

# BENEFITS

## THE BENEFITS OF COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS



**College in high school programs, such as dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and early college high school provide significant benefits to students, schools, colleges, and society.**

National and state research studies have consistently shown that these programs improve rates of college access and completion, particularly for low income students, students of color, first generation college students, and other populations of students who are under-represented in higher education. Students with disabilities may also find considerable value in participating in college in high school program opportunities.

These proven programs are important mechanisms for advancing student success through prioritizing partnerships and alignment between secondary education, postsecondary education, and the workforce, and providing more seamless transitions for students between sectors.

### WHAT ARE COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS?

College in high school programs — which are referred to by many terms in states across the country — promote partnerships between secondary school systems and institutions of higher education that provide high school students with intentionally designed, rigorous, and authentic postsecondary experiences leading to officially transcribed and transferable college credit towards a recognized postsecondary degree or credential. These programs are distinct from credit by exam programs such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, as they are authentic college courses through which students will always receive transcribed postsecondary credit if they pass the course.

### WHY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOULD TAKE COLLEGE COURSES

The college and career landscape has changed dramatically over the past several decades, making it imperative for schools and colleges to work together more closely to promote seamless transitions between secondary, postsecondary, and the workforce. College in high school programs help students — particularly those who are low income, students of color, or first generation — to acclimate to college-level teaching and expectations in a supported environment, giving students college skills, confidence, and an understanding of how to be a college student that makes it much more likely they will attend a good-fit college or university, thrive there, and complete a postsecondary degree or credential. This stands in stark contrast to the traditional school to college pipeline, which leaves far too many students ill-prepared for success in college.

Currently, the vast majority of students in the lowest income brackets who start college leave without completing a degree. This has a direct impact on their ability to obtain and maintain employment. As an example, recent data from the Community College Research Center (CCRC) during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that students with at least an associate's degree were more likely to have remained employed, less likely to have been laid off, and more likely to retain health insurance. The pandemic starkly

demonstrates the importance of ensuring that students complete a postsecondary degree or credential to set themselves up for long-term economic success.

Giving students early access to college credit and degree pathways helps make college more accessible, affordable, and relevant to all students. This is particularly crucial for students of color, low-income, and first-generation college-goers, for whom these programs provide a sense of belonging and a managed transition into postsecondary education that puts them in control of their future education and career choices.

## THE BENEFITS OF COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The benefits of participating in college in high school programs for students, high schools, colleges, the workforce, and states are as follows:

### ▶ STUDENTS

Students who participate in college in high school programs are more likely to **graduate high school, enroll in college, persist in college, and complete a college degree or credential.**

- Evidence indicates that all students can benefit from participating in college in high school programs, but that low-income students and students underrepresented in higher education benefit the most, and experience the biggest positive impacts on their ability to access and complete college by participating in a college in high school program. This is particularly true for students attending early college high schools and dual enrollment programs with strong student supports and program leadership dedicated towards promoting equitable outcomes.
- College in high school programs may also allow students to complete degrees or credentials at lower costs than the traditional high school and college model as many programs are provided at low or no cost to students.
- College in high school programs provide an opportunity for growth and exploration, providing students with an introduction to college including a wide course catalogue, college course content and expectations, study habits, and college culture.
- College in high school programs offer a bridge between K-12 and higher education that gives students a strong onramp to their first year of college and an opportunity to explore their educational and career options while still in a familiar environment.

### ▶ HIGH SCHOOLS

- College in high school programs allow high schools to offer a range of engaging advanced coursework opportunities to students to support them on their pathway towards college and career.
- Data also indicates that college in high school programs improve high school graduation rates, an important metric in school accountability systems.

### ▶ COLLEGES

- Students are more prepared to succeed in college and more likely to graduate on time or early, and less likely to require remediation.
- In an era of declining enrollments at many colleges, recruiting high school students not only helps improve college access and completion but also improves the college's enrollment numbers.

## ▶ THE WORKFORCE

- The modern economy requires a trained workforce equipped with postsecondary degrees and credentials. College in high school programs put students on a pathway towards securing industry-recognized and required degrees that open the door to wealth-generating careers.
- College in high school programs allow many students to earn a degree or credential by the time they finish high school, ready to enter the workforce.
- Growing a skilled workforce with credentials and training to expand the jobs of the future ensures growing prosperity for employers as well as the country overall.

## ▶ STATES

- Studies show that college in high school programs provide a high return on investment, providing significant social and fiscal benefits to states through savings and increased tax revenue.
- Growing a skilled workforce through college in high school programs expands the tax base to support important public investments.
- College in high school programs foster communication and collaboration between K-12 and higher education, improving outcomes in creating a more seamless and transparent transition between the two education systems.
- With strong results, college in high school programs help states meet their postsecondary attainment goals and meet workforce demand and changing needs over time.