

# INDIANA EARLY COLLEGE RESEARCH BRIEF

## THE IMPACT OF ENDORSED EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS



Early College High Schools open doors of opportunity for Indiana students by allowing them to earn a high school diploma AND the Indiana College Core, an associate degree, a technical certificate, or 15+ dual credits while in high school.

### COLLEGE-GOING: *Early College graduates are 1.4 times more likely to go to college than their peers.*

Percent of students who go to college:

**Early College  
Graduates**

**76%**



**Indiana  
Average**

**53%**



*Based on data from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education*

### COLLEGE SUCCESS:

*Early College graduates more likely to succeed in college.*

Percent of students who didn't need remediation in college:

**97%** Early College graduates

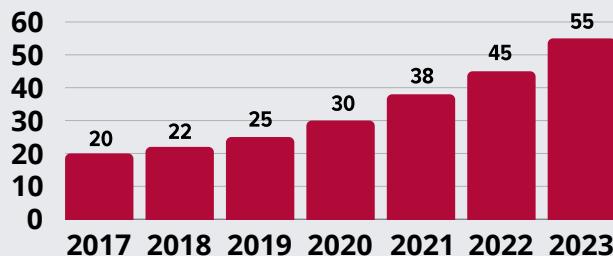
**92%** non-Early College graduates from the same schools

*Based on data from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education*

### GROWTH OF THE EARLY COLLEGE MODEL:

*Demand for Early College training and endorsement continues to grow*

Number of endorsed Early College High Schools:



By design, Early College High Schools target students who are typically under-represented in higher education - including first-generation, low-income, and minority students - increasing college access and success.

## INDIANA'S ENDORSED EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS AND STUDENT OUTCOMES



[CELL.INDY.EDU/EARLYCOLLEGE](http://CELL.INDY.EDU/EARLYCOLLEGE)

**CELL** | Center of Excellence  
in Leadership of Learning  
UNIVERSITY of INDIANAPOLIS

## College Going Success with Indiana's Endorsed Early College High Schools

Carey J. Dahncke, Ed.D.

*Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning, University of Indianapolis.*

In 2012, Indiana set a goal that 60% of working-age Hoosiers will have a college degree or postsecondary credential. The state is also involved in a significant effort to rethink high school. A key strategy in supporting both goals is the state's policy and fiscal support, encouraging colleges and high schools to collaborate around delivering dual credit opportunities. With their ability to offer dual credit and focus on removing barriers between high school and college, Early College High Schools are a proven solution to improve postsecondary success. This brief looks at recent achievement data to understand the impact of Early College High Schools.

### What Are Early College High Schools?

Early College High Schools allow students to earn a high school diploma and an associate degree, the Indiana College Core, or a technical credential while in high school. A unique feature of Early College High School (ECHS) programs is the emphasis on ensuring underrepresented students from statistically disadvantaged backgrounds are included and supported. In this way, ECHS programs offer the opportunity to expand access to advanced-level coursework for a student population that would not otherwise have access and support to succeed. In Indiana, an increasing majority of these advanced-level coursework opportunities involve dual credit in partnership with a higher education institution.

### National Research on Early College High Schools

Recent large-scale research into dual credit programs has demonstrated an increase in student grade point averages, college enrollment, college persistence, and degree attainment (Schaller et al., 2023), supporting the merit of Indiana's policy agenda and initiatives like ECHS programming that increase access to dual credit. Over the last decade,

extensive research has shown Early College High Schools offer an effective school improvement strategy, increasing both college enrollment and college completion rates (Haxton et al., 2016).

### Indiana's Early College and College-Going Progress

Data from the Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education offer insight into the impact of ECHS programs by comparing Early College graduates—defined as graduates from a CELL-endorsed Early College High School who earned 15 or more dual credit hours—with other groups of students. For the 2021 cohort, 53% of Hoosier students went on to college after high school, while 76% of Early College graduates transitioned into college, a 23% difference in the college-going rate. Early College graduates are  $\approx$  1.4 times more likely to attend college than the rest of Indiana's students.

For low-income students who are not 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars, 59% of Early College graduates transitioned to college, while only 25% of other students from the same high schools went on to college. This is a marked 34% difference. This means that low-income Early College graduates are  $\approx$  2.36 times more likely to attend college. When looking at low-income Early College graduates who are 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars, 86% of those students attended college after high school, compared to 78% of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars who were not Early College graduates.

### Early College and College Success

The Early College High School impact is not simply limited to college enrollment. Once enrolled, approximately 8% of non-Early College graduates needed remediation during their freshman year in college. However, for Early College graduates, that remediation rate dropped to 3%.

### Growth of the Early College Model

The Early College High School model gained traction in 2002, when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation initiated a national effort to develop and promote Early College programs. The goal of this effort was to increase high school graduation rates and college attendance for historically unrepresented students, making higher education more accessible and more affordable. At that time, there were no Early College High Schools in Indiana.

In April of 2003, the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) at the University of Indianapolis was awarded a \$13.7 million grant from the Gates Foundation to support the creation of new public and private high schools in Indiana, which included the development of Early College High Schools. By 2005, in partnership with the National Governors Association, CELL had incubated 10 Early College High Schools around the state. Three years later, Indiana's first class of Early College High School students graduated from high school, with 100% of the 12 students accepted into four-year colleges and universities.

As the popularity of Early College programs grew, CELL launched a framework and evaluation process in 2008 to ensure that high schools adhered to a set of standards, leading to designation as a CELL-endorsed Early College High School. While any school can offer an Early College program, endorsed Early College High Schools demonstrate their program quality through a rigorous application and evaluation program conducted by CELL. Acknowledging CELL's work at the forefront of the Early College landscape, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education has authorized CELL as the only organization in Indiana to designate schools as 'Endorsed' Early College High Schools. As of January 2024, more than 50 Indiana high schools have undergone the training and evaluation process, earning the designation of being called a CELL-endorsed Early College High School.

### Conclusion

The Early College High School model, and endorsed Early College High Schools in particular, have demonstrated tangible results to advance the state's goals of increasing college readiness and college-going rates. Through rigorous research and analysis, it is evident that Early College programs have positively impacted student outcomes, particularly college enrollment and completion rates, with an emphasis on supporting marginalized and economically disadvantaged students.

By providing opportunities for students to earn a high school diploma alongside the Indiana College Core, an associate degree, or a technical credential, Early College High Schools effectively bridge the gap between high school and college, increasing college-going, reducing the need for remediation, and enhancing overall postsecondary success. As a proven model, Early College High Schools stand as a critical component of Indiana's strategy to achieve its educational objectives, ensuring that more students have access to advanced level coursework and the opportunity to pursue and succeed in higher education.

### References

- Haxton, C., Song, M., Zeiser, K., Berger, A., Turk-Bicakci, L., Garet, M. S., Knudson, J., & Hoshen, G. (2016). Longitudinal findings from the early college high school initiative impact study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38(2), 410-430.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373716642861>
- Schaller, T. K., Routon, P. W., Partridge, M. A., & Berry, R. (2023). A systematic review and meta-analysis of dual enrollment research. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/15210251231170331>