

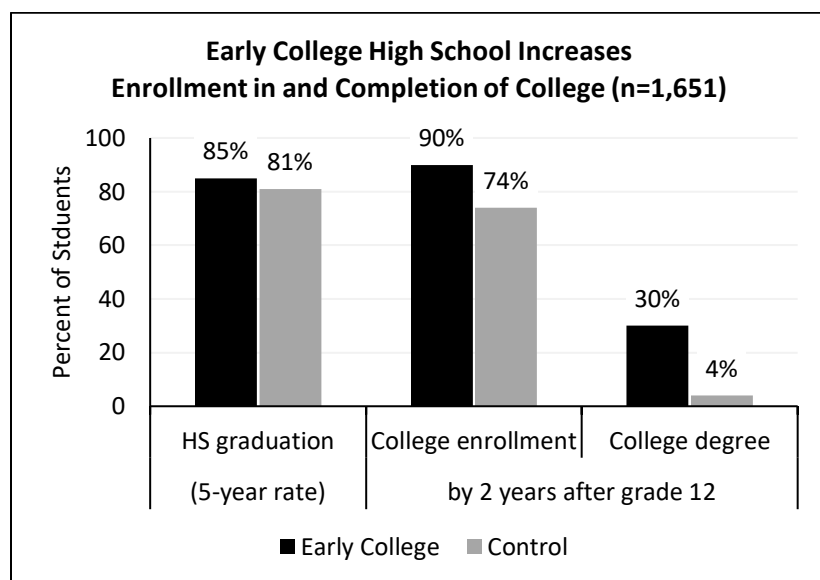
Early College High Schools Increase Students' Early Postsecondary Degree Attainment

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Are early college high schools effective?

Yes, they are, according to a rigorous study conducted in North Carolina. Students who attended Early College High Schools enrolled in and completed college more than comparable students who did not (see bar chart below). The increase in degree completion is one of the largest ever observed in a randomized trial! Early college students also earned 8 times as many college credits in high school as their peers in the control group.



How to read this chart: The chart shows that 30% of early college students had earned any college degree (primarily associate degrees) by 2 years after grade 12 compared to 4% of control students.

What are early colleges?

North Carolina's early college high schools are small schools, mostly located on college campuses, that seamlessly integrate the high school and college experience. Early colleges serve students starting in 9th grade through grade 12 or 13 (some schools are five-year programs), and specifically target students underrepresented in college. The intent is that students graduate with an associate degree or two years of college credit in addition to their high school diploma.

How did we do this study?

These findings come from an experimental study, which falls under Tier 1 of the ESSA evidence standards. Students who applied and were deemed eligible by the school were then randomly selected either to attend the early college (the treatment group or "Early College" in the bar chart) or not to attend ("Control" in the chart). This randomization means that differences in outcomes between the early college and control groups are due to the early college itself and not to any student characteristics. The sample included 1,651 students who applied to 12 early colleges and entered 9th grade in the years from 2005-06 through 2008-09. Data sources included student application data; the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction; the North Carolina Community College System; and the National Student Clearinghouse.

It is important to note that the study only includes students who chose to apply to early college high schools. Consequently, these results may not directly inform potential systems changes, such as converting an entire comprehensive high school to an early college high school. We do not know if the early college experience would work as well for students who would not deliberately choose it.

For more info about North Carolina's early colleges visit [here](#).

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