

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MCNC EARLY COLLEGE STUDENT SURVEY REPORT (2005-06)

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BACKGROUND

The Middle College National Consortium (MCNC) consists of a network of high schools across the nation, located on community college campuses, which provide historically underrepresented youth with access to college. The Consortium supports these small schools in implementing six design principles that lay the foundation for an excellent high school education leading to postsecondary success. Students typically enroll in both high school and college classes.

Building on this history, the MCNC, with support from the Gates, Ford, and Carnegie Foundations, has taken this initiative to the next level. The Middle-College Early-College (MC-EC) High Schools blur the border between high school and the community college to create "blended institutions" that offer a dual degree program. Taking a mixture of high school and college courses, students work to attain both a high school diploma and associates degree in four to five years. For the past four years, NCREST has provided research and evaluation support to the MCNC related to the development and implementation of their Early Colleges.

DATA SOURCES

This brief is drawn from a larger report titled *Early College Student Survey Report Academic Year 2005-2006 and Longitudinal Analysis 2003-2005* and is based on analysis of NCREST's 2005-2006 student survey, which assesses students' perceptions of and experiences with the schools and the Early College initiative. Schools administered the survey to their 9th and 11th graders in the spring of 2006. In all, 1,552 students were surveyed, of whom 880 (57%) were 9th graders and 672 (43%) were 11th graders. This brief provides a summary of data from the 2005-2006 academic year and tracks changes across time, from

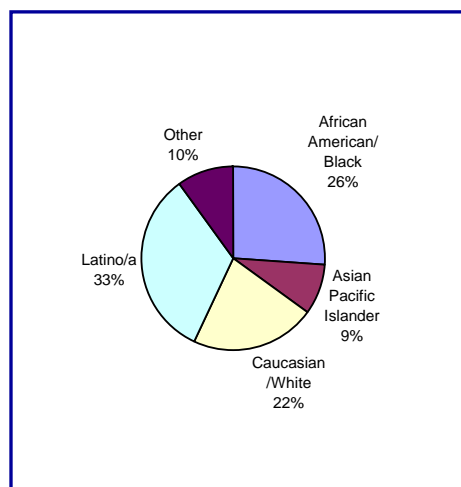
2003 to 2005 in terms of student demographics, students' educational aspirations, students' school-related activities and habits, students' sense of self-efficacy, attitudes, and beliefs about education in general, and students' beliefs about college and the college-going process.

FINDINGS

Who are MC-EC High Schools Serving?

MC-EC High Schools are serving students from groups under-represented in college, including racial and ethnic minorities, first-generation college-goers, English language learners (ELLs), and recent immigrants. The surveyed population is comprised of a variety of races/ethnicities, as shown in Figure 1. Of all surveyed students,

Figure 1: Students by Race/Ethnicity



33% are Latino/a and 26% Black, percentages that are higher than national population figures. Many students are also first-generation college-goers, as only 42% of students' mothers or female guardians and 32% of their fathers or male guardians had completed at least some college. Students speak a

variety of languages, including Spanish and Chinese. Of the students surveyed, 16% were born outside the US, in comparison to 9% of the US population.

Who do students rely on for advice on education?

A clear majority of students reported relying on their parents for advice about education (Figure 2). This finding reinforces the importance of school and family partnerships in supporting student progress.

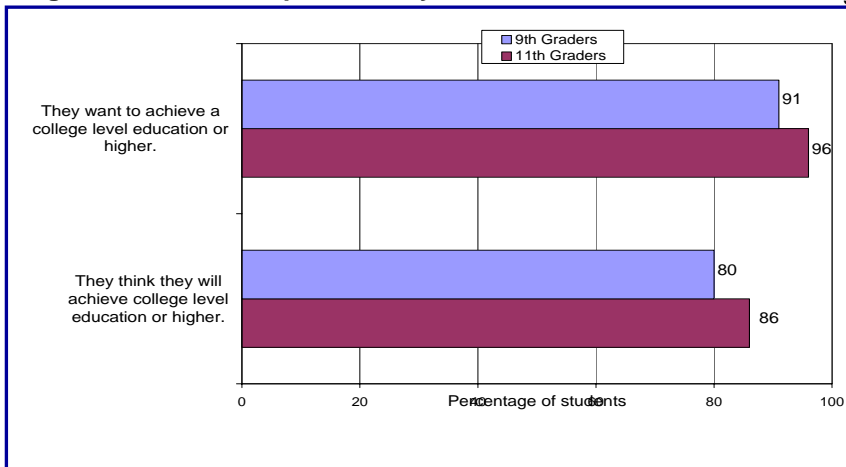
Figure 2: Sources of Advice on Education

Source	Times Stated
Parents	900
Extended Family	317
Siblings	174
Teachers/Counselors	434
Friends	86
Self/No one	31
Other	25

What educational aspirations do students have?

