

UNDERSTANDING FLORIDA'S

**EARLY COLLEGE AND
EARLY ADMISSIONS
PROGRAMS**

AUGUST 2022

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A. INTRODUCTION

Florida is a national leader in the effort to provide students with a range of dual enrollment opportunities. The state is also a national leader in expanding opportunities for students to be able to earn college credit, particularly through two important initiatives: Early College (EC) programs/schools and Early Admissions (EA) programs. Both initiatives have been created through state legislation that seeks to expand ways in which students can enter and complete college efficiently and successfully. In addition, they have the potential to improve opportunities for traditionally underserved groups of students.

Both dual enrollment and Early College high schools across the nation have been well researched and lead to positive student outcomes.¹ Florida's dual enrollment programs have been extensively studied and shown to be effective.² However, little is known about Early College and Early Admissions programs in Florida—their designs, their implementation practices, and evidence of effectiveness. This report begins to address this knowledge gap.

1. Edmunds, J. (2021). Early and middle college model: Summary of the literature [report]. Greensboro, NC: SERVE, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Edmunds_EarlyMiddleCollegeHS_lit_review.pdf

2. Liu, V., Minaya, V., Zhang, Q., & Xu, D. (2020). High School Dual Enrollment in Florida: Effects on College Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity and Course Modality. New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/dual-enrollment-florida-race-ethnicity-course-modality.html>

KEY DEFINITIONS

The following are definitions of terms used in Florida's statutes and then a comparison with nationally used definitions.

DUAL ENROLLMENT "... is the enrollment of an eligible secondary student or home education student in a postsecondary course creditable toward high school completion and a career certificate or an associate or baccalaureate degree."³ Both Early College and Early Admission initiatives are defined in Florida statutes as forms of dual enrollment and subject to related state policies.

The definition of dual enrollment in Florida's statute is consistent with definitions used nationally.

EARLY COLLEGE "the term 'Early College program' means a structured acceleration program [within a high school] in which a cohort of students is enrolled full time in postsecondary courses toward an associate degree."⁴ No distinction is made between Early College schools and programs.

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS The definition of Early College in Florida's statute varies from those used in other parts of the USA. In most places across the USA, Early (and Middle) College high schools are small, stand-alone schools, often located on a college campus, that offer students a blended high school and college curriculum, leading to the completion of both a high school diploma and a community college associate degree.⁵ The model that looks most similar to this in Florida are the "collegiate" high schools⁶ (see below). Because students may not take college classes in cohorts, not all people agree that they should be called Early Colleges.

EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAMS around the US are typically available to a cohort of students within a comprehensive high school.⁷ However, students generally take a mixture of high school and college courses. We have not encountered other states in which all enrolled students are enrolled full time in college courses while participating in these programs.

Early college high schools and programs across the USA are typically designed to reach first generation and other traditionally underserved students.⁸ This target population is not mentioned as a priority in the Florida legislation related to Early Colleges.

EARLY ADMISSIONS "... is a form of dual enrollment through which eligible secondary students enroll in a postsecondary institution on a full-time basis in courses that are creditable toward the high school diploma and the associate or baccalaureate degree. A student must enroll in a minimum of 12 College credit hours per semester or the equivalent... Career Early Admission is a form of career dual enrollment through which eligible secondary students enroll full time in a career center or a Florida College System institution in postsecondary programs leading to industry certifications."⁹

Early Admissions programs are not common in the US. The most notable example is Washington's Running Start program.¹⁰

COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOLS "... are innovative schools designed to provide academic and technical education for high school students interested in pursuing college-level study."¹¹ As defined in the Florida state legislation, Collegiate High Schools are not Early Colleges. However, they bear a strong resemblance to the Early College high schools found throughout the US. In addition, they are included in the annual data collection processes conducted by the FLDOE. Thus, we have included them as a type of Early College in the current report.

3. Florida Statute § 1007.271 (2021).

4. Florida Statute § 1007.273 (2021).

5. Barnett, E.A., Bucceri, K., Hindo, C., Kim, J. (2011). Ten key decisions in creating Early Colleges: Design options based on research. New York: NCREST, Teachers College, Columbia University. <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8BR8RKG>

6. Florida Statute § 1007.273 (2021).

7. Barnett, E., Maclutsky, E., & Wagonlander, C. (2015). Emerging Early College models for traditionally underserved students. In J. Pretlow and J. Taylor (eds.) *New Directions in Community Colleges*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/early-college-models-underserved-students.html>

8. Zinth, J. (2016). Early College high school: Model policy components. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. <https://www.ecs.org/early-college-high-schools-model-policy-components/>

9. From Florida Statute § 1007.271 (2021).

10. For information about Running Start, see <https://www.sbctc.edu/Colleges-staff/programs-services/running-start/default.aspx>

11. Florida Statute § 1007.273 (2021).

THE CURRENT RESEARCH

With a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Florida Student Success Center sought an external research partner to identify ways to support and enhance Early College (EC) and Early Admissions (EA) programs. The study findings have the potential to benefit practitioners running these programs as well as policy makers interested in ways to facilitate their adoption and implementation.

The research questions of interest were:

1. What is the relationship between participation in Early Admission and Early College dual enrollment programs and student acceleration and success, particularly for students who have been traditionally underrepresented in acceleration programs, such as low-income students and students of color?
2. What are the characteristics of high-quality Early Admission and Early College dual enrollment programs? How can state and institutional policies support these programs?
3. Are there scalable best practices institutions can implement to promote student success in dual enrollment programs, particularly Early Admission and Early College programs? What strategies can be used to leverage dual enrollment as an access point for underserved populations?
4. What funding incentive structures would support increased dual enrollment participation for underrepresented populations of students?

The external research partner is comprised of a six-individual team with extensive experience studying policy, practice, and the effectiveness of dual enrollment and Early College high schools and programs. To address the research questions, we collected, reviewed, and analyzed the following in early 2022:

DATA SOURCES	SAMPLE
Survey	25 of 28 colleges, covering a total of 72 of 76 EC and EA programs
Interviews	44 total interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 college administrators 14 high school and district administrators 4 Florida Department of Education representatives 5 non-Florida representatives in states best known for EC implementation 5 non-Florida representatives in states best known for EA implementation 2 experts leading EC focused organizations
Demographic information provided by colleges	16 colleges, covering 33 EC and EA programs
Website information	28 college sites 60 school, program or district sites
FLDOE data compilation of EC enrollment and outcomes	62 EC schools/programs

Please see Appendix A for more details on the data sources and technical notes.

OUR REPORT

In this report, we address the research questions to the extent permitted by available data. We include chapters describing the landscape of Early College and Early Admissions programs, descriptions of the characteristics of these schools and programs in Florida and nationally, a discussion of pertinent state and institutional policies, a review of ways that Early College and Early Admissions programs seek to serve underrepresented student groups, and a set of recommendations for both practitioners and policymakers.

OVERVIEW AND EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

EARLY COLLEGES

Nationwide, Early College (EC) schools and programs are defined differently depending on the state context, though there is general agreement that the EC approach allows high school students to simultaneously enroll in high school and college classes, earning up to 60 transferable college credits or an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree by the time they graduate from high school. The EC schools or programs are often intended to serve populations who are historically underrepresented in college, including first generation college-goers, students who are economically disadvantaged, and historically underserved racial and ethnic groups. In addition to academic pathways that incorporate college coursework, Early Colleges provide a holistic range of supports, both academic and social-emotional, while students are enrolled in the college courses. Typically, close partnerships exist between an institution of higher education and a high school or school district, guided by a clearly and jointly constructed Memorandum of Understanding or articulation agreement.

Stand-alone Early College schools differ from Early College programs within comprehensive schools. Research on stand-alone EC schools reveals that they have a strong positive impact on students who participate. A high-quality study conducted by the American Institute for Research found that Early College students were significantly more likely than control students to enroll in college each year between the fourth year of high school and six years after high school graduation (i.e., year 10). By year 10, 45% of Early College students and 34% of control students (similar students who did not participate) had completed a certificate, associate or bachelor's degree, an 11-percentage point difference. The same study reported that impacts on college enrollment and degree completion outcomes did not differ significantly by gender, race/ethnicity, or eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, a common indicator of socio-economic status.¹²

Similarly, a randomized controlled trial conducted in North Carolina by SERVE at University of North Carolina at Greensboro found that:

- Early College high school students were three times as likely to get associate degrees as students in control groups within six years after 12th grade.
- Among economically disadvantaged students, Early College students were 4.5 percentage points more likely to earn bachelor's degrees than their control group counterparts in the same period.
- Participating in Early College schools shortened students' time to degree by two years for associate degrees and by six months for bachelor's degrees.
- Despite the shortened time in school, Early College students did equally well as control group counterparts in college, i.e., both had essentially the same post-secondary GPA.¹³

The research on Early College programs in comprehensive high schools is also positive, but less compelling. Several high-quality studies were conducted by SERVE at University of North Carolina at Greensboro on three programs that received USDOE funding between 2011 and 2018. Results indicated that, while students were not more likely to complete college preparatory math and English courses, there were mixed impacts on dropout rates. In all settings, students were more likely to take college courses while in high school than non-participants.¹⁴

12. Song, M. & Zeiser, K. (2019). Early College, continued success: Longer-term impact of Early College high schools. American Institute for Research. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED602451.pdf>

13. Edmunds, J.A., Unlu, F., Furey, J., Glennie, E., and Arshavsky, N. (2020). What happens when you combine high school and College? The impact of the Early College model on postsecondary performance and completion. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol 42, No. 2, pp 257-278. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373720912249>

14. *ibid.*

EARLY ADMISSIONS

Early Admissions (EA) is defined for this report as a program in which students who are juniors and/or seniors in high school maintain their high school status while simultaneously pursuing a full-time course of study (12-18 credits per semester) at a college. They concurrently earn credit toward high school graduation and an associate degree or career certificate. Early Admissions programs are distinct from Early Colleges. EA students spend their whole day in classes at the college and are essentially indistinguishable from other college students. They often participate in extra-curricular activities at both their home high schools and colleges and are eligible for both high school and college advising and career services.

There are limited programs nationally that would be considered Early Admissions as defined in Florida. The most well-known of these is Running Start in Washington State which gives high school juniors and seniors the option of attending any of Washington's 34 community and technical colleges, as well as several public universities, full-time or part-time, while concurrently earning high school and college credit. Running Start has been found to increase the likelihood that participants will attend college, most often a community college.¹⁵ On average, Running Start students finish their high school career with 52 college credits earned.¹⁶

In Rhode Island, the Running Start program allows high school students to enroll full time at the Community College of Rhode Island and simultaneously earn college credit and high school graduation credit. A recent study, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, reported that Rhode Island's free, accelerated college credit programs have significant positive effects on students' high school graduation rates, entry into and persistence in college, regardless of family income. However, as in other states, access to these programs varies.¹⁷

Students from racial/ethnic minorities, males, and economically disadvantaged students are underrepresented in Rhode Island's early admissions and other programs that allow students to take college classes. Rhode Island is currently conducting a study to determine why this is so. Barriers are thought to include transportation and lack of qualified teachers at urban schools, which are more likely to serve minority students and those from low-income families.

15. Dan Goldhaber, James Cowan (2013). How Much of a "Running Start" do dual enrollment programs provide students? CALDER Working Paper No. 92. <https://caldercenter.org/publications/how-much-%E2%80%9Crunning-start%E2%80%9D-do-dual-enrollment-programs-provide-students>

16. Community and Technical Colleges, Washington State Board (2018). Running Start participation and success. Research Brief No. 18-1. [running-start-participation-success-research-brief-18-1.pdf](https://www.ctc.edu/research-brief-18-1)

17. Shields, K., Bailey, J., Hanita, M., Zhang, X. (2021). The effects of accelerated college credit programs on educational attainment in Rhode Island. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=5680>

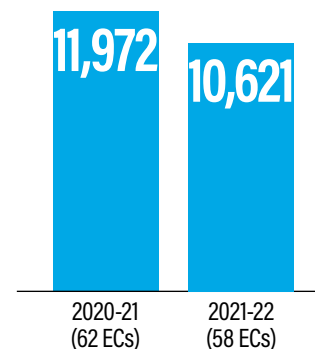
B. THE LANDSCAPE: EARLY COLLEGE SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS

This chapter provides an overview of Early College (EC) schools and programs in Florida based on the results of a statewide survey. We address student enrollment and demographics, the number of ECs per college, years operating, grade levels served, admissions criteria, locations, and key student outcomes.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

In Florida, over 10,000 students were enrolled in Early College schools and programs in the past two years, 2020-22. However, enrollment numbers decreased between the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years by approximately 1,400 students (see Figure 1). The decrease could possibly be due to the decrease in the number of Early Colleges (from 62 to 58), a significant drop in enrollments at a few sites (two ECs associated with one college went from approximately 600 total students to a little over 100 students), varying interpretations of whether a program would be considered an Early College according to changes in the Florida statute, or the impact of COVID-19.

FIGURE 1 Number of Students Enrolled in Florida Early Colleges, 2020-21 and 2021-22

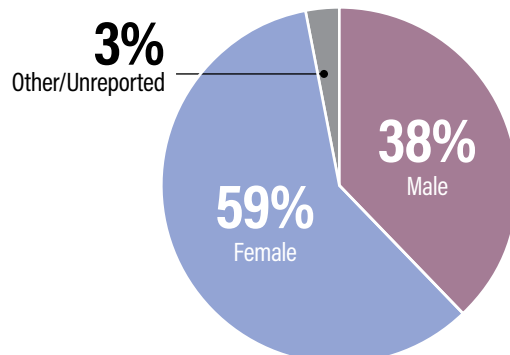


Note: Figure reflects analysis of data from the Florida State Early College Program Data Request information.

STUDENT GENDER

Female students are more heavily represented across Early Colleges in Florida. During the 2021-22 school year, 59% of the students enrolled were female and 38% were male (see Figure 2). Male student enrollment has typically been lower in Early Colleges across the country, as well as in postsecondary education in general.

FIGURE 2 Florida Early College Students by Gender, 2021-22

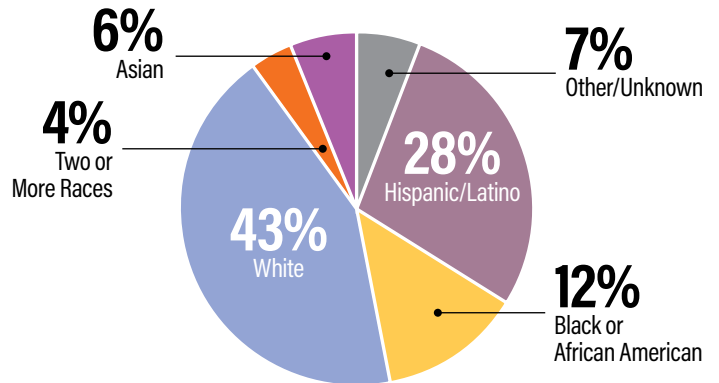


Note: Figure reflects a total of 8,019 students across 33 ECs based on data received from 16 colleges participating in this study.

STUDENT RACE/ETHNICITY

White students make up the largest racial/ethnic group in Early Colleges across the state of Florida (see Figure 3). However, 57% of Early College students are non-white (including Other/Unknown) with 28% Hispanic/Latino students making up the largest non-white group.

FIGURE 3 Florida Early College Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2021-22



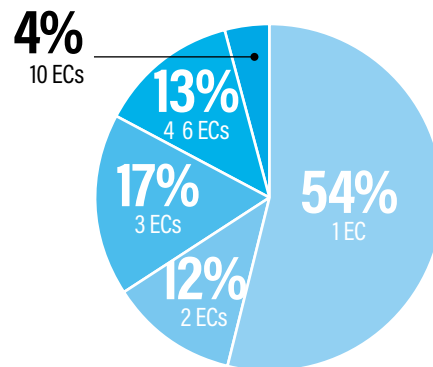
Note: Figure reflects a total of 8,050 students across 33 ECs based on data received from 16 colleges participating in this study.

Students from two groups less than 1% (American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander) are not displayed.

EARLY COLLEGES PER COLLEGE

In the state of Florida, the overwhelming majority of Florida colleges offer Early College opportunities. Based on our survey and interview data, which include all but three of the 28 colleges in Florida, only one college did not offer an Early College opportunity, although it did have an Early Admissions program. Fifty-four percent of the colleges were associated with one Early College program or school, and 29% had two to three unique Early Colleges (see Figure 4). One college had 10 different Early College programs.

FIGURE 4 Distribution of Colleges by the Number of Associated Early Colleges



Note: Figure reflects a total of 24 colleges; it does not include the one college that indicated that it did not have any ECs and it does not include three colleges with four ECs that were unable to participate in our study.

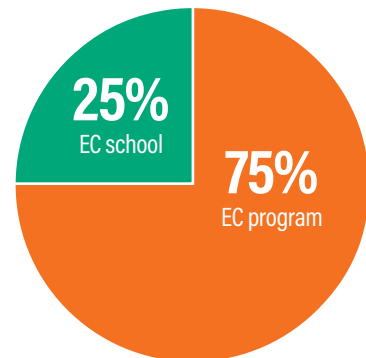
TYPES OF EARLY COLLEGES

Similar to other states, there are two main types of Early Colleges in Florida: Early College schools¹⁸ and Early College programs. The schools are stand-alone entities where all the students participate in the Early College and eventually earn their high school diploma from the school. On the other hand, Early College programs involve a select group of students from one or more high schools participating in an Early College.

In Florida, Early College programs are far more common than schools (see Figure 5). According to our survey data, there are a total of 56 unique Early College programs or schools across the 25 Florida colleges surveyed.¹⁹ Of these, 75% are Early College programs.

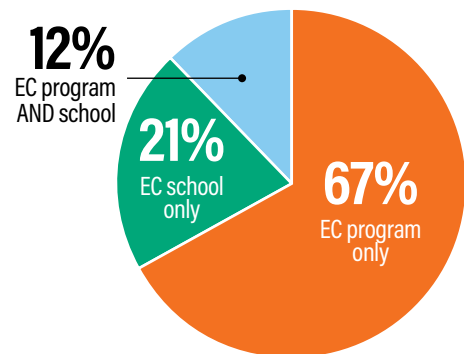
As shown in Figure 6, only 12% of colleges were partnered with both types of Early Colleges – programs and schools. The majority of colleges (67%) were involved only with Early College programs, compared to 21% affiliated with Early College schools.

FIGURE 5 Distribution of Early Colleges by Type



Note: Figure reflects a total of 56 ECs (42 programs and 14 schools) across 24 colleges.

