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College Going Culture in Urban High Schools

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This grant is funded by TG's Public Benefit Program, 2007-2008

College Going Cultures in Urban High Schools

Introduction

This project explored perceptions of the culture to support college going in six urban high schools that serve primarily students from groups underrepresented in higher education whose parents did not graduate from college. The high schools were located in three school districts in the Dallas Fort Worth area: Dallas ISD, Carrollton Framers Branch ISD, and Fort Worth ISD. Two of these districts are among the largest in Texas. Two of the high schools studied were early college high schools in their second year of operation when this study was conducted. The remaining four high schools were identified as among the lowest 10% for college going in the state by the state education agency as directed in HB 400. Two were located in Dallas ISD and two in Fort Worth ISD. An unusual aspect of the study was that case studies of the six schools were completed by undergraduate students, a majority of whom were themselves from underrepresented groups and first generation college students. Using the six case studies as data, the research team sought answers to the following questions.

1. What successes and challenges were faced by the college student teams in completing case studies of urban high schools in the field?
2. Were there differences in the cultures for college going of the early college high schools and the other urban high schools studied?
3. What patterns are evident in the recommendations made to the high schools by the research teams?

The study was funded by the TG Public Benefit Foundation whose interest is in college access and retention.

Background of the study

The project is connected to a State of Texas initiative whose goal is that by the year 2015, 650,000 more first generation African American and Hispanic students will be enrolled in higher education. Announcement of this goal coincided with passage of the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation that promises to increase the number of students who graduate from college. A roadmap developed by the state higher education agency (2005) describes state, partnership, and community actions to increase educational participation. The roadmap identifies the Dallas Fort Worth metropolitan area as one of three most critical regions in the state for targeted activity. Among the community strategies specified by the roadmap are 1) work with early college high schools as a resource for learning about K-15 collaboration and 2) work to determine best practices among high schools in reducing the need for developmental education. Although the roadmap is not explicitly research based, it represents the work of educators who are familiar with scholarship in this field.

According to Venezia (2003), recommendations for future research growing out of the work of the Bridge Project at Stanford University include the need to study how to encourage

postsecondary institutions to engage with high schools in meaningful ways and whether pre-college outreach programs meet well the needs of the students they serve. This project addressed the first issue by involving undergraduate college students in research and service to high schools that serve students who may be like themselves. It addressed the second issue by using high school students and others in their environment as primary informants about the success of programs intended to increase college going in urban high schools.

Of most help in planning this study were examples of tools for assessment of school cultures published in 2006 by The College Board (*Creating a College Going Culture Guide*) and a series of studies completed at Locke High School by Center X at UCLA from 2002 to 2005 (Azzam, 2004; Slocum & Azzam, 2006). These documents provide examples of instruments and procedures for use in assessing college going culture in a high school setting. Other documents, such as “Checklist for building a college going culture” on the College Next website (www.collegenext.org) also suggest questions of importance.

The incidence and effectiveness of use of “student-centered intervention programs” in Texas is the subject of a report completed by The Institute for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research (2005). The researchers found more than 90 percent of the programs that most significantly impacted college going rates included, in this order of impact for large programs: academic counseling/advising; early information about preparing for college; assistance with admissions, financial aid application, or placement test preparation; and participation in cultural/social/co-curricular educational activities or events. The review of literature for this study also indicated that successful programs have a governance structure that provides for sharing of data between the high school and college as a means of gauging the success of the program.

Methods of inquiry

This study employed mixed methods. Undergraduate students enrolled in a three-credit, lower-division course that met communication requirements within the university’s core curriculum studied an introductory text on qualitative research, *Learning in the Field* (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) in the spring 2008 semester. Prior to the start of the semester, the study was approved by the external research boards of the school districts, the two community colleges at which the early college high schools are located, and the UNT Institutional Review Board. Student researchers completed National Institute of Health human subjects training and criminal background checks.

The 18 students were assigned to research groups of three for data collection and development of case studies. The case studies were standardized in format to include an introduction, data collected about the school from external sources, observations of the school, findings from collection of data, conclusions, and recommendations. The college student researchers shared their case studies with five students and an adult (teacher or counselor) from each high school at a follow-up conference at which revisions were invited. The case studies are currently being read by external reviewers who are familiar with the schools as an additional check on their credibility.

The research leadership team of the instructor and two graduate students posed the research questions posed in the introduction as a tool for engaging in analysis of data across the six case studies.

Sources of evidence

The undergraduate student researchers included 14 women and four men. Thirteen of the students were African American, three were Hispanic, and two were White. Thirteen of the students were first generation for college graduation; four had parents who were college graduates; one did not know. Eight were Emerald Eagle Scholars, indicating high need, and two others were participants in the Ronald McNair Program. High schools from which the students graduated included three identified as HB 400 schools, among of the lowest 10% for college going in the state.

To develop the case studies, groups of three undergraduate students collected information from urban high schools through review of websites, direct observations during two to seven site visits, and interviews of at least one key informant, usually a college and career counselor or an AVID teacher in spring 2008. They conducted at least one focus group interview with 10 to 20 high schools students and administered surveys similar to those recommended by the College Board (2006) to high school students, teachers, and parents/community members. The numbers of surveys collected at each participating school from students, teachers, and parents/community members are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Numbers of Participants Submitting Surveys at Each School

School Name	Student Survey	Teacher Survey	Parent/ Community
Amon Carter Riverside High School	44	1	12
Early College High School at Brookhaven	10	11	0
L.G. Pinkston High School	33	20	0
Early College High School at Mountain View	31	13	22
Oscar D. Wyatt High School	46	6	0
Thomas Jefferson High School	46	26	12
Totals	210	77	46

Quantitative data from the surveys were summarized using descriptive statistics and presented in figures and tables using Excel or SPSS. Qualitative data were summarized from notes taken by members of the research teams during interviews and observations. In some cases, each team

member presented his or own observations of the same phenomenon as part of the group report. Based on findings and conclusions from the individual schools and knowledge of the literature cited above and Conley (2005), recommendations were presented for each school.

Review by high school participants was used to verify findings and recommendations. An external review of the reports is in progress.

In addition to the cases studies in draft and final form, the leadership team had some other sources of evidence regarding the reactions of the undergraduate students to the research experience. Major sources of evidence included a reflective paper written by each student in response to questions about his or her work on a research team in a field setting and the final examination, which included questions about what students had learned about the research process in relation to course goals and objectives. Another source of evidence was field notes in the form of goals, objectives, and plans for each class session that were developed in response to perceived student needs and concerns. Class activities included weekly reports from research groups, role playing of challenges faced by group members in the field, and large and small group discussion of ways to resolve issues in development of the case studies.

Results related to the research experience

Based on reading of college student data, the following were noted by the leadership team as the three major successes and three major challenges in development of the case studies of college going cultures.

1. Application of research skills by the undergraduates displayed understanding of rights of human subjects, interviewing skills, and use of data from the Texas Education Agency website. The students also understood well the concept of “material culture” and used it in their case studies.
2. The grouping of the college students into research groups was a success. The goal for each group of three was to be diverse in gender and ethnicity and to have someone who was organized, someone who was a motivator, someone who knows how to get things accomplished, and someone who could relate to the students. Of course, some of the individuals expressed multiple traits.
3. The three-day summer conference was established to share results with the high school students and administrators. The college students came back to campus, interacted with the high school students, and presented their case studies to the group. The high school students were given the opportunities to stay in a residence hall, eat at a dining hall, play at the recreation center, as well as talk to students and staff from the Multicultural Center, Greek Life, Admissions, and Financial Aid. The high school students and administrators also reacted to the reports and developed implementation plans for their own campuses.
4. Although the required approvals were obtained for this research, engagement was also needed from campus-level administration and a primary contact in each school willing to involve some teachers and provide access to parents/community members. Building these

relationships took time and varied in efficacy from school to school. The number of participants in some roles was quite small or even non-existent in some schools due to our inability to develop relationships sufficiently in only one semester.

5. Although hundreds of informed consent forms were distributed in both English and Spanish, only a fraction were returned completed. School informants said that beyond lack of communication between students and parents, immigrant families, a significant portion of each school population, were deterred by the official-sounding language of the consent forms and fear of drawing unwanted attention to their status. At some schools seniors, who were over 18, were overrepresented among student informants because surveys could be completed by them without parental consent.
6. Gaining access to the schools and obtaining informed consent for students under 18 took so much time that data collection continued into the state testing season, severely limiting our opportunity to interact with school people. At some schools, we were collecting data as late as the 14th week of the UNT semester, severely limiting the time available for these research teams to reflect on their data and findings.

Comparison of Early College to Other High Schools

Drawing on the survey data from the case studies as the data collected that is most comparable across schools, we present in this section results at the two early college high schools in comparison to the four comprehensive high schools. Students at the early college high schools included only ninth and tenth graders, as these schools were only in their second year at the time of this study. Each school served approximately 200 students and included fewer than 15 teachers. The comprehensive high schools served all four grades and ranged in size from 953 to 1421 students, with 79 to 149 staff members. Table 2 shows the numbers of surveys collected from the three informant groups at the two types of school.

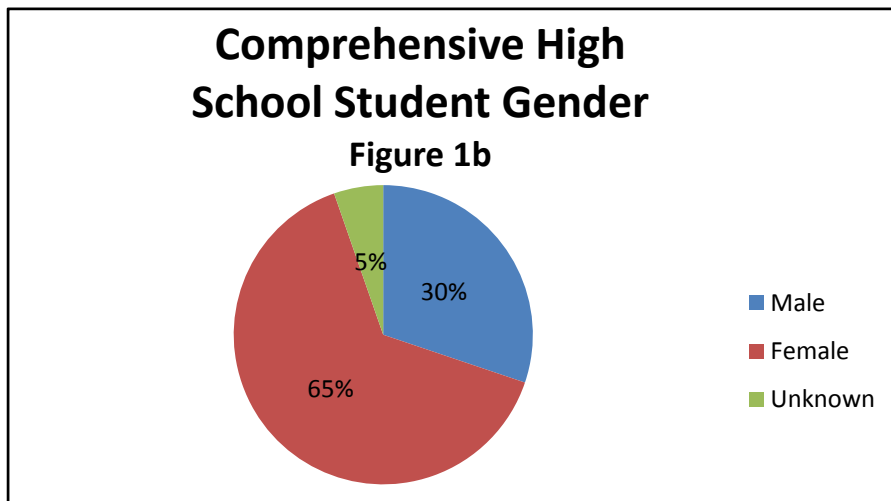
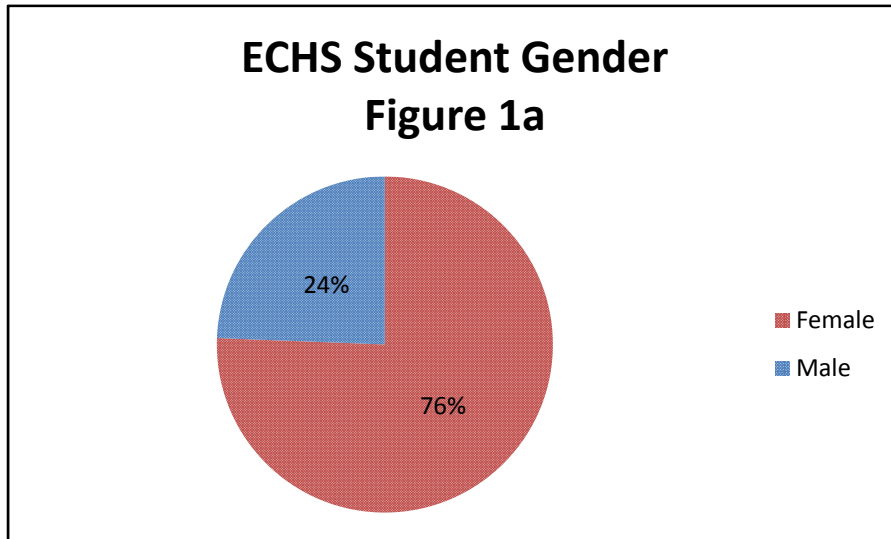
Table 2: Numbers of Participants Submitting Surveys by Type of School

