

Jobs for the Future, Inc.

The Early College Expansion Partnership (ECEP)

DID ECEP INCREASE COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSE TAKING,
GRADUATION RATES, AND THE EARNING OF COLLEGE CREDITS?

Project Overview

THE PROBLEM: What Challenge Did the Program Try to Address?

Good-paying jobs require some level of postsecondary education, but few high school students earn these credentials. High school graduation and graduates' college and career readiness are persistent concerns. The original Early College Model focused on college readiness in small schools with positive impacts on various outcomes related to high school completion and post-secondary education success. The Early College Expansion Partnership (ECEP)¹ aimed to implement and scale up Early College Model strategies in comprehensive middle and high schools, in districts with a prevalence of students who face challenges in postsecondary education.

THE PROJECT: What Strategies Did the Program Employ?

Jobs for the Future Inc., acting as a representative for ECEP, received an i3 validation grant² (2012–2017) to implement Early College Model strategies in 14 middle schools, 12 high schools, and two grade 6-12 schools in three school districts in Colorado and Texas. The impact study relied on a quasi-experimental design, which matched ECEP schools to similar schools not receiving the ECEP intervention.

¹ Jobs for the Future Inc. received an i3 validation grant supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation program through Grant Number U411B120049.

² Validation grants provide funding to support the expansion of projects that address persistent education challenges to the regional or national level. All i3 grantees are required to conduct rigorous evaluations of their projects. The quality of evidence required to demonstrate a project's effectiveness depends on a project's level of scale or grant type.

