



Early College High School Initiative

Student Information System

Frequently Asked Questions

What are early college high schools?

Early college high schools are small schools from which students have the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and also an Associate's degree or two years of college credit toward a Bachelor's degree. They represent a new way of organizing high schools and the first two years of college.

What are the advantages of early college high schools for students?

Students in early college high schools can earn both a high school diploma and two years of college credit at no cost. Thus, these schools make college more affordable to students and their families. Graduates are ready for the academic and social challenges of college, and they are motivated to work hard in school because they see themselves as "college material." By changing the structure of the high school years and compressing the number of years to a college degree, early college high schools have the potential to improve graduation rates and better prepare students for entry into high-skill careers. This approach helps young people to progress toward the education and experience they need to succeed in life and a family-supporting career.

What is the Student Information System (SIS)?

The Student Information System is a secure, confidential collection of data about students attending early college high schools throughout the United States. The SIS provides information and analyses to guide the development and improvement of early college high schools. It also provides evidence on how well early college high schools are achieving their mission: to help young people progress toward the education and experience they need to succeed in life and a family-supporting career.

Jobs for the Future coordinates the SIS and analyzes school and student outcomes and trends. JFF is a non-profit organization with overall responsibility for coordinating the Early College High School Initiative nationwide. EDsmart, a leader in data systems for school districts, and Policy Studies Associates provide support for the development of the SIS, including the engagement of local school districts and higher education institutions in the effort.



What information is in the SIS?

The SIS includes information about each student's academic achievement in early college high school, prior academic achievement going back to at least the eighth grade, and college attainment after graduation from early college.

School districts supply information on:

- Demographics (e.g., race, age, gender, free/reduced lunch)
- Standardized test scores (including two to four years before enrolling in early college high school)
- Student attendance and persistence
- Rates of attendance
- Courses taken and grades (including two to four years before enrolling in early college high school)
- SAT/PSAT and ACT scores
- Date high school diploma awarded

Colleges and universities supply information on:

- College placement test results
- College courses taken and grades in those classes, including pass/fail
- Degrees or credentials awarded to early college high school students
- Grade Point Average
- Results on college placement exams

In addition, through the National Student Clearinghouse, the SIS will follow the progress of former early college high school students as they pursue postsecondary credentials following graduation from early college.

Why collect this information?

The SIS helps stakeholders in the Early College High School Initiative learn more about the effectiveness of early college high schools, and it helps the Initiative gain the support necessary to strengthen and expand this new vision of schools.

The data in the system helps stakeholders test key principles underlying early college high schools:

Preparing students at a young age for the academic expectations of postsecondary education and supporting students through the crucial first years of college should result in higher high school graduation rates, greater college enrollment rates, lower college remedial course-taking rates, and higher postsecondary degree completion rates. This would reduce the expense of remediation and the lost investments (e.g., public loan subsidies, grants, and defaults on loan repayment) in students who drop

out of college. A study of Texas students revealed that students who withdrew from postsecondary education were nearly twice as likely to default on loan repayment than students who graduated.¹ And studies of programs in Arizona, Florida, and California suggest that high school students who take college courses perform better in college than those who do not.²

Integrating high school and college should enable students to complete high school and postsecondary degrees and begin a career more quickly, saving tuition costs for families and ultimately saving taxpayer dollars. Recent data on students with a Bachelor's degree showed that those who had earned some college credits while in high school took less time to complete their degree than those who had not.³

Because more young people will earn a college degree over the long term, states should spend less on services for the poor and realize greater economic productivity and revenues from a better educated citizenry.

How is information collected?

In order to obtain access to data on students, Policy Studies Associates contacts schools districts to secure agreement to participate in the SIS.

Jobs for the Future works with postsecondary institution and district officials to gain approval for data transfer based on existing policies and requirements. EDSmart works with each institution's or district's research and evaluation unit to determine procedures for extracting, transforming, and transmitting district data to the SIS.

Personal identity is protected by assigning each student a unique Student Information System number, which is assigned by EDSmart. Only this identifier, not student names or social security numbers, are visible and accessible to users of the SIS. Early college high schools and school districts supplying data on their students are the only ones that have access to individually identifiable student data.