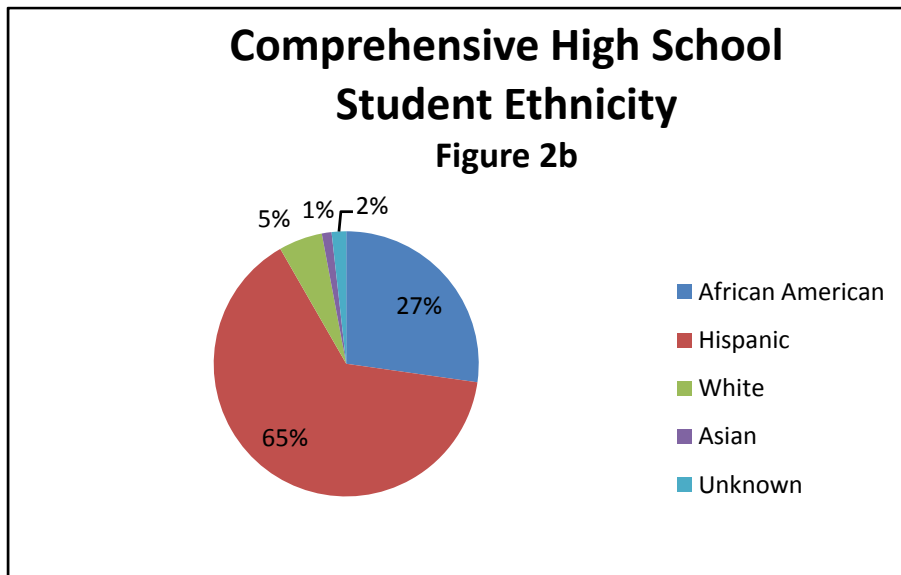
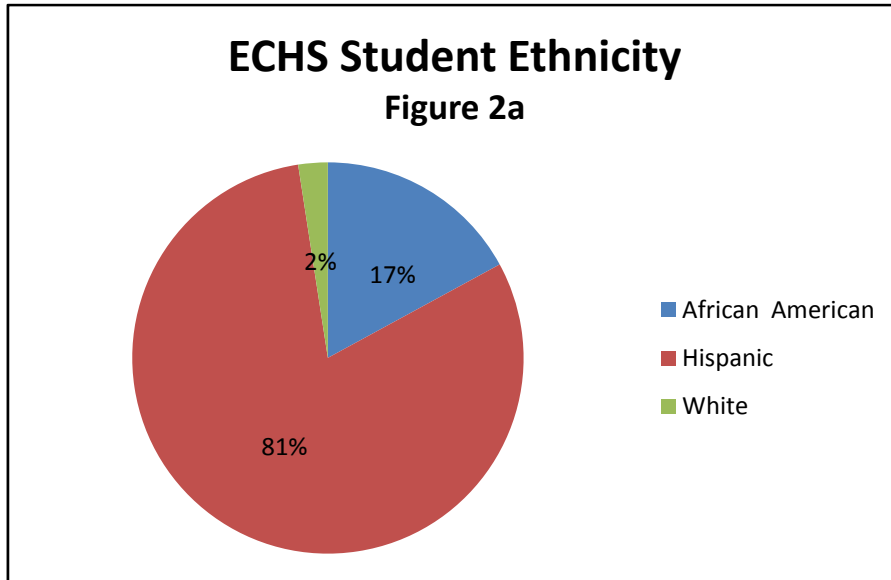
Schools	Student Survey	Teacher Survey	Parent/ Community
Early College High Schools	41	24	22
Comprehensive High Schools	169	53	24
Totals	210	77	46

Student survey results

The 210 students surveyed at all schools were 29% male, 67% female, and 4% unknown. Their ethnicity was 68% Hispanic, 25% African American, 1% White, 1% Asian, and 3% unknown. By grade level, the students were 11% ninth graders, 36% tenth graders, 11% eleventh graders, 41% twelfth graders, and 1% unknown. With respect to family education, 42% of the students reported that members of their families had completed college, and 53% they would be the first in their family to be college educated.

Comparing the demographics of the early college high school students to the comprehensive high school students showed that 75.6% of the early college high school students participants were female, compared to 64.4 % of the students from the comprehensive high schools. A majority of both groups was Hispanic. From the early college high schools, the student participants were 80.5% Hispanic, 17% African American, and 3% White. From the comprehensive high schools, the students were 64.9% Hispanic, 27% African American, 6.0% White, 1% Asian America, and 1 % unknown.

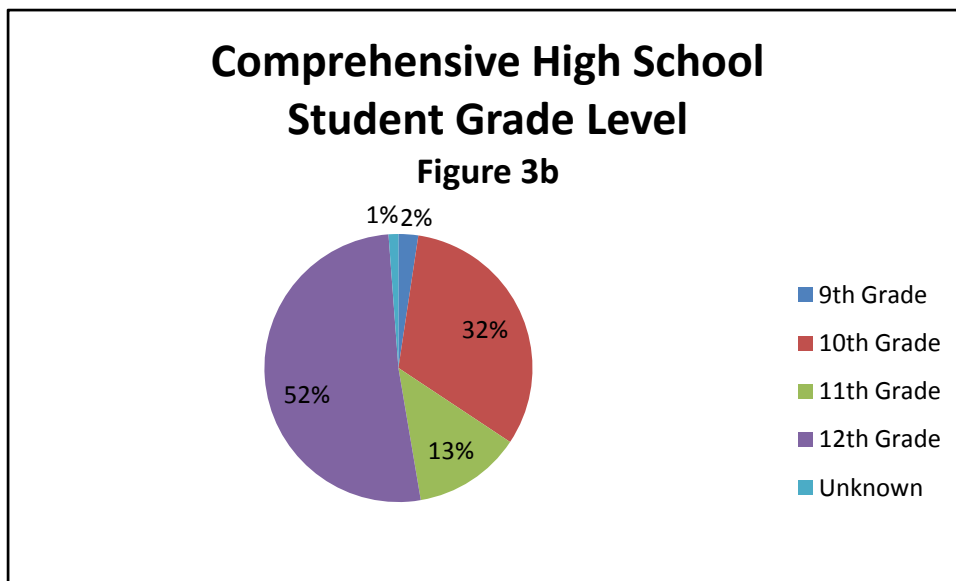
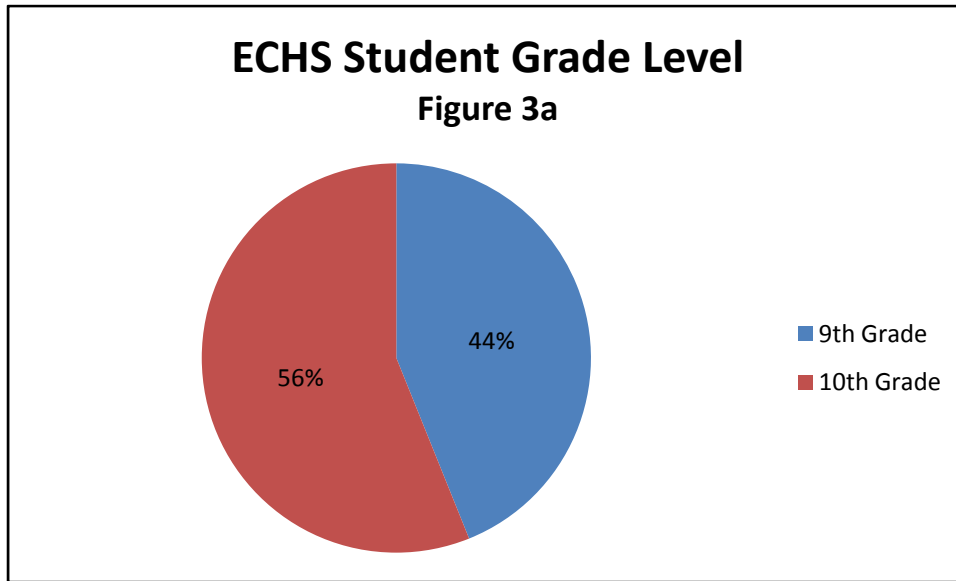




At the early college high schools, students were in grades 9 and 10 only. There were 44% in ninth grade and 66% in tenth grade. From the comprehensive high schools, only 2% of participants were in the ninth grade, 32% were in the tenth grade, 13% were in eleventh grade, and 51% were in twelfth grade. The large representation of eleventh graders was likely due to the difficulty associated with securing informed consent for the students in the lower grades, who were less likely to be over 18 years old.

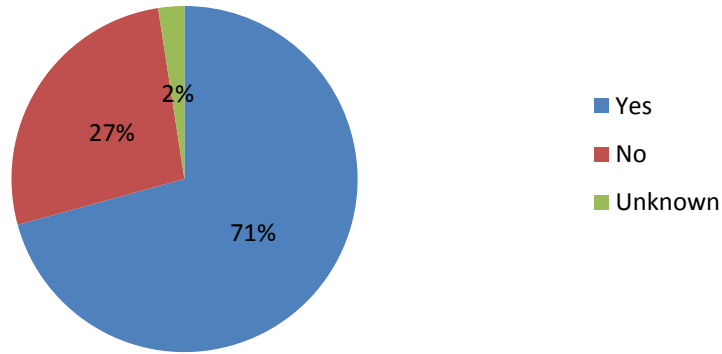
A majority of students in both types of school indicated that they would be the first in their families to attend college, but this was more true of the early college high school students. First generation status was claimed by 70.7% of the early college high school students compared to 48.5% of the comprehensive high school students. High representation of first generation

students at early college high school is not surprising since this is one of the criteria for selection of students at these schools. The high representation of students from college educated families in our comprehensive high school sample than is typical for these schools may have resulted from the decisions of school counselors to select participants in AVID programs for participation in this study. It should be noted that we did not request a random sample of students, so this decision was a prerogative of the counselors. However, it may have influenced the results.