FIGURE 6 Distribution of Colleges by Associated Early College Type

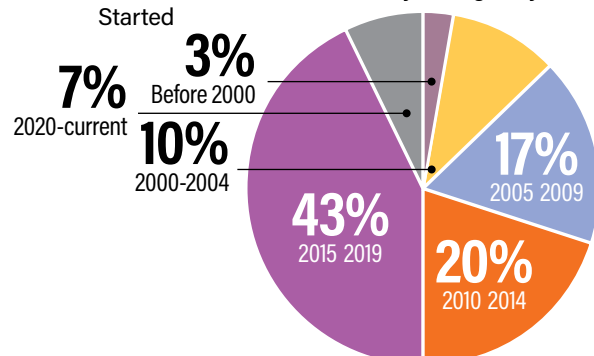


Note: Figure reflects a total of 24 colleges.

STARTING YEAR OF EARLY COLLEGES

The majority of Florida Early Colleges started enrolling students between 2010 and 2019: 43% in 2015-19 and 20% in 2010-2014 (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7 Distribution of Early Colleges by Year Started



Note: Figure reflects a total of 33 ECs based on data received from 16 colleges participating in this study.

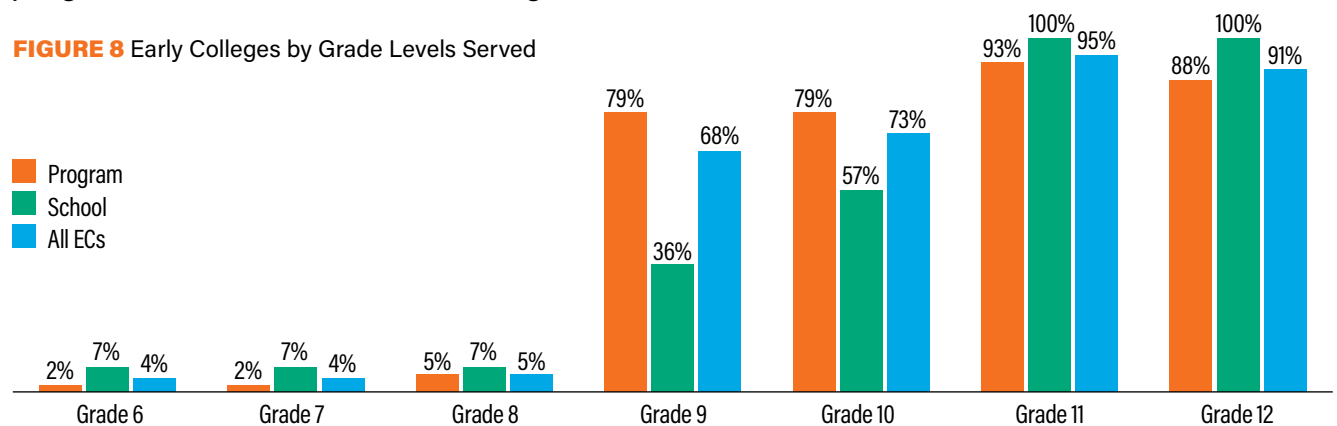
18. In order to classify the Florida Early Colleges as 'schools' or 'programs,' we reviewed three different data sources: a) descriptions provided in the interviews; b) online websites about individual Early Colleges; c) list of Early College sites provided by the Florida state partner. Our final categorization of Early College schools included all but one of the 12 charter school designated sites and three non-charter school sites for a total of 14 Early College schools.

19. One of the 25 colleges indicated it did not have any Early College. Also note that, of the 28 colleges in Florida, 3 colleges with a total of 4 Early Colleges were unable to participate in our study.

GRADE LEVELS SERVED

In Florida, the majority of Early College schools and programs serve high school students. An overwhelming majority served upper grade levels with close to 90% of programs and 100% of schools reporting that they served students in grades 11 and 12 during the 2021-22 school year (see Figure 8). Interestingly, a smaller percentage of Early College schools enrolled students in grades 9 (36%) and 10 (57%), while the majority (79%) of Early College programs served students in these grades.

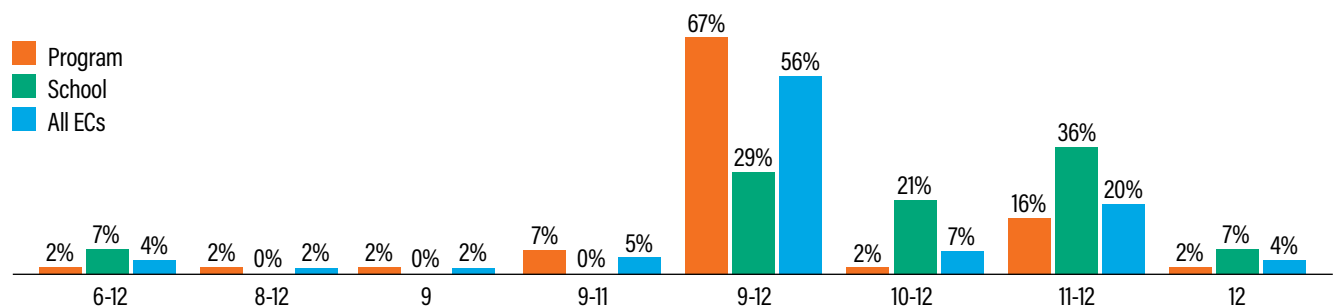
FIGURE 8 Early Colleges by Grade Levels Served



Note: Figure reflects a total of 55 ECs (one program did not provide grade level information).

As shown in Figure 9, a little over two-thirds (67%) of programs served students in grades 9-12, followed by 16% enrolling students only in grades 11-12. The majority of Early College schools in Florida do not enroll a traditional 9-12 grade range of students.

FIGURE 9 Distribution of Early College Type by Grade Level Ranges Served

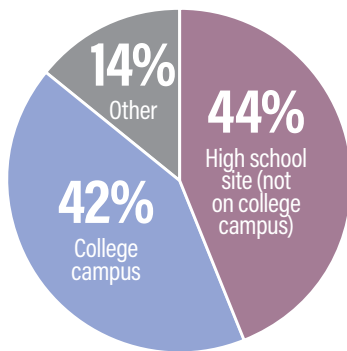


Note: Figure reflects a total of 55 ECs (one program did not provide grade level information).

LOCATION

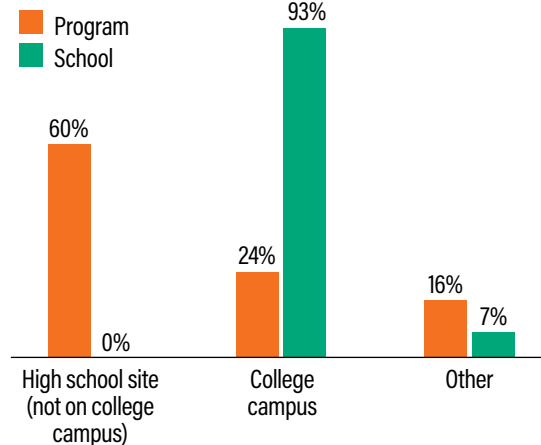
Similar numbers of Florida Early Colleges are located on a college campus and at a high school site (see Figure 10). However, when disaggregated by Early College type, we see a different picture. All but one of the Early College schools (93%) were located on a college campus while only 24% of Early College programs were situated on a college campus (see Figure 11).

FIGURE 10 Distribution of Early Colleges by Location



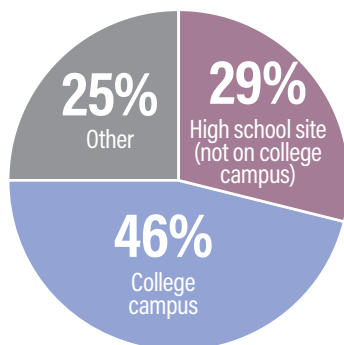
Note: Figures reflect a total of 56 ECs.

FIGURE 11 Distribution of Early College Type by Location



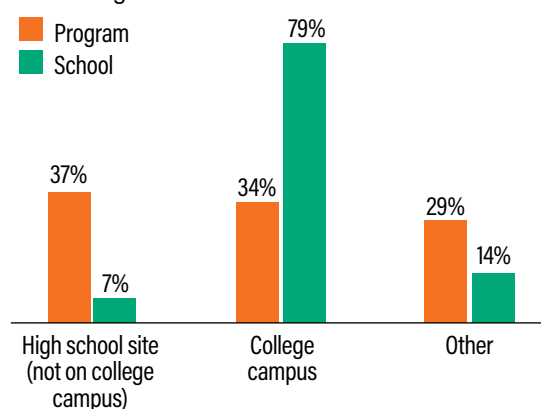
When examining the location where the majority of Early College students' college courses take place (see Figure 12), close to half (46%) were on a college campus. Similar numbers of Early Colleges responded that students take most of their college courses at a high school site (29%) or in some other way (e.g., equally at the college and the high school or online). There was some variation by Early College type (see Figure 13). For the majority of Early College schools (79%), college course-taking typically took place on a college campus, while programs demonstrated more variation.

FIGURE 12 Distribution of Early Colleges by College Course-taking Location



Note: Figures reflect a total of 56 ECs.

FIGURE 13 Distribution of Early College Type by College Course-taking Location

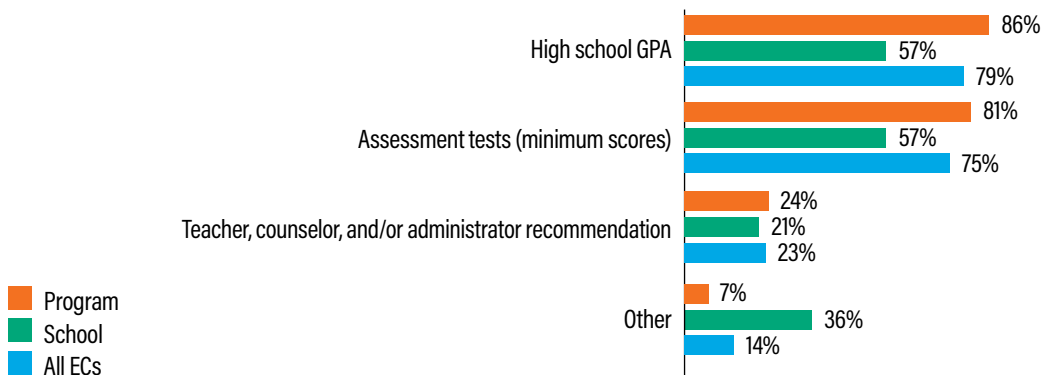


ADMISSIONS INTO EARLY COLLEGE

Almost all Early Colleges (88%) require potential students to submit an application in order to be considered for admission to their program or school. A lottery system for student selection was more prevalent among Early College schools (64% of schools) than among Early College programs (19% used this method).

As shown in Figure 14, the most common admissions criteria used by Early Colleges were high school GPAs (79%) and minimum scores on assessment tests such as the PERT (75%). However, more than 80% of EC programs reported using these criteria compared to 57% of EC schools. Thirty-six percent of EC schools specified using different criteria such as portfolios and other types of assessments that were not linked to the college, minimum grade level of students, and eligibility to take college courses.

FIGURE 14 Early Colleges Using Specific Admission Criteria



Note: Figure reflects a total of 56 ECs. Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options.

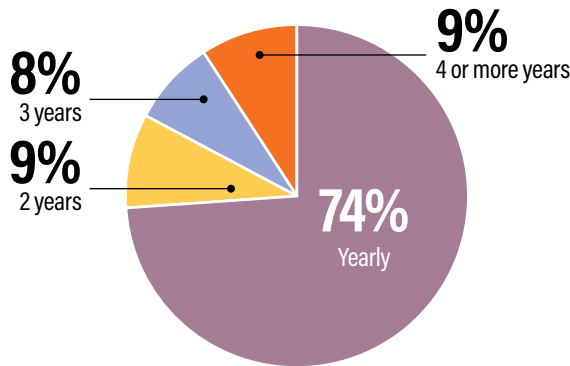
THEMES

When asked about themes that apply to their Early Colleges, the majority of colleges indicated that there wasn't a specific theme. Among those that mentioned a theme, most responded that the EC was focused on helping students earn an Associate of Arts degree. One college had five different Early College programs in collaboration with four high schools, with each one focused on either criminal justice or first responder careers. Another college had 10 different Early College programs across nine high schools, with some focusing on cybersecurity, one on manufacturing, another on leadership, and the rest on general liberal arts.

ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

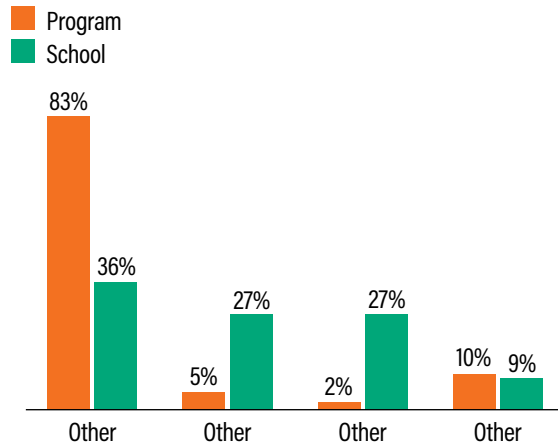
Early Colleges are required by the state of Florida to create articulation agreements between school districts and colleges governing their design, students served, finances and other key topics. Articulation agreements are renewed yearly for the majority (74%) of Early Colleges (see Figure 15). The majority (83%) of EC programs renewed articulation agreements every year. Among EC schools, only 36% renewed yearly while most reported renewing every two years (27%) or three years (27%; see Figure 16).

FIGURE 15 Distribution of Early Colleges by Articulation Agreement Renewal Years



Note: Figure reflects a total of 56 ECs for both figures.

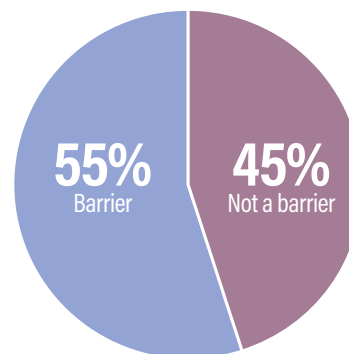
FIGURE 16 Distribution of Early College Type by Articulation Agreement Renewal Years



TRANSPORTATION

Colleges report that transportation can be a barrier to student participation in Early Colleges, as shown in Figure 17.

FIGURE 17 Distribution of Early Colleges Indicating Transportation Is a Barrier

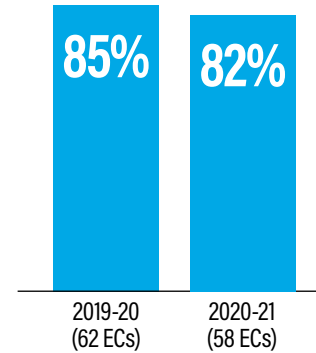


Note: Figure reflects a total of 36 ECs.

ASSOCIATE DEGREES AWARDED

Early College graduates in Florida are very successful in earning a postsecondary award upon graduating from high school. For the two school years considered, more than 80% of Early College graduates were awarded an Associate Degree – 85% in 2019-20 and 82% in 2020-21 (see Figure 18).

FIGURE 18 Associate Degrees Awarded to Early College Graduates, 2020-21 and 2021-22

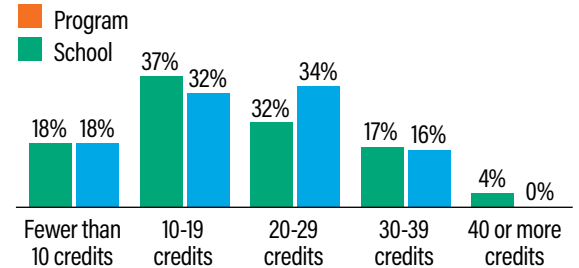


Note: Figure reflects analysis of data from the Florida State Early College Program Data Request information.

AVERAGE COLLEGE CREDITS EARNED

Early Colleges vary in the average number of college credits earned annually by their student populations. As shown in Figure 19, for both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, 82% of Florida Early Colleges reported an average of 10 or more college credits earned by students.²⁰

FIGURE 19 Average Number of Dual Enrollment Credits Earned Annually by All Students, 2019-20 and 2020-21

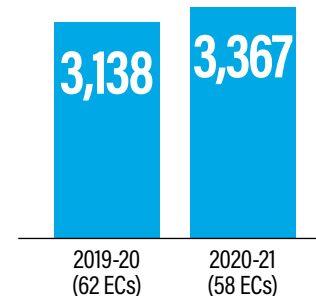


Note: Figure reflects analysis of data from the Florida State Early College Program Data Request information.

EARLY COLLEGE

More than 3,000 EC students graduated each year (see Figure 20) in 2019-20 and 2020-21, with an increase of a little more than 200 from 2019-20 to 2020-21. Interestingly, the total number of students enrolled in Early Colleges had decreased over the two years (refer back to Figure 1).

FIGURE 20 Number of Graduates from Florida Early Colleges, 2019-20 and 2020-21



Note: Figure reflects analysis of data from the Florida State Early College Program Data Request information.

20. Note: A few of the Early College sites had a zero value, no value, or an asterisk mark for average number of dual enrollment credits earned; these were not included in the calculations since these could not be clearly interpreted and the zero college credits earned did not make sense.

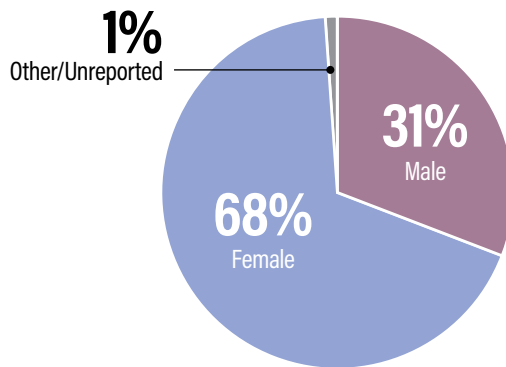
C. THE LANDSCAPE: EARLY ADMISSIONS PROGRAMS

In addition to Early College opportunities, the state of Florida also offers Early Admissions programs to students. Sixteen of the 25 Florida colleges represented in our survey data have Early Admissions programs, while nine colleges do not.

In the 2021-22 school year, 68% of the students enrolled in Early Admissions programs were female, 31% male, and an additional 1% were other gender identities or unreported (see Figure 21).

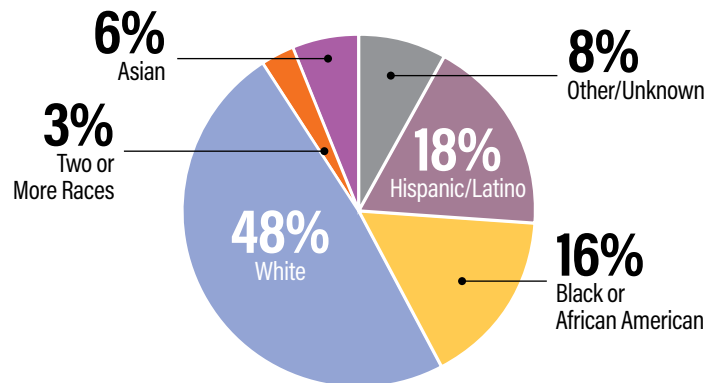
Among the Florida Early Admissions programs that provided demographic data, the largest racial/ethnic group was White students (48%) (see Figure 22). A total of 52% of Early Admissions students were from non-White racial/ethnic groups (including Other/Unknown racial groups). The largest non-White racial/ethnic groups included Hispanic/Latino students (18%) and Black or African American students (16%).

