

BARD HIGH SCHOOL EARLY COLLEGE
ENGAGING STUDENTS IN THE LIBERAL ARTS
BHSEC BEST PRACTICES: Organization and Structure

About Bard High School Early College

Premised on the belief that many adolescents are ready and eager for greater challenge, Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) seeks to provide bright, highly motivated, and diverse students with an intellectually engaging four-year academic program that includes a two-year college liberal arts degree. Students graduate prepared to take upper level college courses, earn a baccalaureate degree, develop successful careers, and contribute to society. First developed in 2001 as a partnership between Bard College and the New York City Department of Education, four BHSEC schools currently operate: BHSEC Manhattan, BHSEC Queens (2008), BHSEC Newark (2011), and, most recently, BHSEC Cleveland, opened in August 2014 in partnership with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

The BHSEC schools immerse students in the traditions and practices associated with a liberal arts education. Students take high school courses in the ninth and tenth grades, and then engage in a full college-level course of studies in the eleventh and twelfth grade, graduating high school with an Associate in Arts degree from Bard College. With a faculty of highly qualified scholars and artists that teach both high school and college courses, BHSEC aspires to teach higher-level thinking skills through analytic writing, focused discussion, and in-depth inquiry.

After four years at BHSEC, the majority (90%) of students graduate with a Bard College Associate in Arts degree in the liberal arts and sciences and 60 transferable college credits. Historically, 98–100% of BHSEC Manhattan and Queens students receive a New York State Regents high school diploma. (BHSEC Newark and BHSEC Cleveland are still too new to have historic data regarding either high school or college graduation rates for the full four-year program.) More than 97% of BHSEC students continue their studies at a four-year college and most complete their BA/BS degrees.

To help others understand the design underlying the success of Bard High School Early College schools and students, the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University undertook a study of several of BHSEC's key practices. This series of seven reports provides insights into how the key practices are implemented as well as how they could be replicated by others.

BHSEC's organization and structure is a key dimension of practice. To understand this aspect of BHSEC, NCREST conducted interviews with BHSEC school leaders, staff and

teachers and reviewed a wide range of documents. A detailed report on this aspect of the BHSEC design follows.

Introduction

BHSEC schools are unique members of a more general group of high schools labeled early colleges. These schools are designed to allow traditionally underserved students to engage in a curriculum that blends high school and college coursework along with extensive supports. BHSEC schools are unusual in their partnership with a liberal arts college and their separation of the curriculum into two years of high school and two years of college. BHSECs also vary from the norm in that their faculty teach all courses—at both the high school and college level.

In our discussion of BHSEC's organization and structure, we include some comparisons to early colleges generally. In addition, we spend time describing BHSEC's approach to the following aspects of organization and structure: mission and foundational ideas, leadership and governance, partnerships between K-12 and colleges, financing, and policy and advocacy. Our discussion of these features is informed by research literature.

About Organization and Structure

The ability of a school to adequately prepare its student depends on having effective leadership and structures (Luppescu et al. 2011). It also depends upon having a clear mission and a set of foundational ideas, with all action directed toward their implementation (Goodlad, 1994). Research in school settings has found that the content of a mission statement influences subsequent performance (Weiss and Piderit, 1999). Principals and other school leaders have a key role in reinforcing the centrality of the school's mission and insuring that the school has a productive climate (Hallinger and Heck, 2002). Research has found that principal's actions are key to establishing working environments that contribute to teacher satisfaction and commitment (Anderson, Belzer and Smith, 1991). BHSEC schools are grounded in a mission and core approach developed by Bard College in consultation with, and supported by, school leadership.

Partnerships between high schools and colleges can contribute to better student outcomes generally and particularly in the transition to college (Barnett, Corrin, Nakanishi, Hare Bork, Mitchell and Sepanik 2012). According to Berger, Adelman and Coleman (2010), "Partnerships are the bedrock of the [Early College High School] model, representing an agreement between educational sectors to cooperate in a new approach to blending secondary and postsecondary education for students who might not otherwise consider themselves 'college material.'" This is evident in the core

principles of the national Early College High School Initiative. Of five principles,¹ three pertain to the partnerships that sustain these schools:

#1: Early college schools are created and sustained by a local education agency, a higher education institution, and the community, all of whom are jointly accountable for student success.

#2: Early college schools and their higher education partners and community jointly develop an integrated academic program so all students earn 1 to 2 years of transferable college credit leading to college completion.

#3: Early college schools and their higher education and community partners work with intermediaries to create conditions and advocate for supportive policies that advance the early college movement.