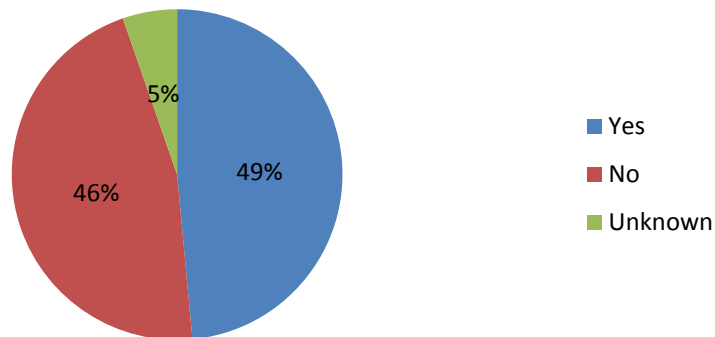
ECHS Student First Generation Status

Figure 4a



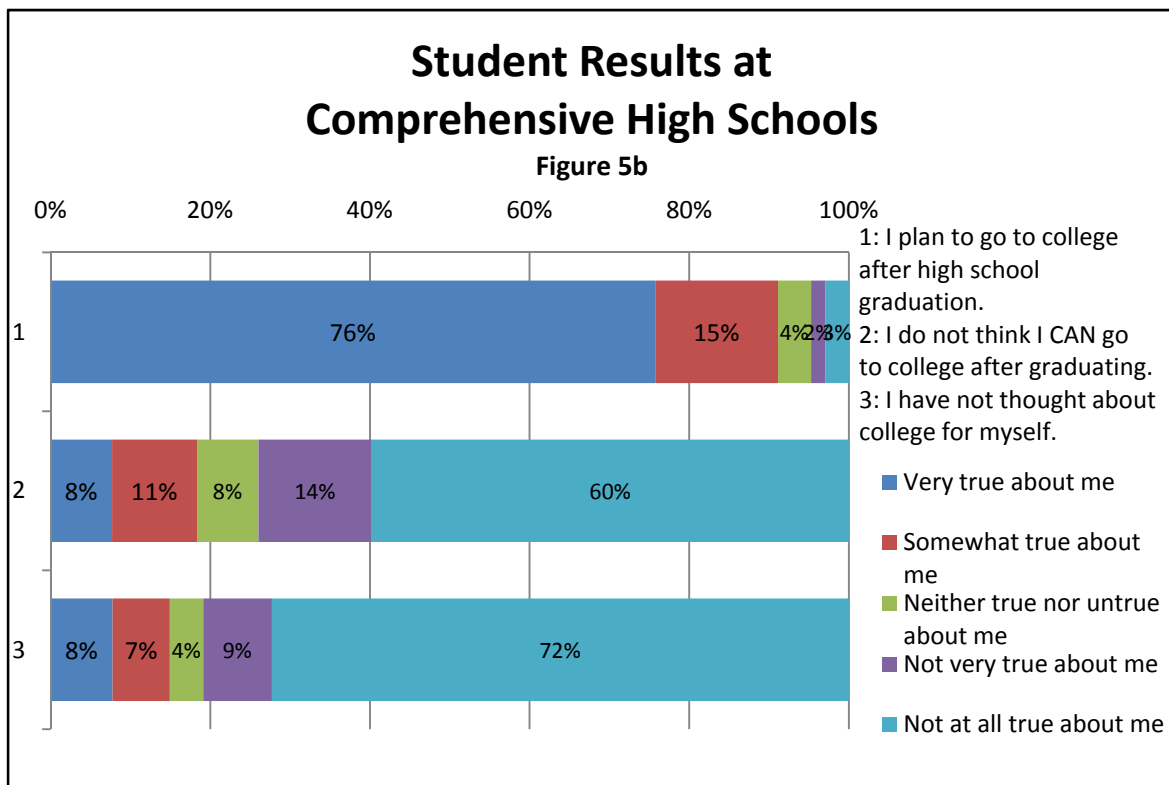
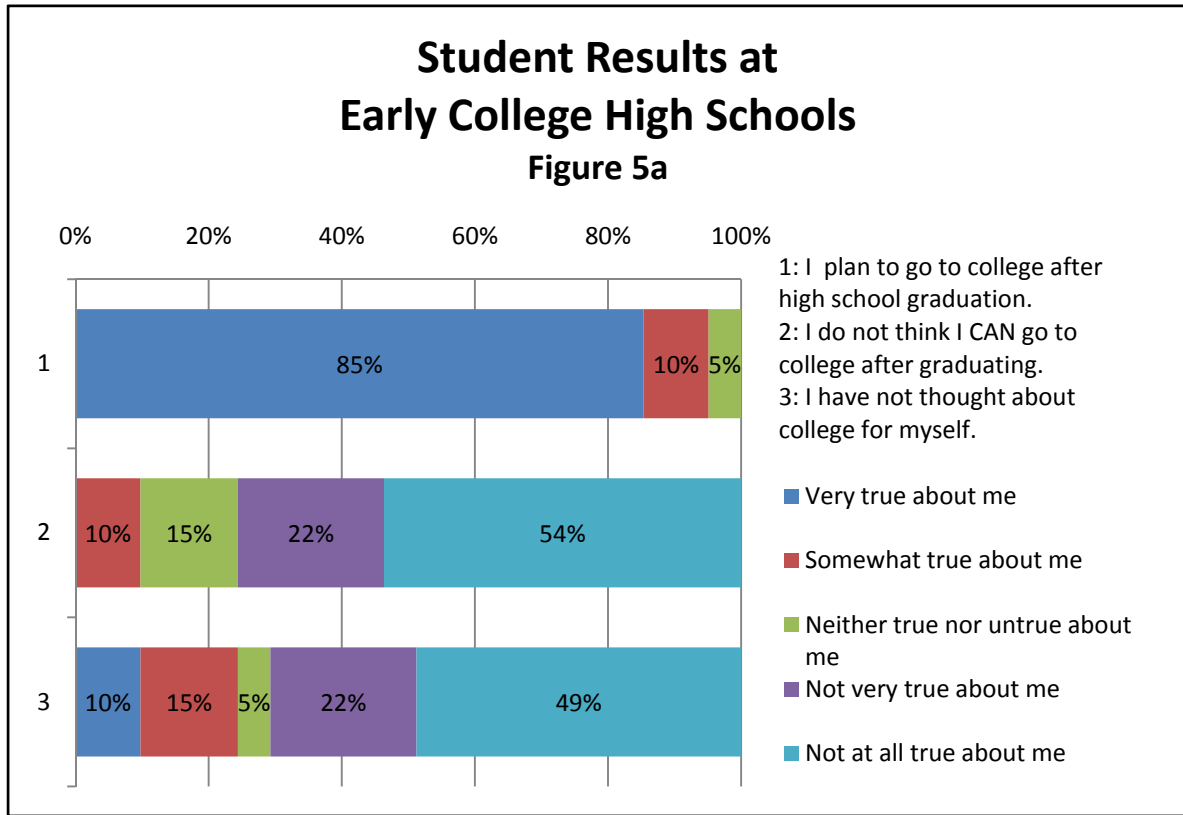
Comprehensive High School Student First Generation Status

Figure 4b

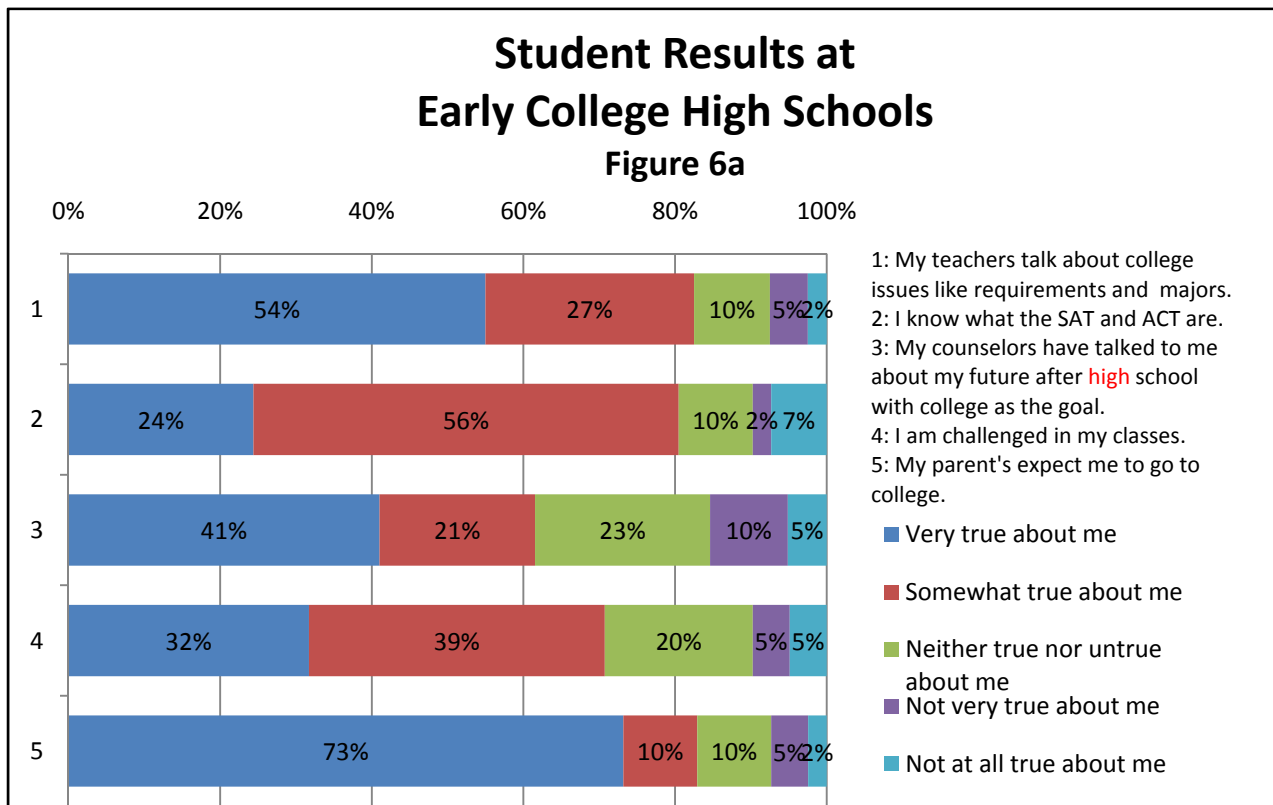


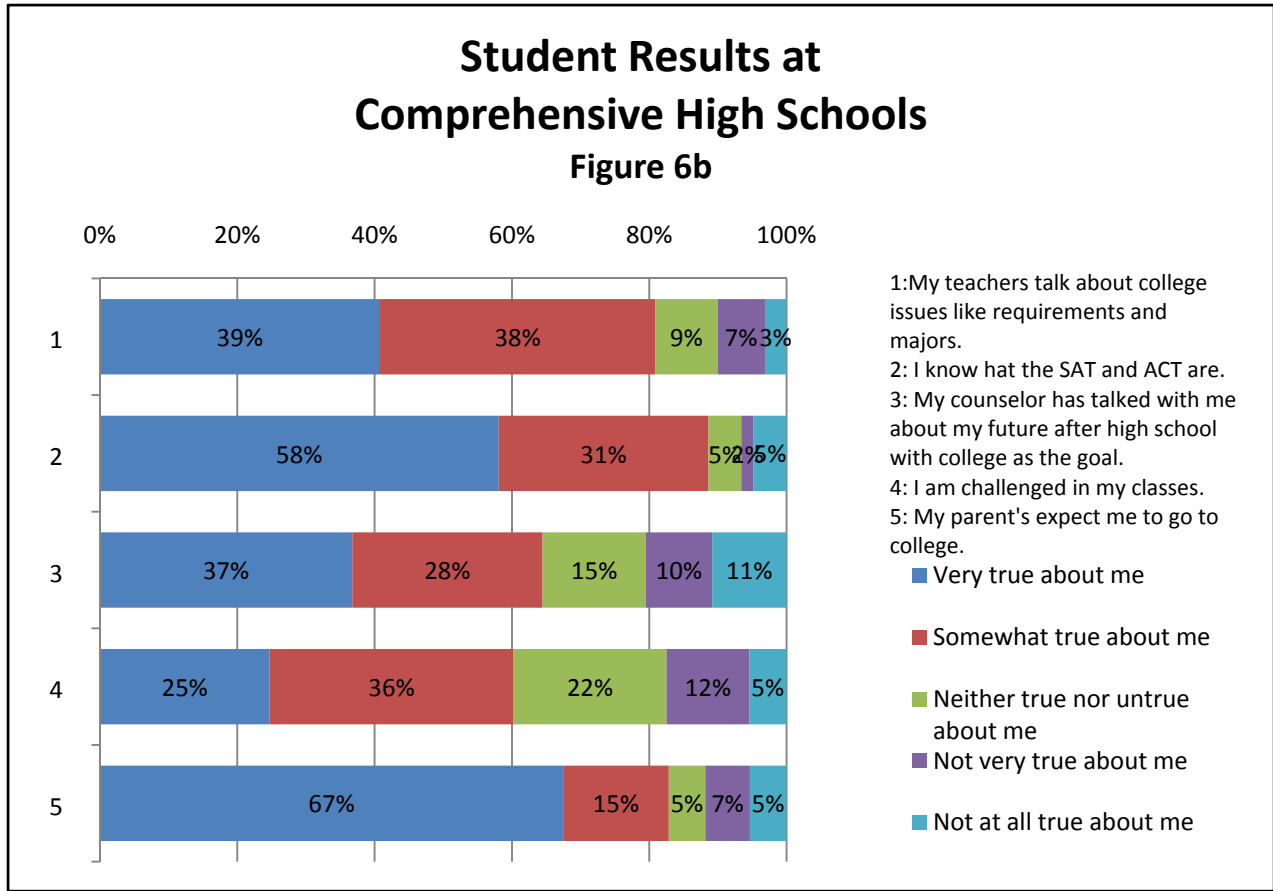
The figures that follow show answers to the survey questions by students at the early college high schools and at the comprehensive high schools. Figures 5a and 5b show responses by the two groups to questions about the perceived likelihood of students' attending college. At the early college high schools, 85% of the students surveyed said it was very true that they planned to go to college compared to 76% at the comprehensive high schools. Looking at this question from another perspective, 54% of the early college high school students said it was not at all true about them that they could not go to college after high school graduation compared to 60% of the comprehensive high school students. Of the early college high school students 49% denied having given no thought to college-going compared to 72% of the comprehensive high school students. These results suggest that the early college high school students were more confident

that they could go to college, although more of the comprehensive high school students had given thought to college as an option.



Figures 6a and 6b offer comparisons of student responses to questions about college knowledge and the expectations of others. In response to these questions, 54% of early college high school students said that it was very true that their teachers talked about college issues compared to 39% of the comprehensive high school students. Of the early college high school students, 24% said it was very true, and 56% said it was true, that they knew what the SAT and the ACT are, compared to 58% and 31% of the comprehensive high school students. Even though they were in only ninth or tenth grade, 41% of the early college high schools students said it was very true, and 21% said it was true, that their counselor had talked with them about college, compared to 37% (very true) and 28% (true) at the comprehensive high schools. Asked whether they were challenged in their high school classes, 32% of the early college high school students said it was very true and 39% said it was true that they were, compared to 25% and 36% of the comprehensive high school students. Of the early college high school students, 73% said it was very true that their parents expected them to go to college, compared to 67% at the comprehensive high schools. On all of these items except the one about knowledge of the ACT and SAT, the early college high school students scored higher in spite of the fact that they were in lower grades than many of the comprehensive high school students.

