

2006-07 MCNC Early College High School Students: Participation and Performance in College Coursework

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HIGHLIGHTS & FACTS

2006-07 MCNC Early College High Schools

- 13 operating schools (9 redesigns, 4 new)
- 7 states represented (NY, CA, MI, TN, SC, CO, KY)
- 3,866 students served

2006-07 MCNC Early College Students

College Participation

- 63% of all students were enrolled in college courses
- 34% of 9th graders were enrolled in college courses
- 79% of 12th graders were enrolled in college courses

College Course Credits Earned (cumulative)

- 49,787 = Total number of cumulative credits earned
- 9th graders accumulated an average of 9 credits
- 10th graders accumulated an average of 15 credits
- 11th graders accumulated an average of 22 credits
- 12th graders accumulated an average of 31 credits

College Performance (cumulative)

- 92% course pass rate
- 2.78 average cumulative college GPA
- 56% of students earned As or Bs in their college courses

Introduction

Early College is an initiative funded by the Gates Foundation, aimed at increasing access to higher education for underserved students. Launched in 2002, the initiative focuses on the development of small schools in which high school students earn both a high school diploma and transferable college credits upon graduating from high school.

The Middle College National Consortium (MCNC) is one of 11 intermediary organizations awarded funds by the Gates Foundation to establish Early College High Schools (ECHSs). The MCNC is a school-practitioner network of more than 30 middle colleges (high schools located on college campuses)

committed to a set of shared beliefs and instructional practices regarding the successful schooling of underserved high school students.

In 2002, the Middle College National Consortium developed two of the first Early College High Schools. During the 2006-07 school year, the MCNC oversaw the development of 13 ECHSs; it will eventually develop a total of 30 such schools. For the past six years, NCREST has provided research and evaluation support to the MCNC and its schools.

MCNC Early College High Schools include both redesign and new, startup schools. Redesigns are existing high schools restructured into ECHSs and startups are newly created ECHSs. Similar to new startup schools that typically open with a 9th grade cohort, some MCNC redesign schools phased in the initiative starting with each new 9th grade cohort, while others aimed to implement the initiative concurrently at all grade levels.

This brief provides a summary of college course-taking data among students at Early College High Schools sponsored by the Middle College National Consortium. This brief is based on NCREST's Early College transcript study, and covers the cumulative college coursework of MCNC students enrolled during the 2006-07 school year. Of the 3,866 total students enrolled at MCNC's 13 ECHSs during the 2006-07 school year, 63% were enrolled in college courses. College transcript data was only collected for students taking college courses; thus, the college participation and performance of these students are the primary focus of this brief and the overall transcript study.

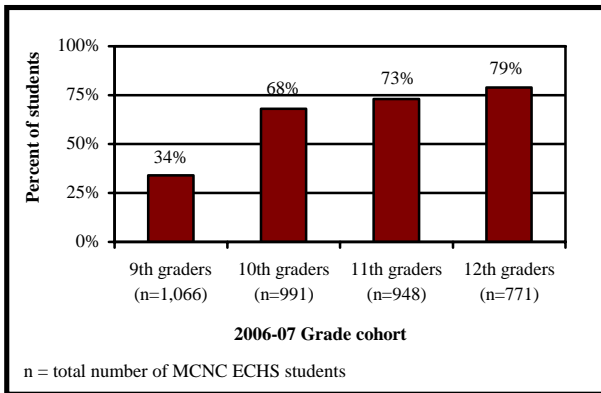
Based on NCREST's most recent MCNC Early College High School student survey data, 78% of students were from racial/ethnic minority groups, 46% spoke only English at home, and 62% reported being eligible for free or reduced lunch (of those who knew their eligibility status).

How many students take college courses?

The number of MCNC students in college courses has increased every year of the Early College High School initiative. In 2005-06, 53% of MCNC students were enrolled in one or more college courses; in 2006-07, the percent of students enrolled in college courses increased to 63%.

Figure 1 indicates that a much greater percent of students in the upper grades (73-79%) enroll in college courses than those in the 9th grade (34%).