FIGURE 21 Distribution of Florida Early Admissions Students by Gender, 2021-22



Note: Figure reflects a total of 1,646 students across 8 EAs based on data received from 16 colleges participating in this study.

FIGURE 22 Distribution of Florida Early Admissions Students by Race/Ethnicity, 2021-22



Note: Figure reflects a total of 1,415 students across 8 EAs based on data received from 16 colleges participating in this study.

Students from two groups less than 1% (American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander) are not displayed.

While all Early Admissions programs serve 12th grade students (100%) (see Figure 23), almost one third of programs also serve students in grade 11 (31%). While 13% of programs serve students in grade 9 or grade 10, only one program of those surveyed serves students in grade 8. Most survey respondents indicated that their Early Admissions program serves solely 12th grade students (69%). However, a few programs serve multiple grade levels including grades 11-12 (19%), grades 9-12 (6%), and grades 8-12 (6%) (see Figure 24).

FIGURE 23 Grade Levels Served by Early Admissions Programs

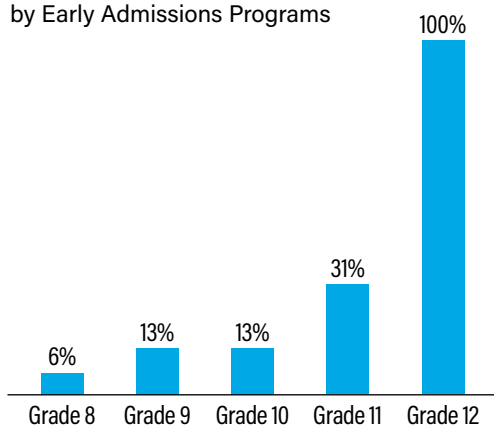
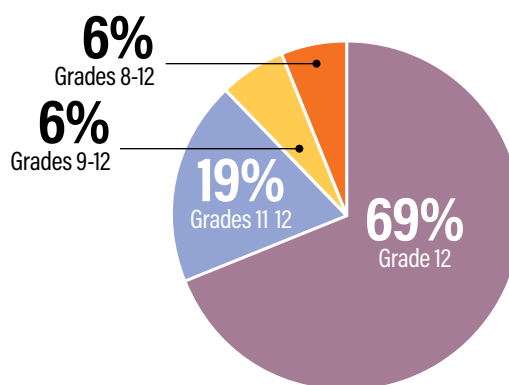


FIGURE 24 Range of Grade Levels Served by Early Admissions Programs



Note: Figures reflect a total of 16 EAs.

Early Admissions programs in Florida are primarily located on college campuses (81%), while none are located solely at an off-college campus high school site (see Figure 25). Some programs (19%) reported other arrangements: their locations are both at the high school site and on the college campus, or solely online. As shown in Figure 26, most programs reported that students take their college courses on the college campus (88%), while two programs have other arrangements whereby students take the majority of their courses both at the college campus and online (13%).

FIGURE 25 Distribution of Early Admissions Programs by Location

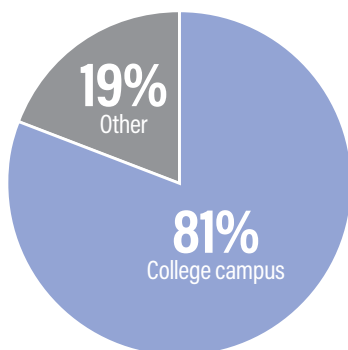
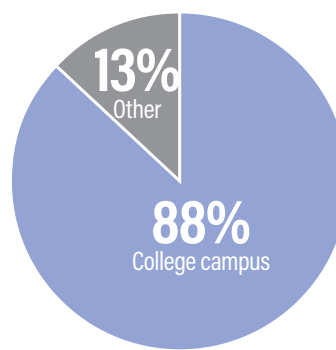


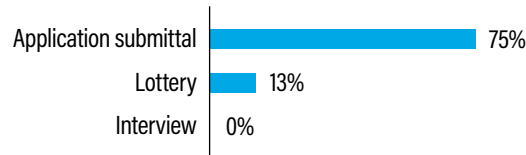
FIGURE 26 Distribution of Early Admissions Programs by College Course-taking Location



Note: Figures reflect a total of 56 ECs.

Most Early Admissions programs require an application for admission into their program (75%) as seen in Figure 27. Several indicated that a lottery system is a step required in the admission process (13%). No programs required interviews.

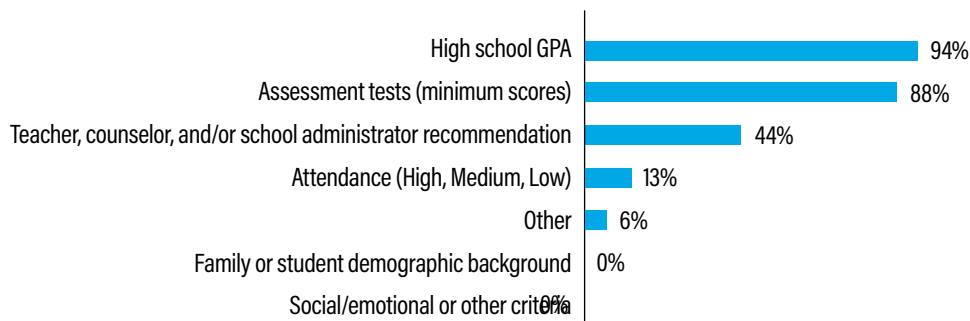
FIGURE 27 Steps Required for Admission into the Early Admissions Program



Note: Figure reflects a total of 16 EAs. Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options.

Most EA programs responded on the survey that they use high school GPA (94%) and minimum scores on assessment tests such as the PERT (88%) as criteria for admission into their Early Admissions program (see Figure 28). Almost half of respondents also used teacher, counselor, and/or school administrator recommendation (44%) as a criterion for admission.

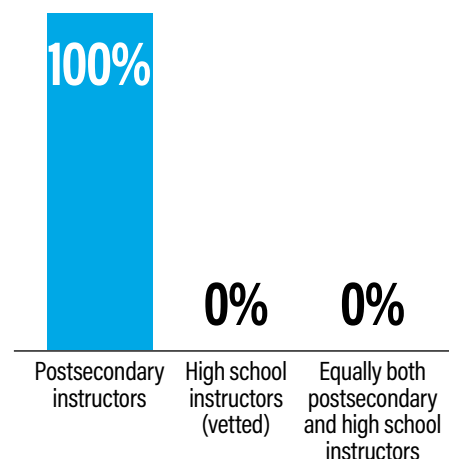
FIGURE 28 Early Admissions Programs Using Specific Admission Criteria



Note: Figure reflects a total of 16 EAs. Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options.

Regarding the type of instructors who teach the majority of college courses taken by students, all Early Admissions programs responded that postsecondary instructors teach their college courses (100%) as shown in Figure 29.

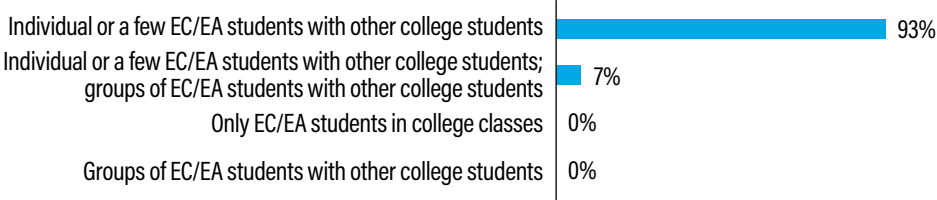
FIGURE 29 Who Teaches the Majority of College Courses



Note: Figure reflects a total of 14 EAs.

While most Early Admissions programs enroll their students into college courses with other college students (93%), one program indicated that it may enroll its students in college classes individually or in groups (7%). See Figure 30.

FIGURE 30 Student Composition of the Majority of College Courses Taken



Note: Figure reflects a total of 14 EAs.

Almost all survey respondents indicated that their Early Admissions students can earn an Associate degree (94%) and a high percentage also indicated that students can earn a certificate (69%) as seen in Figure 31.

FIGURE 31 Types of Degrees/Awards Students Can Earn



Note: Figure reflects a total of 16 EAs.

D. EARLY COLLEGE DESIGNS AND PRACTICES

Each college in the Florida state system is required to collaborate with public school districts (including charter schools) within its service area to establish Early College (EC) programs. As mentioned earlier, the two most common forms of Early College dual enrollment entities are Early College programs and whole, stand-alone high school models.²¹

PROGRAM MODEL

EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAMS: Early College programs in Florida are of two main types, both of which allow students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an AA/AS degree. In one model, EC programs pull students from multiple school sites, including public schools within the district, private schools, charter schools, and home-schooled students, into a dual enrollment program located on a college campus or at another location. In the other model, a group of students from one school is enrolled as a cohort in the EC. As determined by the EC program, student enrollment may begin in ninth, tenth, and/or eleventh grade. Typically, students are enrolled full-time at the college in their eleventh and twelfth grade years.

Generally, students who wish to participate in Early College programs must meet specific admissions criteria, including a 3.0 high school GPA and college-level proficiency in English and math, as indicated by performance on high stakes, standardized exams. In Florida, the GPA and exam requirements mean that most Early College programs and schools enroll students who are already on track for post-secondary enrollment and success. In fact, some of these programs are explicitly conceptualized as acceleration programs for students who are already among the most academically successful in the district. College and high school administrators explained that these EC programs then focus on supporting the highest academic achievement possible, with the intention of allowing students to earn maximum scholarship offers at the most competitive colleges in the nation.

21. The majority, but not all, Early College schools are also collegiate high schools.

In addition to assessing college readiness in academic skills, some EC programs assess applicants for certain “soft skills.” One college administrator noted the importance of student effort, persistence, and commitment:

The programs are designed for students who first and foremost, are willing to work hard. [When] we recruit, we talk to students’ parents and students about – “the student needs to want this because it’s a rigorous course of study. And they’re going to need to put in the time and effort.” And if they’re not willing to do that, then a collegiate high school program and Early College program can hurt them because it can damage their college transcript ...

The COVID-19 pandemic conditions required a shift in regulations on testing requirements, broadening admissions criteria. During the 2020-2021 academic year, some Early College programs used “alternate placement methods” to determine college-level proficiency, which altered eligibility criteria for enrollment in college classes. Colleges reported using different indicators, including scores on SAT/ACT exams, grades in high school courses, and high school GPAs as alternate measures. Among those interviewed, all but one college reported similar levels of success for students who accessed college courses using the alternate placement as had occurred historically with students placed using placement tests. The positive results for students admitted under alternative methods and criteria led EC programs to reconsider traditional concepts of “readiness,” broadening their willingness to enroll students who might have previously been screened out. One dual enrollment coordinator we interviewed commented on students admitted using alternative admissions methods:

They did almost as well as students who came in with placement testing [which] was surprising to me. I did not expect that kind of a positive result, but it was very positive and interesting and I think opened up minds to the possibility that alternative measures could be another pathway for students to begin their college education early.

However, at one college, a group of students admitted using alternate measures was unsuccessful in their first semester of college course-taking and lost eligibility for continued participation in the program.

WHOLE SCHOOL MODELS: The other common structure in Florida is a whole high school model. Whole schools are traditional public or charter high schools that are often situated on a college campus and serve students either in ninth through twelfth grade, tenth through twelfth grade, or eleventh through twelfth grade, depending on the school. Some of these schools rely on a lottery to admit students because there are more applicants than slots available. Students take college courses and simultaneously work toward their high school and AA/AS degrees. If a school serves students only in 11th and 12th grades, the students are enrolled full-time at the college.

A proportion of whole school EC models serves students beginning in the ninth grade in order to prepare them to meet the criteria to take dual enrollment courses by the time they are 11th graders. Providing EC services in the earlier grades is a deliberate strategy to expand access to a broader population of students than would be possible if the school began enrolling students as juniors.

There are several features of the whole school EC model that school and college leaders felt contributed to their success. In particular, creating small, closely monitored communities was believed to be essential. Described as being “high touch,” “highly engaging” spaces that were “fully integrated as a part of the college,” the whole school model was perceived as creating nurturing, family-like spaces that “changed the lives” of the students who attended them.

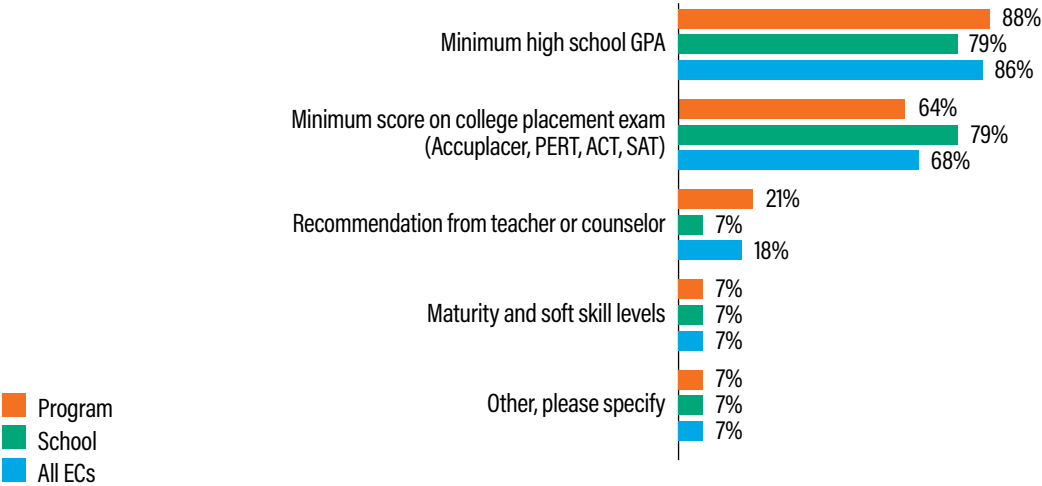
One challenge encountered by some charter schools implementing the whole school EC model involved competition with districts for high-capacity students and funding. The EC charter schools’ student recruitment process has involved their sending letters of invitation to apply to all district students who were qualified for admission. Apprehensive about losing their most capable students as well as the funds that would follow them to the college, some districts have begun to refuse to share student information with the EC charter schools.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

ACADEMIC GOALS AND THEMES: The academic programs offered by both Early College models vary across institutions. Most frequently, Early Colleges are structured so that students can earn a general AA degree, with the goal of enabling them to earn the maximum number of general education credits that can be transferred to a four-year college. Additionally, some institutions offer certificate programs, career technical education (CTE) pathways, or other pathways leading to an AS degree. Currently, Florida colleges offer Early College CTE programs in Welding, Aviation Airframes, Criminal Justice, and Fire Science Technology. A number of recently developed programs have a STEM focus.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY FOR COLLEGE COURSEWORK: Some students enter their Early College school or program before being deemed ready for college coursework. For example, in schools where students enroll in grade 9, their college course-taking may not begin until they reach upper grades. In these cases, Early College programs and schools consider a range of criteria to determine when students are eligible to begin taking college courses. As shown in Figure 32, a minimum high school GPA is the most common criteria (86%) used by both schools and programs. Minimum scores on college placement exams were considered by 68% of all Early Colleges; however, a much higher percentage of schools (83%) used this criterion as opposed to programs (64%).

FIGURE 32 Criteria Considered to Determine Eligibility to Start Taking College Courses



Note: Figure reflects a total of 56 ECs. Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options.

COURSE SELECTION: Choices about what courses to take and in what order are typically determined by the need to meet high school graduation requirements along with general education or program-specific AA or AS requirements. Both the high school counselor and college advisor need to be involved in these conversations with students to make sure that students' course-taking meets all requirements for graduation, as well as being aligned with their goals for the future. As a Director of K-12 Partnerships stated,

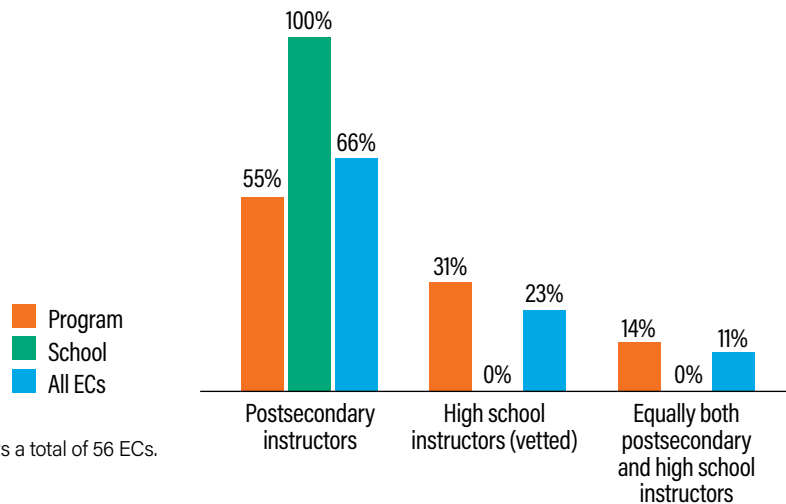
Your first priority is to meet your high school graduation requirements. So that is the counselor piece, and then we encourage them to meet with a student success navigator, who is a college advisor, to align those courses to the AA. So that's the approach that we take.

At some colleges, careful planning ensures that dual enrollment college courses will transfer to four-year institutions within Florida. At one Early College, students are asked to select a pathway in STEM, business, or general education and to take courses that will prepare them for transfer into a related major in a four-year college.

COHORTING: Although Florida statute specifies that students should take college courses as a cohort, survey and interview data indicate that placement of students in college courses as a cohort was less common (42%) than enrollment of students individually or in small groups in courses with traditional college students (53%). In some Early Colleges, students take their initial college classes as a cohort but disperse for subsequent classes. Many EC interviewees explicitly highlighted the value of a "college experience" and exposure to traditional college students as a key benefit of the Early College approach. Course-taking with traditional college students allowed Early College students to see themselves as college students, capable of achieving on similar levels as traditional college-aged students.

COLLEGE COURSE INSTRUCTORS: When asked about who taught the majority of college classes taken by EC students, more than two-thirds of Early Colleges indicated that postsecondary instructors taught the courses (see Figure 33). However, when comparing Early College programs and whole school models, all (100%) of whole schools relied primarily on postsecondary instructors. The majority of Early College programs also relied primarily on postsecondary instructors (55%) but 31% reported that the majority of their college courses were taught by vetted high school instructors. Also 14% (6 programs through one college) indicated that both were equally used – courses worth 30 college credits in grades 9-11 at the high school were taught by vetted high school instructors and courses worth 30 college credits in grade 12 were taught by postsecondary instructors.

FIGURE 33 Who Teaches the Majority of College Courses



Note: Figure reflects a total of 56 ECs.