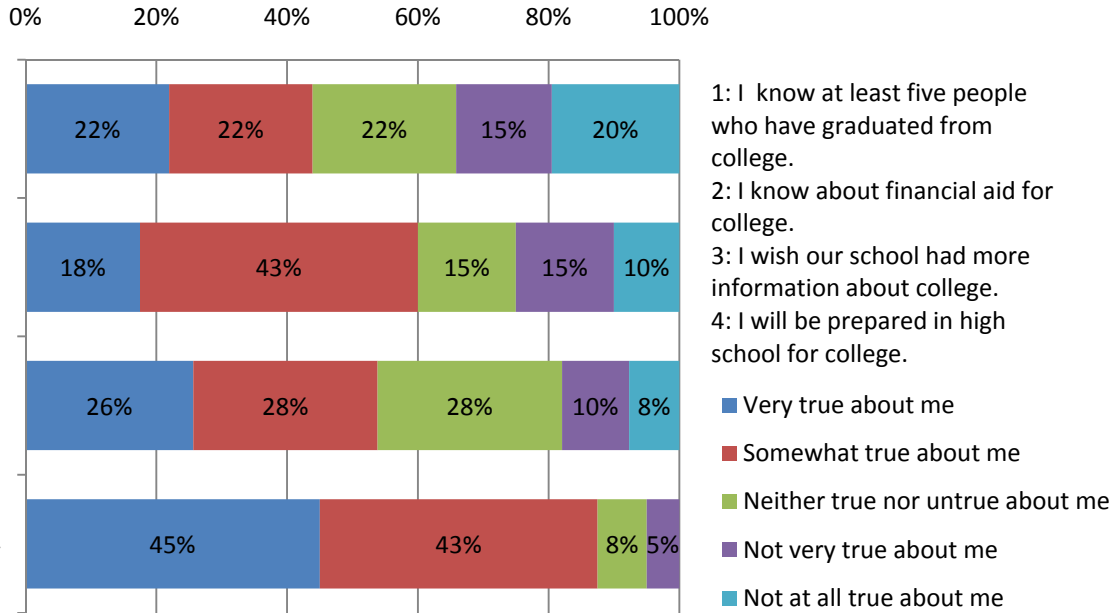




Another set of questions related to college readiness. To a question about knowing at least five college graduates, 22% of early college high school students compared to 32% of comprehensive high school students said it was very true that they knew at least five college graduates. In response to a question about knowledge of financial aid, 18% of early college high school students said it was very true, and 43% said it was true, that they knew about this topic, compared to 36% (very true) and 36% (true) of comprehensive high school students. Of the early college high schools students 26% said it was very true and 28% said true that they wished their school provided more information about college. In comparison, 32% of comprehensive high school students said it was very true and 38%, true that they wished their high school had more college information. About preparation for college, 45% of early college high school students said it was very true, and 43% true, that they would be prepared, compared to 28% (very true) and 37% (true) of comprehensive high school students. In summary, in response to these questions, the comprehensive high school students had an edge in networking with college graduates and knowledge of financial aid, and the early college high schools students were more satisfied with the college information available at their schools and were considerably more confident that they would be prepared for college.

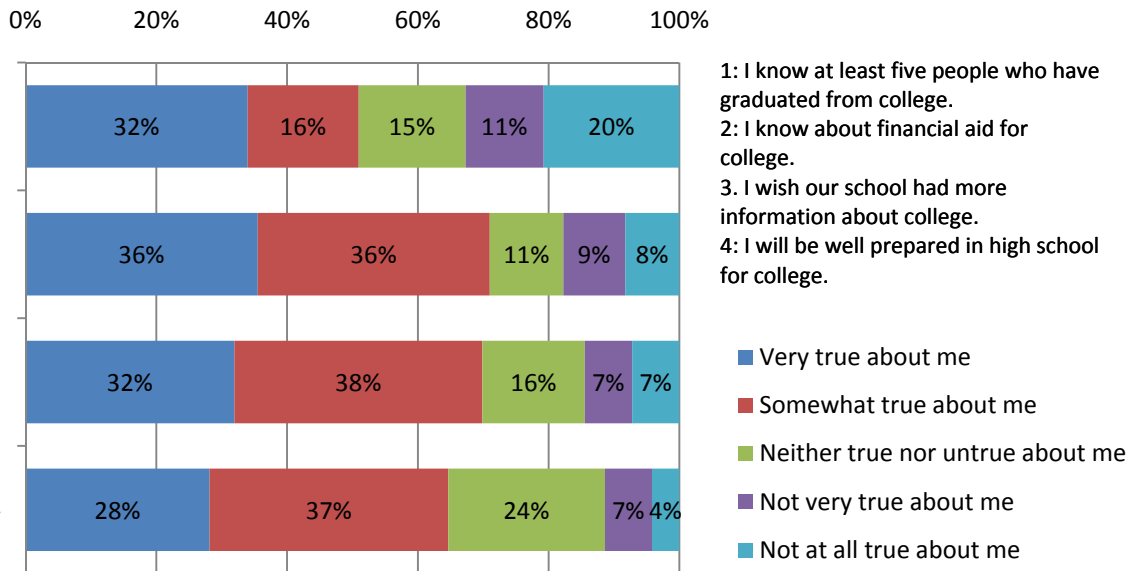
Student Results at Early College High Schools

Figure 7a



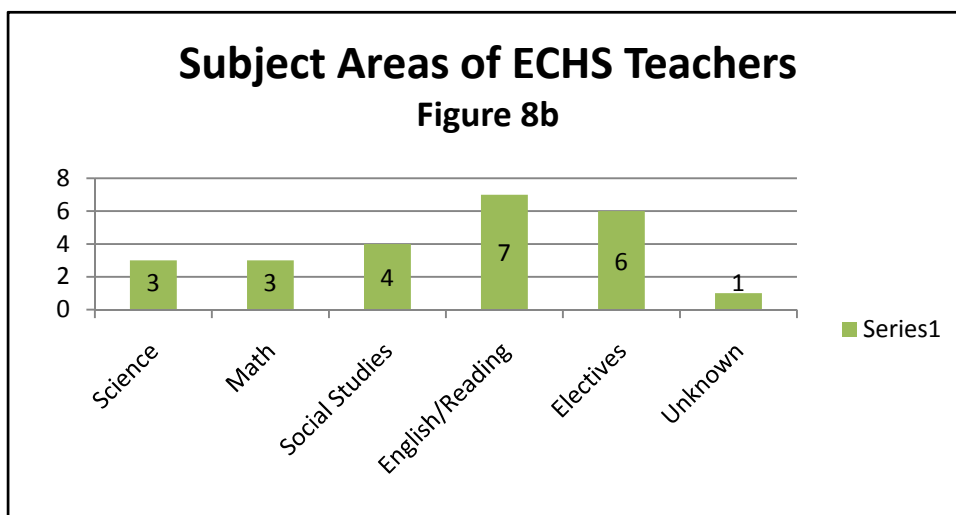
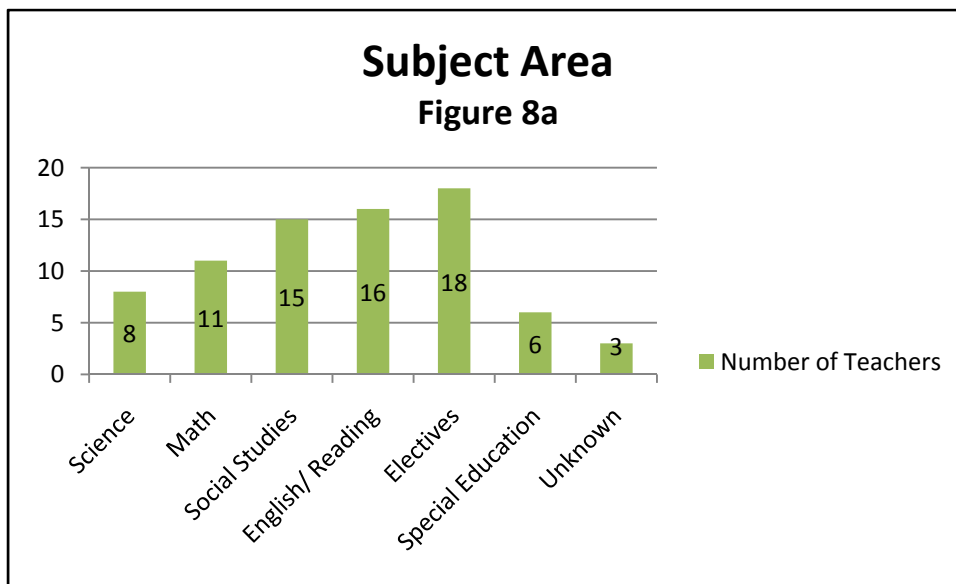
Student Results at Comprehensive High Schools