Born (2006) observes that early colleges are most successful when there is a high level of commitment from the college's president, increasing the likelihood that students will be treated as college students and welcomed by college faculty and staff. Effective early college partners collaborate on creating an academic plan that combines high school and college curriculum and graduation requirements. Born (2007) finds that early colleges must constantly review the curriculum at both institutions to insure that students are meeting the requirements for both the high school diploma and for the Associates degree.

In addition, early colleges must create the kinds of structures that have been linked to successful student outcomes. One such feature is a small school environment, an integral aspect of the early college design. In the 2007-2008 academic year, the average early college high school had 211 students (AIR and SRI 2009). This figure can be compared to the national high school average size of 706 students for the same year (NCES 2009). A rigorous study of small schools in New York City (NYC), found that small schools increased 4-year graduation rates as well as postsecondary enrollment rates (Unterman 2014). In a qualitative study of the same small schools, principals and teachers reported that their success depended on "a structure that fosters the development of authentic, sustained, caring, and respectful relationships between teachers and students and among staff" (Villavicencio and Marinell 2014).

Financial stability is also key. LaGuardia (1998) finds that effective high school-college partnerships must have the sustained financial support of both the district and the college, as well as a written memorandum of understanding pertaining to organizational

¹ See: <http://www.earlycolleges.org/Downloads/CorePrinciples.pdf>

structures and operations. Not all states award high schools and postsecondary institutions the same amount of funding for early college students as they do for traditional high school or postsecondary students (Dounay 2008). Thus, early colleges must often seek philanthropic and grant funding to insure that optimal structures are in place. A pilot study of early college financing found that they often struggle to pay for the combination of high school and college costs, including tuition, books, and fees (Webb 2004). With one exception, all of the early colleges in Webb's (2004) study showed a deficit. At the same time, he makes the case that students and society will ultimately save money because the typical 8 years spent in high school and college can be reduced to as little as 6 years in early colleges.

Finally, the work of an organization such as BHSEC may be hard to sustain without efforts to influence policy at the local, state and national level. Furman and Sheilds (2005) propose that leaders who are committed to improving educational opportunities for students need to embrace political advocacy and action.

BHSEC's Mission and Foundational Ideas

Bard's mission regarding the Reform of Secondary Education extends the college's mission to the improvement of middle and high school education through exposing younger students to the learning and skills built through participation in a rigorous liberal arts program, thereby both changing lives and strengthening civic society.

Petition for licensure for BHSEC Newark, 2013, p. 4

Bard College, unlike most of its peers in higher education, has made the advancement of secondary education a central part of its mission. In the college's current (2010-2016) strategic plan, "reform of secondary education" is one of five areas targeted for growth and development. This is a part of Bard's larger commitment to innovation and contribution to a better world. The college seeks to serve as "a model of how an independent college can and should contribute, as a public space with rich human capital resources, to the character of culture and public life in the service of freedom and democracy" (Bard College, 2013, p. 4).

President Leon Botstein is personally committed to better adolescent education. In a book entitled *Jefferson's Children*, written in 1997, he bemoaned the type and quality of education typically provided to young people, believing that they are not encouraged to live up to their potential during key formative years. These statements came to the attention of former New York City Schools Chancellor Harold Levy, who invited him to start the first public BHSEC school, which opened in Manhattan in 2001.

While each BHSEC school is unique, reflecting local conditions, student needs, and available resources, all have certain core components. These include:

- A curriculum that blends 2 years of high school coursework (9th and 10th grade) with two years of college coursework (Years 1 and 2, corresponding to 11th and 12th grade), enabling students to graduate with an associates degree and a high school diploma.
- A commitment to serving students from groups traditionally underrepresented in college.
- Ph.D prepared faculty who are credentialed to teach at the secondary level as well as at the college level.
- A small school environment in which each student is known and supported.
- Co-ownership of the school by Bard College and a school district.

Legal status

Ultimately, the Bard College Board of Governors is responsible for us on the collegiate side. On the high school side, we are public schools [with] a public school number, etc.

Dean of Administration, BHSEC

Bard College and its partnering public school districts are jointly responsible for BHSEC schools. From the perspective of Bard College, the BHSEC schools in New York, Cleveland and New Jersey are considered branch campuses. The college's Board of Governors is responsible for the financial, business and education policies of the college, the development of the institutional master plan, review of budgets and the design of academic programs. They are the final authority at Bard College and their decisions apply to any college-related functions at BHSEC as well. This Board of Governors consists of appointed business leaders and philanthropists, as well as Bard College President Botstein.

