

Early College Review Committee Proposal

HHS Student Council

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What is the impact of the Early College program on the high school's students, teachers, and culture?

Pros:

- Provides access to and preparation for higher education to low-income, first generation, and traditionally marginalized communities
- Reflects positively upon the district and brings in state and federal funding
- Decreases time and money invested in higher education for students/families
- Provides a fast-track to a multitude of professional certifications
- Acquaints students with the college environment, fostering self-confidence, independence, and the development of executive functioning skills

Cons:

- Has an outsized impact on scheduling
- Lures a large cohort of the high school's students from the building on a daily basis, decreasing course offerings and participation in extracurricular activities and creating disproportionate class sizes and inequitable classroom experiences
- It has given an unfair advantage in terms of class rank and GPA to Early College students
- There is little transparency and/or oversight

Unanswered questions about Early College?

1. What are the effects of Early College enrollment on HHS teachers, courses, and students?
2. What is the demographic makeup of our Early College program? Is it equitable? How has it changed in recent years?
3. Which colleges are accepting Early College credits? In what circumstances?
4. What are the expectations for Early College students in terms of behavioral policies? What happens when students don't meet those expectations? What happens if students fail a course or semester at NECC?
5. What is the attendance policy at Early College? Must students attend in person?
6. How are assignments being assessed and grades calculated? What exactly is being covered in Early College courses?
7. What do Early College professors think of the program and its expansion over recent years?
8. Are Early College courses as rigorous as Advanced Placement courses? Should they be weighted equally? Should a semester-long course be worth a full-year credit?

Snapshot on the Impact on AP/Honors Classes

Currently, there are 4 sections of ELA Senior Honors and 2 sections of ELA Junior Honors.

- Total number of students in Senior Honors: 66
- Total number of students in Junior Honors: 46
- Total number of students in AP Literature (juniors): 50
- Total number of students in AP Language (seniors): 42
- **Total number combined in Honors/AP Classes: 204**
- **Total number in the Early College Program: 250**

Although decreased class sizes may seem beneficial, the impact has disproportionately affected AP and Honors classes. As EC has grown, AP and Honors course offerings have significantly decreased, as has the rigor in the courses that remain.

Are these the reason we want students pursuing Early College?

Student Council recently surveyed students who take AP, Early College, or both AP and Early College classes.

Of the Early College student respondents who were asked why they chose the Early College program:

- 62 said “Early College guarantees college credits”
- 51 said “Early College offers a more appealing schedule”
- 12 said “Early College” classes are easier

*[Student Council EC/AP Survey](#)

Why should we care?

Equity:

- While Early College provides a great opportunity for students who lack certain resources, as with many things, the opportunity provided has been seized by a significant number of students who do not lack the support and resources the program was designed to provide.

Inclusivity:

- By encouraging the growth of Early College, meaningful academic experiences are being outsourced and diminished, making the high school not a school for all but only for either very high-achieving and struggling students.

Relationship-Building and School Culture:

- With nearly a third of upperclassmen out of the building on a daily basis, underclassmen are deprived of positive role models; participation in sports and clubs continues to decline; and enriching, innovative course offerings are severely limited due to the lack of students in the building.

Proposal

Form a committee of district stakeholders, including guidance counselors, teachers, administrators, district leaders, and students, to work collaboratively with Early College representatives to:

- a.** Review curriculum, grading policies, and assessments of Early College courses
- b.** Share curriculum, grading policies, and assessments from the high school with Early College personnel
- c.** Research various universities' perceptions of the Early College program and policies regarding the transfer of credits
- d.** Research outcomes for Early College graduates
- e.** Examine the demographic makeup of the Early College cohort and the progression of the program in recent years
- f.** Assess and offer recommendations to address effects of Early College program on school culture

Steps taken

So far we have two meetings with both Ms.Lu and Ms.Dion (head of the guidance department) as well as Mrs. Marotta:

- a.** Early college entry exams will be given in CP classes.
- b.** Honors student will be allowed to opt into the entry exam with parental permission as well as a meeting with their guidance counselor.
- c.** A semester of Early College classes will be weighted as a half credit instead of a full one.
- d.** Early College will be emfificied for students planning to attend state colleges.
- e.** Students looking to attend more prestigious colleges will be encouraged to take AP courses.