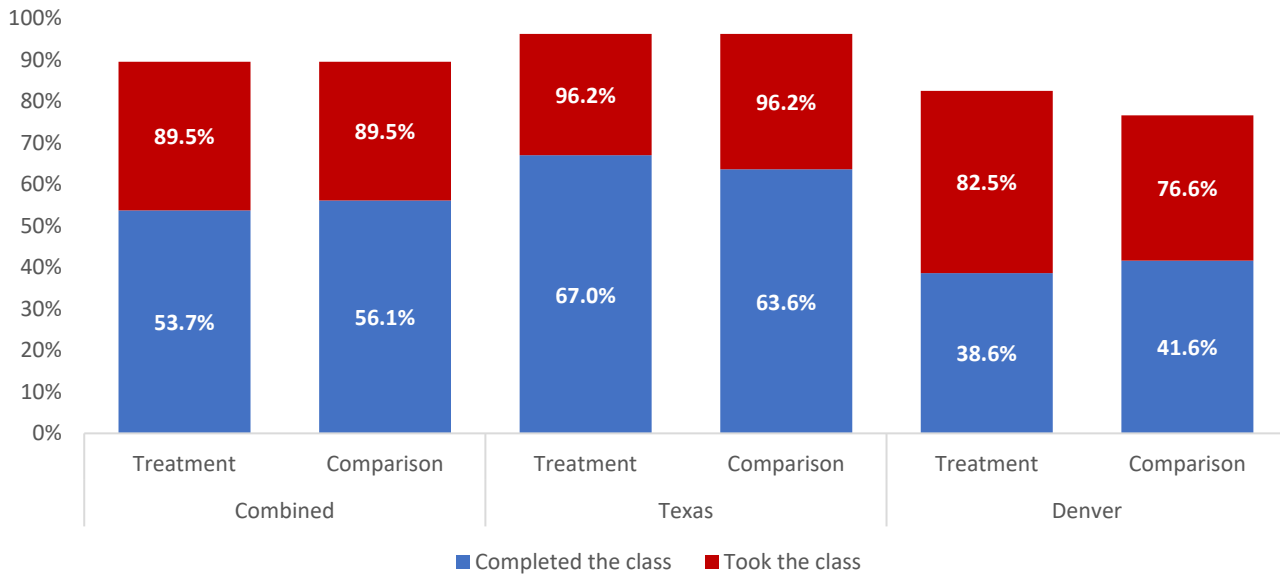
THE ECEP MODEL

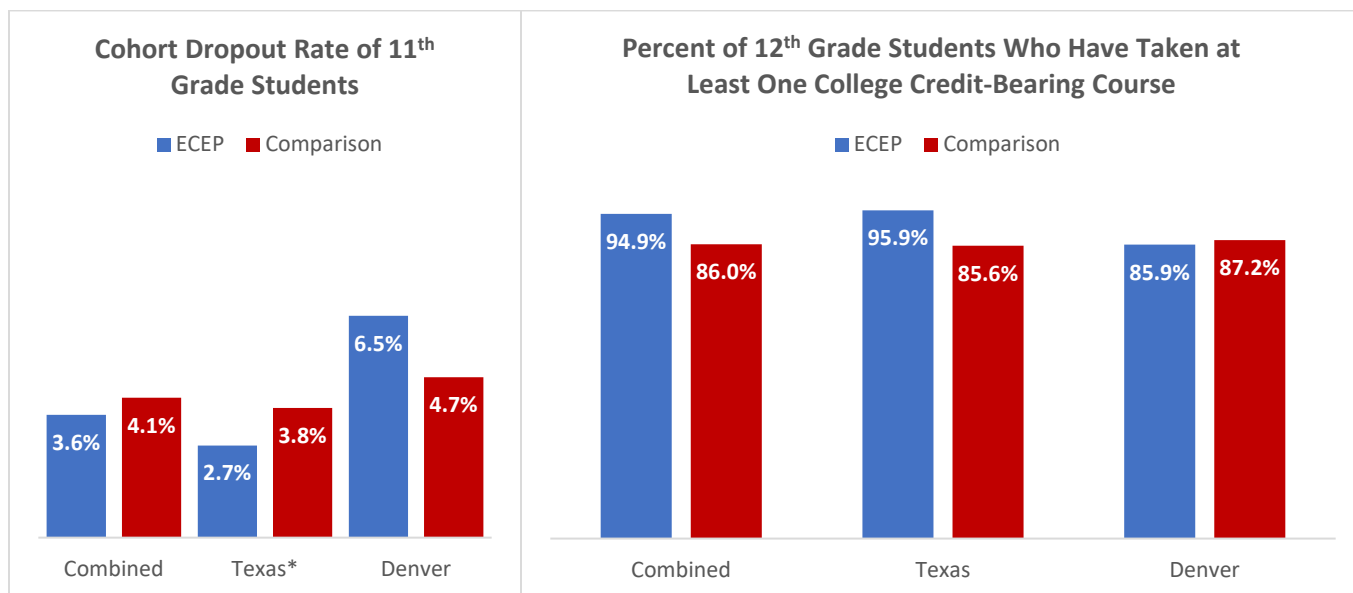
- **College Ready Academic Program.** The implementation included an instructional framework aligned to college-ready standards, student-centered instructional practices – the Common Instructional Framework – and early access to college courses.
- **College Headstart.** This component included instruction in college readiness behaviors and the culture and norms of college in middle and high school, as well as support for college enrollment in high school.
- **Wraparound Student Supports.** This program element included comprehensive academic and emotional supports, strong staff-student relationships, and the development of relationships with students' families.
- **School-level Organizational Practices.** Schools had to have post-secondary partnerships, a college going culture, and opportunities for teacher professional development and collaboration, including the use of data to inform instruction.

Summary of Results

DID ECEP INCREASE COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSE TAKING, GRADUATION RATES, AND THE EARNING OF COLLEGE CREDITS?

Percentage of 9th Graders Taking and Completing College Preparatory Classes





- **COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSE ENROLLMENT.** ECEP had no statistically significant impact on college preparatory course taking.
- **COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSE SUCCESS.** The study found that ECEP had no statistically significant impact on the successful completion of college preparatory courses.
- **DROPOUT RATE.** There were no statistically significant differences in the dropout rate between ECEP and comparison schools.
- **COLLEGE CREDIT COURSE TAKING.** There were no statistically significant differences overall between treatment and comparison schools in the share of students taking *some* sort of college credit course.

Please see Appendices B and C for information about the evaluation’s design and the quality of the evidence, respectively.

SECONDARY FINDINGS

- **DROPOUT RATE ACROSS STATES.** There were differences across the states. In Texas, ECEP schools had a statistically significant lower dropout rate than comparison schools. English Language Learners were also less likely to drop out in treatment schools in Texas than in comparison schools. In Colorado, the dropout rate was significantly higher in treatment schools. Evaluators speculated that existing dropout prevention efforts in Texas, unrelated to ECEP, may have been responsible for the finding.
- **COLLEGE CREDIT COURSE TAKING ACROSS STATES.** In Denver, treatment students earned over double the number of CTE credits relative to students in comparison schools (0.61 Carnegie units compared to 0.28 Carnegie units), a difference that was statistically significant.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Below, we summarize the study's considerations regarding fidelity of implementation, implementation challenges, and explanations for the lack of statistically significant findings.

- **LACK OF SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS.** Despite the large magnitude of differences between treatment and comparison groups in the share of students taking *at least one* college credit-bearing course, the findings were not statistically significant. The evaluators indicated that minimal detectable effects were even higher (as high as 14%). Additionally, Texas schools started from a very high share of students taking college courses, which would limit the impact of the intervention in increasing those levels.
- **TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.** Surveys found a substantial increase in teacher professional development activities as a result of the intervention via more teacher collaboration and use of data and post-secondary partnerships. Districts also moved to incentivize high school teachers to become credentialed to teach college courses.
- **DEVELOPMENT OF CAREER PATHWAYS.** One effect of the college course taking emphasis captured in the implementation study was the development of career pathways to guide student course taking, aligning college course taking with degree plans.
- **UNEVEN IMPLEMENTATION.** Evidence showed that instructional change was not widespread across schools, but instead occurred in pockets. A decline in the availability of coaching for teachers may have contributed to uneven implementation.
- **STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN.** Both school leadership and teacher buy-in to ECEP varied. Among challenges to consistent implementation, evaluators highlighted staff turnover.
- **SCHOOL POLICY.** ECEP schools received state designation as early colleges, which allowed students to take more college courses. Structures to provide coordination with post-secondary partners were also formed.

For More Information

Evaluation Reports

[Early College Expansion Partnership External Evaluation \(Full Report\)](#) (SERVE Center University of North Carolina Greensboro, June 2018)³

Additional Reports

[Sharing Responsibility for College Success: A Model Partnership Moves Students to Diplomas and Degrees \(Full Report\)](#) (Joel Vargas, 2014)

[Solving the Dual Enrollment Staffing Puzzle: Strategies from the Early College Expansion partnership](#) (Jobs for the Future & Educate Texas, November 2017)

[Leadership Lessons from the Early College Expansion Partnership \(Full Report\)](#) (Sarah Hooker, April 2017)

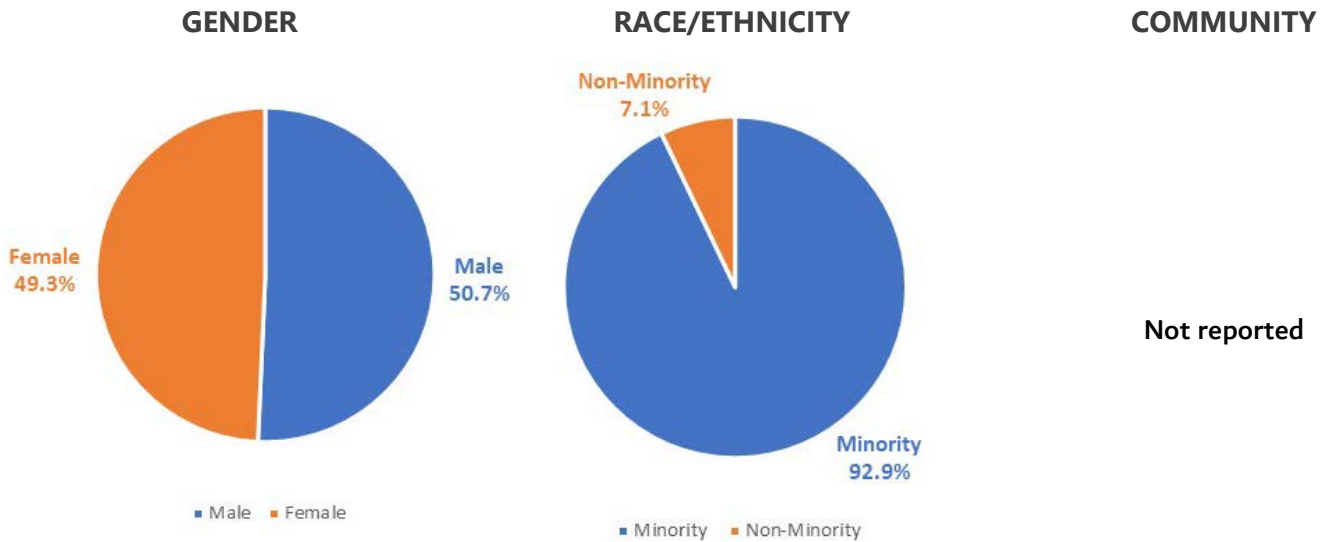
[Highlights of the Early College Expansion Partnership](#) (Sarah Hooker, 2018)