At the same time, the BHSECs are public high schools with all of the rights and obligations thereof. Each public school district is legally responsible for the BHSEC school facilities, policies regarding district personnel, school budgets, and the compliance of schools with district policies. Each district has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Bard College that covers specified periods of time, but can be renewed based on the satisfactory performance of the schools.

The MOUs are complicated documents because they require the integration of the regulations and norms of the K-12 and higher education systems, as well as contractual

agreements with teachers unions and obligations to funders. The language therein reflects a delicate balance of accountability, legal requirements, and trust required to sustain these agreements.

[The NYDOE Chancellor] will accord great weight to recommendations made by Bard College for those responsibilities not delegated to Bard College.

Memorandum of Understanding, Bard College and the NYDOE, p.1

The MOUs between Bard College and each district address similar topics, including:

- How to maintain the integrity of degrees offered to students and control over when they are awarded;
- Allowing Bard College considerable control over hiring of principals as well as employing faculty who can teach college courses;
- Systems for admissions that are aligned with the policies in place in each district and also result in the enrollment of students with the academic preparation required for success in BHSEC's accelerated academic program;
- Arrangements for public funding of the schools as well as supplementation with private funds when needed and possible;
- Meeting requirements for accountability, accreditation, and data sharing.

School leadership

Internally, the principals are chiefly responsible for the operation of BHSEC schools. Bard College has negotiated with each district to have considerable control over the hiring process. The school principals receive appointments as deans/faculty members of Bard College; they are appointed by and meet licensure requirements in their public school districts. Principals have direct responsibility for the hiring and supervision of all BHSEC faculty and staff. As district appointees, they are charged with overseeing all aspects of the school's administration as well as compliance with district requirements. As Bard College appointees, principals are also responsible for the academic integrity of the college courses offered (Bard College, 2013).

At the same time, BHSEC schools are not especially hierarchical and responsibility for many aspects of the work is distributed across leaders, faculty and other staff, as well as students to a lesser degree. BHSEC is unique in that principals also teach a course almost every semester. This gives principals an opportunity to interact with students and to have direct experiences with how they are feeling and learning.

While the principal is ultimately responsible for the academic program, the coordination of curriculum is handled by the deans of studies at each school. The deans of studies determine course offerings and create “all schedules for all kids to make sure that they have the classes that they need to graduate” (Dean of Studies, BHSEC Newark). Along with the principals, the deans of studies support teachers by observing them and providing guidance on pedagogy, especially important for the significant numbers of BHSEC faculty who have not previously taught at the high school level. They also guide professional development for new faculty working toward their secondary certification.

Each BHSEC school also has an administrative team, although the composition and responsibilities vary by school. For example, at BHSEC Manhattan, the administrative team consists of a dean of administration, two academic deans (academic deputies to oversee curriculum, faculty hiring, teacher evaluation, academic operations, scheduling, registration and transcripts and faculty affairs), and two assistant principals (one focuses on guidance, counseling, IEPs, and student services while the other handles operational matters such as security, purchasing, payroll, and budget).

There is no one way that each school has set up its administrative team. It varies based on the history and the composition of the school.

BHSEC principal

BHSEC faculty have roles and responsibilities that are similar to those of traditional college faculty, although there are key differences. In addition to teaching, faculty are expected – and encouraged – to pursue academic and professional interests related to their fields.

....students learn the passion and professionalism of the particular discipline from the modeling of the faculty, and the community becomes a vibrant intellectual community where everyone’s academic interests are pursued and shared.

Petition for licensure for BHSEC Newark, 2013, p. 20

Similarly, they are expected to contribute to the school enterprise by serving on school committees, participating in admissions decisions, and advising students. A number of administrative functions are carried out through the faculty committee structure, for example, reading of student applications for admission, revising curriculum, and reviewing college applications for seniors. However, unlike typical college faculty, BHSEC teachers are expected to spend time on tutoring students, supervision of school common areas, and advising student clubs.

Typically, when faculty are hired by the public school district, they automatically become union members. The BHSEC Dean of Administration has created memoranda of understanding with teachers unions in each district to make sure that teacher workloads are in compliance with union bylaws.

We have had really good relationships with teacher unions...because our whole model is premised on our faculty being professionals and knowing what they're doing.

Dean of Administration, BHSEC

BHSEC schools do not have department chairs, but rather department coordinators who represent their departments in biweekly or monthly meetings with the principal and dean of studies to discuss curriculum and other school matters. One BHSEC-Queens faculty member noted that “BHSEC has a very democratic model; they almost always have faculty input into decisions.”

