



A Study of English and Mathematics Instruction that Leads to Success in Introductory College Coursework

A study funded by Jobs for the Future and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, conducted by The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching, Teachers College, Columbia University

Purpose of the Study

This study will identify the characteristics of English and mathematics instruction that contribute to students being successful in introductory college courses in early college high schools. Early indicators show that early college students perform at a higher level in introductory college courses than do students from similar backgrounds in conventional high schools (American Institutes for Research and SRI International 2008; Kim & Barnett 2008). This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of what early college practices result, or are likely to result, in successful performance in introductory college courses. The study will address two questions of interest:

What characteristics of English and mathematics courses in early college schools prepare students for college-level introductory courses?

What strategies, practices, and academic supports do teachers and schools use to accelerate the progress of students who are underprepared in these content areas?

Conceptual Framework

This study builds on the work of David Conley and is based on the assumption that college readiness requires a skill set that differs fundamentally from high school competence (Conley 2005). We will survey English and mathematics instructors in early college schools. The survey tool defines college readiness as the level of preparation a student needs in order to succeed in credit-bearing, general education, college courses. While we are specific in defining college readiness, we are open to a broad range of high school instructional practices designed to develop key cognitive skills and content knowledge in students.

Design, Sampling, and Analysis

This study has three inter-related phases and employs a mixed methods research approach.

Phase of Study	Data Source	Purpose	Sample	Timeline
PHASE 1	Student Information System	Data on college course-taking for early college students	All early college schools for which data are available	Winter 2008 – Spring 2009
	Integrated school survey	Data on school performance outcomes	All early college schools for which data are available	Winter 2008 – Spring 2009
	English and math teacher survey	To get data on self-reported values and methods consistent with Conley's college-readiness model.	Universe of early college English and mathematics instructors	Spring 2009
PHASE 2	Teacher focus groups	To get data on the social, cultural, structural, and pedagogical influences that impact instruction	About 20 English and mathematics teachers selected from survey respondents	Spring 2009
PHASE 3	Observational data from site visits	To capture exemplary instructional practices and supports	Three to five schools identified through the data collection and analyses	Fall 2009 – Winter 2009

Dissemination

The findings of this research will be widely shared within the Early College High School Initiative. We will prepare a detailed report and a brief and will offer workshops at regularly scheduled convenings of stakeholders in the schools and the initiative.

References

- Conley, D. 2005. *College Knowledge: What it Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do to Get Them Ready*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- American Institutes for Research & SRI International. 2008. *Fourth Annual Early College High School Initiative Evaluation Synthesis Report: Emerging Patterns and Relationships*. Washington, DC: Author
- Kim, J.E. & Barnett, E.A. 2008. 2006-07 MCNC Early College High School Students: *Participation and Performance in College Coursework*. New York: National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching.