

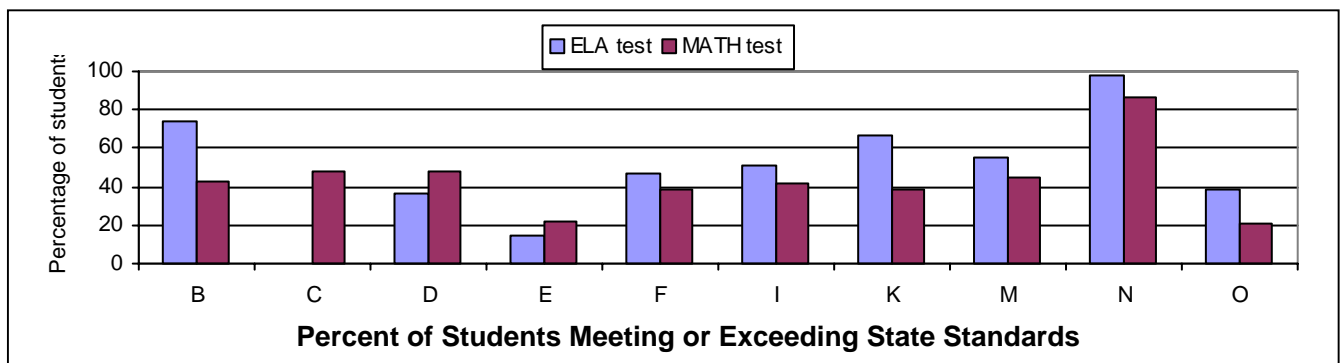
ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY PRIOR TO HIGH SCHOOL: ECHS GRADUATING STUDENTS

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Middle – Early Colleges are small schools in which students earn both a high school diploma and transferable college credits upon graduating from high school. The Middle National Consortium (MCNC) is one of several intermediary organizations charged with developing EC schools. During the 2007-08 school year, there were 5,610 high school students enrolled in 17 MCNC Early College schools nationwide. Among the 12th graders or graduating students, close to 80% of this student cohort had enrolled in college courses.

Over the past several years, NCREST has analyzed transcript data to describe students’ participation and performance in college courses. In order to better understand students’ college performance in relation to their academic proficiency prior to entering high school, Grade 8 state assessment test data were recently collected and analyzed. Ten MCNC Early College schools, representing six different states participated in this study.

The chart below shows that, at half of the schools in the study, less than 50% of the students had met state standards on the Grade 8 ELA test, while 50-75% of the students met the standards at four of the schools. Across all but one school, students were not as successful on their Grade 8 MATH tests. Of the ten schools, nine sites had less than 50% of the students meeting state standards on their Grade 8 Math tests. At one school (N), students entered high school with very high ELA and MATH test scores.



But how do these students, with different levels of prior achievement, do in college? Is it “safe” for Middle – Early College High Schools to admit underachieving students? To answer these questions, NCREST conducted analyses looking at the connection between prior low achievement and college GPAs, for coursework taken while the students were enrolled in Middle – Early College High Schools.

English Language Arts (ELA) and College GPA: At seven schools, we found no statistically significant relationship between students’ 8th grade ELA proficiency levels and their college

GPA's. In other words, college performance was not related to 8th grade test scores. At three schools, students who entered better prepared earned better college grades.

Math and College GPA: At six schools, there was no statistically significant relationship between students' 8th grade test scores in math and their college grades. At four schools, students who entered with higher test scores in math did better in their college classes.

ELA and College GPA – 8th Grade

ELA test level and College GPA	
7 schools	Relationship was not statistically significant
3 schools	↑ Grd8 ELA level ↑ College GPA

Math and College GPA – 8th Grade

MATH test level and College GPA	
6 schools	Relationship was not statistically significant
4 schools	↑ Grd8 MATH level ↑ College GPA

And outcomes data show that these students with low prior academic achievement earned an average 30 college credits and a 2.35 college GPA by the time they graduated from high school. Additional analyses combining college coursework and student survey data with 8th grade data suggest the important role teachers and student supports play in college performance, particularly for students with low academic proficiency prior to high school. For example, Figure 1 shows that within the group of high school seniors who did not meet 8th grade state standards, those who felt teachers had high expectations for them averaged a 2.43 college GPA while those who felt teachers had low expectations averaged a much lower GPA of 1.76.

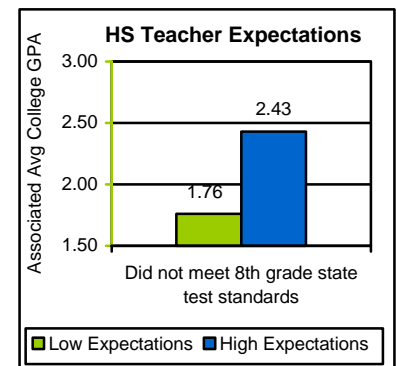


Figure 1

The data indicate that students who felt a stronger sense of belonging and conveyed a higher sense of perseverance about their college coursework also performed better in college than those reporting lower levels of belonging and perseverance (see Figures 2 and 3). This suggests that support structures and systems to bolster students' experiences and attitudes towards college are an integral part of school improvement.

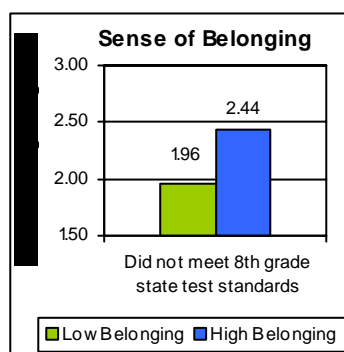


Figure 2

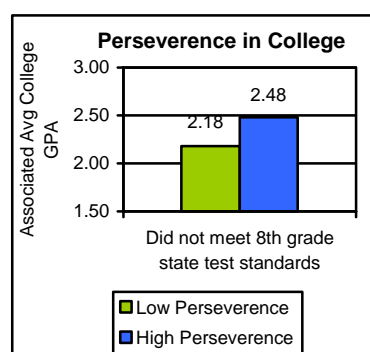


Figure 3

From this, we conclude that Middle – Early College High Schools *can* and *do* overcome students' early deficits. They are able to support students academically and socially in ways that allow them to do well in college no matter what their 8th grade test scores might predict.