Students are also given the rights and responsibilities typical of traditional college students. Each school has some version of a community council or student government with elected officers and meetings, guided by a faculty advisor. The student government generally focuses on issues that affect students' quality of life.

When students bring forth an idea they don't have the final decision, but they bring it to the student government who bring it [us]. The students at Queens got a quiet study room, study tables in the halls, and a gender neutral bathroom.

BHSEC Principal

Finally, the BHSEC structure has included an overall leadership and coordination position that reports to the Bard College president. Up until recently, Martha Olson, BHSEC Dean of Administration and Dean of Education Initiatives for Bard College, served as the administrative liaison to Bard College and Simon's Rock. She was also responsible for fundraising and overseeing the use of non-public funds. In these capacities she worked closely with by the Bard College Finance and Administrative offices and Bard's Office of Institutional Support. In addition, she represented the BHSEC campuses in their dealings with local districts and various state and federal agencies.

Curriculum Oversight and Accreditation

BHSEC's curriculum is carefully constructed to meet college, district, and union requirements as well as to meet student needs and reflect faculty interests.

No matter how rigorous the curriculum, no matter how stringent the requirements, if what goes on in the classroom does not leave its mark in the way young adults voluntarily act in private and in public while they are in college, much less in the years after, then the college is not doing what it is supposed to do.

Botstein speech 2013²

There is no formal accreditation process for the high school curriculum although it must be aligned with state standards. All of the BHSEC schools are subject to the same academic requirements for a high school diploma as other schools in their state or district. Students must complete all of the requirements for a high school diploma including state tests such as New York State's Regents exams. Students receive both high school and college credit for college classes completed, and there is a process by which BHSEC schools must demonstrate that their college courses meet each public school district's requirements for the high school diploma.

In addition, a committee convened by Bard College is charged with insuring the academic integrity of the college courses offered at BHSEC schools. This group, the *Standing Commission on Early College Credits and Degrees*, ensures that all credits and courses bearing Bard's name conform to the college's academic standards. They annually review all college level programs, courses, faculty CVs, and course syllabi associated with Bard's early college initiatives. In this way, Bard ensures that curricular goals and learning outcomes are shared across campuses and that students meet similar requirements for classes offered at the same level.³

The Bard Standing Commission has made clear its expectations that BHSEC students in the Year 1 and Year 2 programs will demonstrate college readiness by carrying out college level work. College level work is indicated through satisfactory completion of courses that have college-level content and proceed at the pace generally followed in college courses.

² Dr. Leon Botstein, *The Love of Learning*, (Jan. 10, 2013), <http://www.bard.edu/about/loveoflearning>

³ Members of the Bard Standing Commission include the Vice President & Dean of the College, the College Registrar, the Provost for Bard College at Simon's Rock, the Vice President & Dean of Graduate Studies, the principals of each of the three BHSEC schools, a senior faculty representative from each of the four Bard College academic divisions (Social Studies, Science Mathematics & Computing, the Arts, Language & Literature), the Dean of Academic Affairs at Bard College at Simon's Rock, and the Dean of Education Initiatives and BHSEC Dean of Administration.

As branch campuses of Bard College, the BHSEC college curriculum must also meet the accreditation requirements for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The accreditation process consists of a structured self-review every 12-18 months, as well as an external review from a visiting committee of peers from other colleges every 10 years. This process is intended to insure that the education offered at member colleges meets high standards of quality.

Financing

Principals oversee school expenses as well as any funds raised by Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), in coordination with the BHSEC Dean of Administration. The financing of each of the BHSEC schools varies according to state and city funding, the student population, and the funding allocation structure of the district. In New York City, BHSEC Queens and Manhattan receive their funding through the “fair funding formula” based on total enrollment and the number of high/special needs students. However, a considerable portion of these funds is set aside by the district to cover salaries of faculty and staff, benefits, school lunches, and security. New York City schools receive substantially less than per pupil funding levels suggest because of these deducted expenses.

At BHSEC Newark, most of per pupil funding goes directly to the school and the classroom. Following litigation to insure that more money goes directly to classrooms, the Newark Public School system reduced their central staff in order to spend more money on educational activities. However, start up funds for this school came from a number of sources including the Foundation for Newark’s Future, the Newark Trust Foundation, and the Booth Ferris Foundation, among others.

