

Early College is a structured program of study and support that increases college success and career readiness. In Early College, high school students take strategically-sequenced, real college classes with strong career orientations during their regular high school day, at no cost to themselves or their families. They receive enhanced academic and guidance support to ensure that they thrive in rigorous college coursework and in the unfamiliar, sometimes daunting, college environment. They graduate from high school with significant college credits, reducing the cost and time to degree completion. And they graduate with the confidence, habits, and skills needed to be successful in college and career.

Rigorous national studies show that Early College works. Gold-standard evaluations in pioneering states show that Early College works, and particularly so for disadvantaged students, earning the program a Tier 1 rating for [evidence of effectiveness](#) in the U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse.

Massachusetts has staggering equity gaps in college access and completion. [Data](#) from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education demonstrates that while 50% of White students earn a degree within six years of high school graduation, only 24% of Black students and 17% of Latino students achieve the same success, and while 59% of middle-income or higher students graduate from college, only 23% of their low-income peers ultimately earn a degree. The impacts of the college completion gap are severe for students and the Commonwealth; data from the [Massachusetts Department of Economic Research](#) indicates that statewide, 98% of current job postings providing a [living wage](#) for a one-adult, one-child household require education beyond a high school diploma.

Early College drives better, more equitable outcomes in college and career success, especially as a complement to the Commonwealth's recent investments in college affordability. While Massachusetts investments in [college affordability](#) are critical, cost is not the only barrier to college success. [Decades of research](#) shows that success in college is impacted by the development of social, cognitive, noncognitive, and academic skills that support students in adjusting to the college environment and the rigors of college coursework. Early College helps students build college success skills, increasing completion rates and building pipelines for a diverse, skilled workforce.

While Massachusetts has laid a strong foundation for Early College success and scale, the state has an important window of opportunity this year to double down on its impact. To date, just 3% of students in the Commonwealth participate in Early College programs. This year, the state Boards of Education and Higher Education have authorized a strategic planning process, conducted by the Office of Early College, to set goals and strategies to rapidly grow access to Early College statewide.

There is tremendous opportunity to build on the state's early successes and double down on Early College's impact. With the commitment of state and local leaders, and a public policy and funding framework, Massachusetts is positioned to close a quarter of the statewide college success equity gap by race and income, and benefit thousands of students beyond that, by scaling high-quality Early College programs across the Commonwealth.



MA4EC
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FOR EARLY COLLEGE

Early College is a ground-leveler, a game-changer. It is a core piece of what we do, what we offer to families, because we are seeing the results. We look forward to continuing to see this opportunity grow.

Dr. Patrick Tutwiler
Massachusetts Secretary of Education

www.ma4ec.org @MA4EarlyCollege