Most students surveyed want to achieve a college-level education or higher, regardless of whether they were in 9th grade (91%) or 11th grade (96%). However, fewer students in both populations thought they would actually achieve the level they aspired to achieve (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Student Aspirations by Grade Level



These differences in educational aspirations and expectations occurred across all racial/ethnic subgroups and across both male and female students. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the gap between aspirations and expectations, students were asked to “explain what you think might prevent you from accomplishing your educational goals.” The most frequently stated reason was lack of money (Figure 4).

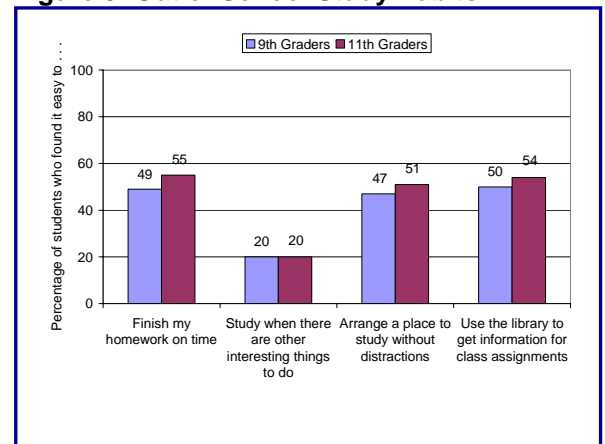
Figure 4: Most Frequently Stated Reasons for Differences Between Educational Aspirations and Expected Attainment

Reason	Times Stated
Lack of money	142
Laziness/Lack of motivation	37
Family Obligations	34
Myself, no confidence, current behavior	34
Career goals/No need or desire for higher degree	25
Uncertainty about future	20
Takes too much time	17
Friends, distraction, drugs or alcohol	17
Tired of school, want to stop, lack of interest	16
Getting a job	11

How do students perform on school-related tasks?

Student responses to questions about their school habits and their participation in school-related activities suggest that students may need additional assistance in establishing better in and out of school study habits. Ninth graders reported that they had more difficulty than eleventh graders with performance on school-related tasks, including participating in class discussions, taking notes on class instruction, concentrating on school subjects, and remembering information presented in class and in textbooks. Only a small percentage of students found it easy to study when there were other interesting things to do, while about half of students found it easy to arrange a distraction-free place to study, to finish their homework on time, and to use the library to get information (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Out of School Study Habits

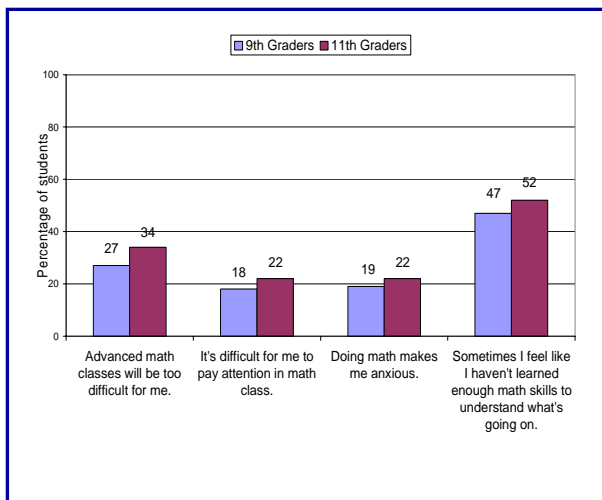


What are students' feelings of self-efficacy and attitudes about school, math, and writing?

Students reported fairly high levels of self-efficacy in relation to school. Sixty-one percent of students stated that they felt like they were successful in school. Seventy-five percent of students found it easy to stick to their aims and accomplish their goals. The two specific content areas in which self-efficacy was measured were math and writing. Overall, students were somewhat more likely to display self-efficacy in relation to writing skills (56% considered writing easy) than in math (46% considered math easy).