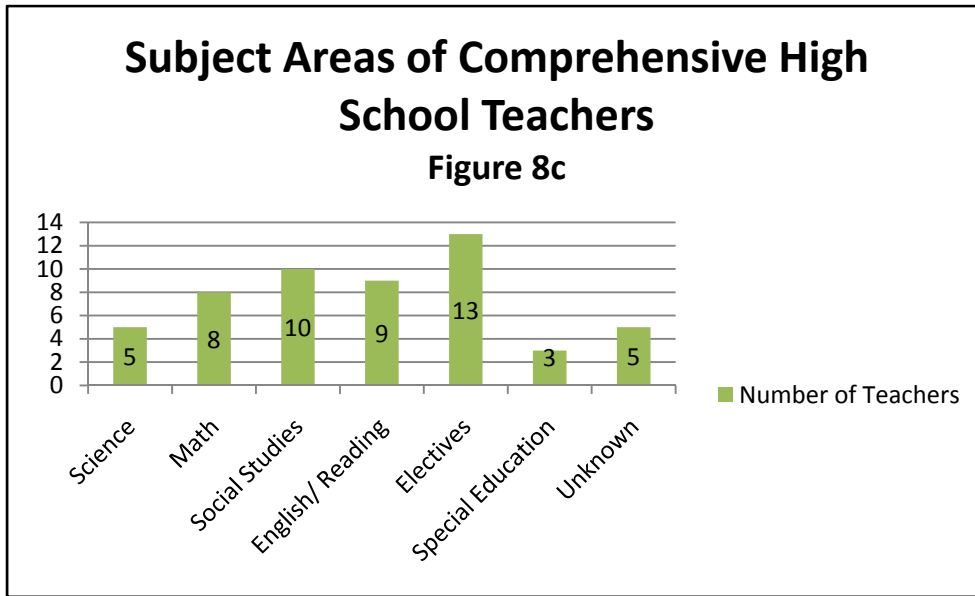
Figure 7b



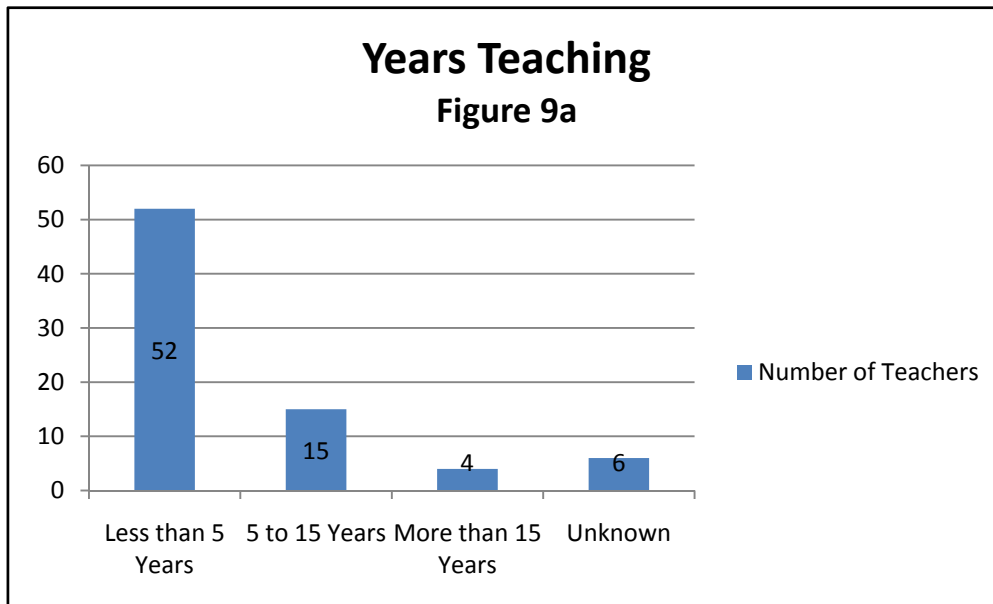
Teacher survey results

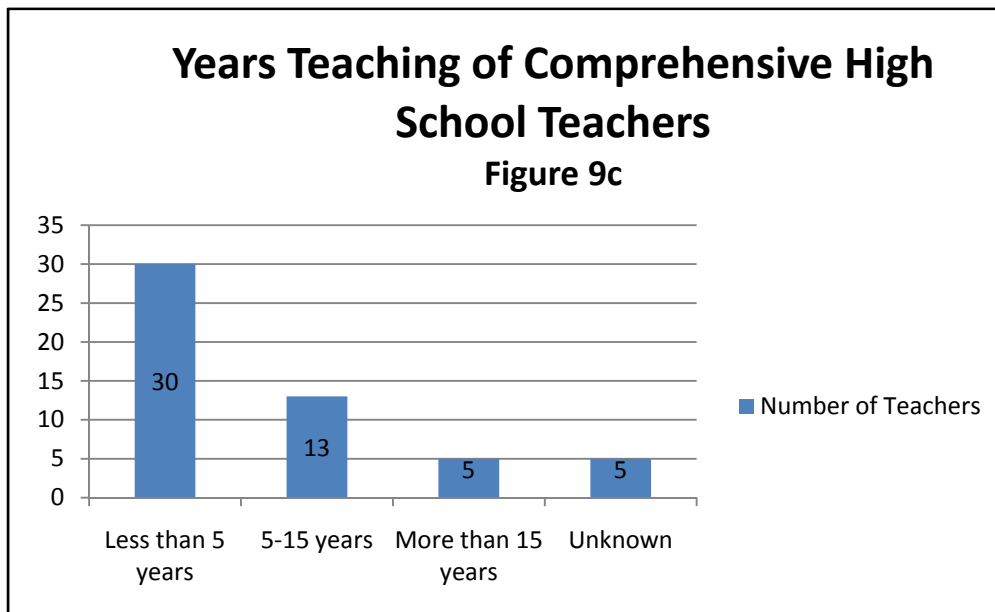
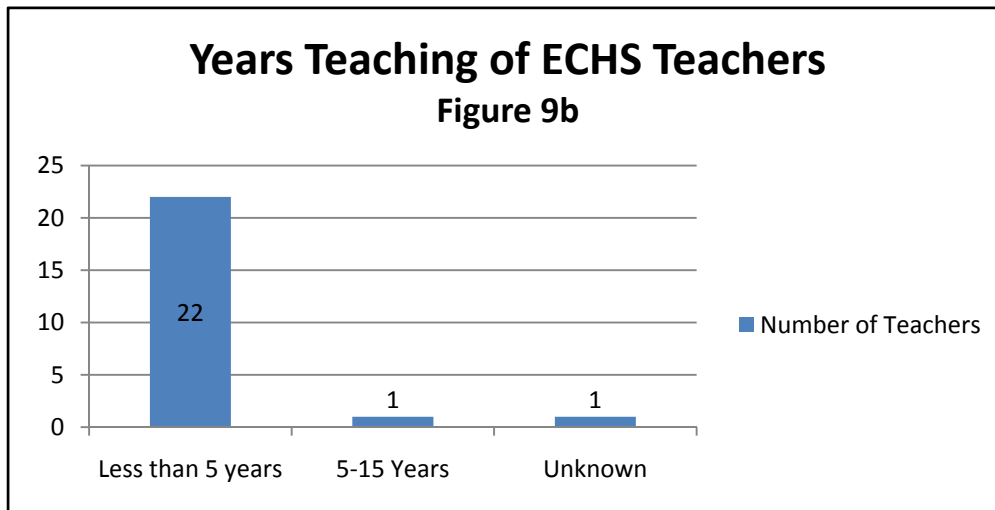
Of the 77 teachers who participated in this study, 50 taught core subjects, 18 taught electives, and three were special education teachers. Comparing the distribution of the content areas taught by the teacher participants at early college high schools and at comprehensive high schools shows that more teachers of elective subjects were involved at the comprehensive high schools than at the early college high schools. Very often, at the comprehensive high schools, the elective subject taught was AVID. In the early college high schools, a larger proportion of teacher participants were core subject teachers, with English language arts as the most often represented subject. Social studies teachers were the most often represented among core teacher participants in the comprehensive high schools.





In terms of the years of teaching experience of the teacher participants in this study, 52 (71.4%) of the 77 participants had taught less than five years. Comparing the profile of years of experience of the early college with the comprehensive high school teacher participants suggests that the comprehensive high school group included more experienced teachers, although teachers with fewer than five years of experience were common in both groups.

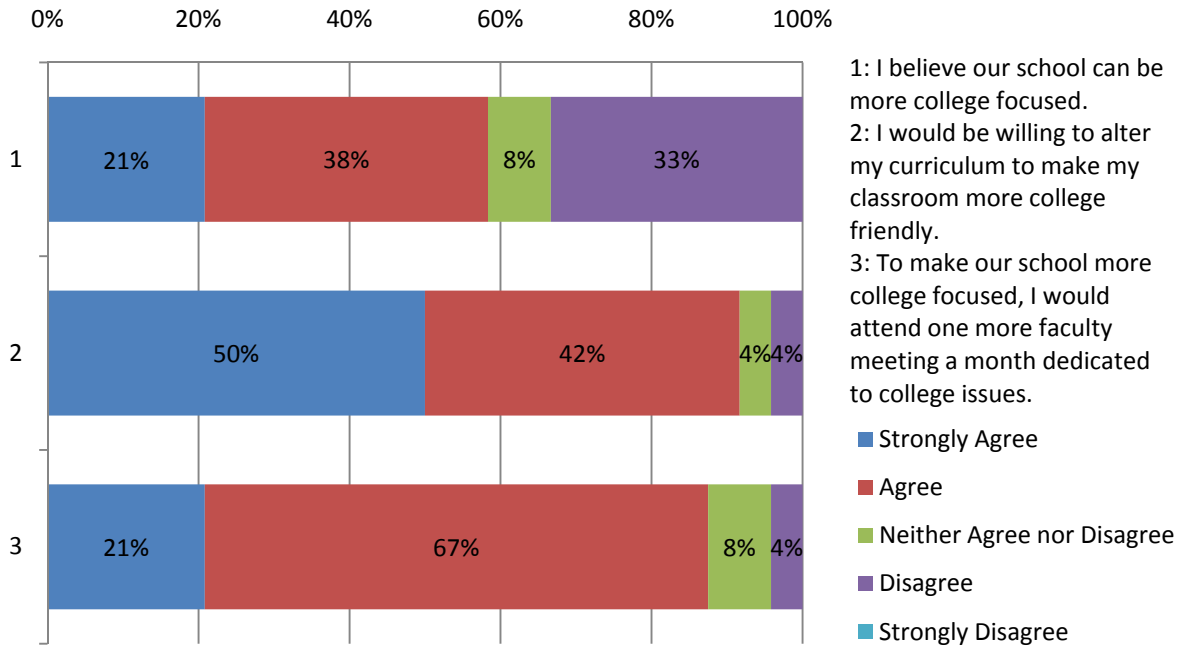




The teachers in both groups responded to questions about their perceptions of the college focus of the school. Twenty-one percent of the early college high school teachers and 54% of the comprehensive high school teachers said it was very true that their school could be more college focused. Half (50%) of the teachers in early college said it was very true they would change the curriculum to be more college focused compared to 40% at the comprehensive high schools. At the early college high school, 21% of teachers said it was very true, and 67% said it was true, that would attend another meeting every month to improve college focus compared to 25% and 43% at comprehensive high schools. On these questions, the early college high school faculties showed a stronger commitment to investing in the college going focus of the school.

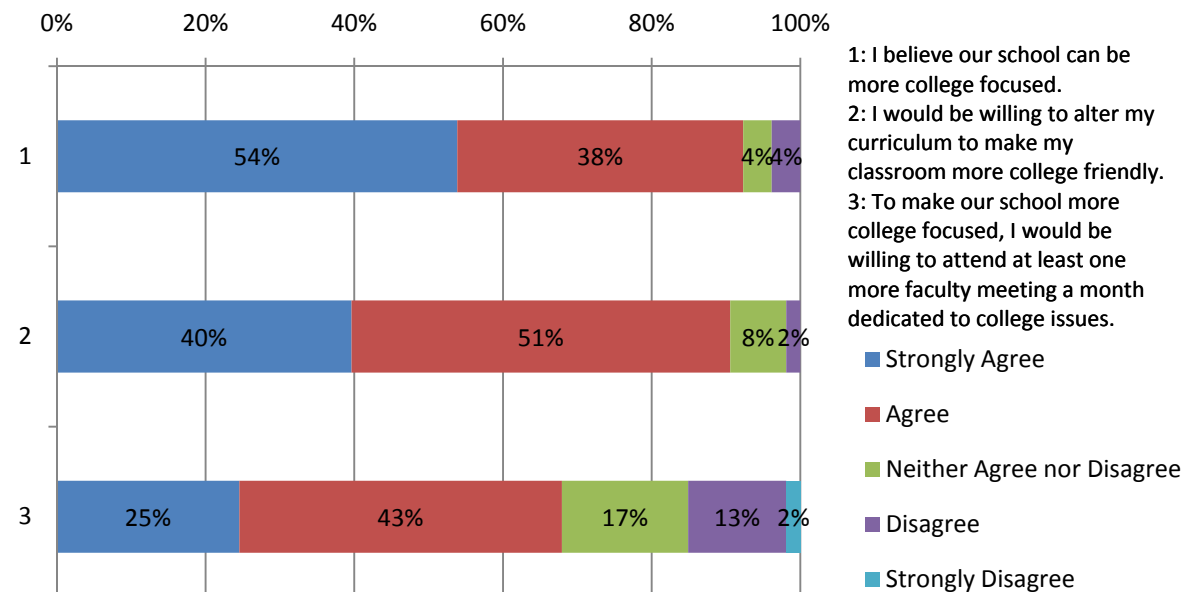
Teacher Results at Early College High Schools

