



Issues in Funding Early & Middle College High Schools

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March 2008

Several states are attempting to ease students' post-high school transition periods through the use of "early" or "middle" college programs. Early and middle colleges allow students to earn a high school diploma free of cost while gaining postsecondary credit in a small school environment. While early and middle college programs have many similarities, there are some differences:

- Early college high schools can be located on a college campus, inside a traditional high school, or on their own campus, and are often focused on serving low-income and/or minority populations. They are established with the goal that every student will earn an associate's degree, technical certification or enough credits to enter a four-year institution as a junior.
- Middle colleges are located on college campuses and tend to target students who are at risk of dropping out. They do not have the goal that students will earn up to two years of college credit but they do allow students to gain more postsecondary credit than otherwise received in a traditional dual enrollment program.

Early/Middle Colleges vs. Traditional Dual Enrollment Programs

Like early/middle colleges, traditional dual enrollment programs allow students to earn college credit while attending high school. However, there are differences between traditional dual enrollment programs and early/middle colleges. Among these differences are:

- Program structure
 - A student's ability to participate in a dual enrollment program, and the size and scope of the program varies from district to district.
 - Early/middle college programs are highly structured and provide the same level of service to each student.
- Age of participating students
 - In many states students are not allowed to attend postsecondary classes until they enter 11th grade.
 - Early/middle colleges allow students to begin to participate in postsecondary courses in 9th grade.

- Students who are targeted
 - Dual enrollment programs are often targeted to mid to high achieving students.
 - Early/middle colleges are targeted toward students who are not being well served by traditional high schools including, but not limited to, at-risk and minority students.
- Higher education credits earned
 - In dual enrollment programs, the number of higher education credits earned varies by student needs and skill level. In addition, some states set a cap on the maximum number of credits a student may earn while enrolled in a dual enrollment program.
 - The goal for students completing an early college program is to receive their Associate's degree upon high school graduation. Middle college programs are designed to allow students to gain some college credits.

New Programs Require New Funding Systems

Because early and middle colleges allow students to gain both high school and postsecondary credit simultaneously they have different funding needs than traditional high schools or dual enrollment programs. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) conducted a review of all fifty states' legislation and rules to determine which states had established early/middle college programs. ECS' review found that seven states (California, Colorado, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas) have specific state-level policies that allow for the establishment of early/middle colleges. To help determine how state funding systems for early/middle colleges differ from funding programs for traditional schools, ECS reviewed the funding policies for these seven states. This review focused on three education funding issues in particular:

- How does the state fund early/middle colleges compared to traditional high schools?
- Does the state provide additional funding to the higher education institution where students are earning their postsecondary education credits?
- Is a student required to pay tuition?

Findings

Funding to High Schools:

Pennsylvania is the only state surveyed that does not provide funding to early/middle colleges equal to the funding amounts it provides to traditional high schools in every circumstance. Pennsylvania provides early/middle colleges with funding amounts that are equal to traditional high schools if the early/middle college pays student tuition costs. Early/middle colleges not covering tuition costs receive a reduced amount of state funding.

Funding to Higher Education Institutions:

Of the states surveyed, North Carolina and Pennsylvania did not provide an equal amount of funding for students enrolled in an early/middle college program and for the students enrolled in a traditional higher education program. In North Carolina, a student enrolled in an early/middle college program would receive funding equal to the funding provided to a student enrolled in a traditional postsecondary program, as long as the course is taught by a college/university professor. If the course is taught by a high school teacher, the early/middle college would receive a reduced amount of funding. Pennsylvania provides an equal amount of funding, unless the early/middle college has an agreement to pay a higher education provider an amount above a limit set by the state.

Tuition:

California and Pennsylvania allow schools to pay students' tuition, but do not require it. Michigan requires early/middle colleges to pay for tuition costs that are equal to the amount of funding that they receive from the state for the portion of the school day that the student is attending postsecondary courses. If the tuition payment from the early/middle college does not cover the full cost of tuition, students are required to pay the remaining amount. The other four states surveyed mandate that students not be charged for tuition costs.

	Does the State Have A Policy For:		How Does the State Fund Early/Middle Colleges Compared To:		Does A Student Have to Pay Tuition Costs?
	Early College	Middle College	Traditional High Schools	Traditional Higher Education Institutions	
California	No	Yes	Equal	Equal	Varies (See State Write-up)
Colorado	Yes	No	Equal	Equal	No
Michigan	Yes	Yes	Equal	Equal	Varies (See State Write-up)
North Carolina	Yes	No	Equal	Varies (See State Write-up)	No
Pennsylvania	Yes	Yes	Equal (See State Write-up)	Equal (See State Write-up)	Varies (See State Write-up)
Tennessee	Yes	No	Equal	Equal	No
Texas	Yes	Yes	Equal	Equal	No

Conclusion

Based on this review, it appears that each of the seven states with state-level early/middle college policies adjusted its funding formula to address the uniqueness of these programs. These adjustments attempt to ensure that early/middle colleges are funded at the same level as traditional high schools for their secondary education programs and that funding for higher education courses equals what state postsecondary institutions receive. In addition, all seven states adopted policies that mandate or encourage free postsecondary tuition for students attending early/middle colleges. Policymakers who wish to establish early/middle colleges in their state may want to ensure that the same adjustments are made to their K-12 and higher education funding formulas so that they can maximize the impact of these programs.