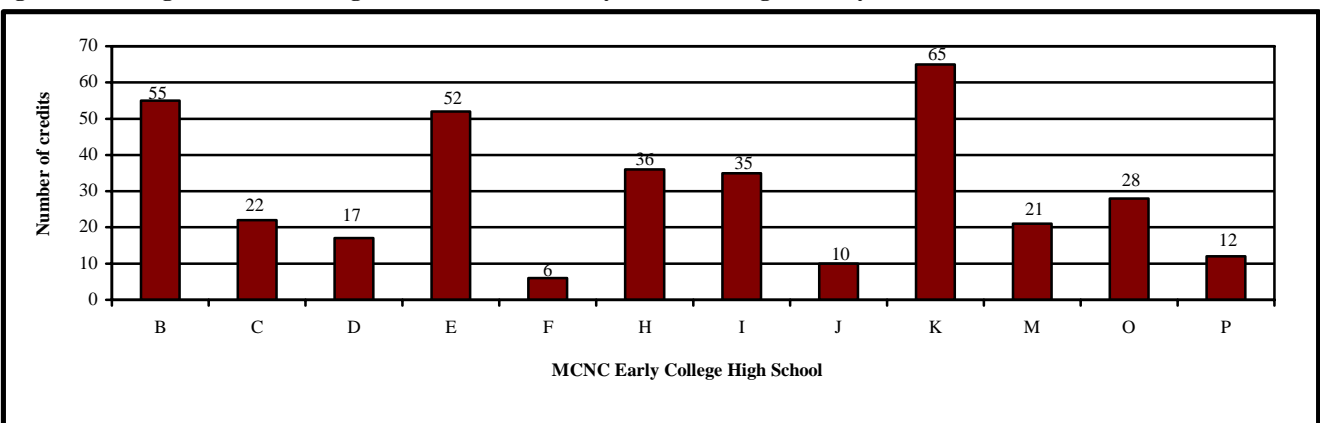
Figure 1: Percent of students in college by grade cohort



This data is similar to 2005-06 data that showed 35% of 9th graders enrolled in college courses compared to over 50% of students in the upper grades.

As shown in Figure 1, 79% of 12th graders were enrolled in college courses. When considered by school, eight had 90% or more of their 12th graders in college classes. Some MCNC schools enrolled all or the majority of their students in many different college courses while others, typically several of the redesign schools, enrolled a smaller percentage of their students in college classes.

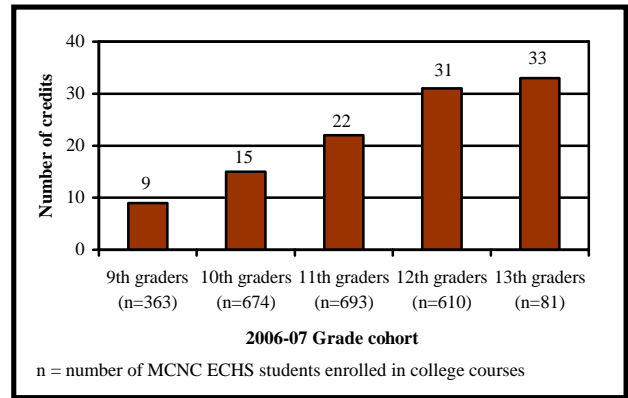
Figure 3: Average number of college credits accumulated by 2006-07 12th graders by school



How many college credits do students earn?

MCNC students earn a significant number of college credits during their high school years. Figure 2 shows that students in the upper grades had accumulated more college credits than those in the lower grades.

Figure 2: Average number of college credits accumulated during high school by grade cohort



This credit pattern is consistent with data from previous MCNC transcript studies and suggests that students accumulate more college credits as they progress through high school. For example, in Figure 2, the 31 credits accumulated by the 12th graders represent several years of college course taking, while the nine credits accumulated by 9th graders cover one year of college coursework.

Credit accumulation varies among MCNC schools (see Figure 3). For example, an average 12th grader at Schools B, E, and K had accumulated over 50 college credits, while a 12th grader at School F earned 6 credits over the same time. Figure 3 suggests that the average college-course taking student at many of the MCNC schools will most likely complete one or more years of college credit by the end of the 12th grade year.