Figure 10a

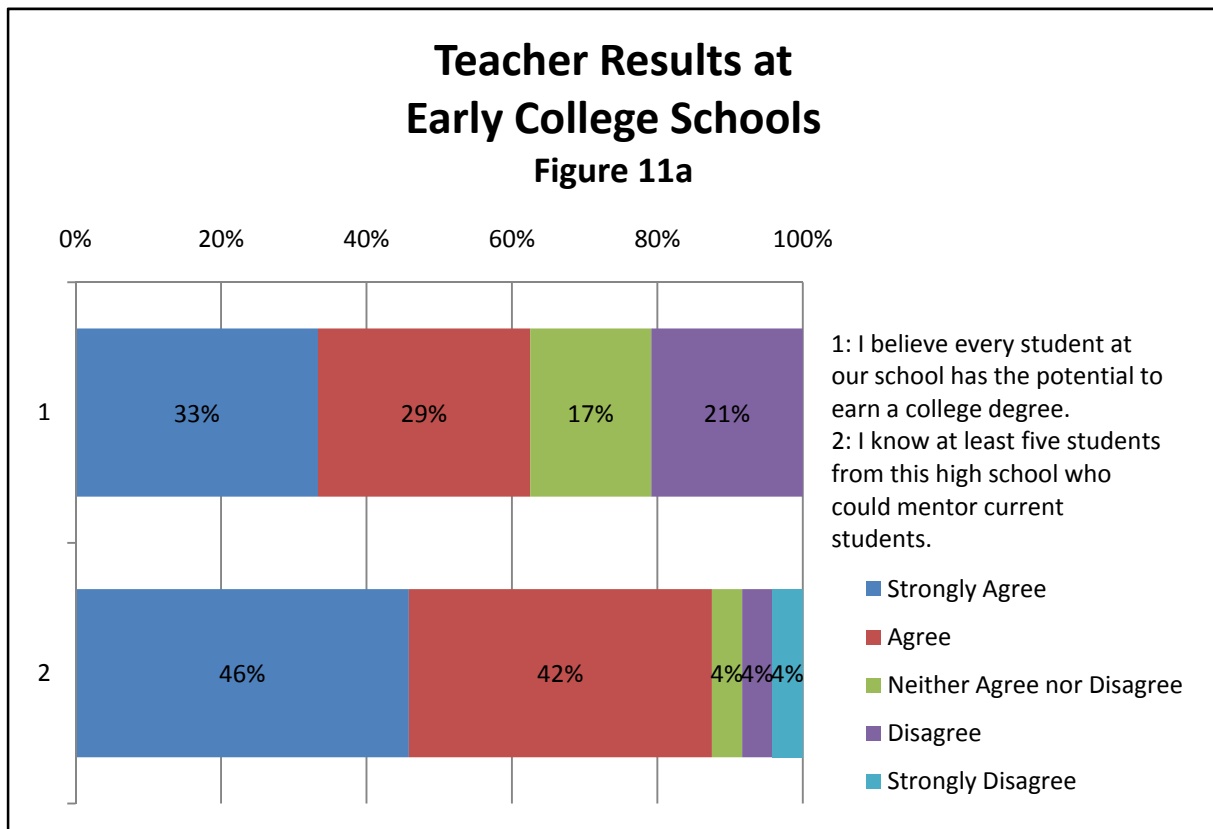


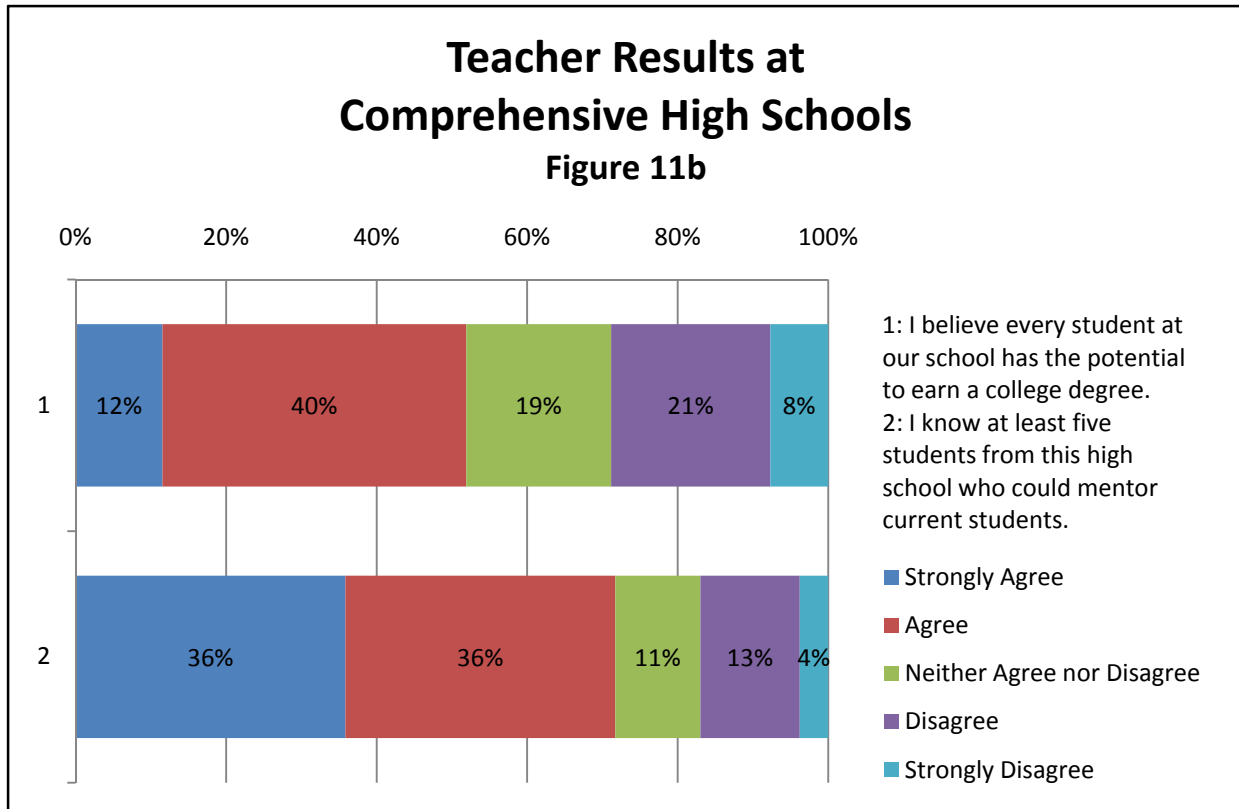
Teacher Results at Comprehensive High Schools

Figure 10b



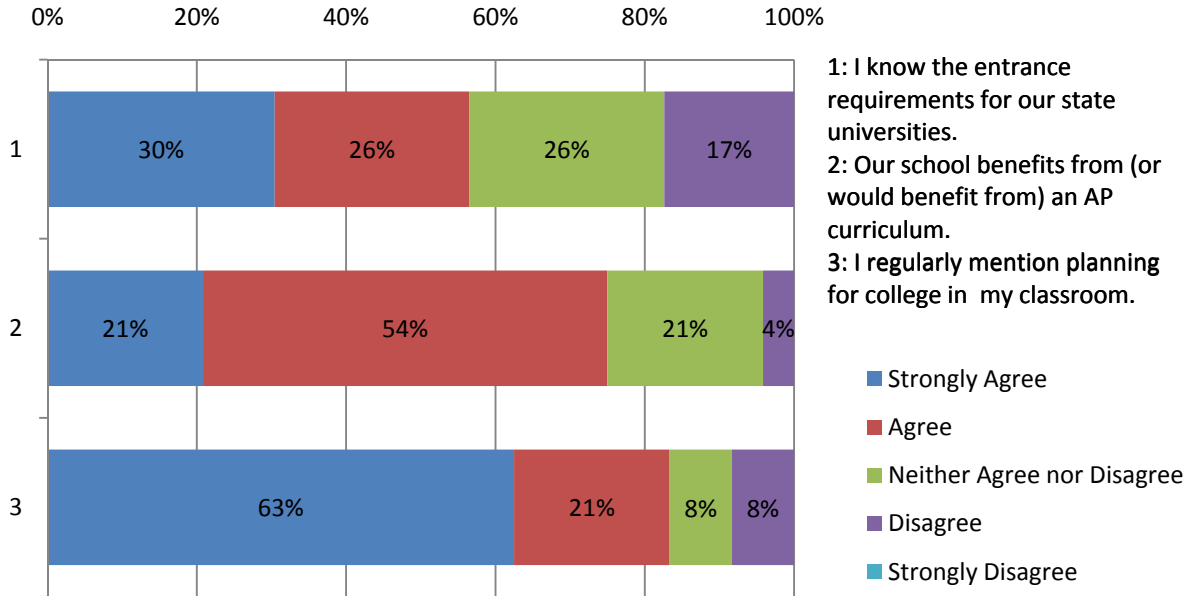
The teachers responded to two questions that were intended to focus on college going by individual students or student mentors. At the early college high schools, 33% of teachers said it was very true that every student had the potential to go to college, and 29% said this was true. At the comprehensive high schools, 12% of teacher said it was very true that all students had the potential to attend college, and 40% said this was true. Combining these two statistics from both types of schools, early college high school teachers were more likely to believe their students were college material. Forty-six percent of early college high school and 36% of comprehensive high school teachers said they knew at least five students from their high school who could mentor others.



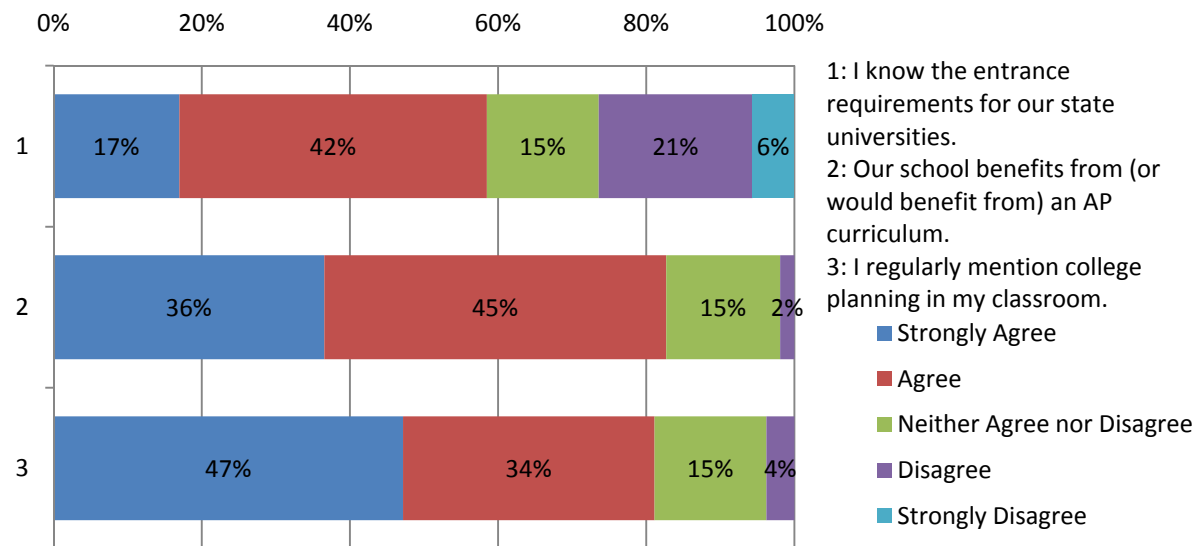


A few questions were intended to assess the teachers' college knowledge. Thirty percent of early college high school and 17% of comprehensive high school teachers said it was very true that they knew the admissions requirements for state universities. Twenty-one percent of early college high school and 36% of comprehensive high school teachers said it was very true that their school bebbefitted from or would benefit from an AP curriculum. Of the teachers at the early college high school 63% strongly agreed that they regularly talked about college in their classes, compared to 43% of the teachers from comprehensive high schools. In general, the early college high school responsets seemed to have more college knowledge and focus. On the question about AP, it should be noted that at least one of the comprehensive high schools did offer an AP curriculum. In the early college high school, the empahsis for advancement was on dual credit courses, not AP.

Teacher Results at Early College High School Figure 12a

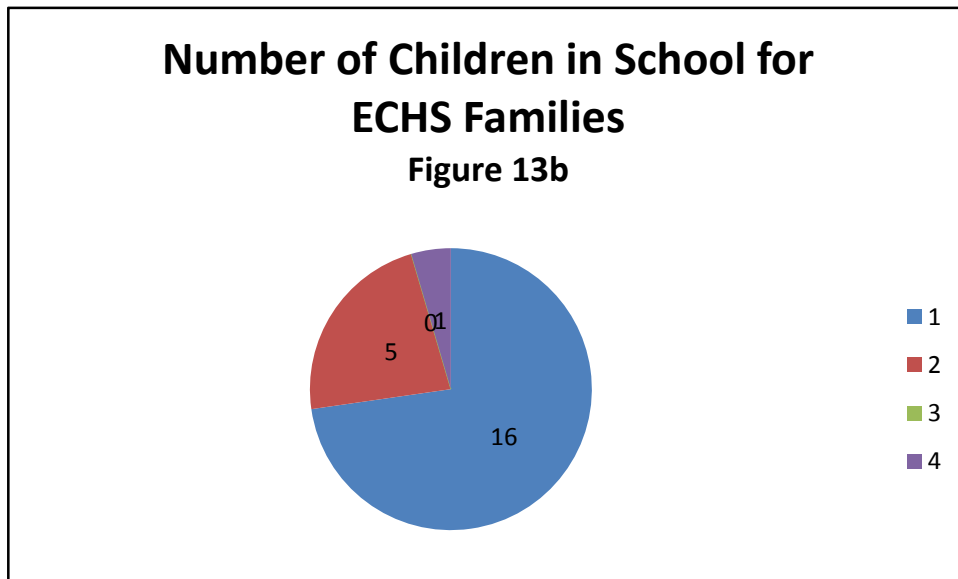
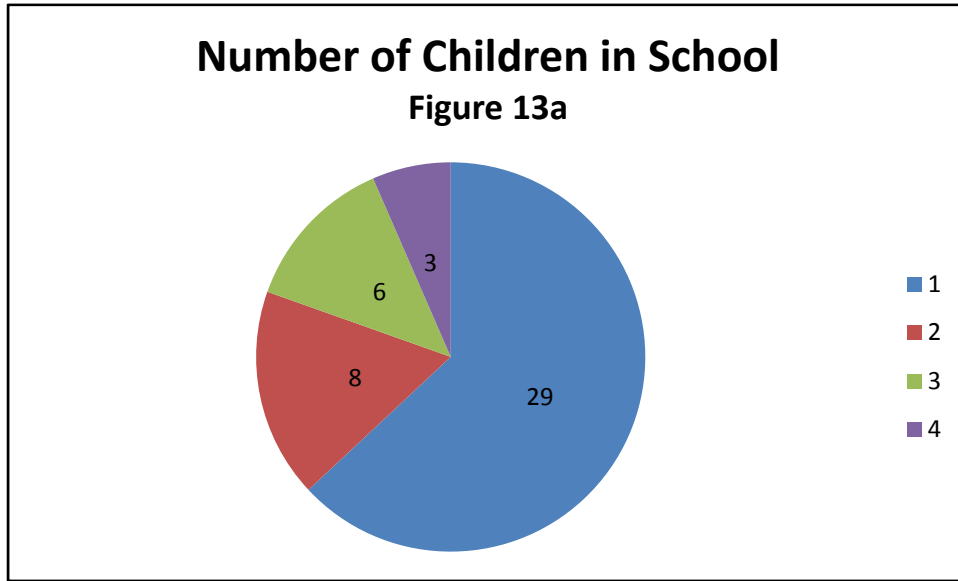


Teacher Results at Comprehensive High Schools Figure 12b



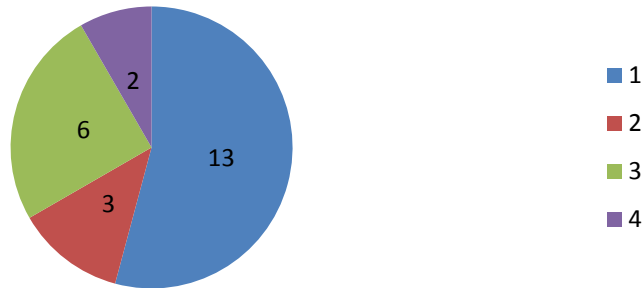
Parent and community surveys

The 46 parents or community members who participated in this study were about evenly divided between early college high school and comprehensive high school representative. Participants were offered survey instrument printed in Spanish or English, and 56% of them selected the Spanish language surveys.



