursework.

The Challenge

Early college programs across the nation face the challenge of assessing student readiness for college work. A best practice of early college programs is that all college courses must be credit-bearing. This puts pressure on early college high school educators to ensure that students are college-ready when they take their first courses.

Readiness assessments are challenging because early college leaders have two competing goals: recruiting students widely, but particularly those who may be at risk of not going to college; and ensuring that those students are prepared to earn passing grades in college courses.

Students are required to take the standardized Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System exam, known as the MCAS, at the end of grade 10. While MCAS scores might be used as one indicator of college readiness, it comes too late for programs that offer early college coursework in grades 9 and 10. In addition, the MCAS is not well aligned with standards for college admission. The state has phased out the standardized ACCUPLACER assessment

as the sole readiness test for incoming college students and moved to multiple measures or the composite of a variety of measures for readiness. However, one other requirement is a high school grade point average of at least 2.7 over four years—which students in grades 9 and 10 won't yet have had an opportunity to demonstrate.

The Early College Approach

Program designers know that when early college students take their first three-credit college course, they must have the knowledge, skills, and support to navigate and succeed in college coursework.



As increasing numbers of students enroll in College 101 or MyCAP courses in grade 9 or 10, the readiness assessments must serve two purposes: first, to ascertain whether a student is ready to begin college credit coursework immediately, and second, to serve as an indicator of the supports a student may need to be college-ready in the near future.

Early college partnerships approached the design of readiness assessments in a similar way to the state’s public higher education system—by focusing on students’ preparedness for college-level math or writing courses. In the several exemplary designs now in place, early college high schools brought together high school and college faculty members to codesign new ways of assessing the readiness of young students. Principles that characterize the practices of the early college high school educators include the following:

- Current and past academic performance, especially in high school English and math
- Consistent high attendance
- Maturity and self-motivation
- Beyond college English and math, a B or higher in the high school content area they intend to take in college
- Counselor recommendations

Lawrence High School and Northern Essex Community College

Northern Essex Community College (NECC) codesigned assessments with Lawrence High School for its early college program. Now all 10th-grade students take an English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessment regardless of their interest in the early college program. This college readiness assessment provides the school with invaluable information, not only for early college, but for high school teachers and students alike regarding what all students will need to achieve college readiness.



WHAT WAS THE **PROCESS** FOR CREATING THE NEW ASSESSMENTS?

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER- DECEMBER	JANUARY- FEBRUARY	FEBRUARY- MARCH	APRIL- SUMMER
<i>Goal Defining & Brainstorming Meetings</i>	<i>Creating Rubrics & Assessments</i>	<i>Assessments Given at High School</i>	<i>Students Attend Formal Info Sessions</i>	<i>Reflection Meeting & Revising Timeline</i>
<p>Math: Decided on a course-specific computer-based test</p> <p>ELA: Decided on an assignment that could assess both reading and writing skills.</p>	<p>Math: Faculty completed skills mapping to ensure alignment with college courses.</p> <p>ELA: NECC incorporated its developmental coursework rubrics into assessments.</p>	<p>Math: Students were given the new assessment during their math class.</p> <p>ELA: Students submitted assignments that were then sent to NECC faculty members for review.</p>	<p>Students in both math and English who were deemed “college-ready” were invited to participate in the early college program.</p>	<p>Refined the process and timeline and reviewed the budget.</p> <p>Approximately \$50,000 was spent on teacher and faculty compensation due to the additional workload.</p>

The graphic above illustrates the timeline that Lawrence and NECC used to create a new mode of assessments, including a breakdown for both math and ELA subject courses.

Bunker Hill Community College and Partners

Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) and its four high school partners—Charlestown, Madison Park, Chelsea, and Malden—devised a different strategy. BHCC brought instructors together from the partnerships to align high school

and college coursework. This means that 10th-grade high school English sufficiently resembles the content of developmental English in college so that a high school student can now take the college end-of-course exam at the end of grade 10 to qualify for the three-credit required college English course. The graphics below depict the collaborative work undertaken to create the assessment and the new process that the collaboration yielded.

WHAT WAS THE **PROCESS** FOR CREATING THE NEW **ELA** ASSESSMENT?