In places where vetted high school instructors were used to teach the majority of the college courses, professional development (PD) was provided to support these faculty. Frequently coordinated by someone at the college or district level, PD generally consisted of meetings between the college faculty and high school instructors, or content-specific meetings and conferences (e.g., conferences hosted by National Council for Teachers of Math and National Council for Teachers of English). Content-specific meetings often focused on how to best prepare high school students for college expectations in math, English, or other fields of study. Early College high schools, as a whole school model rather than one of many programs a school offers, allow for a more targeted focus, and coherent approach to PD.

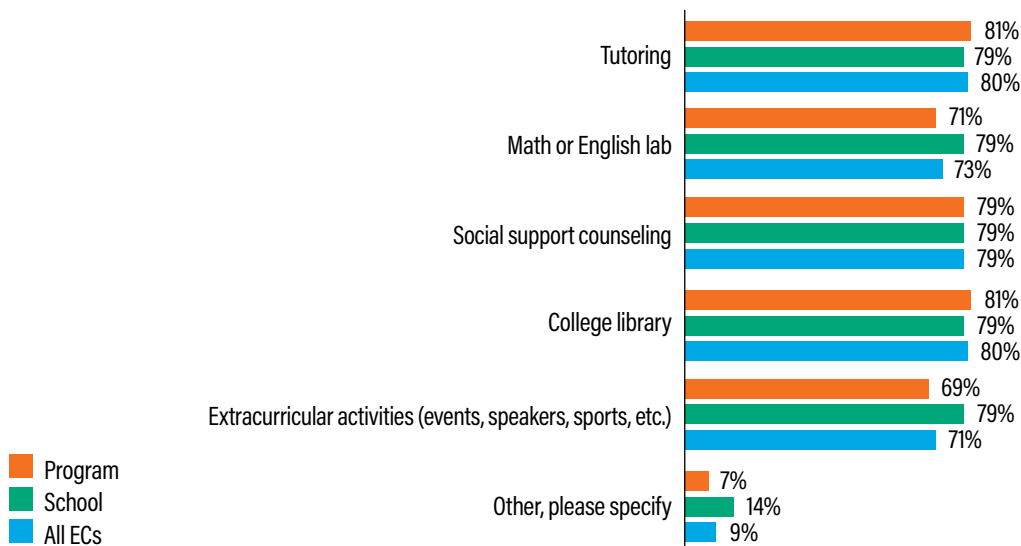
STUDENT SUPPORTS

Your first priority is to meet your high school graduation requirements. So that is the counselor piece, and then we encourage them to meet with a student success navigator, who is a college advisor, to align those courses to the AA. So that's the approach that we take.

SUPPORTS AVAILABLE: A holistic approach to meeting student needs was described as foundational at every Early College. Considering academic needs, mental health, physical well-being, and structures to enhance students' sense of belonging were common features of student support systems. These supports were sometimes offered by the college partner and sometimes by the Early College program's home high school or Early College school.

Students have access to additional support resources due to the college partnerships that are intrinsic to Early Colleges. College representatives who participated in our survey were asked to select all the resources/services available to Early College students from a list of options. More than 70% of them indicated that the following were available to Early College students through the College: tutoring, math or English labs, social support counseling, and the college library (see Figure 34). A similar proportion indicated that extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs were available to Early College students.

FIGURE 34 Resources/Services Available to Early College Students from the College Partner

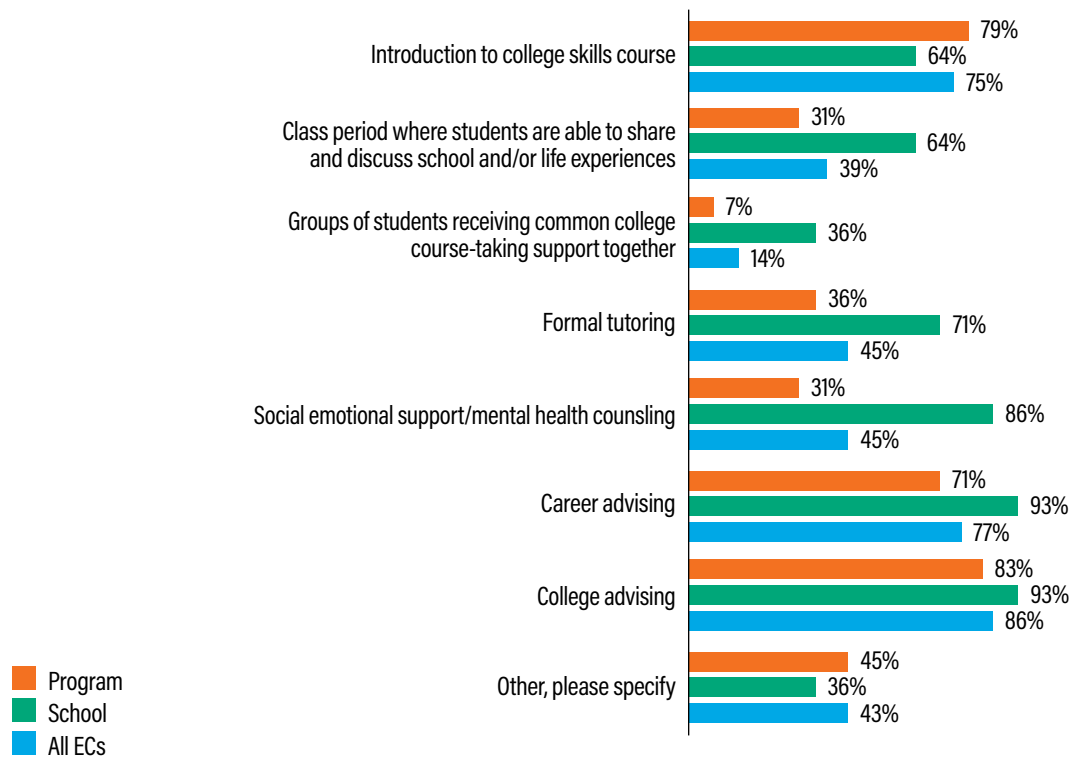


Note: Figure reflects a total of 45 ECs. Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options.

In terms of supports provided by the Early College (K-12) in addition to any offered by the college partner, college advising was the most common support offered (86%), followed by career advising (77%), and introduction to college skills courses (75%). See Figure 35.

When disaggregated by programs versus schools, the same three support features were most commonly offered by Early College programs. However, for Early College schools, college advising and career advising were the most common supports offered with 93% offering each. Furthermore, there were noticeable differences between programs and schools for the following provided supports: a) A class period where students are able to share and discuss school and/or life experiences (31% of programs vs. 64% of schools); b) Groups of students receiving common college course-taking support together (7% vs. 36%); c) Formal tutoring (36% vs. 71%); and d) Social-emotional support/mental health counseling (31% vs. 86%). In some cases, these supports may be offered by students' home high schools.

FIGURE 35 Supports That Early Colleges Provide to Students



Note: Figure reflects a total of 48 ECs. Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options.

ADVISING (COLLEGE AND CAREER): College partners most frequently cited Early College counselors as the most common source of support for students. Some districts funded counselors or academic success coaches who were situated on the college campus to work exclusively with Early College students. As a Director of Dual Enrollment said,

[The] college advisors go out to the high schools, so students are familiar with [them]. The director of dual enrollment takes different advisors [to the schools/programs] each time [so] when the students come to the campus, they are more acclimated and are not afraid to go to advising for help. That transition to when they're coming to us [i.e., the college] is much smoother.

Other institutions assign specific college advisors to meet, plan courses, and provide support to Early College students. Easy access to these advisors is perceived as especially beneficial to students.

Small group, large group, one-on-one, and individual meetings between college advisors and students and families were all mentioned as valuable advising approaches. Clear communication, easily accessible online content, a well-established process for monitoring students, and counselors' being aware of what classes students were eligible to take were all seen as contributing to effective advising. Several places developed individualized academic plans for each student in the Early College program.

Having a structured advising system that addressed four-year college goals has alleviated some of the challenges that historically occurred at one college when some courses taken through dual enrollment were not accepted for transfer. An interviewee explained that,

In the past, we have seen where a lot of students get AA degrees, but then they still need to come to take specific courses needed for the university they plan to go to after the AA. We want them to take as much as they can here to apply to what they need to do for their four-year degree.

The *Interactive My Academic Planner* (IMAP), an interactive "next generation planning tool" used at one college, was also perceived as decreasing barriers to the transfer of credits to four-year colleges. The planning tool was specifically designed to allow students to plan their coursework through the completion of their bachelor's degree, creating a "seamless pathway" between the associate and bachelor's degrees.

COLLEGE SUCCESS CLASSES: College success classes, sometimes called Introduction to College or Student Life Skills are another support available to high school students at many colleges and required at others. The courses are designed to help students set goals, learn to manage time, hone study and test-taking skills, and explore majors and careers. A college representative pointed out that the Student Life Skills course at her college requires that students complete an educational plan, which operates as a safeguard against “students accruing credits for courses that fit their schedules but not their career plan,” setting them up to accumulate too few credits in one area and too many in another. One college brings the college success course to the high school campus to introduce dual enrollment in a familiar setting to students who might not otherwise consider it.

PROGRESS MONITORING: Early intervention or early warning systems like Starfish or Drop Out Detective were also perceived as a powerful form of support for students. These systems provided a way for people on either the high school or college side, depending on the institution, to reach out to students who are at risk of failing a particular course, monitor attendance and grades, and send alerts to dual enrollment advisors. One college administrator explained,

The college has a dashboard and we can monitor how students are doing in our classes--our academic advisor does that for us. If we have a student that maybe we're concerned about, maybe we know that they're dealing with a social-emotional issue or they're taking a course that is especially challenging for them, we're going to watch them a little closer.

Once advisors at the college or high school were alerted to concerns, effective interventions could follow. One college representative explained,

Our counselors are really well-versed in the supports that exist on the college campus and they will literally hand walk kids to a support mechanism.... [They] will literally say let's go for a walk and go find tutoring services and introduce the student to multiple people at tutoring services so that they feel comfortable going in on their own at a later date.

Several colleges concurred that an early alert or early intervention system could be helpful and would decrease reliance on students self-reporting their academic challenges, which might not always be accurate. Early alert systems enable colleges and schools or programs to intervene with students to prevent them from failure.

SUPPORT COURSES: Some Early Colleges offered a course, sometimes called a “Seminar,” intended to provide structured support for students related to their college course-taking. Seminar is a regularly scheduled course, has a specific curriculum targeted to address the needs of the particular student cohort with the goal of increasing students’ likelihood of success in their college or work experience. The course may be focused on providing academic help or it may be used for skill-building. Additionally, support courses provide a space for the development of close peer relationships and close relationships between the instructor and the students. Student academic success is supported by close, caring student-teacher relationships, as well as peer relationships. At one college, the support course focused on developing students’ soft skills. At another, it functioned similarly to the college success skills class. Two college representatives talked about their support courses in this way.

The Seminar is a required weekly 45-minute course. It is facilitated by our principals and our school counselors and encompasses a lot of things, including how to register for classes right, time management, progress monitoring, how to talk to a professor, doing your resume, maybe some interviewing tips.

We've had a leadership course in the past, where they learned about social media, dress for success, table manners. You know handshakes, eye contact, how to start a conversation... and that ends in a capstone leadership luncheon. We also do the college application process. We have guest speakers from various fields and leadership and career pathways for our students.

Similar supports that function like Seminar in some Early Colleges include monthly assemblies at one school and First Fridays at a College with multiple Early College programs. First Fridays were described as an opportunity for juniors and seniors, who aren’t scheduled for classes on Friday, to meet with a counselor and teacher to work on soft skill building.

PEER AND ALUMNI INTERACTIONS

Some Early Colleges described peer or alumni interactions as central to the supports they provide their current students. Having opportunities for current students to see recently graduated Early College students who are successful either in college or in their careers is central in helping them establish identities as college students or future professionals. Two school leaders shared,

We have a heavy presence of our alumni. We've connected with our immediate past students who are either in graduate school or have just recently finished graduate school and are in corporate America. That is a weekly activity and, honestly, it's probably working better with COVID than it did before, because it is nothing to have a kid in Chicago doing a session talking about her job and engineering.

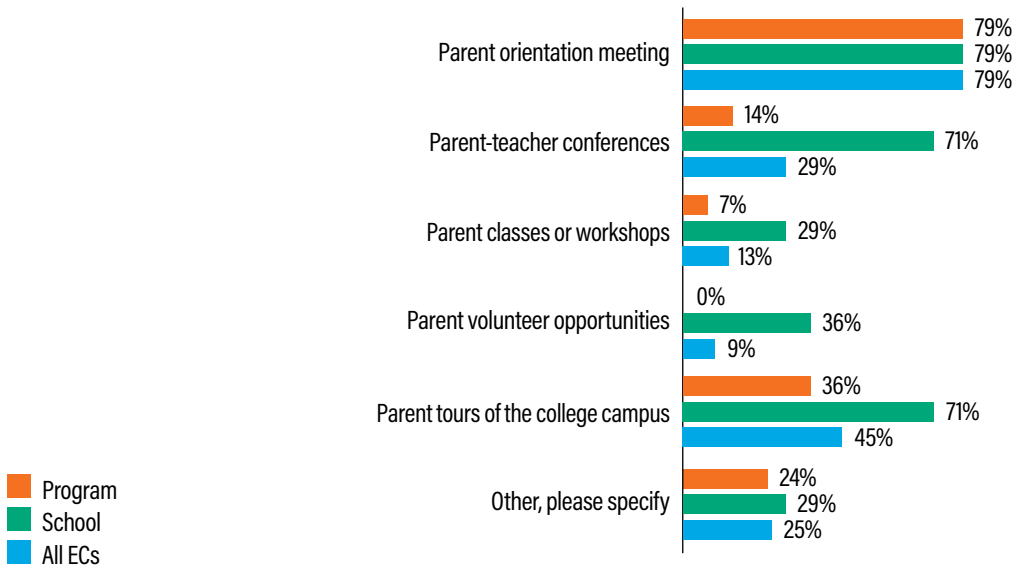
We have a peer-mentor program where [successful dually-enrolled students have] developed an entire kind of curriculum that they space out over the ninth and tenth grade. They take over a class every so often and give a lesson. There are kids talking to kids about lessons that we know are important, like time management.

PARENT OR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

In-person and Zoom parent information sessions were a strategy many colleges discussed as a form of support. Whether the goal was solely to provide information, give tours of the campus, increase students' comfort with the college, or to help students and parents align their goals for dual enrollment, introductory meetings for students and their families are an essential part of supporting the transition to Early College. Interviewees pointed out that parental outreach has actually become easier since the pandemic, as people have become accustomed to online interaction.

Parent orientation meetings were the most common support that Early Colleges provided to the parents of their students, offered by 79% of Early Colleges, as shown in Figure 36. Among Early College schools, over half indicated that they provide parent-teacher conferences and parent tours of the college campus.

FIGURE 36 Supports That Early Colleges Provide to Parents



Note: Figure reflects a total of 44 ECs. Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options.

PARTNERSHIPS

Stakeholders at all levels of Early College partnerships spoke highly of the Early College model and of their partnering district/school or college. Aspects of the partnership that facilitated close working relationships included regularly scheduled meeting and planning times, clear and responsive communication, and dedicated key personnel whose roles and responsibilities were specifically targeted to Early College initiatives and needs, according to two college representatives.

I think we've got a great voice inside of the school district of the exact expectations and requirements of the program but also the benefits of the program. [But] I think that is just because of the unique relationship the Dual Enrollment Director has developed with a lot of the district people.

The articulation meetings that we have twice a year—the agenda allows us to have additional communication with all the schools. ... And even sometimes [when] we can't do exactly what the school wants, by us being there they know they can call us. We'll listen and will do our best to make the changes that we can make or do.

Direct contact between the college advising system and the high school guidance departments was viewed as essential. Regularly scheduled meetings between the two sides of the partnership for the purpose of sharing information and troubleshooting were often cited as promising practices. The easy access and direct contact between the college advising system and high school guidance departments facilitated collaboration and knowledge-sharing so that each side of the partnership obtained the benefit of each other's expertise; this shared expertise was then used in decision-making. The partners trusted one another's perspectives and expertise, which allowed for true collaboration. The relationships showed a joint commitment to the success of the project. One college partner noted that,

We do specific training, where we hold a counselor breakfast and have them come on campus and show them processes. We really ask them for a lot of feedback for ways to improve our dual enrollment process and they've been integral in that. For example, we're looking to roll out a new form in the spring and so we've had some volunteers to work with us. I really feel like their feedback and their insight have been important.

Many Early College schools felt their partnerships were particularly strong because they were fully integrated into the college. One high school representative said,

We're part of the college family; we are not the high school who's on a corner of the college campus... I serve on various college-wide committees; the principals serve on various campus committees. We do professional development with the college. They have the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Our faculty are invited and encouraged to be a part of that.

A point of tension between districts and colleges that was mentioned several times is the funding of the Early College approach. Districts were sometimes perceived as being reluctant to have students participate in college course-taking because a portion of the students' FTE followed the student to the college, to pay for the cost of college courses. On the other hand, colleges sometimes were concerned about the discounted rate that Early College students paid, noting that the tuition received did not cover the cost of participation in courses. The nature of funding is a source of possible tension between schools and colleges and may be a disincentive to participate in the initiative.

Some programs had support from external partners. These external partnerships were most common in programs that were offering a CTE pathway. One college representative described an external partnership that provides mentoring to students:

The most notable example is the advanced manufacturing [CTE program which has] a corporate partner that is deeply involved. In the case of our advanced manufacturing program, it's Johnson and Johnson Vision²². They have employee volunteers who [mentor students].

22. For information on this company, see <https://www.jnjvisionpro.com/>.

ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOLS

The two Collegiate High Schools at St. Petersburg College (SPC) are campus-based, Early College charter high schools that serve Pinellas County students in grades 10 through 12. Students take high school classes on the college campus in grade 10. Beginning in their junior year, all students attend St. Petersburg College full-time, earning their high school diploma and an associate degree simultaneously. SPC issues both the high school and college diplomas. A third Collegiate High School is opening in the fall of 2022 with a STEM focus. This school will serve students in grades 9 through 12, which will allow for more open admission standards, as students will be provided support specifically in math classes in ninth and tenth grades. A school leader stated,

These programs change lives, for first generation underserved populations - economically disadvantaged students, in particular - but they change lives for all students. Students don't waste time after they've participated in a Collegiate High School model. And the thing I like about the Collegiate High School is everything is there. We operate like a small family--all the support is right there.... If I know you as a student and I'm your principal and you're walking down the hallway and you're usually happy and everything's great, and I see you looking not happy, I'm not going to just keep walking. There's power in being right there.

Students are admitted to the Collegiate High Schools based on their high school GPA, since the schools serve students beginning in grade 10. All district students with a GPA of 3.0 or above receive a mailing encouraging them to apply. In the 2020-21 academic year, students earned an average of 30 college credits. Almost all graduates (95%) in the same year earned an associate degree as well as a high school diploma.