Number of Children for Comprehensive High School Families

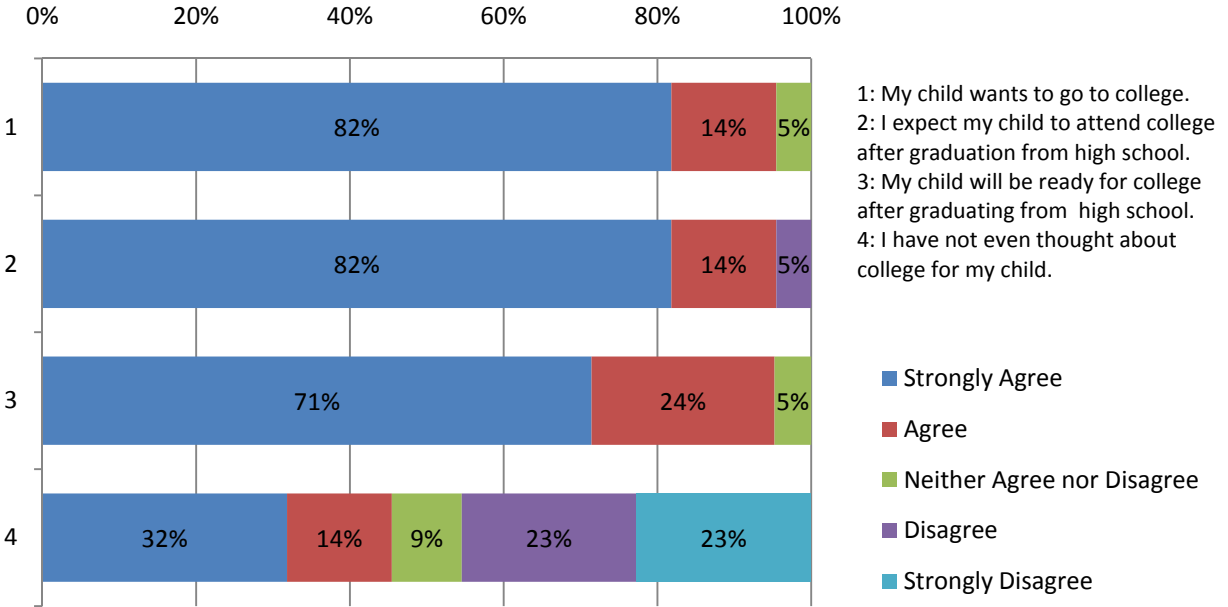
Figure 13c



Results of surveys from parents of students at early college high schools and comprehensive high schools were compared. They showed that 82% of parents of early college high school students and 52% of parents of students at comprehensive high schools said it was very true that their children wanted to go to college. Matching their expectations to those of their children, 82% of early college high school students said it was very true that they expected their children to attend college. At the comprehensive high schools, 62% of parents said it was very true that they expected their children to attend college, 10% higher than the children. Most, 71% of the early college high school parents agreed it was very true that their children would be ready for college compared to 50% of the comprehensive high school parents. Compared to comprehensive high school parents, 18% of whom said it was true that they had not thought about college for their child, 32% of early college high school parents said this was very true for them. Except for this rather puzzling result, the early college high school parents, in general, seemed both more confident that their child would go to college and that they would be prepared for it.

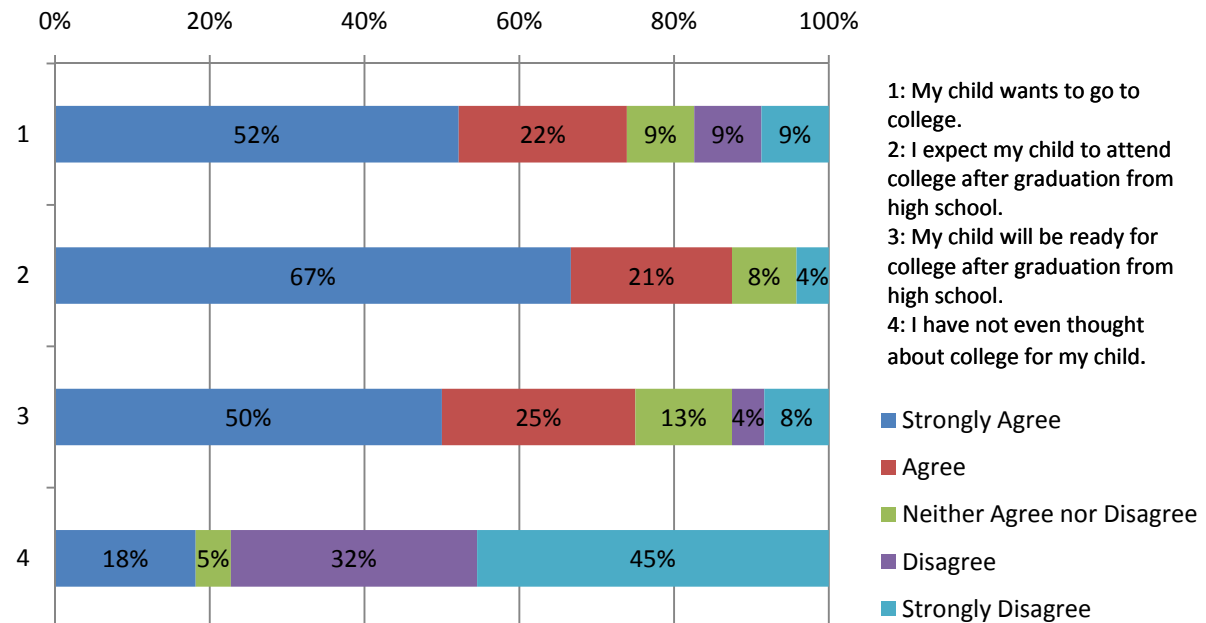
Parent and Community Results at Early College College High Schools

Figure 14a

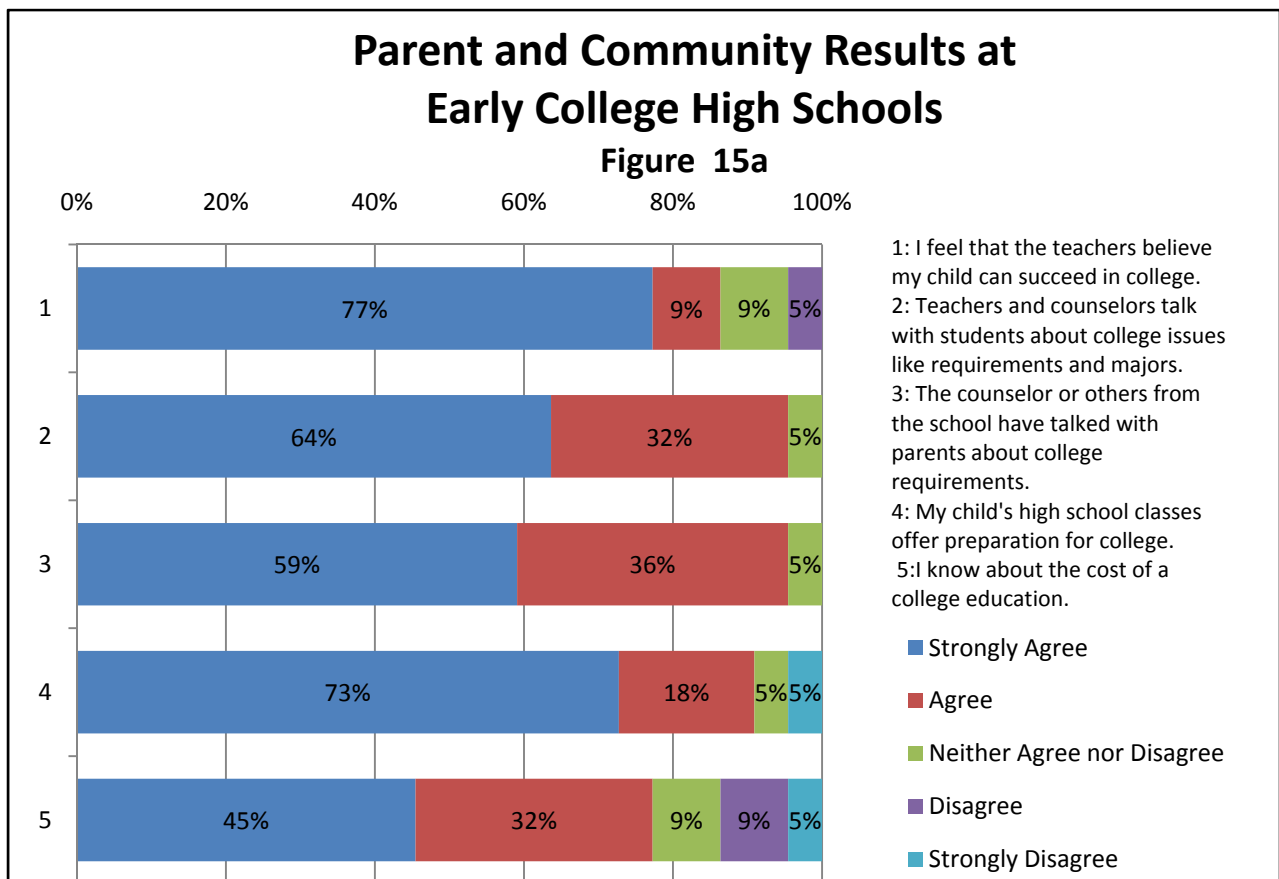


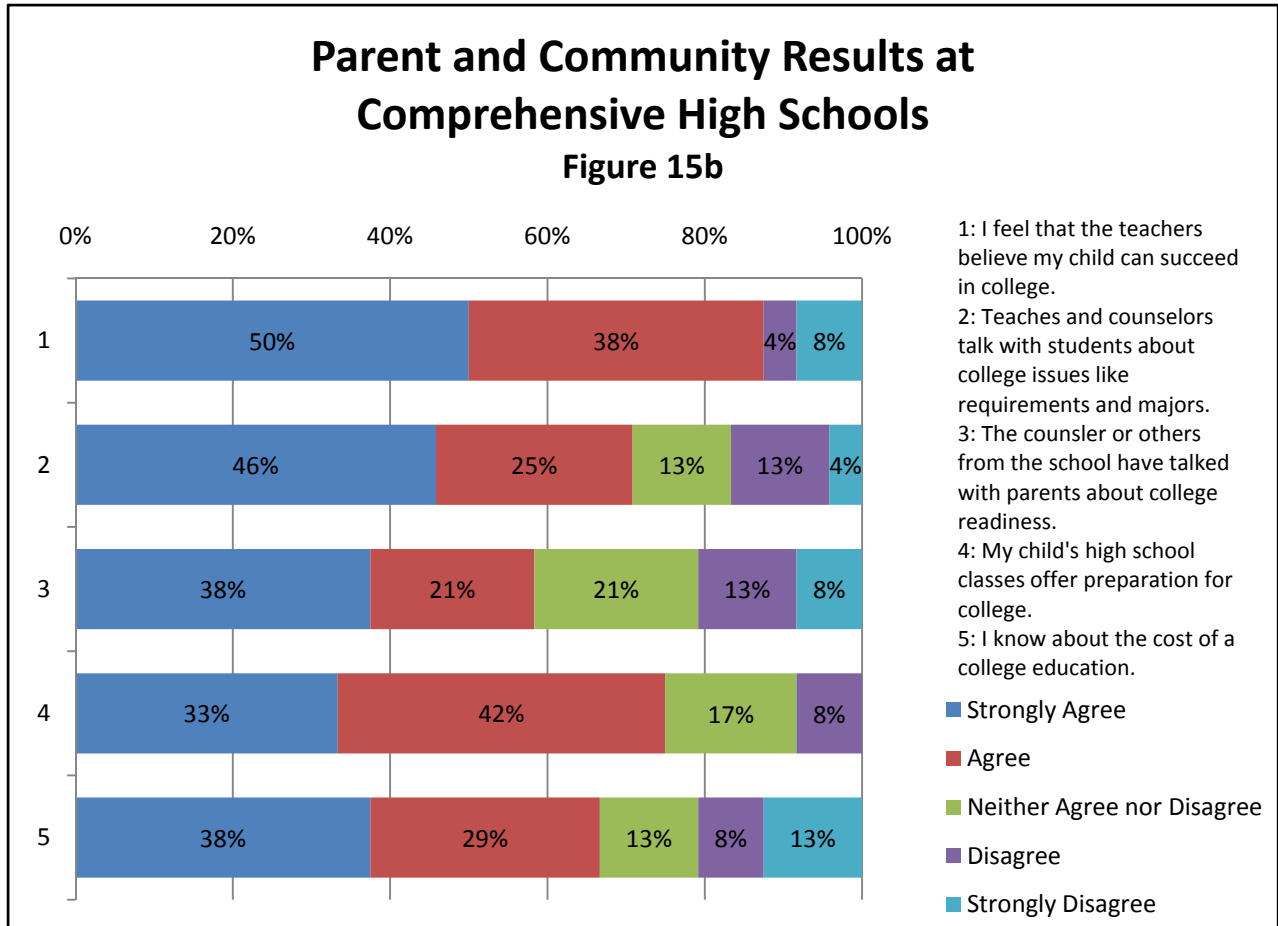
Parent and Community Results at Comprehensive High Schools

Figure 14b



A set of questions explored parental perceptions of the schools’ focus on preparing students for college. At the early college high school, 77% of parents said they felt it was very true that teachers believed their students could succeed in college, compared to 50% at the comprehensive high schools. Equally dramatically, 64% of early college high school parents compared to 46% of comprehensive high school parents agreed it was very true that teachers and counselors talked with students about college issues like requirements and majors. Parents at the two types of schools were not close (59% for early college high school and 38% for comprehensive high schools) in their perceptions that counselors. Similarly, 73% of parents at early college high schools, compared to 33% of parents at the comprehensive high schools agreed it was very true that the school was preparing their student for college. Asked about their knowledge of the cost of college, 45% of early college high school and 38% of comprehensive high school parents agreed it was very true they were informed. In general, these results very much favor the early college high schools. However, it should be noted that these results are based on a limited amount of data from only one of the early college high schools and only two of the four comprehensive high schools.