RESEARCHED-BASED	TIMELINE	COLLABORATION	INTEGRATED
<p>BHCC has sought to design a program that is evidence-based, practitioner-centered, and grounded in the tenets of reciprocal partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus Building • Ongoing • Phased 	<p>Fall Semester Design Phase</p> <p>Spring Semester Implementation Phase</p> <p>Alignment happens at the 10th-grade level.</p> <p>Students take a practice exam before the actual exam.</p>	<p>Process involves faculty from both the high school and college.</p> <p>The overall planning process takes about 20 hours.</p> <p>Support meetings are planned to maintain relationships, evaluate alignment, and adapt to changes.</p>	<p>The same exam is used at both the high school and college.</p> <p>Instructors observe each other's classrooms.</p>

WHAT'S THE **ELA** ASSESSMENT? WHAT **COLLEGE COURSES** CAN STUDENTS TAKE IF THEY PASS?

Students (typically 10th graders) take an integrated reading/writing exam during their English class that includes a timed, in-class essay based on a pre-read article.

After students have completed the exams, faculty from BHCC and the partner high school norm and score the exams together using the English Department **ENG 095 Exit Exam** rubric.

If they pass the exam, students are placed directly into **ENG 111**, bypassing developmental English and reading courses.

If they do not pass, students typically have the opportunity to try again in their subsequent high school years.

4 Assemble a team of high school and college instructors and administrators to codesign and lead the early college program.

The Challenge

In the United States, K-12 and higher education systems are not set up to align well with each other. This causes overlaps in coursework between high school and college curricula. Even pedagogical approaches can be at odds, with few lectures in high school and large lecture classes in college. Expectations also differ: Students see their high school teachers almost every day and submit daily assignments that allow a teacher to monitor their progress, whereas a college course meets once or twice a week, and assessment generally occurs in the middle of the semester. Unfortunately, in most cases, teachers and guidance counselors have limited time to build professional relationships with faculty and staff members at the colleges that admit large numbers of students from their schools. Thus, the disconnect between high school and college persists.

The Early College Approach

Early college demands that high school and college faculties create curricula and programs of study together, especially

when adapting a college knowledge course for students in grades 9 and 10. The collaborative processes to create College 101 and readiness assessments are team efforts; they demand that educators take seriously the aspiration that the transition from high school to college be seamless and start early. To be seamless means, at a minimum, that curricular pathways are properly sequenced, gaps and repetition are eliminated, and rules and procedures allow movement between divergent systems. This is a tall order.

Across the nation, high schools typically reach out to their nearby higher education institutions to form early college design teams. Unusually, in Massachusetts, public higher education institutions have taken the lead in reaching out to their nearby high schools to solicit their interest in applying for early college designation. MCC and Salem State University, two of the colleges profiled in this report, saw the advantage of having close ties with their regional high schools. As two deans at these colleges reported, when offered the opportunity to work on early college, not only were their faculties willing—they were pleased to be asked. Teams at both the high schools and higher education institutions readily understood that they and early college students, as well as the high schools themselves, would benefit from collaborative work.

Middlesex Community College and Lowell High School

In Lowell, high school teachers and MCC professors are codesigning the introductions to college and careers for 9th and 10th graders. The prework to prepare is substantial. The high school teacher and college instructor spend about 10 hours together developing the syllabus. The syllabus is reviewed through the college's committee structure. When approved, it is piloted, evaluated, and revised, if necessary, and then it becomes part of the early college curriculum. High school teachers upload their syllabi each semester to ensure the maintenance of standards and comparability.

Salem State University and Partners

Salem State had offered only three dual enrollment evening courses for high school students in its region when it applied for the early college designation and startup funding to work with Lynn English and Salem High Schools. But in this case, too, faculty members immediately saw the synergy between applying for an early college designation and the university's mission.

Today, Salem State offers 18 cotaught courses. Teams are provided with summer stipends to do the initial planning. The college instructor teaches the college course and is with the students two or three days a week. A high school teacher

“Middlesex faculty are inspired by their high school colleagues because they can see them in action. In addition, we have regular meetings between all the partners. And seeing how well all this is going, we want to make our clubs, theatre events, and student organizations open for early college students as an expansion of college readiness.”