Students are supported throughout high school and their college course-taking by both high school guidance counselors and dedicated college advisors. The counseling and advising approach is holistic and includes information for families about navigating college as well as how students can position themselves to be successful, well-rounded people as they move into careers or to four-year institutions. A school leader shared information about how on-campus activities, volunteerism, and work can help students determine what their long-term plans and goals are:

They save money, not only by getting two years of college for free but by learning how to be a successful college student and knowing for sure--trying some of those college classes on for size in their college major that they think they want. And by doing the career interest inventories and the career guidance that we give them. They get away from what mom and dad think they should do, to really figuring out what do I want to do? What are my strengths? Where's my passion? What do I really love? What means something to me? And how can I make a difference in this world, and have the quality of standard of living that I want economically to be happy and self-sufficient and contribute to society? That is priceless.

Structurally, SPC integrates the Collegiate High Schools into the college campus, treating them as a department within the college, which allows them to truly function as a part of the campus. A formal agreement between the college and the charter school outlines the nature of the partnership.

FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE AT JACKSONVILLE

Florida State College at Jacksonville serves Duval County. It is the college with the largest number of unique Early Colleges in Florida with ten programs. The programs are housed in existing high schools and serve students in grades 9-12. Students spend grades 9 and 10 at their high school site where they participate in college courses as a cohort. In the spring term of 9th grade, students typically enroll in an academic success skills college course – SLS 1103: Strategies for Success in College, Career and Life – or if they already took that course as part of a preparatory program in 8th grade, they may take another college course and continue to take a few courses the following year. Then, in grades 11 and 12, students take college courses on the college campus. For the most part, the high school students take their classes together, but there may also be other college students present if there are remaining slots. Postsecondary instructors teach both the college courses taken at the high school and the college.

The ten Early College programs include:

- a combination of four career-focused academies – a cybersecurity academy at two different high schools, an advanced manufacturing academy, and an academy of leadership.
- six programs focused on general education and the liberal arts which include two programs that prepare students to eventually earn a teaching license.

These programs allow students to earn their associate of arts or associate of science degree upon graduating from high school, as well as industry certifications that provide students with options to progress into the workforce or continue their education. The college plans to open two additional Early Colleges in the 2022-23 school year and, unlike their other programs, one would be a charter school located on the college campus and the other, a private school.

The college does outreach to 8th-grade students through a pre-early college program that allows students to participate in the college's student life skills course during their spring term. Approximately 7-10 middle schools were recently involved. While this opportunity is a launchpad for the Early College program to commence in 9th grade, it also prepares students to enter other accelerated program options aside from Early College.

To support students through their Early College program during grades 11 and 12 when they are mostly at the college, some of the programs have a feature called 'First Fridays.' Students are in classes between Monday and Thursday, leaving Fridays open for focused time when high school students can meet in groups for advising on their schoolwork and life and soft skills development. Plans for the upcoming school year include expanding supports to students in the earlier grades, such as visits from the dual enrollment coordinators to provide an overview of resources to 9th graders and providing career exploration exercises for 10th graders in collaboration with the college's Career Services division.

Of the 184 graduates from these programs in 2021, all earned associate degrees and 54 earned industry certifications.

E. EARLY ADMISSIONS DESIGNS AND PRACTICES

ABOUT EARLY ADMISSIONS

THE PROGRAM: Early Admission students from some or all high schools in a district attend college while still officially enrolled at their home high school. They may participate in extracurricular high school activities and have access to their high school counseling services. Ultimately, they participate in high school graduation ceremonies alongside their classmates. If they have earned an AA degree in the process, they participate in two ceremonies, sometimes wearing a decorative cord from their college graduation as they receive their high school diploma.

Early Admissions programs in Florida allow high school students to enroll at a college on a full-time basis, carrying between 12-18 credits a semester, in their junior or senior year of high school, completing their high school graduation requirements while earning college credits that will apply to an associate degree, a technical certificate, or be transferred to a four-year institution.

At many Florida Colleges and K-12 schools, Early Admission is not distinguished from general dual enrollment, whereas Early College programs are. As one college representative explained,

Many students are enrolled full-time, not because we've invited them to enroll full-time as an Early Admissions student but because they've been doing dual enrollment for a couple of years, they've taken all their high school courses, so they spend their senior year enrolled at the college full-time.

At one Florida college, which serves more than 40 high schools, Early Admission students are categorized as "general academic dual enrollment," which might include sixth graders enrolled in one or two college classes as well as high school students enrolled full-time. "No one—including parents—knows who is in which program. It's all blended," explained one director of dual enrollment.

ADMISSION INTO THE PROGRAM: Admissions requirements are identified in the articulation agreements between school districts and colleges. Most Florida colleges admit students to Early Admission programs (as well as general dual enrollment) based on a minimum GPA (3.0 or higher) and qualifying scores on either the Florida Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT) or a college readiness exam, such as the Accuplacer or ACT/SAT. Some programs require letters of recommendation from a high school counselor, teacher, or school administrator. Lotteries may be employed if space is limited.

At least some interviewees would like to see the guidelines relaxed for entry into Early Admission. One leader was worried about opportunities denied to students because of rigid cut-off scores.

How do you provide opportunities across the board for all students, whether they are the 2.5 [GPA] students that might do great in a different program or a 3.5 student who is already excelling? ... Maybe we're missing that student with a 2.8 who, with the right opportunity and management, would have a great start into college.

Results from flexible admissions requirements to Early College schools and programs during the pandemic give validity to this concern.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

STUDENT PLACEMENT: The pandemic may have interfered with the administration of standardized tests, but it also provided an opportunity for some colleges to experiment with admission based on demonstrated competency or completion of high school coursework. As mentioned earlier in the discussion on Early College, one college reported that the performance of students who were enrolled in college courses based on course grades and those admitted based on placement tests was very similar. The college was involved in a pilot program during the pandemic to experiment with the new testing protocols and submitted its data to the state.

Another large state college unable to administer traditional placement tests due to the pandemic reported that they admitted students into college English courses based solely on students' high school English grades. "We had to send 130 students back to their high schools this year due to poor performance in college English," the director of dual enrollment told us. She expressed skepticism about eliminating placement tests as an admission criterion.

COURSEWORK: Early Admission students are usually able to take any courses available to traditional college students. High school counselors guide them toward those courses that will allow them to graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate degree. At some colleges, efforts are made to make sure that the courses taken will transfer into the students' likely college major at a four-year institution.

COURSE DELIVERY: In most cases, Early Admission students take their college courses on the college campus, taught by college faculty. However, since the pandemic, online course delivery has proliferated across the state. Though students, parents, and instructors were initially hesitant, interviewees reported that many have begun to embrace the flexibility of online learning for Early Admission coursework. Also, online programs are more accessible to students who live in outlying and rural areas, which might entail a lengthy drive to a campus. Students can attend an orientation with their parents, meet with an advisor, register for classes, receive tutoring services, and access library and other campus resources without setting foot on a college campus. One high school principal suggested that the growth of online course delivery might change the necessity for high schools and colleges to restrict their partnerships to specific geographic regions.

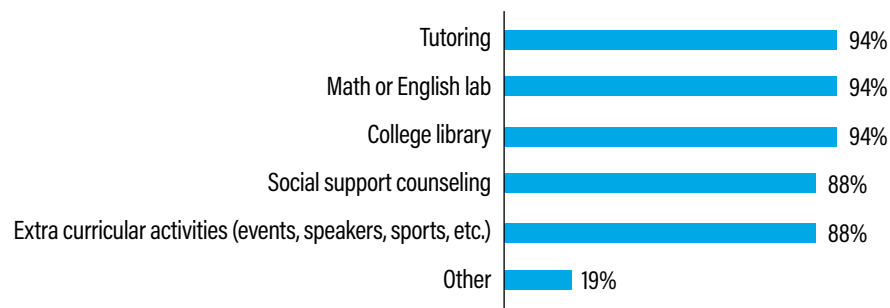
STUDENT SUPPORTS

ADVISING: The advisement systems in place at colleges and high schools are key to the success of students enrolled in Early Admission programs as well as to the success of the programs themselves. Those we interviewed discussed advisors at both the college and high school levels as well as school principals who are committed to helping Early Admission students achieve their goals. Many college advisors meet regularly with advisors from the school district or high schools so that each sector is familiar with the information disseminated by the other. This can ensure that students receive accurate information and know where to go to for guidance. One college advisor said of high school counselors,

I know those counselors are getting pulled in a million different directions but the more thorough our information, the clearer the pathway for students to a degree. It's really about communication on both sides.

OTHER SUPPORTS: As shown in Figure 37, colleges offer a range of services to their Early Admission students; generally, these are the same services available to all other students attending the college.

FIGURE 37 Support Services Provided to Early Admissions Students by Colleges



Note: Figure reflects a total of 16 ECs. Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options

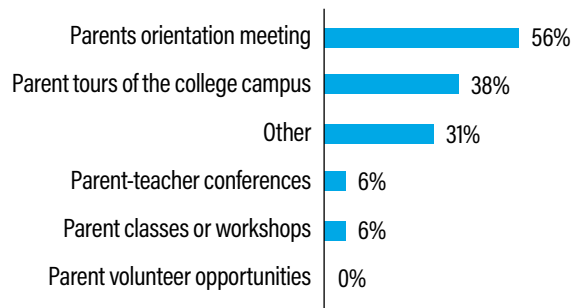
However, actual support mechanisms and structures vary across the state. At some colleges, students are assigned a designated advisor who follows them as they progress through the program. At one such school, students are required to meet with the college advisor before registering for classes each semester. The dual enrollment advisor described the advisement system as “fairly intrusive but in the students’ best interest.” Another small college rotates college admissions “navigators” to various feeder high schools. The navigators visit the largest schools weekly to build rapport with the students and academic and counseling staff. Another college placed its academic counselor at the high school full-time; however, college staff reductions have meant that the counselor now serves several high schools in the region.

Almost all colleges offer in-person or online tutoring services to Early Admission students. Math and English labs and the library are widely accessible to these students. In addition, several colleges have activated early alert systems. At one, a “dropout detective” allows advisors to monitor attendance and grades and the dual enrollment advisor reaches out to students at risk. At another college, “nudges” from success coaches ensure that students remain on-track. Many colleges send tutors or guidance counselors to meet with students at their home high schools, especially if located far from the college.

One college has established a Summer Academy intended only for dual enrollment students, who can earn up to nine credits in a six-week period. The Academy includes an orientation and presentations from faculty and staff about various programs offered at the college. Lunch and transportation are provided. Many of the instructors in the Academy are themselves graduates of the college.

PARENT SUPPORTS: More than half of the colleges offer parent orientation evenings to families of Early Admission students as shown in Figure 38. Some require that parents attend those functions. A number of Early Admission programs include families in meetings with guidance counselors before a student enrolls in college classes.

FIGURE 38 Supports Provided by Colleges to Parents of Early Admission Students



Note: Figure reflects a total of 16 ECs. Respondents were asked to select all that apply from a list of options

SCHOOL CULTURE: The high school itself can be the powerful factor in steering students toward college. At one rural middle-high school, the principal credits communication that is “hard and steady,” and begins as soon as sixth graders hit campus when families are first alerted to the availability of dual enrollment programs. The school has devoted its resources to building a college-going culture. Since he became principal five years ago, the number of students who attend college has grown from five to sixty percent. All students at the high school are required to set up a Bright Futures²³ account to track academic progress and prepare them to qualify for scholarships.

23. Bright Futures is a scholarship program that uses lottery funding to reward Florida high school graduates for high academic achievement. See <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SAPBFMAIN/SAPBFMAIN>

PARTNERSHIPS

Across Florida, partnerships between colleges and schools are formalized in articulation agreements between high school districts and the state and community colleges. The agreements are typically reviewed annually. The state statute that defines those agreements permits inclusion of criteria other than grade point average and minimum test scores for admission to dual enrollment programs; however, none of the articulation agreements we examined detailed using alternative admissions criteria.

The articulation agreements also establish course equivalencies, i.e., which college courses count for high school credit, and outline how costs will be shared between the school district and the colleges. One longtime student services specialist described crafting the language in the articulation agreement based on statutory language and then allowing that agreement “to run the show.” Writing the agreement with broad language based on the statute then allowed the college to establish context-specific parameters that worked for their partnership.

The collaboration between the school districts and the colleges is considered key by college personnel. One representative from a college that works with two districts explained how the college brought together the two districts that it serves for the purpose of standardizing the number of class periods in a day. At the time, one district offered four periods and the other seven, which complicated the task of aligning high school graduation requirements with offerings at the college. At one state college campus, the representative credited the communication between the college and high school as especially effective “not just at my level but even with the vice president and district superintendent. They’re always just an email or a phone call away.” This close communication contributed to the partnership between the district and the college, allowing for successful program management and better serving dual enrollment students. Any issues are quickly and efficiently addressed due to the collegiality between district and college personnel.

However, we heard frequently that districts sometimes view the colleges as taking the best students, characterized as a “brain drain” by one district leader, though he claimed that there is still broad support for dual enrollment. Because Early Admission (and Early College) programs serve high-achieving 11th and 12th grade students, the high school teachers do not have the opportunity to teach the strongest students in the upper grades. At the same time, representatives from both colleges and high school districts agreed that cost is not the primary consideration in operating dual enrollment programs:

It's a service mission. At the end of the day, we are a public institution. The dollars and cents don't necessarily align with the mission, which is to provide a high quality post-secondary experience that helps people get out of poverty and move forward in their lives.

F. STATE POLICY

In this chapter, we examine current Florida state policies that affect the implementation of Early College and Early Admission efforts. We share information on how other states have formulated and implemented policies that address these areas and suggest ways that Florida might strengthen policies to advance desired goals.

1. REQUIREMENT THAT EARLY COLLEGE AND EARLY ADMISSION OPPORTUNITIES BE PRESENT IN THE STATE

FLORIDA

Florida requires all districts to enter into a dual enrollment partnership with local colleges that have the capacity to offer dual enrollment courses ([F.S.A. § 1007.271](#)). Unlike other states in which the development of Early Colleges is voluntary on the part of postsecondary institutions, Florida statute, [F.S.A. § 1007.273](#), directs each institution in the Florida College System to work with each school district in its service area to establish one or more Early College programs or school. Charter schools are eligible to develop agreements directly with their local Florida College System institution to establish an Early College program or school.

Furthermore, Florida explicitly permits high school students to enroll full-time in on-campus college course offerings and has state policy supports for such student experiences.

OTHER STATES

Florida is one of 11 states that explicitly permit high school students to enroll full-time in on-campus course offerings and has state policy supports for such student experiences. The other states that allow high school students to enroll full-time in college courses are Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington.

A small number of states – including Idaho and Texas – require all districts to offer Early College credit opportunities, which may include dual enrollment but which may also include Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE). Fewer states – including Colorado – explicitly require all districts to offer dual enrollment. Indiana may be the only state nationally to require all high schools to offer dual enrollment courses. Specifically, Indiana requires every high school to offer a minimum of two dual credit courses and two AP courses; high schools offering at least two Cambridge International (or AICE) courses are considered to meet this requirement ([IC 20-30-10-4](#)).

Other states offering high school students the opportunity to enroll full-time in on-campus college courses do not brand these programs as “Early Admission” or otherwise as separate from on-campus opportunities for high school students taking fewer than 12 credit hours a semester.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School district boundaries in Florida are contiguous with county lines; the size of Florida counties renders Florida school districts much larger than districts in other states. As such, some districts may in practice meet the letter of [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) by having some, but not all, high schools offer dual enrollment courses. To increase student access to dual enrollment opportunities, including Early Admission programs, Florida might consider adopting a policy similar to Indiana’s, requiring all high schools rather than all districts to offer a minimum number of dual enrollment courses.

To avoid confusion with Early College programming, Florida might also consider dropping the “early admission” provision in [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) and simply state that high school students may enroll part- or full-time in on-campus college coursework. There does not seem to be a clear benefit to distinguishing early admission from regular dual enrollment.

2. POLICY ON PROGRAM PURPOSE

FLORIDA

Florida statute ([F.S.A. § 1007.27](#)) frames dual enrollment, including Early Admission, as one among several acceleration mechanisms for students to “shorten the time necessary for a student to complete the requirements associated with the conference of a high school diploma and a postsecondary degree, broaden the scope of curricular options available to students, or increase the depth of study available for a particular subject.” Early College is not explicitly referenced in [F.S.A. § 1007.27](#); [F.S.A. § 1007.273](#) does not provide a statement of purpose for Early Colleges.

OTHER STATES

Some other states provide a broader statement of purpose for dual enrollment and/or Early College initiatives that makes explicit their intention to serve underrepresented students. For example, Colorado statute ([C.R.S.A. § 22-35-102](#)) states: “Historically, the beneficiaries of concurrent enrollment programs have often been high-achieving students. The expanded mission of concurrent enrollment programs is to serve a wider range of students, particularly those who represent communities with historically low college participation rates.”

Illinois statute ([110 ILCS 27/10](#)) states that the purpose of the Dual Credit Quality Act is

- (1) To reduce college costs.
- (2) To speed time to degree completion.
- (3) To improve the curriculum for high school students and the alignment of the curriculum with college and workplace expectations.
- (4) To facilitate the transition between high school and college.
- (5) To enhance communication between high schools and colleges.
- (6) To offer opportunities for improving degree attainment for underserved student populations.”

State policies in North Carolina ([N.C.G.S.A. § 115C-238.50](#)) and Texas ([Education Code § 29.908](#)) make clear that Early College schools and programs are meant to serve students at risk of dropping out. North Carolina's statute also includes first-generation students among early colleges' target student population.

The University of Indianapolis' Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL), in partnership with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, conducts a five-year "endorsement" process for schools or programs seeking state approval as an Early College high school. Per a CELL Early College high school [webpage](#), the state's Early College "model specifically serves low-income young people, first-generation college students, English language learners, and students of color, all of whom are statistically underrepresented in higher education and for whom society often has low expectations for academic achievement."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Florida should consider expanding its statement of purpose for dual enrollment in [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) and integrating a statement of for Early College into [F.S.A. § 1007.273](#). These statements of purpose would identify the target student population(s) that dual enrollment programs and Early Colleges are intended to serve, and additional dual enrollment program goals beyond acceleration. These statements of purpose would help ensure that state leaders, agency staff, and local secondary and postsecondary partners are in agreement on the intended outcomes of dual enrollment and Early College programs/schools and guide the development of measures to assess the extent to which local programs are achieving articulated program outcomes.