[Taking the Long View: Sustainability Lessons from the Early College Expansion Partnership \(Full Report\)](#)
(JFF, April 2018)

³ The information and data for this result summary was collected from the most recent report as of 01/22/2020: SERVE Center. (2018, June). *Transforming Comprehensive High Schools into Early Colleges*. Retrieved from https://jfforg-prod-prime.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/Transforming_Comprehensive_High_Schools_Into_Early_Colleges.pdf

Appendix A: Students Served by the Project⁴

GRADE(S)													
PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12



HIGH-NEED STUDENTS¹

Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	English Learners	Students with Disabilities
87.9%	Not reported	Not reported

⁴These data reflect the entire student population served by the intervention, not just the evaluation sample used in the impact study.

Appendix B: Impact Evaluation Methodology⁵

RESEARCH DESIGN:

Design:	Randomized Controlled Trial
Approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fourteen middle schools, 12 high schools, and two grade 6-12 schools in three school districts in Colorado and Texas which responded to RFPs for implementation of ECEP were selected. These treatment schools were matched to a set of similar comparison schools using a quasi-experimental design.
Study Length:	Four years

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Study Setting	29 schools in Texas and Denver, CO
Final Sample Sizes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Intervention Group</i>: 14 schools <i>Comparison Group</i>: 15 schools
Intervention Group Characteristics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9th Grade College Prep Course Taking - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free/reduced-priced lunch: 88.1% Underrepresented minority: 92.6 % Female: 49.4% Persistence - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free/reduced-priced lunch: 87.5% Underrepresented minority: 92.5 % Female: 48.6% College Credit Courses - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free/reduced-priced lunch: 88.2% Underrepresented minority: 94.3% Female: 50.1%
Comparison Group Characteristics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9th Grade College Prep Course Taking - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free/reduced-priced lunch: 88.1% Underrepresented minority: 92.3% Female: 49.6%
Data Sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student records: Attendance, course enrollment, and completion Surveys: Staff survey Interviews: administrators, students (focus groups), and teachers

⁵ These data reflect only the evaluation sample in the impact study, not the entire population served.

Key Measures:

- College Prep Course Taking -
 - Percentage of students taking a core set of college preparatory courses at the 9th-grade level, with “taking a course” defined as student enrollment in at least one Carnegie unit of relevant coursework during the academic year
 - Percentage of students taking and succeeding in English I and at least one college preparatory math course in the 9th grade, with successful completion equal to earning high school credit for at least one Carnegie unit of relevant coursework with a grade of C- or higher
- Persistence -
 - Cohort Dropout Rate, i.e. the percentage of 9th grade students in 2013-14 who dropped out by the start of 11th grade
- College Credit Courses -
 - College-Level Course Taking. The percentage of students who had enrolled in at least one college-level course (any number or fraction of Carnegie units) by the end of 12th grade, excluding developmental courses.
- High School Credits Received for College-Level Courses. The average number of high school credits earned in college-level courses students had taken and passed with a grade of C- or higher by the end of 12th grade.

Appendix C: Quality of the Evidence

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW⁶

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/22/2020	N/A

EVIDENCE FOR ESSA REVIEW⁷

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/22/2020	N/A

NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS REVIEW⁸

STUDY	RATING
Not reviewed as of 01/22/2020	N/A

⁶ <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW>

⁷ <https://www.evidenceforessa.org/>

⁸ <https://intensiveintervention.org/>

Investing in Innovation (i3) Grantee Results Summary

Validation, 2012-2017

The [*Investing in Innovation Fund \(i3\)*](#), established under section 14007 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is a Federal discretionary grant program at the U.S. Department of Education within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). i3 grants help schools and local education agencies work in partnership with the private sector and the philanthropic community to develop and expand innovative practices that improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and/or increase college enrollment and completion rates for high-need students.

This summary was prepared by the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program Dissemination Project. The project is conducted by the [*Manhattan Strategy Group*](#), in partnership with [*Westat*](#) and [*EdScale*](#), with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, [*Office of Elementary and Secondary Education*](#), under Contract No. ED-ESE-15-A-0012/0004. The evaluation results presented herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education should be inferred.

ⁱ “High-need student” refers to a student at risk of academic failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, attend high-minority schools, are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, in foster care, have been incarcerated, have disabilities, or who are English learners. For more information see: [*Applications for New Awards; Investing in Innovation Fund-Development Grants, 81 FR 24070 \(April 25, 2016\)*](#).