

## 2007-08 MCNC Early College High School Students: College Coursework Participation and Performance

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### Introduction

Early College is an initiative funded by the Gates Foundation, aimed at increasing access to higher education for underserved students. Launched in 2002, the initiative focuses on the development of small schools in which high school students earn both a high school diploma and transferable college credits upon graduating from high school.

The Middle College National Consortium (MCNC) is one of several intermediary organizations awarded funds by the Gates Foundation to establish Early College High Schools (ECHSs). The MCNC is a school-practitioner network of more than 30 middle colleges (high schools located on college campuses) committed to a set of shared beliefs and instructional practices regarding the successful schooling of underserved high school students. The MCNC developed its first two ECHSs in New York in 2002. By the 2007-08 school year, the organization was overseeing the development of 19 such schools in eight states, with clusters in California and New York.

MCNC Early College High Schools include both redesign and new, startup schools. Redesigns are existing high schools restructured into ECHSs and startups are newly created ECHSs. Similar to new startup schools that typically open with a 9th grade cohort, some MCNC redesign schools phased in the initiative starting with each new 9th grade cohort while others aimed to implement the initiative concurrently at all grade levels.

For the past several years, NCREST has provided research and evaluation support to the MCNC and its schools. This brief is based on NCREST's college transcript study, and covers the cumulative college course participation and performance of all 2007-08 students enrolled at MCNC Early College High Schools.

Of the 19 MCNC Early College High Schools, 17 were at full grade capacity with cohorts for grades 9-12; the other two schools were startups and had

### HIGHLIGHTS & FACTS

#### 2007-08 MCNC Early College High Schools

- 19 operating schools across 8 states (CA, NY, TN, SC, MI, TX, CO, OH) and serving 6,240 students
- Ethnicity: African American (37%), Hispanic (33%), White (21%), Asian (7%), Other (2%)
- Gender: Male (43%), Female (57%)
- Student attendance rate (95%)

#### 2007-08 MCNC Early College High School Students

##### **College Participation**

- 63% of ALL students had enrolled in college courses
- 31% of 9th graders had enrolled in college courses
- 64% of 10th graders had enrolled in college courses
- 79% of 11th graders had enrolled in college courses
- 85% of 12th graders had enrolled in college courses

##### **College Credits (cumulative)**

- 68,929 = Total number of accumulated credits
- 9th graders accumulated an average of 10 credits
- 10th graders accumulated an average of 13 credits
- 11th graders accumulated an average of 22 credits
- 12th graders accumulated an average of 27 credits

##### **College Performance (cumulative)**

- 90% course pass rate; 2.71 average GPA
- 12th graders: 80% earned a 2.00 college GPA or higher, and over 40% completed close to a full year's equivalent of college coursework

not enrolled students in college courses. During the 2007-08 school year, of the students enrolled at the 17 MCNC schools offering college courses, 63% of the students had enrolled in at least one college course.

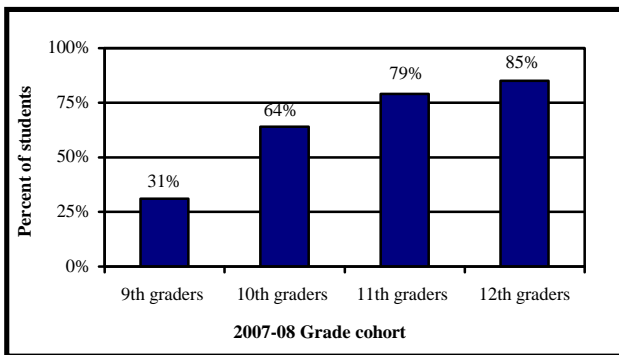
College transcript data was only collected for students taking college courses; thus, the college participation and performance of college course-taking students are the primary focus of this brief and the overall transcript study.

## How many students take college courses?

The number of MCNC students enrolled in college courses is important in understanding the degree to which Early College High Schools are able to offer college access to students. Of the 2007-08 students enrolled across all the MCNC schools, 63% had taken at least one college course. This was an increase from two years prior where 53% of the 2005-06 students had taken college courses.

When examining college participation by grade cohort, Figure 1 shows that a greater percent of students in the upper grades had enrolled in college courses than 9th graders.