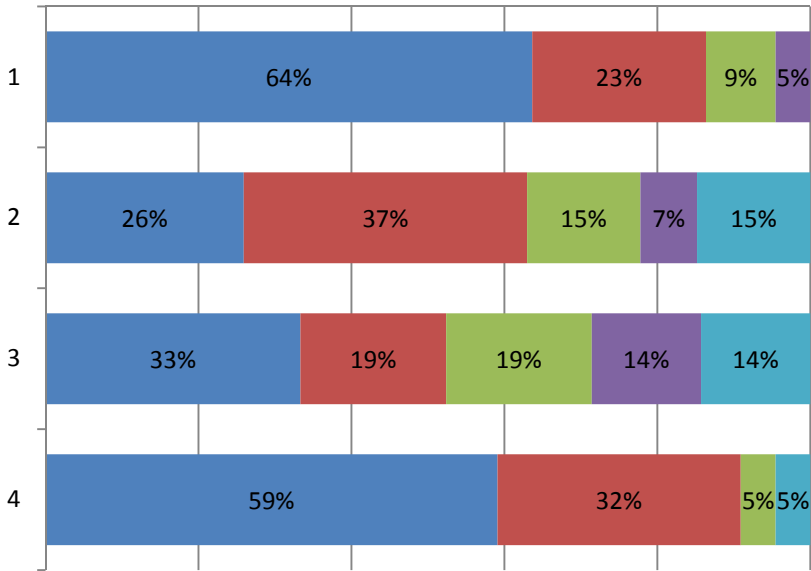


The parents also responded to questions to ascertain their own awareness of college issues. In response to a questions about awareness of the relationships between college and income level 64% of parents of early college high school and 50% of comprehensive high school parents agreed this was very true. Twenty-six percent of early college compared to 67% of parents of comprehensive high school parents said it was very true they know at least five people who had gone to college. This surprising result seems to reinforce the greater extent of first generation status among early college high school families and the tendency of the comprehensive high school participants (and their parents) to represent the most likely college-going population of the school. In spite of this 33% of early college high school and 17% of comprehensive high school student parents strongly agreed that their families could afford the cost of college. Rather surprisingly, 59% of early college high school parents compared to 29% of comprehensive high school parents very much wished the school had more resources to prepare students for college. These answers seem to reinforce the strong focus of early college high schools on college in spite of the greater tendency of the comprehensive high schools families involved with this study to know college educated people.

Parent and Community Results at Early College High Schools

Figure 16a

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%



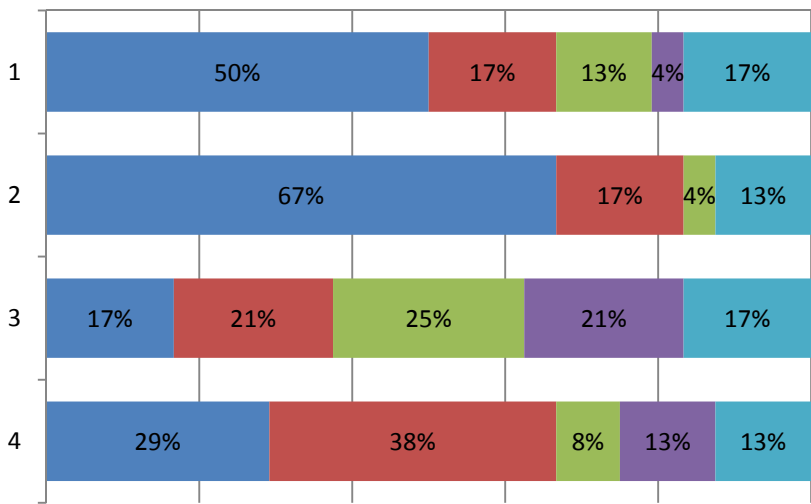
1: I am aware of the relationship between education and income level.
 2: I know at least five people who graduated from college.
 3: My family can afford college.
 4: I wish our school had more resources to prepare students for college.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Parent and Community Results at Comprehensive High Schools

Figure 16b

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%



1: I am aware of the relationship between education and income level.
 2: I know at least five people who have graduated from college.
 3: My family can afford college.
 4: I wish our school had more resources to prepare students for college.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Findings from Survey Results

From these results, it seems that the culture for college going was somewhat different at the early college high schools and the comprehensive high schools.

The student populations we interviewed at the two types of schools were not directly comparable, with the early college high school students from only the two lower grades, and the comprehensive high school students weighted toward twelfth graders. The early college high school sample was probably representative of the schools in terms of commitment to attend college; while the comprehensive high school student participants tended to be perceived by the counselors who chose them as more college-ready than the general student populations of the schools. Interestingly, however, the results for these two groups of students were roughly comparable with the early college high school students often surpassing the older comprehensive high school students in perception of their levels of college knowledge and commitment.

The teacher samples we interviewed included more teachers of elective courses at the comprehensive high schools. At early college high schools, non-core courses are often taught by college faculty in the early grades. Often AVID was the elective course taught by comprehensive high school teacher participants. In general, the comprehensive high school teachers were more experienced than those at the early college high schools. A majority of the teachers in both settings had five years or less of teaching experience. In terms of perception of college going cultures, the comprehensive high school teachers viewed their schools as less college focused than did the early college high school teachers. The early college high school teachers saw themselves both as more likely to change the curriculum and to attend extra meetings to improve the college going cultures of the schools. The early college high school teachers were also more likely to perceive their current students as college material and to know students who could mentor current students in college readiness. The early college high school teachers reported greater self-perceived knowledge of state university admissions and greater commitment to discussing college issues in class. Comprehensive high school teachers were more likely to support strengthening the AP curriculum at their schools. In general, teacher perception seemed to support the early college high schools as having the stronger college going cultures.

About half of the parents interviewed from both settings selected surveys written in Spanish. Comparing the two groups, 82% of the early college high school parents strongly agreed that their children wanted to go to college, compared to 52% of the comprehensive high school parents. Both groups of parents expressed support of their children's ambitions, but the desire that their child would attend college of parents of comprehensive high school students exceeded by about 10% their perception of desire from the students. In every way we asked this question, parents of early college high schools perceived the college going culture of these schools to be higher than was perceived of comprehensive high schools by the students' parents. Comprehensive high school parents appeared to be even more aware than early college parents of the financial benefits of a college education and to know more college graduates. This group was also more likely to have attended college themselves, which is not surprising since first generation status is a criterion for early college high school admissions. Nevertheless, the early

college high school parents appeared both more willing to pay the cost of college attendance and more likely to perceive the high school as needing every more resources related to college going. The parent/community surveys, in general, supported community perception of stronger cultures for college going at the early college high schools.

Patterns of recommendations

Observations and results of the surveys conducted in each school led the college student researchers to offer recommendations that varied from school to school. The continuous nature of development of a college going culture was evident in the recommendations. A major pattern observed in the recommendations was the greater development in the early college high schools of a college going culture that results in fewer and less arduous recommendations being made to these schools. Table 3 offers a summary of recommendations included in the six reports and indicates which recommendations were made to early college high schools and which to comprehensive high schools. In the

Table 3: Recommendations

Recommendations	Early College High Schools	Comprehensive High Schools
1. Avoid tracking students – promote college going culture to all students		OD Wyatt Thomas Jefferson
2. Encourage students to take and pass the SAT and ACT test		OD Wyatt Thomas Jefferson Pinkston Carter Riverside
3. Increase the academic rigor of the curriculum (mathematics and literacy/language arts)		OD Wyatt (overall and math) Thomas Jefferson (Literacy/language arts) Pinkston Carter Riverside
4. Start or strengthen an AP and pre-AP curriculum		OD Wyatt Thomas Jefferson Carter Riverside
5. Continue to develop AVID Program	Brookhaven	OD Wyatt Thomas Jefferson
6. Assure the alignment of the curriculum with the TAKS		OD Wyatt
7. Develop clubs that help students prepare for college		OD Wyatt
8. Tap parents as a resource	Brookhaven Mountain View	OD Wyatt Thomas Jefferson
9. Continue to showcase historically African American colleges, adding attention to Hispanic-serving colleges		OD Wyatt
10. Develop expertise in financial aid/create a bulletin board on this	Brookhaven Mountain View	OD Wyatt Pinkston

topic		Thomas Jefferson Carter Riverside
11. Develop a series of “college knowledge” events for parents of students at all grade levels	Mountain View	OD Wyatt Carter Riverside
12. Provide staff development for teachers to gain college knowledge	Brookhaven	OD Wyatt Thomas Jefferson Pinkston
13. Encourage teachers to share their college experiences with students and display their diplomas	Brookhaven Mountain View	OD Wyatt Pinkston Carter Riverside Thomas Jefferson
14. Improve the image of the school in academics		OD Wyatt
15. Develop and publicize the systems of the counselors to work with all students		OD Wyatt Thomas Jefferson Pinkston
16. Provide resources directed toward recurring pipeline issues		OD Wyatt
17. Provide cycles of college visits for student, their families, and teachers	Brookhaven Mountain View	OD Wyatt Carter Riverside
18. Develop a student leadership group to promote college knowledge	Brookhaven Mountain View	OD Wyatt Thomas Jefferson
19. Expand the “stairway to college” concept		Pinkston
20. Start a Go Center		Pinkston Carter Riverside
21. Improve the welcoming environment of the school		Pinkston
22. Create careers and majors bulletin board		Pinkston Carter Riverside
23. Host college nights		Pinkston
24. Use graduates as resource		Carter Riverside
25. Start a college newsletter		Carter Riverside
26. Start an early college high school as a school within a school		Carter Riverside
27. Form a relationship with a university department	Brookhaven Mountain View	
28. Assist students w/scholarship applications	Mountain View	

In should probably be pointed out that after making their recommendations, the college students did not have an opportunity to read one another’s reports and possibly borrow applicable recommendations. The recommendations for each school were reviewed by high school students from these schools, however, and are edited here to reflect their input. Fewer recommendations

were made to the early college high schools, seven to Brookhaven and eight to Mountain View. An average of twelve recommendations was made to each of the comprehensive high schools, ranging from nine to eighteen. The number of recommendations is more indicative of the approach of the research team at the school, however, than of the depth of the college going culture of the school. However, some recommendations are indicative of a stronger college going culture. For example, a recommendation to strength the AVID program indicates that the researchers noted a program already in place. A recommendation to involve graduates in promoting knowledge indicates that the researchers perceived a pool of available college graduates of that high school.

A major source of recommendations used by the research teams was the College Board (2006) *Creating a College Going Culture*.

Educational importance of the study

A major contribution of this study was its successful involvement of 18 undergraduate students, many of them second semester freshmen, in the process of educational research. The students were generally interested both in the process and in the problem of development of college going cultures in urban high schools. This study provides one model of a core curriculum course that engages undergraduates in original, if somewhat structured, research.

This work is also important in its potential contribution to the participating high schools by providing diagnostic feedback and suggestions for action. In the similar Locke High School study in Los Angeles (Azzam, 2004; Slocum & Azzam, 2006), researchers returned to the high school in successive years for data collection. At a replication conference planned for September, we hope to provide the high schools with tools for evaluation of progress. We found the human subjects requirements of our study a barrier to collecting representative data at the schools and think that an internal evaluation study could overcome this barrier, although it sacrifices the possibility of external sharing.

In addition, this study provides information about college going cultures at two types of urban high schools of interest in the state and nation, the early college high schools and the low-performing comprehensive high schools that are the subject of HB 400 in Texas. This work suggests greater strength in the perception of college going cultures and commitment to improving college going cultures by students, teachers, and parents associated with early college high schools than with comprehensive high schools. This may be not surprising, given the exclusive focus of early college high schools on college participation. However, if college participation is the goal of a school or school district, the early college high school provides a model that is likely to promote this result.

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