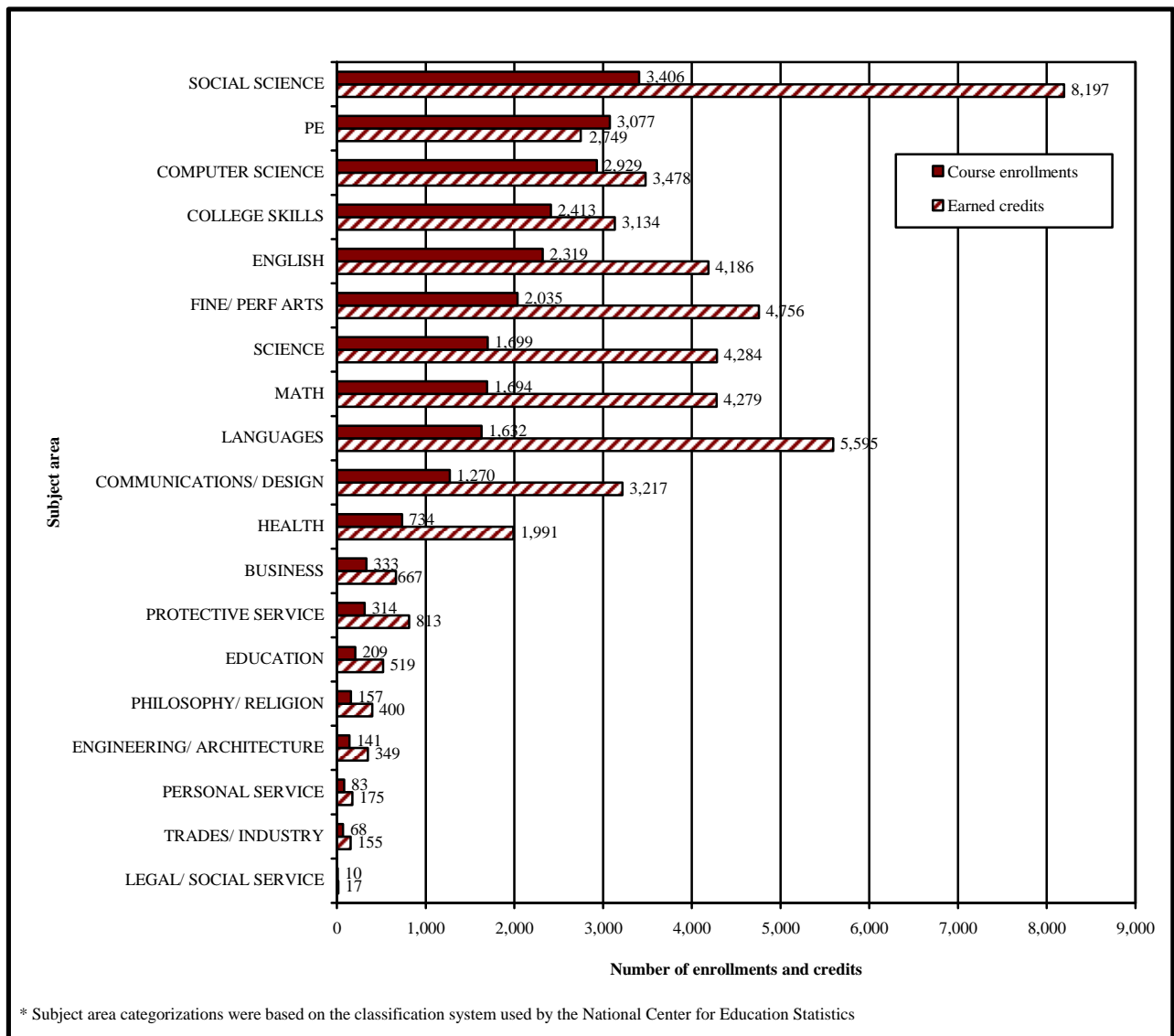
What types of college courses do students take?

Students were enrolled in college courses across a wide range of subject areas, in both academic and career-technical fields. Figure 4 shows the number of cumulative course enrollments and credits earned by MCNC students in all grade levels according to subject area; it lists the subject areas from highest to lowest enrollments. The highest number of course enrollments was in Social Science, followed by Physical Education (PE), Computer Science and College Skills. When considering college credits earned, students accumulated the largest number of credits in Social Science, followed by Languages and the Fine/Performing Arts. A typical college course is worth about three credits. Figure 4 shows that credits earned were typically much greater than the number of course enrollments.

However, in some subject areas such as PE, Computer Science, and College Skills, there was a smaller gap between credits and enrollments; courses in these fields were typically worth one or two credits. For example, Introduction to Computers and computer applications courses were common one credit classes included in the Computer Science area.