Districts are asked to update the data on students, preferably after each term. Information is collected on students enrolled in early college high school (beginning in fall 2002 through the 2008-2009 school year). Aggregated, district data is collected on non-early college counterparts for comparison purposes. Districts report data until the 2008-2009 school year. Postsecondary data collection will continue until 2013, at which point the SIS will be disposed of safely. Data records will be made available to districts for their students.

How is the SIS used?

Schools and their partners use the Student Information System to follow students' progress. The SIS provides schools with information to better understand how well their design and organization are serving students' needs and resulting in reaching short- and long-term goals, including the earning of two years of college credit by high school graduation. The SIS continues to follow students after they leave early college high school and provides follow-up information to the school on the number of students who continue on to earn a four-year college degree.

Schools use the system to monitor the progress of individual or groups of students or classes and to manage information on services and supports provided to students, including tutoring, mentoring, and counseling. The analyses provided by the system support professional development, program planning, and continuous school improvement. The SIS provides solid evidence that helps to sustain and expand funding, policy, and public support for early college high schools.

How is students' privacy protected?

The Student Information System is a secure data system. Individual student information is completely confidential and protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Personal identity is protected by a unique Student Information System number, assigned by EDSmart, the developers of the SIS. Only this identifier, not student names or social security number, is visible and accessible to users of the SIS.

How does the SIS benefit higher education institutions?

The SIS provides information on the preparation and progress of students who are jointly enrolled in high school and in college courses. The information includes student-level, class, and cohort analyses. Postsecondary institutions can use this information for program planning and to inform professional development and collaboration with the early college high school. The SIS will also provide evidence of how early college high schools prepare students for placement in college courses without remediation.

How does the SIS benefit school districts?

The SIS provides comparative information, including longitudinal postsecondary degree attainment data, on the impact of district early college high school designs on students' secondary and postsecondary success. SIS analyses help identify approaches with the potential to increase persistence in both high school and higher education.

What specifically are early college high schools, school districts, and postsecondary institutions asked to do for SIS?

If your institution agrees to participate in SIS, at the end of each term, EDsmart, the technical developer of the SIS, will ask you to provide the information described here. This can be done efficiently over the Internet or by mailing the data on a CD-ROM. EDsmart staff will assist school districts and postsecondary education institutions in the extraction, transformation, and loading of data to the SIS.

Who can answer my questions about the Student Information System?

JFF manages the Student Information System. Contact Dr. Michael Webb or Dr. Joel Vargas at (617) 728-4446.

The Early College High School Initiative

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, along with Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is funding the Early College High School Initiative. By 2008, the partner organizations will create or redesign more than 180 pioneering small high schools. Jobs for the Future coordinates the Early College High School Initiative and provides support to the partners and to the effort as a whole.

Organizations Involved in the Student Information System

AIR/SRI:

AIR/SRI, the external evaluator for the Early College High School Initiative with responsibility for analyzing its outcomes, will use SIS data in its evaluations.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is funding the SIS.

EDSmart:

EDSmart is the technical developer of the SIS with responsibility for working with postsecondary and school district research and evaluation units to determine procedures for extraction, transformation, and loading of district data to the SIS.

Jobs for the Future:

JFF coordinates the SIS and analyzes school and student outcomes and trends.

Policy Studies Associates:

Policy Studies Associates is a research and evaluation organization with responsibility for ensuring local district engagement and participation in the SIS.

Endnotes

- ¹ The study, conducted by Texas Guaranteed, a non-profit guarantor of the Federal Family Education Loan Program, looked at borrowers entering repayment in 1991.
- ² Spurling, Steven and Robert Gabriner. 2002. *The Effect of Concurrent Enrollment Programs Upon Student Success at City College of San Francisco*. San Francisco: Office of Research, Planning and Grants, City College of San Francisco; University of Arizona. 1999. *Community College and AP Credit: An Analysis of the Impact on Freshman Grades*. <http://aer.arizona.edu/Enrollment/Papers/dualenr.pdf>, retrieved April 11, 2002; Windham, Patricia and George Perkins. 2001. *Dual Enrollment as an Acceleration Mechanism: Are Students Prepared for Subsequent Courses?* Paper prepared for the 41st Annual Association for Institutional Research Forum, Long Beach, CA. June 3-6.
- ³ Adelman, Clifford. 2004. *Principal Indicators of Student Academic Histories in Postsecondary Education, 1972-2000*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.





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