3. FLEXIBILITY ON EARLY COLLEGE AND EARLY ADMISSION DESIGN FEATURES

FLORIDA

Florida requires local agreements governing early college programs to address certain topics, but largely does not specify how those topics must be addressed in local agreements. Namely, per [F.S.A. § 1007.273](#), local contracts between school districts and Florida College System institutions to establish early colleges must specify grade levels to be served; various program parameters including student eligibility criteria; process by which students and parents are annually informed of the program and program participation benefits; student advising services and progress monitoring mechanisms; program review and reporting mechanisms regarding student performance outcomes; and secondary and postsecondary partners' respective funding responsibilities.

Such local flexibility can support innovation and allow local partners to design the contours of their programs to meet local needs. However, such flexibility, particularly in the absence of clearly defined and widely agreed-upon program goals, can alternatively lead to inequities in student access and the potential for low program quality.

OTHER STATES

In most cases, Early College policies or guidelines in other states require Early Colleges to align their offerings with state-defined goals to ensure access and quality. Specifically, other leading Early College states create greater consistency – and potentially, greater equity in program access and quality – across early college programs statewide by establishing program parameters that must be followed to be considered an Early College. For example, program parameters in such states as Indiana, Michigan, North Carolina and Texas specify:

- **Program duration:** In all the aforementioned states, Early College high schools are five-year programs starting in grade 9 (students may enroll in an Early College after grade 9, however).
- **Program scope:** Similarly, in all the previously mentioned states, Early College high schools offer students the opportunity to earn a certificate, an associate degree, or up to 60 credit hours that may transfer to a four-year institution.
- **Target student population:** Most of these states make clear that Early College high schools are intended to enroll underserved students as well as students seeking acceleration opportunities. For example, early colleges in North Carolina and Texas are intended to serve students at risk of dropping out, among others.
- **A state approval process:** To disburse state funds to local Early Middle Colleges, Michigan requires a regional fiscal agent to perform certain oversight functions of the Early Colleges under their purview. Texas, Michigan, and North Carolina require prospective Early Colleges to apply to state boards or agencies for permission to operate. Application processes require aspiring Early Colleges to demonstrate how they address various programmatic topics. Texas Early Colleges must reapply annually for program approval.

In Indiana, programs aspiring to become endorsed Early Colleges must successfully complete a five-year endorsement process through the Commission for Higher Education and the University of Indianapolis' CELL (Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning). They must also undergo a favorable evaluation according to a CELL rubric (separate rubrics are established for [traditional Early Colleges](#) offering general education coursework and [CTE Early Colleges](#)).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Florida might consider adopting one or more of the aforementioned strategies applied in other states, in order to balance local Early College flexibility with equity-centered program features designed to more effectively serve target diverse student populations identified by state leaders.

4. FUNDING MODEL IN RELATION TO DISTRICTS, COLLEGES, STUDENTS

FLORIDA

No tuition or fees for public, private, and home school students.

Florida is one of the only states in which students, regardless of public school, private school, or home school status, do not pay dual enrollment tuition costs. In addition, Florida is a leader in directing that public, private, and home school students cannot be charged for dual enrollment textbooks or fees.

Dual enrollment and early college funding. Early Colleges are to be funded in the same way as dual enrollment programs under [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#); per [F.S.A. § 1011.62](#), Early College students completing a general education core course with a grade of "A" or better generate an additional 0.16 full-time equivalent student membership for their school district; dual enrollment students not in an Early College program/school generate a value of 0.08 full-time student membership upon completing a dual enrollment general education core course with a grade of "A". [F.S.A. § 1011.62](#) also provides districts a 0.3 full-time equivalent student membership for each dual enrollment student who earns an associate degree with a minimum 3.0 GPA.

Under Florida's current funding model, districts lose FTE for Early College and Early Admission students while paying for students' tuition. Further, districts pay more if students take their courses on the college campus. This model could influence school budgets and employment decisions, as districts' fixed costs remain the same even if a percentage of students are enrolled full-time or nearly full-time on the partnering college's campus. For example, to cover tuition for Early College and Early Admission students, financially-challenged districts might be forced to make difficult staffing reduction decisions or set limits on the number of course sections or course types offered.

Additional funding for AP, IB, AICE success. [F.S.A. § 1011.62](#) sets a lower bar for earning an additional weight for a student's AP, IB, and AICE exam success (earning a score on an exam that would accrue college credit) as compared to dual enrollment/early college course completion (completing a general education course with an "A" or higher). In addition, teachers of AP, IB, and AICE courses receive a bonus for each student who earns a college-credit-eligible score on these exams; instructors of Early College and dual enrollment

courses do not appear to receive any such financial incentive. These policies incentivize AP, IB, and AICE programs over EC and dual enrollment programs.

OTHER STATES

Tuition and fees for public, private, and home school students. The 2019 report [Funding for Equity](#) identifies seven states in which at least one statewide dual enrollment funding model requires students to pay some tuition expenses. In 18 additional states and the District of Columbia, the agreement between the secondary and postsecondary partners must specify who is responsible for covering tuition costs, meaning that students may be responsible for costs.²⁴ In the 22 states in which students do not pay, home school and private school students may be unable to access free or reduced tuition, depending upon state or local program policies.

Per a 2021 [report](#) published by the Southern Regional Education Board and the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, programs in 13 states explicitly authorize dual enrollment textbook costs to be passed on to a student; in 35 other states, policy allows for local decision making, or is silent on who is responsible for covering textbook costs. At this time, no 50-state analysis has been conducted on who is responsible for covering dual enrollment fees separate from tuition and textbooks.

Codified in legislation in 1990, Washington's Running Start is among the longest-standing early admission programs nationally. Running Start students may be part-time or full-time dual enrollment students. As in Florida, districts pay Running Start students' tuition using their basic education funds from the state. Unlike in Florida, districts are charged Running Start tuition based on a [statewide tuition rate](#); the tuition rate for CTE students is roughly \$1,000 higher than that for non-CTE students.

Unlike in Florida, Washington statute [R.C.W. 28A.600.310](#) directs that non-low-income Running Start students are responsible for fees, books and supplies. Non-low-income students may pay these fees using advanced college tuition payment program tuition units at a rate set by the advanced college tuition payment program. Low-income Running Start students must be offered fee waivers, but per [state guidance](#) may be charged for textbooks, consumable supplies, "and other materials retained by the student[.]"

24. These figures do not include additional states in which policy is silent on the entity that must cover dual enrollment tuition.

Nationally, representatives of states in which districts stand to lose significant state funding for Early Admission students report that districts or school may prefer Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, AICE, or concurrent enrollment²⁵ over early admission. In fact, districts or school staff might discourage students from Early Admission altogether. According to Florida interviewees, this has happened.

Dual enrollment and Early College funding. Iowa, a national leader in dual enrollment with a majority of high school students graduating with college credit, offers a unique funding model. Districts and postsecondary partners negotiate a tuition amount the district will pay the postsecondary institution for courses offered either at the high school or postsecondary institution. The following year, the state funding formula provides the school district an additional weight of .48 for general education courses and .7 for CTE courses, based on the percentage of the school day each student was enrolled in college coursework. This model not only incents dual enrollment, but recognizes the greater costs imposed in offering CTE dual enrollment courses.

Additional funding for AP, IB, AICE success. Other states do not appear to provide districts or teachers with financial rewards for each student who earns a minimum score on an AP, IB, or AICE exam.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Florida might revisit its dual enrollment/Early College funding model to reduce the district disincentive for students to enroll in coursework on the college campus. Florida might also reconsider its financial incentives for AP, IB, AICE and dual enrollment, to create financial incentives for schools that admit and support underserved students' course success in dual enrollment and early college, and underserved students' exam success in AP, IB, and AICE. A revised funding model might also greater parity between bonuses earned for students earning minimum scores on AP, IB, and AICE exams, and students earning college credit via dual enrollment. One option would be to offer extra funds to districts when students earn an A or B, rather than just when they earn an A in a dual enrollment course.

25. Concurrent enrollment = dual enrollment options offered in the high school.

5. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

FLORIDA

[F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) requires that students seeking initial enrollment to a general education dual enrollment course have a 3.0 unweighted high school grade point average. Per the statute, until recently amended, students were also required to demonstrate basic communication and computation skills via minimum scores on Florida’s common placement test (PERT).

2021 legislation (S.B. 366) revises [F.S.A. § 1008.30](#), directing the state board of education by January 31, 2022, to establish alternative methods that Florida College System institutions may adopt to assess entering students’ basic communication and computation skills. The same alternative measures apply to high school students and adult students. These alternative measures, approved in early 2022, include other assessment scores, performance in high school coursework, credit by exam, and local placement methods approved by the Florida Department of Education.

Research demonstrates that traditional placement exams are not accurate predictors of gateway college course success.²⁶ In particular, high school GPA has proven to be a more reliable measure of a student’s likelihood of success in introductory college courses. Yet with a combined minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA and a minimum B in a specific advanced high school math or English course, the new state board policy ([Fla. Admin. Code r. 6A-10.0315](#)) still limits dual enrollment to students likely to be attending college anyway. Further, use of alternative measures is subject to the discretion of individual colleges, creating barriers to equitable access for students in the service areas of institutions adhering to the high school GPA/PERT combination.

Some college-level interviewees expressed their support for further state policy changes supporting flexibility in dual enrollment eligibility requirements among all Florida colleges (rather than those that self-select into the alternate eligibility requirements).

26. See Scott Clayton, 2012. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/high-stakes-placement-exams-predict.html>

OTHER STATES

Encouraged by the success rates of dual enrollment students placed into college courses under alternative means, a number of states are increasingly exploring other options. For example, in February 2022, Ohio approved a revision to administrative code ([OAC 3333-1-65.14](#)) that allows high school students with a minimum 2.75 high school GPA to enroll in college coursework if they have earned an A or B in a relevant high school course. The rule applies to all public institutions in Ohio.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Florida might explore state policy revisions that support flexibility in dual enrollment eligibility requirements among all Florida colleges, instead of allowing colleges to opt into offering alternate eligibility requirements. Such state policy revisions might be informed by local program outcomes data for students admitted under alternative requirements. Or Florida might create incentives for local partnerships to apply the alternative admission requirements, and assess which approaches are most effective in ensuring both equitable access and student success.

6. STUDENT ACCESS, INCLUDING OUTREACH, ON-RAMPS, TRANSPORTATION, AND ONLINE LEARNING

FLORIDA

Outreach. [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) requires districts to inform all secondary students and their parents of dual enrollment opportunities. Per this statute, “Students and their parents shall be informed of student eligibility requirements, the option for taking dual enrollment courses beyond the regular school year, and the minimum academic credits required for graduation.”

[F.S.A. § 1007.273](#) requires that Early College contracts between districts and colleges, “Describe the methods, medium, and process by which students and their parents are annually informed about the availability of the early college program, the return on investment associated with participation in the program,” information on student grade levels served, courses offered, and “high school and college credits earned for each postsecondary course completed; student eligibility criteria; and the enrollment process and relevant deadlines.”

On-ramps. Florida policy does not require or encourage student “on-ramps” to dual enrollment or Early College. On-ramps could include coursework in earlier grades that prepares students for dual enrollment or ways for students to participate in selected college courses even if they have not yet met eligibility requirements. One college-embedded interviewee noted their program was considering the creation of on-ramps for students to be successful in college courses, and offramps for students struggling in college courses. (Ideally the offramps would be offered after the program had provided substantial academic and nonacademic supports.)

Transportation. [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) requires that a career dual enrollment agreement between a career center and a high school in its district must “determine how transportation will be provided for students who are unable to provide their own transportation.” Other than this provision, Florida statute is silent on transportation for dual enrollment and Early College students taking courses on the college campus. As such, statute privileges career centers’ career dual enrollment agreements with high schools over other program approaches.

Transportation came up as an issue among some college interviewees. Some interviewees commented that many dual enrollment students must determine their own means of transportation to the college campus, posing a barrier to program participation especially for low-income and rural students unable to rely on public transportation.

Online Course Options. Online course options can be especially helpful to students for whom transportation is a barrier to participation in dual enrollment. While some research suggests that students may be as successful in partially or fully online dual enrollment courses as in face-to-face courses when specific program attributes are in place (e.g., flagging when students in asynchronous have not logged in to the platform within the first days of the semester, flagging in the learning management system (LMS) when students are falling behind on assignments or their course grade is flagging), it was not clear from the Florida interviews if these measures were in place to support student success in hybrid or fully online dual enrollment courses.

OTHER STATES

Outreach. Some other states are more intentional about outreach to prospective dual enrollment students. For example, in addition to requiring notification to all students of dual enrollment opportunities, Ohio statute ([R.C. § 3365.04](#)) requires each secondary school to host an informational session at least annually, allowing local colleges to meet with students and parents to discuss program participation benefits and consequences, and program requirements.

Some states provide financial or other incentives for Early Colleges to enroll students who are not college-ready or not already aspiring to attend college. For example, Indiana's rubrics for assessing prospective "[traditional](#)" (general education) and [technical](#) Early Colleges call for broad student recruitment.

On-ramps. More than 60% of Indiana high school students [graduate](#) with college credit. Indiana's Ivy Tech Community College System (the statewide community college system offering the majority of college credits to high school students in the state) offers one example of academic on-ramps. In lieu of traditional GPA and test score eligibility requirements, all students seeking dual credit through an Ivy Tech campus must complete NROC's diagnostic online Knowledge Assessment. Students who do not score high enough on the English or math exams complete learning modules linked to areas in which they scored low. As students demonstrate proficiency in areas in which they previously were under-prepared, they are not required to retest to be eligible to enroll in dual credit coursework.

In addition, Indiana's rubrics to evaluate prospective "[traditional](#)" (general education) and [technical](#) early colleges require aspiring Early Colleges to demonstrate that they offer a continuum of student supports.

Transportation. In most states, transportation for dual enrollment students is the responsibility of the student or parent. For example, per Washington Statute ([R.C.W. 28A.600.380](#)), transportation of Running Start students is not the responsibility of the school district. As a result, students who do not have their own means of transportation are underrepresented in dual enrollment courses offered on college campuses.

Online and Hybrid Course Options. That said, remote or hybrid college coursework for high school students has alleviated the transportation barrier in other locales. Indiana's [Rural Early College Network](#) (RECN) pairs rural schools seeking the state's early college endorsement with Early Colleges that have been endorsed for multiple years and have the capacity to mentor two to three aspiring Early Colleges. RECN has also explored teacher sharing, in which a teacher in one district will deliver synchronous online instruction to students in other districts while providing face-to-face instruction to students in her classroom. A few programs use online courses to fill gaps or teacher shortages in dual credit courses needed for the Indiana College Core (ICC), a broadly transferable set of 30 general education college credits that all public Indiana high schools are encouraged to offer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Outreach. Florida might consider policies such as those in Ohio and Indiana to ensure a broader pool of students and parents are aware of the availability and benefits of dual enrollment and Early College participation. Alternatively, Florida might consider requiring school districts and local postsecondary partners to develop context-responsive policies that assure a more diverse array of students and families are cognizant of opportunities for and the advantages of dual enrollment and Early College participation.

On-ramps. To increase the number and diversity of high school students prepared to access college courses through Early College or Early Admission programs, Florida state policy might encourage or require on-ramps.

Transportation. Florida might explore strategies to ensure district- or college-offered transportation to the college campus. Alternatively, Florida might consider financial incentives for faculty to travel to high schools to teach college courses and/or for high school teachers to become credentialed to teach college courses.

Online Course Options. Florida might also broaden the use of synchronous or asynchronous delivery of online courses, including through teacher sharing models, when paired with means to support student success.

7. MECHANISMS FOR APPROPRIATE COURSE SELECTION AND COURSE TRANSFER

FLORIDA

Florida's [common prereqs manual](#) (CPM) is widely used by students, high school counselors, and college advisors in making course selections. In Florida, any course that a dual enrollment student takes is assigned the same common course number used for courses taken by a regularly matriculated student. As such, dual enrollment courses typically transfer readily to public institutions in Florida.

Many students use dual enrollment courses to fulfill their general education requirements. As one interviewee noted, "If you're hoping for students to complete an AA, advising using CPM is the way to go. Otherwise, you might have students accumulate 24 credit hours of electives."

Despite these advantages, advisors at both the high school and the college need to work closely with students to make sure that courses taken in high school will transfer. In some cases, they may lack adequate knowledge to do this effectively.

OTHER STATES

Course transfer is much more difficult in many states, where receiving institutions have the leeway to deny transfer credit for courses taken in high school. However, states employ various mechanisms to guide students' dual enrollment course selections. Some other states apply common course numbering or other mechanisms to assure transfer of college courses completed in high school.

Ohio regulation [OAC 3333-1-65.12](#) limits the first 15 credit hours that dual enrollment students may enroll in primarily to broadly transferable general education courses and technical certificate CTE courses. North Carolina has established [statewide pathways](#) for various associate degrees; most of these credits apply to broadly recognized general education requirements, while some apply to major requirements. Credits in these pathways transfer to public two- and four-year institutions statewide, and guide meaningful course selection. State funds do not support dual enrollment course selections outside of these pathways. Indiana provides funds to programs for each student completing the Indiana College Core (ICC), 30 credit hours of broadly transferable general education courses.

Some state policies provide greater guidance on the advising colleges must provide to high school students. Under Ohio regulation [OAC 3333-1-65.3](#) (E)(2), each college must assign an academic advisor to each dually enrolled student; among other requirements as mentioned earlier, the advisor and student must meet before a course withdrawal would negatively impact the student's GPA, to discuss topics including academic resources for students; means to engage faculty and campus resources for academic support; and the academic impact of dropping a course after the no-fault withdrawal deadline.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, Florida's policies governing transfer are very strong. However, in some instances more support could be given to local advisors to ensure that they have the training needed to help students select courses that are most advantageous for transfer (as well as to meet career goals).

8. MECHANISMS FOR QUALITY CONTROL

FLORIDA

Per [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#), colleges must annually submit dual enrollment articulation agreements to the FLDOE; articulation agreements must address topics set forth in this statute. [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) requires local secondary and postsecondary dual enrollment partnerships to adhere to some [NACEP accreditation standards](#) for Faculty, Assessment, Curriculum, Student, and Program Evaluation.

[F.S.A. § 1007.273](#) does not require Early Colleges to annually submit contracts between secondary and postsecondary partners to the Department of Education and does not specify that partnerships align to the NACEP accreditation standards required for college courses delivered by high school teachers. [F.S.A. § 1007.273](#) does require that local Early College contracts “establish a program review and reporting mechanism regarding student performance outcomes.” However, it is unclear to what extent this requirement is being implemented at the local level, how the results are used, and the impact of their use. It is also not clear what, in practice, these mechanisms are – and to what extent they vary from program to program across the state, or to what extent there is state-level oversight to monitor this and intervene when early colleges fall short of meeting program objectives.

OTHER STATES

Some states have established more rigorous quality control mechanisms, both for dual enrollment courses offered at high schools (often referred to as concurrent enrollment), and for Early Colleges. As for concurrent enrollment, 11 states²⁷ require or encourage concurrent enrollment programs to be NACEP accredited or adhere to NACEP accreditation standards; an additional four states²⁸ have adopted state concurrent enrollment standards modeled after the NACEP standards.

27. Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Washington.

28. Colorado, Idaho, New Hampshire, and Virginia.

To ensure program quality and adherence to state guidelines, some states have established an approval process for Early Colleges. As mentioned above, Indiana programs seeking to become endorsed early colleges must undergo a five-year [endorsement process](#) through the University of Indianapolis' Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL). North Carolina requires a district and postsecondary institution seeking to establish an early college to jointly apply to the state board of education and the applicable postsecondary governing board; by statute ([N.C.G.S.A. § 115C-238.51](#) and [N.C.G.S.A. § 115C-238.51](#)) the application must address specific program components. Texas regulation ([19 TAC § 102.1091](#)) requires districts to apply to the Texas Education Agency to be approved as an Early College, and to seek annual renewal of their approval as an early college. Under [19 TAC § 102.1091](#), the commissioner of education may deny renewal or revoke an Early College high school's approval owing to:

- “noncompliance with application assurances and/or the provisions of” [19 TAC § 102.1091](#)
- “lack of program success as evidenced by progress reports and program data”
- “failure to meet performance standards specified in the application; or”
- “failure to provide accurate, timely, and complete information as required by the [Texas Education] Agency to evaluate the effectiveness of the [Early College high school] program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Florida might consider adopting an approval process for Early Colleges, to ensure Early Colleges are designed to meet state-defined program goals. Although interviewees suggested that the majority of college courses delivered to high school students are taught by college faculty, Florida might consider encouraging or requiring the use of NACEP standards, or wholly integrating NACEP standards into state expectations for dual enrollment and Early Colleges initiatives, to ensure program quality.

9. MONITORING AND DATA, CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

FLORIDA

As noted, [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) requires postsecondary institutions to annually submit to the Department of Education articulation agreements they have entered into; however, articulation agreements focus on program aspects, not student outcomes, and do not include a continuous improvement component. [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) does not require programs to report to the state, nor to require public reporting on dual enrollment student participation and outcomes.

While [F.S.A. § 1007.273](#) requires local contracts between districts and Florida College System institutions to “[establish] a program review and reporting mechanism regarding student performance outcomes,” it does not establish a state-level data reporting requirement for Early Colleges.

OTHER STATES

Leading states in dual enrollment and Early College outcomes publicly report annually or biennially on a variety of indicators on program participation and outcomes. These public-facing data appear in reports and/or in public-facing dashboards (usually on postsecondary board or agency websites). The 2021 report [College in High School Programs and Data](#) provides further detail on these state-level data reporting efforts.

It should be noted that under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), state and high school report cards are required to report disaggregated data on the number and percentage of students enrolled in dual enrollment. However, these data are not necessarily formatted to call attention to disparities in historically underrepresented students’ participation in dual enrollment. Specifically, ESSA does not require state or local reporting to provide a side-by-side comparison of dual enrollment participation by student subgroup versus the overall representation of students by subgroup in the overall high school student population.

That said, state policies in some 36 states and the District of Columbia also require local programs to report to one or more state agencies on specific program components; policies in a number of these states require some data beyond what ESSA requires. However, some states that require public reporting on dual enrollment participation and outcomes either (1) do not publicly report such data or (2) report some but not all of the data required by state policy.

Shortcomings in other states' data collection and reporting processes result in inaccuracies in public-facing data. In just one example, Washington's public-facing OSPI data on high school students' enrollment in college courses reflects enrollment in Running Start and College in the High School programs but does not consistently reflect CTE Dual Credit enrollment because CTE Dual Credit programs are not required to use a common statewide data reporting system, and students may register program enrollment years after CTE Dual Credit program participation.

Other mechanisms that support continuous improvement include Colorado statute ([C.R.S.A. § 22-35-107](#)) which creates the Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board.²⁹ The duties of this board include "Making recommendations as necessary to the general assembly, the state board [of education], and the commission [of higher education] concerning the improvement or updating of state policies relating to concurrent enrollment programs[.]" Staff from the Colorado Department of Higher Education and Colorado Community College System have commented that the advisory board presents a valuable venue to discuss local program challenges, and identify ways that K-12, postsecondary, and state partners can work together to address challenges. They have added that the board has served a key role in ensuring quality, and has prompted improvements to state statute.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Florida's statute might be revised to require annual, public-facing reporting on dual enrollment and Early College participation and outcomes, disaggregated by student demographics, student academic background, and geography, as is done in other leading states. These data could allow for a side-by-side, high school-by-high school, district-by-district, institution-by-institution comparison of dual enrollment participation by student subgroup compared to the high school or district or institution enrollment as a whole; policy might additionally require local partners in dual enrollment and Early College agreements to regularly review such participation data and use it to identify measures to address inequities in participation and outcomes. Such reporting could increase accountability. The 2021 report [College in High School Programs and Data: Reporting and Using Dual Enrollment Data to Improve Equity](#) provides further details on these efforts.

Local implementation of Early College and Early Admission policy that is faithful to the letter and spirit of Florida law might be further supported by the creation of a statewide body similar to Colorado's Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board as described above.

29. Colorado statute uses the term "concurrent enrollment" to refer to all programs aligned with statutory requirements, regardless of course location, instructor type (faculty or approved high school teacher) or course modality.

G. FOCUS ON UNDER-REPRESENTED STUDENT GROUPS

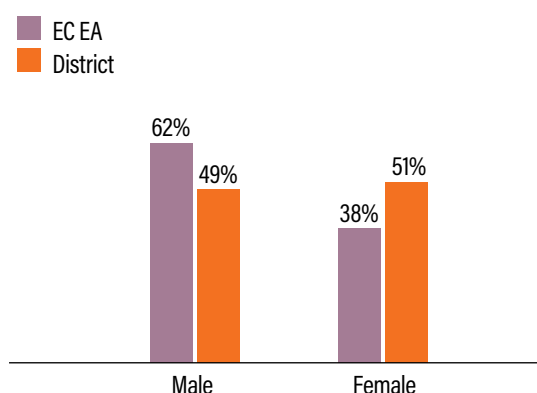
Several studies have found that traditionally underserved student groups are less likely to participate in dual enrollment than their peers. For example, researchers analyzed data from two cohorts of students—those entering high school in 2007 and those entering in 2012. They found that “Florida high school students who took dual enrollment courses were more likely to be White, female, and from more affluent backgrounds than those who did not take dual enrollment courses” (from abstract).³⁰ Similarly, analyses by Fink et al³¹ indicated that four-fifths of school districts across the US have racial equity gaps in access to dual enrollment.

However, Early College schools and programs in some settings are committed to enrolling traditionally underserved student groups. As noted above, a rigorous study of Early Colleges³² found that outcomes of students in Early Colleges were better than those of their peers with no significant difference among diverse student groups.

DEMOGRAPHICS

When comparing demographic data of 38 EC/EA programs and schools to their 23 unique districts, female students represent 49% of enrolled students in Florida districts, while EC/EA programs enroll a significantly higher percentage of female students (62%). See Figure 39.

FIGURE 39 EC/EA and District Gender Comparison, 2021-22



Note: Figure reflects a total of 38 ECs and EAs.

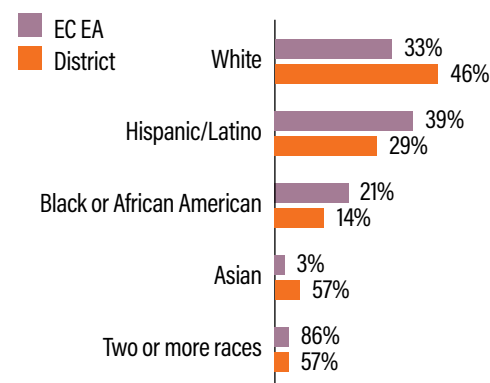
30. Lui, V., Minaya, V., Zhang, Q., Xu, D. (2020). High School Dual Enrollment in Florida: Effects on College Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity and Course Modality. Community College Research Center. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/dual-enrollment-florida-race-ethnicity-course-modality.pdf>.

31. Fink, J., (2021) How Equitable Is Access to AP and Dual Enrollment Across States and School Districts? <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/ap-dual-enrollment-access-update.html>.

32. Berger, A. R., Cole, S., Duffy, H., Edwards, S., Knudson, J., Kurki, A., Report Golden, L., Lundeen, J., Poland, L., Rojas, D., Shkolnik, J., Stone, C. K., Turk-Bicakci, L., Yoon, K.S., Adelman, N., Cassidy, L. Keating, K., & Nielsen, N. (2009). Fifth annual Early College High School Initiative evaluation synthesis report. Six years and counting: The ECHSI matures. Washington, DC: American Institutes of Research. <https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED514090>

With regard to race/ethnicity, the largest percentage of students enrolled in EC/EA programs and schools are White (46%) with Hispanic/Latino students representing the second largest racial/ethnic group (29%). In comparison, across Florida districts in which these EC/EAs were located, Hispanic/Latino students represent the largest racial/ethnic group (39%) followed by White students (33%). Overall, Hispanic/Latino and Black students are underrepresented as seen in Figure 40.

FIGURE 40 EC/EA and District Race/Ethnicity Comparison, 2021-22



Note: Figure reflects a total of 38 ECs and EAs. Students from two groups were less than 1% (American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander) and are not shown in the figure.

ADVANCING EQUITY

Florida’s dual enrollment program, unlike others in the US, was not designed as a strategy to explicitly increase equity for underserved populations. According to researchers Hunt and Carol, Florida’s dual enrollment program, first established in 1979, was intended to “(1) reduce students’ time to degree, (2) diversify the curricular options available to high school students, and (3) deepen study among students in a particular subject.”³³

Similarly, the Early College and Early Admission programs in Florida, per statute, are primarily focused on increasing the efficiency of the education system and expanding students’ opportunities for broader and deeper study. High-achieving students are given the opportunity to complete a college degree as rapidly as possible. Rather than having to complete high school before starting college, students take courses with content that counts toward completion of both a high school and college credential. Such course consolidation, possible in dual enrollment programs, provides economic savings to both students and society.³⁴

33. Hunt, E., & Carroll, C. E. (2006). Florida’s dual enrollment initiative: How state policy influences community Colleges’ service to underrepresented youth. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2006(135), 39–47. <https://doi.org/ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1002/cc.246>
 34. Barnett, E. & Stamm, L. (2010). *Dual enrollment: A strategy for educational advancement of all students*. Washington, DC: Blackboard Institute. <https://doi.org/10.7916/D81G0KNQ>

Other states (e.g., Michigan, Texas) and national organizations (e.g., the Middle College National Consortium, Gateway to College) emphasize the development of Early College schools and programs as a way to improve access to college and successful college outcomes among traditionally underrepresented groups of students. Their theory of action is as follows:

- Students traditionally underrepresented in college are less likely to attend for several reasons: financial limitations, lack of information or know-how, and limited access to a strong academic curriculum.³⁵ Students also may have less confidence that they have the potential to attend and succeed in college.
- While dual enrollment programs can help to address financial limitations, they do not necessarily provide enough social and academic supports to help students who may have less information, inadequate or mediocre prior academic opportunities and less confidence.
- Early Colleges typically and intentionally provide a set of formal and informal social and academic supports that can help students succeed in their dual enrollment courses, including those highlighted in this report.
- This early success in their college coursework can help students to gradually gain the skill set and the confidence that can enable them to successfully navigate college in the future.
- While initial costs of an Early College may be higher, the return on investment is substantial for students, families and society.³⁶ From the viewpoint of outcomes (number of graduates) rather than inputs, the cost of ECs is less than traditional programs.

Through our research, we found that relatively few of the Florida Early College schools and programs are designed to address the challenges faced by under-represented students. Many interviewees expressed concern that if students were admitted who did not have strong prior preparation, they would be likely to fail, which would reflect poorly on the program/school, and possibly result in students dropping out.

35. Dynarski, S. Nurshatayeva, A., Page, L. C. & Scott-Clayton, J. (2022). Addressing non-financial barriers to College access and success: Evidence and policy implications [working paper]. Washington, DC: National Bureau of Economic Research. w30054.pdf

36. Webb, M. (2004) What is the Cost of Planning and Implementing Early College High School? Jobs for the Future, Boston, MA. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497817.pdf>

However, several Early College schools and programs were making efforts to expand access to a more diverse population so that they could benefit from participation in dual enrollment experiences. Several mechanisms have been designed to accomplish this goal:

- **9-12 or 6-12 schools:** A number of ECs admit students in ninth grade, or even 6th grade, in order to begin preparing students for college coursework early on. This early access enables EC schools and programs to bypass state requirements for admission into college courses in order to begin on a pathway to college enrollment. As one interviewee said, “We really wanted to capture the students earlier to really make sure we can get them up to the math expectations, so we have a lower GPA admission standard of 2.0 instead of 3.0.”
- **Outreach:** While most EA programs and ECs conduct recruitment activities, some of them make a point of reaching out to traditionally underserved students. This often involves making sure that parents receive sufficient information about these opportunities early on. Several colleges have counselors assigned to high schools to expand and improve outreach to underserved populations. In one case, a college connected their Minority Male initiative to the Early College.

Our faculty mentor is a faculty member for [the EC], so he works there full-time and so now he's a faculty mentor for the larger group of the minority male initiative and, with that he can recruit within [the EC] as well.

- **On-ramps:** Various approaches have been used to help students prepare to be successful in college in the future. At a rural middle-high school described earlier, the principal we interviewed credits communication that is “hard and steady,” and begins as soon as sixth graders arrive on campus when families are first alerted to the availability of dual enrollment programs. He told us that his high school has broadened access to pre-AP to all middle and high schoolers to expose them to high-level learning. All students at the high school are granted access to AP and Cambridge AICE courses regardless of academic standing. “Basically, if you’re on campus, you’re doing it. We want them to hit the ground running,” he said.

- **College success courses:** Most Florida Early Colleges have some or all students participate in a college success course. These courses typically help students to explore their own interests and learn about how to be a successful college student. In most cases, students can enroll without attaining high scores on the Florida PERT test or a 3.0 high school GPA. Enrollment in these courses provides students with the experience of taking an actual college course, accumulating some college credit, and learning skills in navigating college. As one interviewee stated,

.... we started offering [our college success class] in the senior year for some of our students ... who didn't have the 3.0 GPA that we required, but they had the 2.5 so we dropped GPA down and we were letting them take this introductory class.

- **Career technical education (CTE) courses:** CTE college courses typically have a lower bar for entry, and Florida law permits students with a 2.0 high school GPA to participate. This opens the door a bit wider for students to participate in dual enrollment courses even if they haven't attained the 3.0 GPA generally required for dual enrollment participation. About a quarter of the Early College schools and programs in Florida have a full or partial CTE focus.
- **Modified criteria for entry into college courses:** The Florida state statute that guides the development of articulation agreements (F.S.A. § 1007.23) permits inclusion of criteria other than grade point average and minimum test scores for admission to dual enrollment programs. One college had participated in a pilot during the pandemic in which students were able to forego testing and were placed into college courses based on grades in high school courses. An interviewee stated that "They did almost as well as students who came in with placement testing was very, very, very similar which was surprising to me." This aligns with state of Florida data showing that high school graduates who are admitted to college courses without placement testing generally do quite well.³⁷

37. Hu, S., Jones, B., Nix, T., You, A., Daniels, J., Hu, H. Hu, X. P., & Brower, R. (2021). Understanding the Implementation of Developmental Education Reform in Florida. Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University. https://purl.lib.fsu.edu/diginole/FSU_libsubv1_scholarship_submission_1621877079_9e3145b8

- **Help for struggling students:** Students from traditionally underserved groups may have inadequate prior academic and skills preparation and thus be more likely to struggle in college classes. While essentially all colleges allowed their EA and EC students to use college tutoring services, some had set up systems of advising and tutoring targeted to these students. At one college, an assigned tutor/advisor works with dual enrollment students, including those in EA and EC programs. As one interviewee pointed out, the relationship between the advisor and the student can be a powerful factor in student performance:

...they receive a list of the dual enrollment students. And they're tasked with working that list ... sending those messages each week and they end up having this relationship, so to speak, with the student. That has been very beneficial and, you know, we can see the difference in students and their grades.

- **Reducing financial and logistical barriers:** Some colleges have developed program designs explicitly intended to improve student access. For example, one school in a remote rural area has designed their program to offer courses to cohorts of students taught by college faculty who drive to the school. Another college has started a summer dual enrollment program that seeks to address as many barriers as possible. An interviewee from this college shared,

The impetus for the summer dual enrollment was to increase participation among some of the groups that have not been able to do that. The districts are giving them gas cards, are providing transportation. We're paying for their lunches so we can open it up to students that during the academic school year can't get there...

Other schools and colleges are reducing costs by providing transportation and textbooks. One provides free breakfast and lunch to all students.

- **Building a college-going culture:** Some students may assume that college is not in their future. Their perspectives can be changed by attending a high school that explicitly addresses these assumptions. One school is explicitly focused on building a college-going culture. Since the principal we interviewed started at that school five years ago, the number of students who attend college has grown from five to sixty percent. All students at the high school are required to set up Bright Futures accounts to track academic progress and prepare to qualify for scholarships.

H. CONCLUSION

Florida Early Colleges and Early Admission programs are diverse and are permitted by state policy to develop models that work well in their individual settings. Their results are impressive. Students are graduating from both programs at high rates, with more than 80 percent of graduates earning both a high school diploma and an associate degree. This reflects the fact that 1) colleges and high schools have developed strong programs and 2) that very capable students are being admitted.

A number of locales around the state have developed excellent practices that could be adopted or adapted by other Florida Early College and Early Admission sites. Some of these involve ways to improve the management of programs or enhance the student experience. In other cases, efforts have been made to broaden access so that a larger number of students can participate in dual enrollment. These ideas could be shared more widely through groups such as the Florida Alliance of Dual Enrollment Partnerships (FADEP) and the Florida Student Success Center. They could also be encouraged through systems of state policy.

The section that follows (1) briefly summarizes a number of state policy recommendations provided in Chapter 6, and (2) identifies practices already in use in the state that could be more widely implemented across other Florida Early College and Early Admission sites.

REFLECTIONS ON POLICY

DUAL ENROLLMENT ACCESS

- **Availability in all high schools:** [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) provides that districts may not refuse to enter into a dual enrollment agreement if the local college partner has the capacity to offer dual enrollment courses. Presumably this means that dual enrollment opportunities are available in every district. However, it is possible that some high schools provide no such programming. To increase student access to dual enrollment, including to Early Admission programs, Florida might consider adopting a policy similar to Indiana's, requiring all high schools rather than all districts to offer a minimum number of dual enrollment courses.

