

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EARLY COLLEGE DESIGNS

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JFF's Early College Designs are an exceptional approach to increasing the college readiness and success of low-income students and others underrepresented in higher education. From early college high schools to Back on Track options that prepare over-age and under-credited youth for college success, Early College Designs blend high school and college in a rigorous and supportive academic program that culminates in the completion of key college courses by all students. These designs offer districts a proven and cost-effective means of enhancing the capacity of their schools and teachers to prepare all high school students to a college-ready standard.

In this work, JFF draws on over a decade of experience developing, supporting, and sustaining early college schools. Today, more than 270 early colleges serve 75,000 students across the nation, and recent studies show that early college increases the success of underrepresented students in rigorous college-prep programs and in achieving milestones toward college completion.

The Essential Elements of Early College Designs build on the core principles developed by the network of leaders who established the first early college high schools, autonomous small schools where students could complete up to two years of college credit. By integrating the lessons of the original early college movement with a broader system focus, the Essential Elements of Early College Designs capture the fundamentals behind an approach that ensures that districts have the structures, supports, and practices to prepare all of their students for college success.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Early College Designs focus on ensuring the success of high-need students. These designs:

- > Serve low-income youth, students of color, first-generation college goers, English language learners, and other students underrepresented in higher education.
- > Successfully support all types of learners, including struggling students, students at risk of dropping out of high school, and students off track for high school graduation.

Early College Designs establish strong and long-lasting formalized partnerships with colleges that foster shared responsibility for students' success. These designs:

- > Ensure collaboration with college partners on the development of academic programs that meet secondary and postsecondary standards, as well as the appropriate student supports for such programs.
- > Put in place agreements and processes with college partners to share student-level data in order to improve programming and demonstrate impact.

Early College Designs offer a college-ready academic program and a head start on college coursework. These designs:

- > Use a coherent instructional framework aligned to college-ready standards and consistent instructional practices across all content areas to prepare students for college-level work.
- > Offer rigorous academic pathways that culminate in successful postsecondary transitions. In many cases, these pathways require college-level coursework including first-year college gatekeeper English and math courses.

Early College Designs have wraparound student supports focused on high school and college completion. These designs:

- > Offer comprehensive academic supports, including acceleration strategies for students with weak academic skills, a formal system of tutoring, and personalized academic advising.
- > Expose students to the culture and norms of college and provide explicit instruction on the academic and social behaviors associated with college success.

Early College Designs employ organizational practices that promote success for students and staff. These designs:

- > Align all resources and activities to preparing students for postsecondary success and establishing strong college-going cultures.
- > Offer student-centered environments that promote personalization, engagement, and close relationships between students and staff.
- > Set aside time and support for staff collaboration, professional development, and the use of student data to inform decisions.

Jobs for the Future identifies, develops, and promotes education and workforce strategies that expand opportunity for youth and adults who are struggling to advance in America today. In more than 200 communities across 43 states, JFF improves the pathways leading from high school to college to family-sustaining careers. For more than 25 years, JFF has been a leader in helping states and districts develop and implement school designs that prepare young people underrepresented in higher education to succeed at the postsecondary level.



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

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