**Figure 1: Percent of college course-taking students by grade**



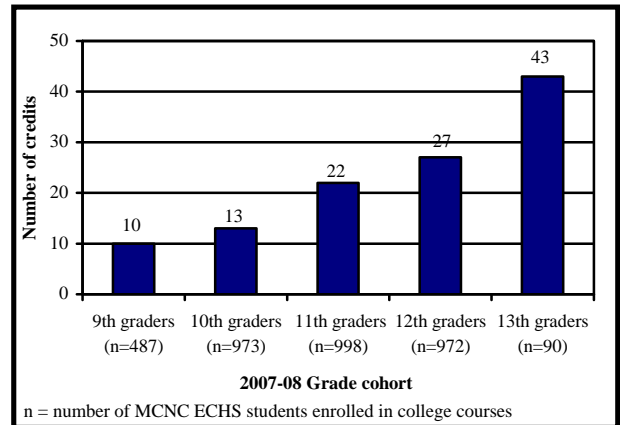
College course-taking by the 2007-08 9th graders (31%) remained steady in comparison to 9th grader cohort data from the past two years (35% and 34%). However, college course-taking percentages among 12th grader cohorts steadily increased over the past three years from 54% to 79% the following year, and most recently to 85% as shown in Figure 1.

When considered by school, all MCNC schools had over 50% of their 2007-08 12th grader cohorts enrolled in college courses; and, at all but four of the schools, more than 80% of the 12th graders were college course-taking students.

## How many college credits do students earn?

In addition to access to college courses, MCNC students earn a significant number of college credits during their high school years. Figure 2 shows that students in the upper grades had accumulated more college credits than those in the lower grades.

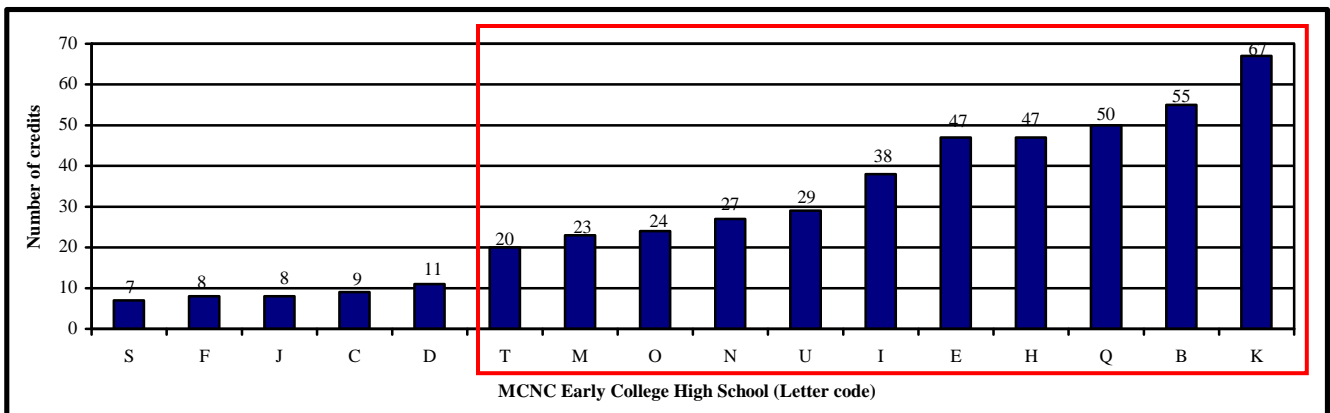
**Figure 2: Average college credits accumulated by grade**



For example, in Figure 2, the 27 credits accumulated by the 12th graders account for their entire time during high school, over several years. Thus, consistent with credit accumulation patterns from previous years' studies, the data suggests that the other cohorts will most likely earn a significant number of credits by the time they are in grade 12.

Credit accumulation varies among MCNC schools. Figure 3 shows the average number of credits earned by college course-taking 12th graders at each of the schools, in order from the lowest average (School S) to the highest (School K). The schools in the boxed area represent 70% of the MCNC schools. Figure 3 suggests that a typical college course-taking student at many of the schools will most likely graduate high school with close to a full year's equivalent or more of college coursework.

**Figure 3: Average number of college credits accumulated upon graduation by college course-taking 12th graders, by school**



