

College Performance and College Readiness Attitudes: MCNC Early College High School Seniors

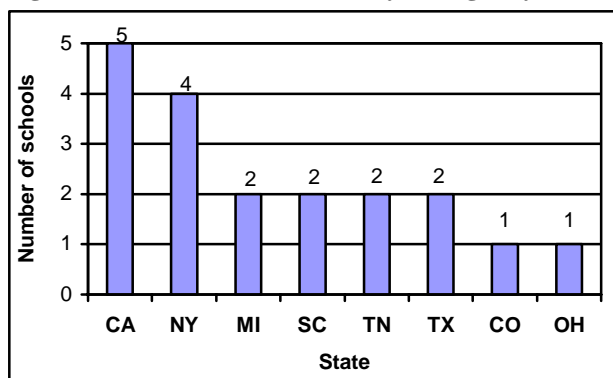
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Introduction

Launched in 2002 and funded by the Gates Foundation, the Early College (EC) initiative focuses on the creation of small schools in which students earn both a high school diploma and transferable college credits upon graduating from high school. The Middle National Consortium (MCNC) is one of several intermediary organizations charged with developing EC schools. The MCNC is a school practitioner network of 30 middle colleges (small schools located on college campuses) committed to a shared set of beliefs about the instructional practices and student support structures that lead to the successful schooling of underserved students.

In 2002, the MCNC developed two of the original EC schools; currently, the organization has 19 early college schools within its national network.

Figure 1: Number of MCNC Early Colleges by state



As shown in Figure 1, the MCNC EC schools are located nationwide with a cluster of four to five schools in California and New York, two schools in four states, and one school each in two states. These schools share common principles and features as members of the MCNC, but they also vary across states and districts.

This summary brief highlights college course-taking data and college readiness attitudes of the 2008 high school seniors at MCNC Early College schools.

College course performance

Analyses of college transcript data show that, upon graduation from high school, that MCNC EC students earn a significant number of college credits over time and are successful overall. During the 2007-08 school year, 17 of the MCNC EC schools were at full grade level capacity. Of the 1,200 Seniors across the MCNC Early College schools, close to 80% had enrolled in at least one college course. The 2008 college course-taking Senior cohort, on average, accumulated 27 college credits, and earned a cumulative 90% course pass rate and a 2.56 GPA.

As shown in Figures 2 and 3, about 80% of the college course taking Seniors earned a 2.00 college GPA or higher, and over 40% completed close to a full year's equivalent of college coursework.

Figure 2: Cumulative GPA distribution, 2008 Seniors

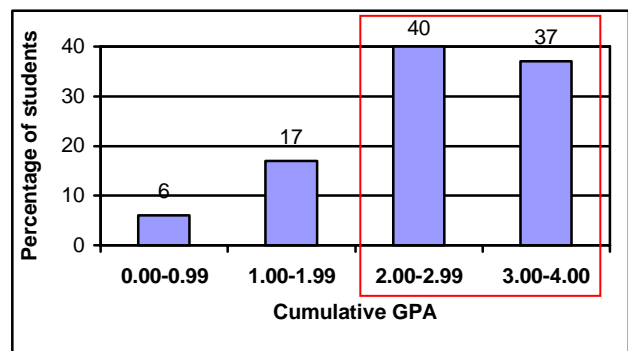
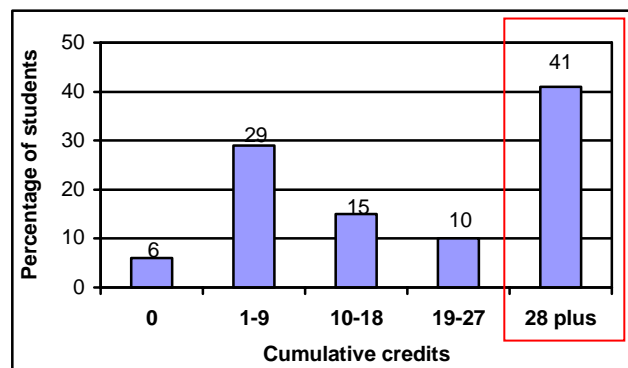