Individual State Profiles

California

Middle College High Schools

State Funding for Secondary Schools

If the student is enrolled in the secondary school program for at least 240 hours, the middle college will receive full state funding for that student. State law: § 48802

State Postsecondary Funding

Middle college high school students are treated no differently from traditional community college students for state funding purposes. State law: § 48800.5(e) & § 76001(c).

Tuition

The community college does have the right to waive the cost of tuition for a student enrolled in a middle college program, but it is not required to do so. If tuition costs are not waived by the community college, it is the responsibility of the student to pay them. California Education Code: §76300(f).

Colorado

Fast College Fast Jobs

State Funding For Secondary Schools

An early college would receive full state funding for all students enrolled in this program taking fewer than 11 college credits. If a student is taking 12 or more credits, the early college would only receive 85% of state funding. State law: § 22-35.5-107(1)

State Postsecondary Funding

Students enrolled in the “Fast College Fast Jobs” program are treated no differently from traditional community college students for state funding purposes. State Regulations: Section V, Part B, 5.01.05.

Tuition

The students' postsecondary tuition costs are paid by their school district. The school district in which the early college is located can negotiate with the postsecondary institution for a lower tuition rate for its students. State law: § 22-35.5-107(2)

Michigan

Early/Middle Colleges through the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act

State Funding for Secondary Schools

Students enrolled in an early/middle college program are counted the same for funding purposes as students enrolled in traditional high schools. State Law: § 388.1606(6)(4)(q)

State Postsecondary Funding

The state discontinued the use of student counts for higher education funding for the 2007-08 school year — therefore funding for students in early/middle colleges does not differ from funding for traditional postsecondary students. House Bill 4350 – 2007.

Tuition

An early/middle college is only responsible for paying the portion of a student's tuition that is equal to the pro-rated amount of funding received from the state for the portion of the school day that the student attends postsecondary courses. An early/middle college can provide additional funding but it is not required to. Any tuition costs that are not covered by the early/middle college are the responsibility of the student. State Law: § 388.1621b(3)

North Carolina
Cooperative Innovative High School Programs

State Funding for Secondary Schools

Early colleges are treated no differently from traditional high schools for funding purposes even if they are physically located in another high school or at a postsecondary institution. State law: § 115C-238.54(a).

State Postsecondary Funding

If taught in association with a community college: If a community college (C.C.) has contracted with a school district to help run an early college and it uses C.C. professors to teach the dual credit courses, the C.C. would receive full state funding for that course. If the C.C. uses high school teachers to teach the course, the C.C. would only receive a state reimbursement that is equal to the direct cost of the course plus 15%. State law: § 115D-41.

If taught in association with a public four-year university: If a University of North Carolina institution's professor teaches the course, the early college may claim full funding from the state. If the course is taught by a high school teacher, the early college will not receive state funding. From the University of North Carolina's *Student Credit Hour Enrollment Change Funding Model Manual*.

Tuition

Community colleges are required to waive tuition cost for students enrolled in an early college high school program. State law: § 115D-5(b)

At a four-year university, it is the responsibility of the student's early college high school to pay his/her tuition and fees. UNC Policy: 400.6.1[R] – 15

Pennsylvania

Early/Middle Colleges Through the Opportunities For Educational Excellence Program

State Funding For Secondary Schools

An early/middle college would receive full state funding for a student if the college pays the student's postsecondary tuition and fees. If the early/middle college does not pay the student's tuition and fees, it would receive a prorated amount of state funding based on the amount of time the student spent in the classroom. State law: 22 Pa. Code § 11.5

State Postsecondary Funding

For students enrolled in community college programs: Students who are enrolled in a early/middle college program are treated the same as traditional students for state funding purposes. The only exception to this is if an early/middle college enters into an agreement with a community college providing the community college with district funding for dual enrollment students that exceeds the additional cost of the program. State law: 22 Pa. Code § 35.61

For students enrolled in four-year higher education programs: Students who are enrolled in an early or middle college program are treated the same as traditional students for state funding purposes. From a review of the 2007-2008 Pennsylvania state budget.

Tuition

Early/middle colleges may choose to pay their students' postsecondary tuition and fees. If the school does not pay, it is the responsibility of the student to pay for his/her own tuition and fees, but the student may qualify for a complete or partial reimbursement through the state's Opportunities for Educational Excellence Program. State law: 24 P.S. § 16-1603-B

Tennessee
Cooperative Innovative High School Programs

State Funding For Secondary Schools

Students enrolled in a early college are funded at the same level as students enrolled in traditional high schools. State law: § 49-15-107(a)

State Postsecondary Funding

Students enrolled in an early college program are treated no differently from traditional postsecondary students for state funding purposes. State law: § 49-15-106(f)

Tuition

A student participating in this program cannot be charged tuition or fees. State law: § 49-15-107(f)

Texas
Middle/Early College Program

State Funding For Secondary Schools

Students enrolled in early/middle colleges are funded at the same level as students enrolled in traditional high schools. State law: § 29.908(c) and § 42.005

State Postsecondary Funding

Students enrolled in an early/middle college program are treated no differently from traditional postsecondary students for state funding purposes. State Regulations: 19 TAC § 4.160

Tuition

A student participating in an early/middle college cannot be charged tuition or fees. Tuition and fees will be covered by the early/middle college unless the postsecondary school is willing to waive or reduce these costs. State Rules: §102.1091(d)(3)

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