– Ellen Grondine
Dean of education and K-16 partnerships
Middlesex Community College

is in the classroom every day to reinforce lessons and provide supplemental coaching as needed. This collaboration reaps substantial benefits for both instructors and students. The two instructors learn about each other's pedagogical practices and subject area expertise, and the students have extra help in mastering college-level concepts and readings. The emphasis here has been on grade 10, with a MyCAP course in the fall semester and a Salem State oral communication course in the spring.

As JFF has learned over the years, collaborations between high schools and colleges have both immediate and second-order positive effects. In the case of the partnerships described above, the collaborative teams solved the immediate

problems—to develop College 101 courses and readiness assessments. In addition, the work that goes into designing and implementing early college high schools has value beyond the programs themselves.

School leaders and college faculty witness for themselves the talent and work ethic of these young early college students. This can lead teachers to raise their expectations for all students, not just for those in early college programs. And as the visibility and success of early college grows, additional students sign on. The result is that some high schools have moved to adopting a model that offers “early college for all” students in the school, currently the dream of early college leaders in Lawrence High School.

“We have recruited our full-time faculty to teach early college courses as part of their regular workload faculty. No one says no, because of our mission—to serve underrepresented students. ... Our professors who teach education methods courses love spending time in high school classes and welcome the opportunity to keep their courses relevant and up to date.”

- Michelle Pierce
Associate dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Salem State University

Conclusion

Early college high school programs demonstrate how high schools and colleges can work together to not only make high school a richer experience, but make the transition to college and career more seamless for students. Initial results confirm this impact, as students who graduate from Massachusetts' early colleges are enrolling and persisting in college at higher rates than their peers, with even stronger results among Black and Latinx graduates.

By thoughtfully employing the strategies covered in this report to fully invest in early college access for all students, starting at a younger age, Massachusetts can continue to prepare a diverse population of youth to succeed in college, earn a degree, and launch successful careers in the state. As they observe emerging trends while the COVID-19 recovery gets underway, educators will be able to guide early college students in preparing for good careers in the years to come.

Endnotes

1. The term *career pathway* is used interchangeably with *early college high school* in this report. By career pathway, we mean a sequence of courses starting as early as grade 9, including college-level courses, and going through to at least an associate's degree in an in-demand career area. For Massachusetts and many other states, in-demand career areas include information technology, health care, engineering, manufacturing, and business or finance.
2. Mengli Song and Krintina Zeiser, *Early College, Continued Success: Longer-Term Impact of Early College High Schools* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, September 2019), <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/Early-College-Continued-Success-Longer-Term-Impact-of-ECHS-September-2019-rev3.pdf>.
3. Benjamin Forman and Simone Ngongi-Lukula, *Early College as a Force for Equity in the Post-Pandemic Era* (Boston: MassINC, April 2021), <https://massinc.org/research/early-college-post-pandemic/>; Survey data presented by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to the Early College Joint Committee, Fall 2020 enrollment data, 2.18.2021.
4. Early College Joint Committee video-based meeting presentation, February 18, 2021.
5. "Early College Program Designation Application Companion Spring 2021," Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.mass.edu/strategic/earlycollege/documents/Designation%20Application%20Companion%20-%202021.pdf>.
6. A community of practice is a group of people who come together around a common interest, collaborate regularly to share knowledge and information, and actively work toward a specific set of goals to improve their practice.
7. For more information about the Massachusetts early college high school designation process and see a list of designated programs, visit: www.mass.edu/strategic/earlycollege.asp.
8. *Best Practices for Grade 9 Transition* (Arlington, VA: Hanover Research, November 2017), https://www.wasa-oly.org/WASA/images/WASA/1.0%20Who%20We%20Are/1.4.1.6%20SIRS/Download_Files/LI%202018/Jan-Best%20Practices%20for%20Grade%209%20Transitions.pdf.

9. Abner Oakes and Winsome Waite, *Middle to High School Transition: Practical Strategies to Consider* (Washington, DC: The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, May 2009), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506363.pdf>.
10. Zane Razzaq, “Framingham, Milford high schools get grants to support a pathway to in-demand profession,” Wicked Local News, accessed June 4, 2021, www.wickedlocal.com/news/20190617/framingham-milford-high-schools-get-grants-to-support-pathway-to-in-demand-profession.
11. “My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP),” Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/ccr/mycap/>.
12. “MyCAP—My Career & Academic Plan,” Boston Public Schools, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/8505>.



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