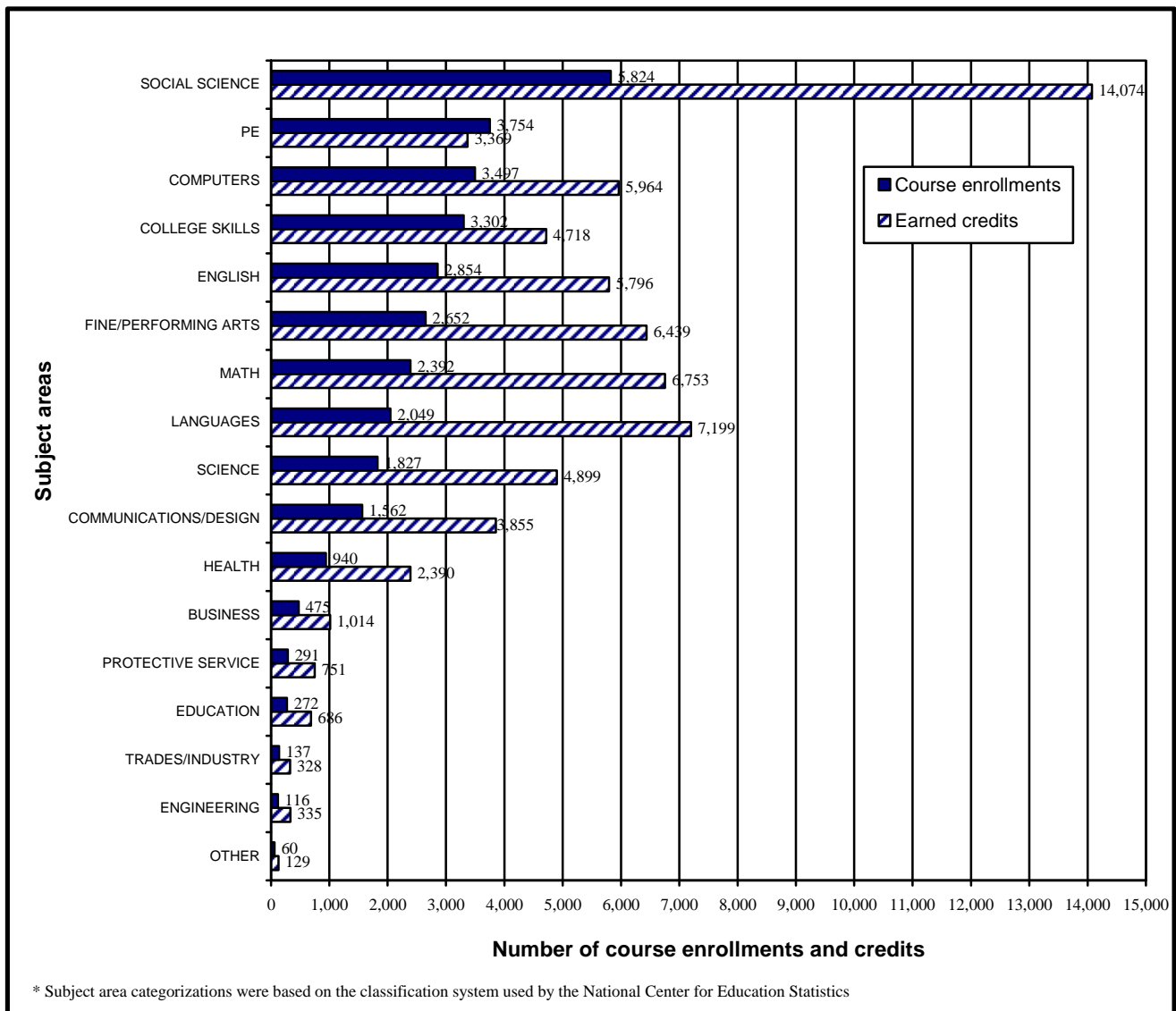
### What types of college courses do students take?

Students were enrolled in college courses across a range of subject areas, in both academic and career-technical fields. Figure 4 shows the number of course enrollments and credits accumulated by all 2007-08 MCNC high school students, in all grade levels according to subject area. The figure lists subject areas from highest to lowest enrollments. The highest number of course enrollments was in Social Science, followed by Physical Education (PE), Computers, and College Skills. When considering college credits earned, students accumulated the largest number of credits in Social Science, followed by Languages, Math, and Fine/Performing Arts. Given that a typical college course is worth about three credits, Figure 4 shows that credits earned were typically much greater than the number of course enrollments.

Figure 4 shows a smaller gap between credits and enrollments in subject areas such as PE since these courses are typically worth one credit. This pattern was also seen in College Skills and to a lesser degree in the area of Computers where common one-credit computer applications courses were categorized together with higher credited computer science courses.

The types of courses in which students were placed varied by grade level. Students in the lower grades were typically enrolled in PE and Fine/Performing Arts courses. Upper grade enrollments were more likely to occur in English, Math, and Social Science courses. Schools enrolled students into courses with other college students in small groups, or on an individual basis. In some cases, college courses were designated for high school students only.