Despite receiving public and foundation funding, none of the schools are able to independently cover the costs associated with offering a high quality education. Bard College supplements the budget of each school for such expenses as additional faculty needed to insure small class sizes, maintaining the writing center, and extra student support staff. The amount of money that Bard contributes varies year to year depending on the district budgets and the funding cycles of foundations and grants. For the BHSEC schools in New York City, Bard College provides approximately \$3,000 per student to supplement city funding or \$4.5 million per year. In BHSEC Newark, Bard contributes \$1,000 per student or \$400,000 per year.

Few early colleges are sustainable solely through the public school partner’s

funding stream--especially if, like BHSEC model, the early college is offering two full years of college credit to its students.

Petition for licensure for BHSEC Newark, 2013, p. 12

The Dean of Administration noted that “BHSEC could operate quite well on public funding, depending on the district. BHSEC could operate on public funding alone in a district like Scarsdale [a wealthy county in the Hudson Valley, NY region].” The newest school, BHSEC Cleveland, which opened in the fall of 2014 is expected to run on locally provided public and foundation funds and not require subsidies from Bard College.

Bard College also raises money from philanthropic sources, grants and foundations. Bard College has a Vice President for Institutional Development who oversees fundraising, and there is a specific person assigned to fundraising for BHSEC. The PTA in each school is able to raise enough money to pay for the college level books that are not available through the high school district book vendors.

One major challenge for BHSEC is sustaining Bard College’s financial support of the schools. When BHSEC Queens and Manhattan opened, Bard College did not anticipate the need to contribute to the extent that they currently do. Originally, the schools received additional funding from the New York City DOE for being a specialized high school. This funding system has since changed and BHSEC receives the same amount that other schools receive. Sustaining these schools in the long term will require some new and consistent sources of funding. As the Dean of Administration observed, “For any institution to consistently support, to the tune of \$2-3 million per year out of pocket, an entity that does not meet the primary focus of an undergraduate education on a particular campus is a really big deal.”

Policy Work and Advocacy

BHSEC schools do not fall neatly into the K-12 or higher education arena, leaving them in a difficult position when advocating for public support. The Dean of Administration expressed that there is a need to “break down the silos of K-12 funding and funding for higher education.” It can be difficult to convince K-12 funding agencies that BHSEC schools are deserving of K-12 funding because they also provide a college education. Likewise, it is hard to appeal to higher education funding agencies to fund the education of a high school student. For this reason, many early colleges struggle to obtain adequate public funding.

One solution to this problem is to seek additional support at the state and national level. Bard College has hired a Washington lobbyist as their Director of Strategy. She has been

focusing on ways to access postsecondary financial aid funding, advocating for the use of the federal Pell Grants and New York State TAP grants to support the work of early colleges in New York.

Advocacy around transfer of credits is also a priority. Some four-year colleges will not accept the college credits earned because students also received high school credit for the same courses. One BHSEC faculty member commented, “This is a very regressive idea, that education is about time spent in a seat rather than the content being learned. And it delegitimizes the early college model, making it hard for BHSEC faculty to feel their work is respected.” BHSEC works with students as they apply to college to advocate for the acceptance of Bard College credits earned while studying in a BHSEC school.

Replication

The organization and structures found at BHSEC can be replicated by early colleges or schools wishing to offer college (dual enrollment) courses to high school students. To a large degree, they depend on the creation of partnerships between school districts and colleges interested in “co-owning” students engaged in early college studies. Both partners should be committed to the early college model and treat students like mature young adults. Ideally, leadership positions for the early college would be joint appointments such that leaders are employees of the college and the district.

To maintain an effective partnership, it is important to have proper channels for communication and decision making. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) should be established between the district and college, taking into account existing agreements with funders and teachers unions. These MOU should address practices for hiring faculty, faculty workloads, degree and diploma requirements, the curriculum, fiduciary responsibility, and anything else that could arise in the operation of the school. These documents serve to make sure that partnerships operate smoothly and there is a protocol for handling issues that arise.

In addition, schools or colleges wishing to replicate BHSEC’s model will need to secure external funding beyond that deriving from public sources. The BHSEC model calls for small student to teacher ratios, which may require hiring extra faculty beyond those that the district budget permits. In addition, these schools need adequate supports for students engaged in a challenging college curriculum. These supports include a library, tutoring centers, and adequate guidance and counseling staff. These supports may not be covered in a district allocated budget.

The BHSEC folio series is a publication of BHSEC, in collaboration with the National Center for Restructuring of Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST), a research center at Teachers College, Columbia University. The series includes information on seven exemplary practices associated with the three BHSEC schools. Each publication in the series is based on qualitative research conducted by NCREST.

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