- **Target student population:** Unlike some other leading states, Florida statute does not include a statement of purpose for dual enrollment or a definition of EC target student population(s). Florida should consider expanding its statement of purpose for dual enrollment in [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) and integrating a statement on Early College into [F.S.A. § 1007.273](#). These statements of purpose would help to clarify the target student population(s) that dual enrollment programs and Early Colleges are intended to serve, and additional dual enrollment program goals beyond acceleration.
- **Enhanced program communications to students and families:** Florida might consider policies to ensure a broader pool of students and parents are aware of the availability and benefits of dual enrollment and Early College participation. These might include policies such as those in Ohio requiring all colleges within a 30-mile range of the partnering secondary school to be offered the opportunity to meet with students and families to discuss dual enrollment programming.

CLARIFYING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EA AND EC

- **Statutory reference to “early admission”:** To avoid confusion with Early College programming, Florida might consider removing the “early admission” provision in [F.S.A. § 1007.271](#) and simply state that high school students may enroll part- or full-time in on-campus college coursework. There does not seem to be a clear benefit to distinguishing early admission from regular dual enrollment; other states’ policies do not call out full-time dual enrollment as a separate form of programming.

DUAL ENROLLMENT/EARLY COLLEGE FUNDING

- **District funding model:** Florida might revisit its dual enrollment/Early College funding model to reduce the district disincentive for students to enroll in coursework on the college campus.
- **District incentives for acceleration options:** Florida might also reconsider its financial incentives for Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) and dual enrollment. Financial incentives could be provided to schools that admit and support underserved students’ course success in dual enrollment and Early College, and underserved students’ exam success in AP, IB, and AICE.

EQUITY AND QUALITY

- **Early College approval process:** As is the practice in leading Early College states, Florida might consider adopting an approval process for Early Colleges, to ensure Early Colleges are designed to meet state-defined program goals. Florida might consider encouraging or requiring the use of NACEP standards, or wholly integrating NACEP standards into state expectations for dual enrollment and Early Colleges offerings, to ensure program quality.

COLLEGE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- **Placement tests:** Research indicates that placement tests are poor predictors of college success. They are no longer used for placement purposes at some Florida EC/EAs. Their use could be further minimized to increase the chance

REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE AND POLICY

that students enter college courses when they are most likely to be successful, and to decrease unnecessary barriers to entry. Florida might explore state policy revisions that require all Florida colleges to use alternate placement requirements, instead of allowing colleges to opt into offering alternate eligibility requirements.

- **High school GPA:** The high school GPA has been found to be a relatively strong predictor of success in college courses. The use of this indicator - along with other indicators (e.g. multiple measures) - is widely recommended by scholars. Consideration at the institution or state level could also be given to the use of a lower high school GPA than the 3.0 generally required at present for placement into college courses. The lower standard could make sense in particular for high school seniors, as is done in some EC/EAs.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

- **Pathways:** A number of colleges have developed pathways in which students take courses that will lead to graduation in a major with good career outcomes. Building on this, some EC/EA programs have worked with students to help them identify future majors and careers and then take the college courses that are most appropriate. Several of them help students to create individualized program plans with students that enable them to make good choices about the courses into which they will enroll.
- **Math course selections:** Selection of math courses is especially important and can open or close the door to future educational and career options. Some EC/EAs are careful to make sure students understand the implications of math course choices.

- **Transferability and applicability of course selections generally:** In general, Florida's policies governing transfer are very strong. However, as in other states, these transfer policies do not guarantee that all broadly transferable courses will apply towards a student's intended program of study. Some EC/EAs are working with students to make sure that the college courses they take will readily transfer to the college or university where they plan to matriculate in the future and apply to their intended program of study. This requires the attentive involvement of knowledgeable advisors. In some instances, however, more support could be given to local advisors to ensure that they have the training needed to help students select courses that are most advantageous for transfer (and align with students' career goals).
- **Online or hybrid courses:** To increase the number of course options for students, many EC/EAs enroll students in online or hybrid courses. As has been done in other states, Florida might broaden the use of online courses for dual enrollment and Early College, when paired with means to support student success. While such an approach can work well, care must be taken to make sure that students are well supported. While high-quality state and local platforms offering dual enrollment report the same course success rates for online and face-to-face dual enrollment students, some research suggests that students are less likely to be successful in online courses.³⁸

STUDENT SUPPORTS

- **Types of supports:** We saw many examples of well-developed student supports such as a) student success courses, b) seminars or other support courses designed to help students succeed in their college coursework, c) robust outreach to parents, and d) advising support readily available to students. Other programs may want to include these supports if they are not already doing so.
- **Timely interventions:** Assistance for struggling students was provided in a timely way at some EC/EAs through the use of early alert systems with appropriate follow-up. These could be more widely used.
- **On-campus resources and activities:** EC/EA students were widely able to take advantage of the range of supports and amenities available on college campuses. In many cases, they were encouraged to become involved in campus activities as a way to gain more experience as college students. These options should be encouraged wherever possible.

38. Xu, D., & Jaggars, S.S. (2014). Adaptability to Online Learning: Differences Across Types of Students and Academic Subject Areas. New York: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University

TRANSPORTATION

- **Transportation challenges:** Many programs were thinking about how to overcome transportation as a barrier to participation. Solutions typically were expensive. Florida might explore strategies to ensure district- or college-offered transportation to the college campus, such as additional state funds to be used for this purpose. Alternatively, Florida might consider financial incentives for faculty to travel to high schools to teach college courses and/or for high school teachers to become credentialed to teach college courses.

ON-RAMPS

- **Academic readiness opportunities in earlier secondary grades:** Ideally, dual enrollment experiences would be available to a wider range of students. However, this is only possible if students have had the chance to grow academically and personally before entering college classes. To this end, many programs and schools begin in 9th, or even 6th grade. Students are able to take courses that prepare them well for college, begin their college courses with supports, and then gradually become more independent. To increase the number and diversity of high school students prepared to access college courses through Early College or Early Admission programs, Florida state policy might encourage or require such on-ramps.
- **Student success courses and summer bridge programs:** Some EC/EAs are offering courses or special programs that help students to be better prepared for college courses. Student success courses can play this role as can summer bridge programs.
- **Corequisite support:** While we did not see corequisite courses³⁹ offered in Florida high schools, these are available in some other states, allowing students to take introductory English and math college courses, with extra support.
- **Good courses for less confident or minimally prepared students:** In some settings, EC/EAs have identified college courses that are appropriate for less confident or less well-prepared students to take. These may be taught by faculty who are used to working with younger students, or they may be courses that are not too different from high school courses.

39. Corequisite courses allow students to take college-level courses (usually math or English) with a companion course section in which they receive extra help.

PARTNERSHIPS

Features of the EC/EAs researched demonstrate that strong K-12/postsecondary partnerships are in place across Florida; Noteworthy partnership practices include:

- **On-campus EC location:** Some ECs are located on the college campus, while others insure that students are able to regularly spend time on campus.
- **Faculty-delivered professional development:** In some locales, college faculty provide professional development to high school teachers. In other settings, college and high school faculty participate in professional development together.
- **CTE pathways:** CTE pathway programs integrate high school and college coursework and are aligned with high quality college CTE programs.
- **Supports and resources:** Colleges and high schools collaborate to make sure that dual enrollment students have access to needed supports and resources provided by both K-12 and higher education.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES

- **Data collection and analysis:** We did not hear much about EC/EA program improvement practices, although they may exist. Regular collection of disaggregated data to monitor student success and check whether outcomes vary for different groups of students can be an important practice and lead to greater equity. To support state and local continuous improvement efforts, Florida's statute might be revised to require annual public data reporting, through a data dashboard and/or a static report, providing data on specified dual enrollment and Early College participation and outcomes measures, disaggregated by student demographics, student academic background, and geography, as is done in leading states. These data could be used to identify strategies to address inequities in EC/EA participation and outcomes.
- **Fidelity to state policy:** Some local interviewees described practices not in alignment with state EC and EA policy. Local implementation of Early College and Early Admission policy that is faithful to the letter and spirit of Florida law might be supported by the creation of a statewide body similar to Colorado's Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board, whose role includes coordinating local efforts across the state and making recommendations as needed to state-level bodies to improve or update policies.

APPENDIX A

DATA SOURCES AND TECHNICAL NOTES

The research team is comprised of six individuals with extensive experience studying practice, policy, and the effectiveness of dual enrollment and early college high schools and programs.

To answer the research questions we undertook the following:

DATA SOURCES	PARTICIPANTS AND COVERAGE
Survey	25 of 28 colleges, covering a total of 72 of 76 EC and EA programs
Interviews	44 total interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 14 college administrators ▪ 14 high school and district administrators ▪ 4 Florida Department of Education representatives ▪ 5 non-Florida representatives in states best known for EC implementation ▪ 5 non-Florida representatives in states best known for EA implementation ▪ 2 experts leading EC focused organizations
Demographic information provided by colleges	16 colleges, covering 33 EC and EA programs
Website information	28 college sites 60 school, program or district sites
FLDOE data compilation of EC enrollment and outcomes	62 EC schools/programs

1. SURVEY DATA:

We sought to collect survey data about a college's affiliated early college (EC) schools or programs and early admissions (EA) programs through a Zoom interview with at least one administrator from each of the 28 colleges in Florida. The survey was designed to answer the research questions as well as to provide descriptive, background information on the types, designs, and characteristics of EC schools/programs and EA programs in Florida. The survey questions were formatted in Qualtrics, a survey software program, to allow us to capture individual EC and EA program information associated with a given college.

After initial design and refinement, the survey questions were reviewed by representatives of the Florida Department of Education for terminology and clarity, and then piloted with administrators at two colleges with varied EC/EA programmatic features. Further revisions were made to make the survey questions clearer and improve ease of administration. Each member of the research team was trained on administering the Qualtrics survey, entering data, and screensharing the survey questions and options while conducting the interview on Zoom to ensure that the same method and approach was used for the interview and entering data.

We conducted surveys with 25 of the 28 colleges in Florida, resulting in a robust response rate of 89%. Through the survey administration, we collected data at the individual level of schools and programs for 72 of 76 sites which represents 95% of EC/EA sites in the state.⁴⁰

The survey data were downloaded, organized, and cleaned in IBM SPSS statistical software. For colleges with a large number of EC/EA sites, the survey data were double-checked against the recordings of the survey zoom session to confirm the accuracy of the survey data entry. For survey items that had missing data, meaning data was not provided, the EC/EA site was not included in the statewide aggregate calculation for that specific survey topic. The results were used in creating figures and writing several chapters of the report.

40. The total number of 76 EC and EA sites in Florida equals the 72 EC/EA sites identified through the 25 colleges that participated in our survey administration and the 4 EC/EA sites associated with the 3 colleges that did not participate in our survey.

2. INTERVIEW DATA:

We sought to collect interview data to better understand the implementation of the features and practices of ECs and EAs at the site-level and general policy priorities. Therefore, we interviewed college administrators and high school and district administrators, as well as state representatives from Florida and other states, as well as national Early College experts. Altogether, we conducted 44 interviews via Zoom or telephone using protocol of topic and questions developed for each interviewee group. We recorded the Zoom interviews which auto-generated transcripts for the sessions. Telephone interviews were audio-recorded and typed up. The transcripts were formatted for easy use by all research team members views were recorded.

a. College administrators: To obtain more complete information on colleges implementing EC and EA programs, we sought to supplement the survey data with an interview with half of the colleges in the state, and we were able to interview and collect data for 14 colleges. The college interviews were conducted immediately following the survey administration, resulting in a time commitment of about one hour for interviewees. We sought to identify a sample with a diversity of characteristics and took into account the following: 1) region within Florida, 2) number of EC and EA programs/schools associated with the college, 3) urbanicity, 4) Title 1 serving institutions, 5) charter schools serving, 6) proportion of non-white students served.

Interview protocols were developed to address the research questions in greater depth. The most important questions were indicated so that interviewers would have guidance in selecting the items to prioritize in the frequent cases when time was running short. These were also piloted with the two colleges who piloted our survey.

b. High school and district administrators: To also get the K-12 perspective on EC and EA programs, we sought to interview at least one K-12 representative associated with each college interviewed. To select our sample, we asked each college interviewee to recommend two individuals who would have considerable knowledge of EC and EA programs. After reaching out to potential interviewees, we were able to complete our target goal of 14 interviews.

c. State representatives and national experts: To understand state policies related to early college and early admission around the country, we identified X states with policies on early college and X states with policies on early admission. We particularly sought out those that we believed could have model policies worthy of consideration in other contexts. After reaching out to potential interviewees, we completed a total of 10 state interviews with representatives from the following states: XYZ. We also conducted 4 interviews with representatives from the Florida Department of Education. To make sure that we were taking into account current national trends related to Early College and Early Admissions, we also interviewed two national leaders.

3. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

Florida's annual data collection provides key data points on students at each early college site, such as total number of students served, total number of graduates, total number of Associate degrees awarded, and average number of college credits earned by all students. However, the state does not collect any student demographic information or grade level enrollment counts at the Early College (EC) site level.

Therefore, we attempted to collect this information directly from the colleges we met with for this study, in order to: a) capture basic information on Early Admissions (EA) programs, not included in the state data collection process; b) understand the numbers of students participating in each grade level; and c) learn about demographic characteristics of students served by EC and EA programs. We also collected information about the year the EC schools or programs were started.

We developed an excel sheet template and emailed this to the 25 college administrators we surveyed via Zoom, and we received data from 16 colleges for a total of 33 EC and EA programs.

These data were used to create the gender and race figures used in this report. The data were also used in examining the extent to which EC and EA student populations are similar to those of the districts they serve.

4. SCHOOL AND PROGRAM WEBSITE INFORMATION:

We collected information on Early College and Early Admissions at each of the 28 colleges by reviewing the college websites and individual EC and EA websites when applicable. We compiled data on race/ethnicity for all the colleges and EC/EA sites when available. The research team reviewed the information for our assigned sites prior to our scheduled Zoom surveys and interviews. Information about key features of EC/EA sites were also compiled and the research team used this information for context and clarification during the interviews.

5. FLDOE DATA COMPILATION OF EARLY COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND OUTCOMES

The research team received data from the state's annual data collection of Early Colleges for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. These data were used in our sampling procedures as well as to analyze student enrollment counts and outcomes information used in this report.

For the 2020-21 data received, 62 Early Colleges were included in our final analysis, representing 27 colleges (note: one college did not have an Early College). A total of 71 sites were listed in the original database; nine were not included because the site was confirmed not to be an Early College program during our interview or it was an Early Admissions program. We did include the four Early Colleges associated with the three colleges that did not participate in the zoom survey or interview portion of our study.

For the 2021-22 data received, 58 Early Colleges were included in our final analysis, representing 27 colleges (note: one college did not have an Early College). A total of 71 sites were listed in the original database; nine were not included because the site was confirmed not to be an Early College program during our interview or it was an Early Admissions program. We did include the four Early Colleges associated with the three colleges that did not participate in the zoom survey or interview portion of our study.

Note: We had hoped to use these data in a correlational analysis of program features associated with positive outcomes; however, this was not possible. More details are available upon request.

APPENDIX B

SITES INCLUDED IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

COLLEGE NAME	EARLY COLLEGE OR EARLY ADMISSIONS NAME	PROGRAM TYPE
Broward College	College Academy at Broward College	School
	Early Admissions	Early Admissions
Chipola College	Chipola Early Admissions	Early Admissions
	STEM Collegiate High School Program	EC Program
College of Central Florida	College of Central Florida - College of Central Florida's Collegiate High School Program at West Port High School	Program
Daytona State College	Daytona State College Early College	Program
Eastern Florida State College	Eastern Florida State College Early Admission	Early Admissions
	Eastern Florida State College Early College	Program
Florida Gateway College	Florida Gateway College	Program
	General EA	Early Admissions
Florida Southwestern State College	Clewiston Institute	Program
	EA program	Early Admissions
	Florida Southwestern Collegiate High School - Charlotte	School
	Florida Southwestern Collegiate High School - Lee	School
Florida State College at Jacksonville	Andrew Jackson Cybersecurity Academy	Program
	Baldwin Early College High School	Program
	Early Admissions	Early Admissions
	Edward White High School Academy of Leadership	Program
	Englewood Advanced Manufacturing Academy	Program
	First Coast Early College High School	Program
	First Coast Early College High School	Program
	Robert E. Lee Early College High School	Program
	Sandalwood Cybersecurity Academy	Program
	Sandalwood Early College High School	Program
	Westside Early College High School	Program

COLLEGE NAME	EARLY COLLEGE OR EARLY ADMISSIONS NAME	PROGRAM TYPE
Gulf Coast State College	Early admissions	Early Admissions
Hillsborough Community College	Armwood High School	Program
	HCC Early Admissions program	Early Admissions
	Lennard Collegiate Academy	Program
	Leto High School	Program
	Spoto High School	Program
Indian River State College	Clark Advanced Learning Center	School
Lake-Sumter State College	Health Sciences Collegiate Academy	Program
	The Villages High School Early College Program	Program
Miami Dade College	New World School of the Arts	School
	School for Advanced Studies	School
Northwest Florida State College	Collegiate High School at NWFSC	School
Palm Beach State College	Early Admission	Early Admissions
	Palm Beach State Collegiate High School	Program
Pasco-Hernando State College	General EA	Early Admissions
	Pasco-Hernando State College Collegiate High School	Program
Polk State College	Chain of Lake Collegiate High	School
	Early Admissions program	Early Admissions
	Gateway to College Collegiate High School	School
	Lakeland Collegiate High School	School
Santa Fe College	Santa Fe College - SFC High School Dual Enrollment	Program
Seminole State College	Crooms Academy	Program
	Lake Howell High School	Program
	Seminole Early Admissions	Early Admissions

COLLEGE NAME	EARLY COLLEGE OR EARLY ADMISSIONS NAME	PROGRAM TYPE
St. Johns River State College	Early admissions	Early Admissions
	EC at Pedro Menendez HS	Program
	EC at Toco Creek HS	Program
	SJR State Collegiate High School at Interlachen High School	Program
	SJR State Collegiate High School at Middleburg High School	Program
	SJR State Collegiate High School at Orange Park High School	Program
	SJR State Collegiate High School at Palatka High School	Program
St. Petersburg College	Early Admissions Program	Early Admissions
	Early College Program	Program
	St. Petersburg Collegiate High School North Pinellas (Opened Fall 2019)	School
	St. Petersburg Collegiate High School St. Petersburg	School
State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota	Accelerated Dual Enrollment Program	Program
	Early Admissions Program	Early Admissions
	State College of Florida Collegiate School (Bradenton Campus)	School
	State College of Florida Collegiate School (Venice Campus)	School
Tallahassee Community College	Tallahassee Community College - Tallahassee Community College Collegiate High School	Program
The College of the Florida Keys	Collegiate High School (EA)	Early Admissions
	Collegiate High School at Marathon High School	Program
Valencia College	Boone High School Criminal Justice Magnet Program	Program
	East River High School Criminal Justice Magnet Program	Program
	East River High School First Responders Academy	Program
	Jones HS Criminal Justice (not magnet)	Program
	Lake Nona Criminal Justice (not magnet)	Program