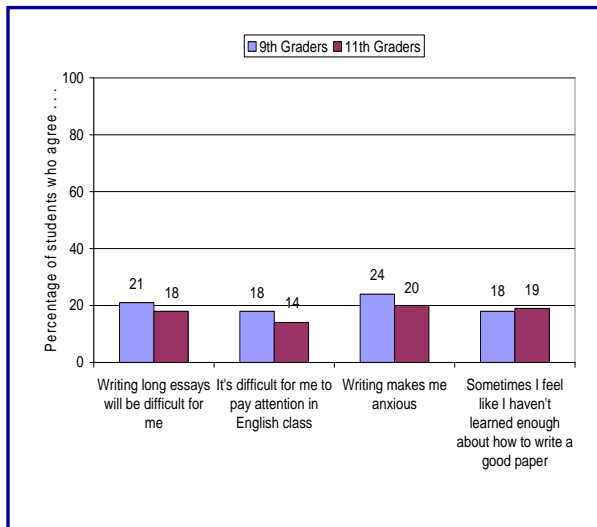
In addition, in terms of math self-efficacy, forty-seven percent of 9th grade students and 45% of 11th grade students stated that math was easy for them. Although only 20% of students reported that doing math makes them anxious, this is of concern given the fact that math anxiety is shown to negatively impact performance¹. Only 20% had difficulty paying attention in math class (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Self-Efficacy in Math



In terms of writing self-efficacy, fifty-six percent of 9th grade students and 55% of 11th grade students reported that writing was easy for them. In contrast, twenty-two percent were anxious about writing. Only 16% of students reported having difficulty paying attention in English classes (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Self-Efficacy in Writing/English

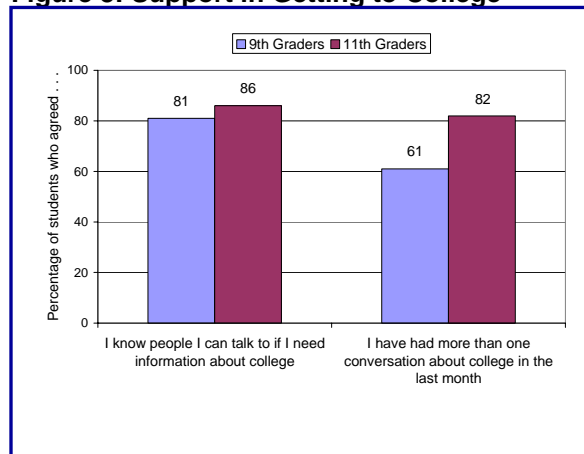


In addition, there was a greater feeling of preparedness for college-level math and English among 11th graders than among 9th graders.

What are students' beliefs and experiences related to the college-going process?

Most students in Early College High Schools see themselves as on track to go to college, despite their membership in groups that have been traditionally underserved in college. The fact that significantly more 11th grade students (82%) had had conversations about college than their 9th grade counterparts (61%) suggests that important supports increase as students progress through high school. Most students were receiving at least some assistance in getting to college as evidenced by the fact that the majority of students knew people they could talk to about college (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Support in Getting to College



Forty-four percent of 9th grade students and 32% of 11th grade students report that they feel unsure about what college will be like and 45% of 11th grade students and 42% of 9th grade students are

¹ Peskoff, F. (2000). *Mathematics anxiety and the adult student: Effective coping strategies* and Marsh, G. E., II & Tapia, M. (2002). *Feeling good about math performance: Is there a sex difference?*

concerned about how they will pay for college. This may indicate that more information or support on these topics would be helpful.

LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS

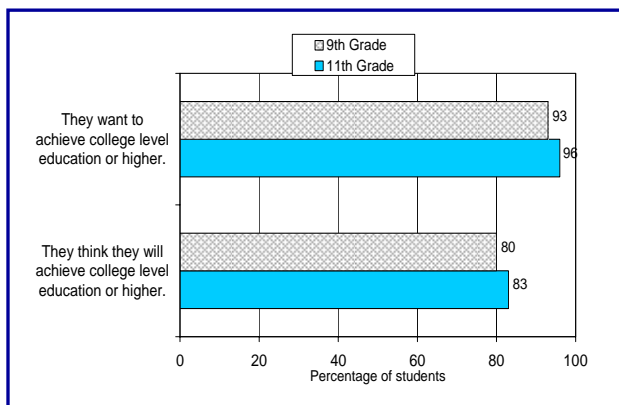
All students in MCNC Early College high schools are surveyed in grades 9 and 11. Each survey includes a space for the students to record their high school student identification number. NCREST used these numbers to match the responses of individual students to questions on surveys given in the 2003-04 year to responses on surveys administered in the 2005-06 year.

The resulting dataset was drawn from six schools out of seven that surveyed 9th grade students in both academic years.

How have student aspirations and expectations changed over time?

In both years that this group of students took the survey, they responded to questions on their educational aspirations and expectations. In general, students in 11th grade had higher educational aspirations and expectations than they did when they were in 9th grade (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Longitudinal Postsecondary Aspirations and Expectations



By comparing students' responses to these questions in 9th grade with the responses that they gave in 11th grade, it was possible to measure change in aspirations and expectations over time. The majority of students had the same educational aspirations in 11th grade as they did in 9th grade. However, 17% of students had lower aspirations in 11th grade than they did in 9th grade while 25% of students had higher educational aspirations in 11th grade in comparison to 9th grade. The same is true for educational expectations: nearly half (47%) of students had the same levels of expectation, while 23% and 31% had lower or higher expectations respectively.