**Figure 4: Number of course enrollments and credits accumulated by subject area (All 2007-08 students, cumulative)**

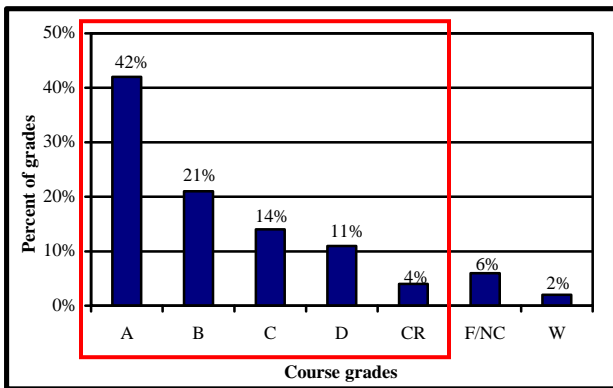


**How do students perform in college courses?**

Overall, the 2007-08 MCNC Early College High School students averaged a 2.71 college GPA and a 90% cumulative course pass rate.

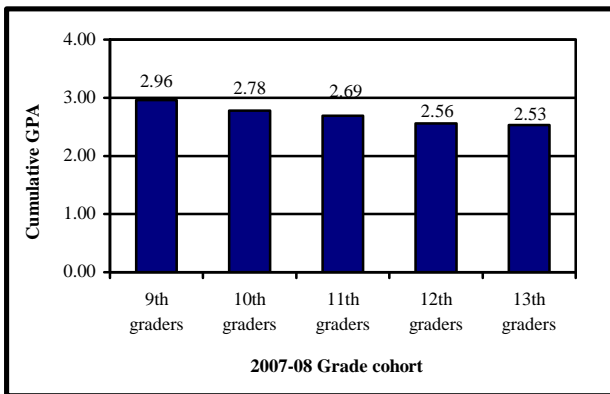
The distribution of all college course grades earned by these students is shown in Figure 5. Taking into account all college course enrollments, 92% resulted in an A, B, C, D, or CR (Credit) grade. Some of the students' college course enrollments also resulted in less successful grades: 6% F (Fail) or NC (No Credit), and 2% W (Withdrawal) grades.

**Figure 5: Distribution of college course grades**



The average college GPA for each grade cohort is shown in Figure 6. It suggests that there may be a slight decline in cumulative GPA over time, particularly as students enroll in more college courses and more challenging coursework as they progress through high school.

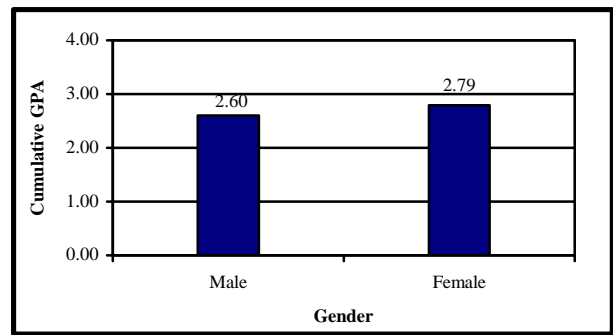
**Figure 6: Distribution of college GPA by grade cohort**



When examining college performance by school, there was some variation across schools as well. For example, individual school data findings show that average GPAs for 12th graders ranged from a 1.95 to a 3.04 GPA. At the vast majority of schools (all but two), the 12th grader cohorts had earned a 2.00 average college GPA or higher.

Like their counterparts in colleges across the United States, female students earned slightly higher GPAs than male students (see Figure 7). In addition, more female students were enrolled in college courses and more female students overall were enrolled in the MCNC Early College high schools.

**Figure 7: Distribution of college GPA by gender**



**Conclusion**

Early College High Schools were launched with the goal of increasing access to higher education for underserved, non-traditional, first-time college going students. During the 2007-08 school year, close to 80% of the students at Early College High Schools affiliated with the Middle College National Consortium represented racial/ethnic minority groups, and over 50% were considered free/reduced lunch status.

The MCNC and its schools have demonstrated success in providing their high school students with early access to college courses, as well as increased access over time. MCNC students enroll in a variety of college classes, and earn substantial numbers of college credits during their high school years. These data provide evidence that a wide range of students can participate and perform successfully in college courses when given the opportunity. Ongoing and forthcoming studies will seek to better understand the predictors and conditions for student success.

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**The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST) is a research and development organization at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City. The Middle College National Consortium Early College Project team includes Elisabeth Barnett, Jennifer Kim, Carina Omoeva, and Claudia Hindo. Please contact NCREST at 212.678.3432 for more information.**