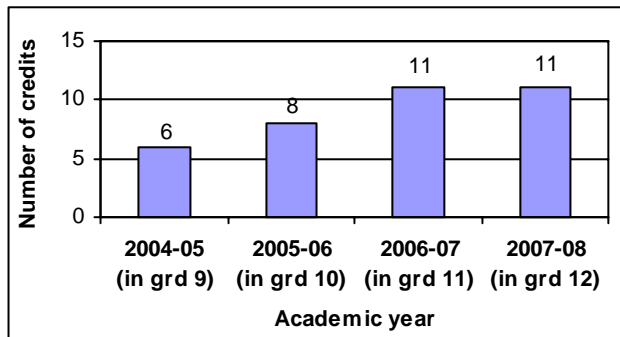
Figure 3: Cumulative credits earned, 2008 Seniors



College course performance over time

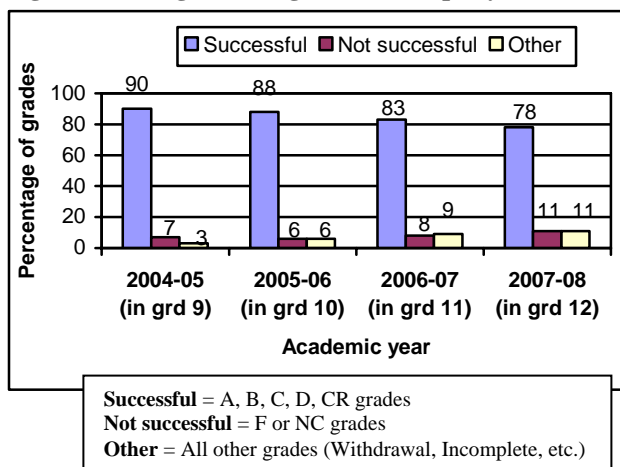
When analyzing this 2008 Senior cohort over time, starting from grade 9 through 12, the percent of students enrolled in college courses increased from one year to the next. More importantly, the data show that students typically earned more college credits as they progressed through high school (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Average college credits earned per year



As shown in Figure 5, students also maintained a fairly high success rate in their courses each year; but, at the same time, the percentages of successful course grades decreased from one year to the next when taking into account all course grade results.

Figure 5: College course grade results per year

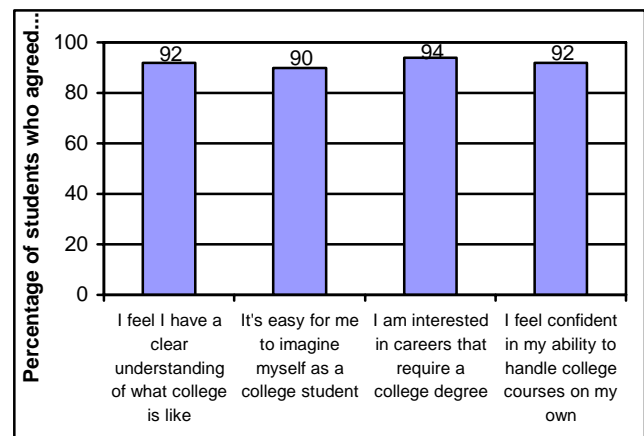


This resulted in a slightly higher frequency of unsuccessful course grades (fails and withdrawals) in the upper grades, likely related to the pattern of students enrolling in more challenging courses as they progressed through the grades.

College readiness attitudes

In addition to increased college course participation and overall successful performance, student survey data indicates that a large majority of students aspire to and feel prepared for college. According to the 2008 MCNC Graduating Student Survey data, 92% of the high school seniors indicated wanting to achieve a college-level education or higher. Further, a scale analysis combining student responses about college readiness (four items shown in Figure 6) found that 94% of the students agree or strongly agree that they are ready for college.

Figure 6: College readiness attitudes, 2008 Seniors



In terms of the college application process, 85% of the students had taken the SAT, ACT, or both, and 71% had filled out financial aid forms. When asked to write about the best part of their high school experience, comments related to the opportunity to take college classes were ranked the highest, along with relationships with students, and relationships with teachers.

As issues of college readiness continue to take center stage in education reform initiatives, analyses of transcript and survey data indicate that the majority of MCNC EC students leave high school with a significant number of college credits and overall positive attitudes about being ready for college. NCREST is currently analyzing additional MCNC data combining student survey and college coursework information, as well as related data tied to 8th grade assessments and student persistence beyond high school.