What obstacles do students think will prevent them from reaching their educational goals?

We asked students what might prevent them from accomplishing their educational goals. Students cited fewer obstacles in 11th grade than they did in 9th grade. Overwhelmingly, 11th graders reported not having money to pay for college as the greatest obstacle. Uncertainty about their futures, and concerns about school taking too much time were also obstacles reported more frequently by students as 11th graders.

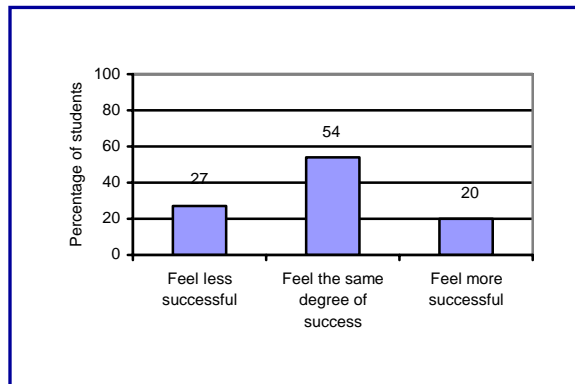
Who do students rely on for advice about education?

In the 11th grade, students reported depending more on teachers and counselors for educational advice and less on their parents, members of their extended family, and siblings than they had in the 9th grade. Other sources of advice about college included friends and peers.

How do students' feelings of self-efficacy and attitudes about school, math, and writing change over time?

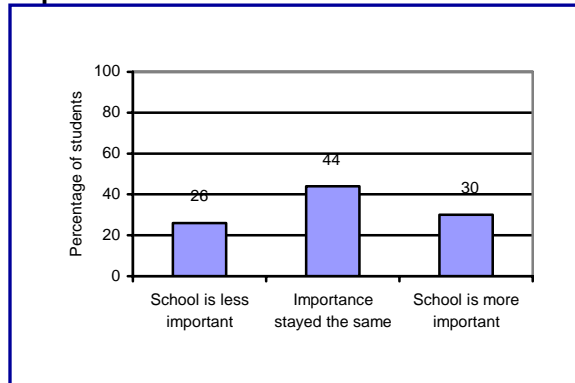
Three-quarters of 11th grade students felt equally successful or more successful in school than they did in 9th grade (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Changes in Feelings of Success in School from 9th to 11th Grade



About equal proportions felt that school was equally or more important than they did previously (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Changes in Feelings that School is Important from 9th to 11th Grade



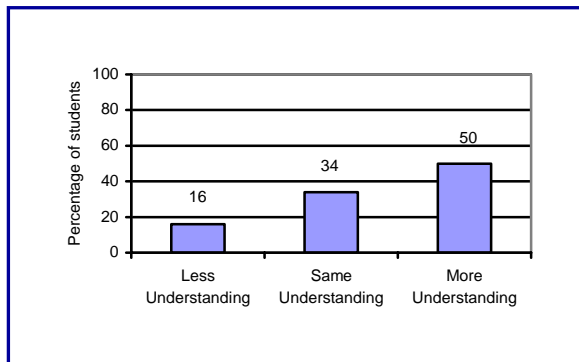
Approximately 25% of 11th grade students felt less successful in school than they did in 9th grade while almost the same percent of students felt that school was less important in 11th grade than it was in 9th grade, an indication that some students may need extra help to stay engaged with their education.

Student efficacy in math was extremely varied across schools, but in general, students had lower self-efficacy in math in 11th grade than in 9th grade. In contrast, students generally had higher self-efficacy in writing in 11th grade.

How have students' beliefs and experiences related to the college-going process changed over time?

The data in this section indicates that students are supported in learning about college as they progress through MCNC Early College High Schools. For example, half of the students (50%) indicated that they had more understanding of what college is like as 11th graders in comparison to their 9th grade responses (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Changes in Understanding of What College is Like from 9th to 11th Grade



In addition, by 11th grade, approximately 75% of students had the same or an easier time imagining

themselves as a college student. Also, over half of the students surveyed (51%) reported having more conversations about college as 11th graders than they reported as 9th graders, while 33% reported the same number of conversations. Finally, students were fairly evenly divided in terms of changes in the extent of concern about paying for college. A slightly larger percentage of students (36%) indicated less concern in 11th grade than they did in 9th grade, while 30% felt more concern about paying for college in 11th grade as compared to 9th grade (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Changes in Concerns about Paying for College from 9th to 11th Grade