The types of courses in which students were placed varied by grade level. Students in the lower grades were more likely to begin college courses in PE and the Fine/Performing Arts. Upper grade enrollments were more likely to occur in English and Social Science courses. Schools enrolled students into courses with other college students in small groups or on an individual basis. Some colleges designated certain classes for high school students only.

Figure 4: Number of cumulative course enrollments and earned credits by subject area (All 2006-07 students)

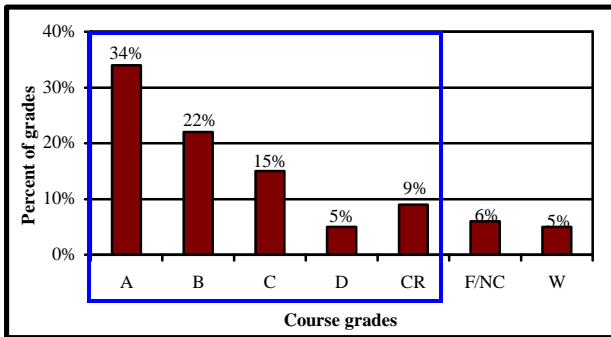


How do students perform in college courses?

MCNC ECHS students averaged a cumulative 2.78 GPA and a 92% course pass rate.

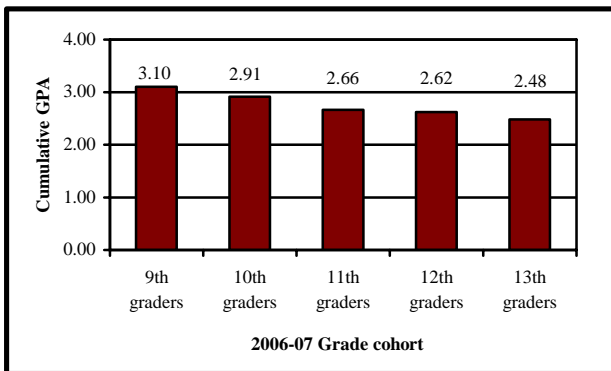
The distribution of all college course grades is shown in Figure 5. Of all college course enrollments of 2006-07 ECHS students during their high school years, 85% resulted in an A, B, C, D, or CR (Credit) grade. Course enrollments also resulted in 6% F or NC (No Credit) and 5% W (Withdrawal) grades.

Figure 5: Distribution of college course grades



The average college cumulative GPA for each grade cohort is shown in Figure 6. This suggests that there may be a slight decline in cumulative GPA over time, particularly as students move to the next grade and take increasingly more college courses and more challenging ones.

Figure 6: Distribution of cumulative GPA by grade cohort

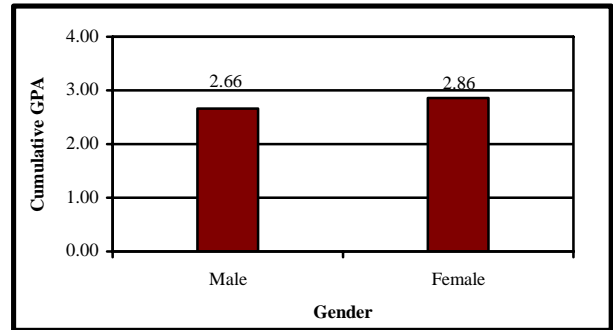


There was also some variation across MCNC schools in the area of college performance as well.

For example, in Figure 6, the 2.62 average GPA for the 12th graders includes college GPAs ranging from an average of 1.83 to 3.06. All but one school had 12th grade cumulative GPAs greater than 2.00, and seven schools had average GPAs higher than 2.50.

Like their counterparts in colleges across the United States, female students earned slightly higher GPAs than male students (see Figure 7). In addition, more female students were enrolled in college courses.

Figure 7: Distribution of cumulative GPA by gender



Conclusion

Early College High Schools were launched with the goal of increasing access to higher education for underserved, non-traditional, first-time college going students. The Middle College National Consortium and its schools have demonstrated success in providing their students with early access to college courses. Increasing numbers of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds participate in college coursework each year.

MCNC students enroll in a variety of college classes, and earn substantial numbers of college credits during their high school years. These data provide evidence that a wide range of students can participate, and perform successfully, in college courses when given the opportunity and access.

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The Middle College National Consortium Early College Project is housed at the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST). NCREST is a research and development organization at Teachers College, Columbia University and is co-directed by Jackie Ancess and Thomas Hatch.

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