

Massachusetts Gov. Baker's administration announces early college programs; awards \$1.3 million in grants

Eight high schools received official designation to launch new programs and fourteen school districts awarded grants to boost student enrollment.

The Baker-Polito Administration today announced eight new early college programs and awarded several grants totaling more than \$1.3 million to high schools launching or expanding early college programs as part of a statewide effort to substantially increase the number of high school students who take college courses and earn college credits at no cost before they graduate high school.

Through these newly awarded designations and grants, the Executive Office of Education anticipates that approximately 8,700 students will be enrolled in early college programs by the 2024-2025 school year. Early college programs combine traditional high school courses with an opportunity to earn college credit at a college or university. Currently, there are approximately 5,400 students enrolled in early college courses at 50 high schools across the Commonwealth.

“Early college is an invaluable tool that supports increased college enrollment among participating students, particularly students from groups historically underrepresented in higher education, and helps them succeed once they arrive on campus,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “Today’s announcement will boost participation rates at schools that already have programs, as well as launch new and exciting programs that will create more pathways to college.”

Since its launch in 2017, the Baker-Polito Administration has strived to expand access to early college programs. The Governor's FY23 budget proposal includes \$7.3 million for early college funding, representing a significant increase over FY22, to bring the total annual investment to more than \$18 million.

"The more communities that launch early college programs, particularly in our Gateway Cities, the more we can provide opportunities to students that help close achievement and workforce gaps," said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. "By creating and supplementing designated early college programs with our municipal partners, our administration aims to break down barriers that persist between high school and higher education."

Eight high schools and their higher education partners were awarded official designation status this month by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Higher Education to launch new early college programs.

"Successful early college programs create a coherent course of study that can change the trajectory of a student's life," said Education Secretary James Peyser. "By designating these early college programs, we are creating a shift in the educational experience for thousands of students."

The majority of students who participate in early college programs meet MassCore college readiness curriculum requirements while also successfully completing credit-bearing college courses. Early college has also been shown to boost college completion rates for low-income, minority and first-generation college students. Early college students enroll in college at significantly higher rates than their high school peers. For example, in 2019, approximately 76 percent of early college students enrolled in college after graduation compared to 55 percent of their peers who did not participate in early

college.

“As part of the intra-agency early college collaboration, the Board and Department of Higher Education has approached this effort, as with all our work, from an empirically-based policy analysis frame,” said Department of Higher Education Commissioner Carlos Santiago. “We are therefore pleased with early data showing that designated Massachusetts early college programs have prioritized and demonstrated progress in raising college-going rates and matriculation for students of color and low-income students, who continue to confront the highest barriers to higher education.”

“It’s wonderful to see additional and expanded designated early college programs everywhere from the Berkshires to the coast,” said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley. “These programs are a great opportunity for students to see that they’re capable of college-level work and take their first steps on that path.”

The newly designated programs are:

- Fenway High School in partnership with Wentworth Institute of Technology
- Mt. Everett Regional High School in partnership with Bard College at Simon’s Rock
- Narragansett Regional High School in partnership with Mt. Wachusett Community College and Fitchburg State University
- New Mission High School in partnership with Wentworth Institute of Technology
- Argosy Collegiate Charter School in Fall River in partnership with Bristol Community College
- Cambridge Rindge & Latin School in Cambridge in partnership with Lesley University
- Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School in partnership with North Shore Community College
- New Bedford High School in partnership with Bristol Community College

In addition, five high schools and their college partners were awarded a total of \$750,000 to create early college programs that are large-scale, with at least 400 students or the whole school participating. This new “immersive early college” model will provide students with an opportunity to earn a minimum of 30 college credits prior to graduating high school.

Each of the following schools received \$150,000 in grant funding:

- Drury High School in North Adams in partnership with Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
- Saugus High School in partnership with Northern Essex Community College
- Mt. Everett High School in Sheffield in partnership with Bard College at Simon’s Rock
- Veritas Prep Springfield in partnership with Springfield Technical Community College and Westfield State University
- Claremont Academy in Worcester in partnership with Quinsigamond Community College and Worcester State University

Additionally, nine schools were awarded expansion grants, totaling more than \$650,000, to support their existing early college programs and boost the number of students enrolled, particularly those underrepresented in higher education.

The grantees include:

- Durfee High School in Fall River in partnership with Bristol Community College – \$75,000
- Framingham High School in partnership with Framingham State and Mass Bay Community College – \$75,000
- Marlborough High School in partnership with Quinsigamond Community College – \$59,000
- Lawrence Public Schools in partnership with Northern Essex Community College – \$75,000
- Lowell High School in partnership with Middlesex Community College – \$75,000

- Salem High School in partnership with Salem State University – \$75,000
- Worcester Public Schools in partnership with Quinsigamond Community College and Worcester State University – \$75,000
- Haverhill High School in partnership with Northern Essex Community College – \$75,000
- Holyoke High School in partnership with Holyoke Community College – \$75,000