



Early College High School Initiative

Empowering Students:

How Georgia College Early College Changes Student Aspirations

by Anne Newton

The Early College High School Initiative
is coordinated by:



in partnership with:

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
The Ford Foundation
The W.K. Kellogg Foundation
and additional funders.

JANUARY 2008

The Early College High School Initiative

Early college high school is a bold approach, based on the principle that academic rigor, combined with the opportunity to save time and money, is a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet serious intellectual challenges. Early college high schools blend high school and college in a rigorous yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first two years of college.

The schools are designed so that low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education can simultaneously earn a high school diploma and one to two years of transferable college credit—tuition free.

About the Author

Anne Newton, a program director at Jobs for the Future, coordinates a national network of partner organizations engaged in developing early college schools and other blended models that serve students underrepresented in higher education. She also manages the Early College High School Initiative Literacy Project and staffs some of the network's work groups.

Her career in education has spanned 40 years. She has been a classroom teacher and reading specialist at the elementary and secondary levels, a staff developer, a technical assistance provider to districts and state departments of education with a focus on linking research, policy, and practice, and director of a regional effort focused on the certification and professional development of educators in the Northeast.

Ms. Newton holds a Master of Regional Planning degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a Master's in Education from Boston University, and a B.A. from Ohio Wesleyan University.



Jobs for the Future seeks to accelerate the educational and economic advancement of youth and adults struggling in today's economy. JFF partners with leaders in education, business, government, and communities around the nation to: strengthen opportunities for youth to succeed in postsecondary learning and high-skill careers; increase opportunities for low-income individuals to move into family-supporting careers; and meet the group economic demand for knowledgeable and skilled workers.

Acknowledgements

This case study would not exist if not for the passion, dedication, and efforts of a special group of people who have made Georgia College Early College a reality—Dawn Cooper, director of Early College, Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia; Dorothy Leland, president of Georgia College & State University; Linda Irwin-DeVitis, dean of the school of education at GCSU; Gene Trammell, superintendent of the Baldwin County Schools; Jim Willis, superintendent of the Putnam County Schools; Michael Walker, director of the Oconee Regional Educational Service Agency; Camille Daniel-Tyson, principal of GCEC; Ed Averett, Liana Nix, John Graybill, Chuck Puckett, Lisa Thompson, and Jennifer Woods, GCEC teachers; Cynthia Alby and Brian Mumma, GCSU faculty; the many GCSU professors, staff, and students, who have worked with or supported GCEC students; and the parents of GCEC students. A particular thank you is extended to Camille Daniel-Tyson, who keeps her eye on the vision and—with those around her—ensures that every student's needs are met, and the students and teachers, who welcomed me into their school and classrooms and talked about their work.

Empowering Students:

How Georgia College Early College Changes Student Aspirations

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Inducting New Students to a College-going Culture	1
Instructional Philosophy and Strategies to Promote Academic Success	2
Mentoring and Tutoring	3
<i>Small Group</i>	3
<i>Individual Intensive</i>	3
After-school Support.....	3
Instilling Goals: Changing Aspirations Through Early Exposure to College	3
<i>Times Talk</i>	4
<i>College-Connection Activities</i>	4
Collaborative Decision Making Among Partners.....	5
Benefits to Partners	6
Financing GCEC.....	7
Moving Forward	8
The Larger Initiative	8
Appendix A. Changing Aspirations: College Supports for Students.....	9
Appendix B. 2006-07 Seventh-grade Student Schedule.....	9
Appendix C. College Connections: Scaffolding for the Future	10
Appendix D. Contacts	10

A Snapshot of Georgia College Early College

Grades Served, 2007–08: 7–8 (ultimately 7–12, with one grade added per year)

Enrollment, 2007–08: 54 seventh graders, 53 eighth graders (73% from Baldwin County and 27% from Putnam County)

Demographics, 2007–08: 67% African Americans, 29% Caucasians, 2% Hispanics, and 2% Asian/Pacific Islanders

Low Income, 2007–08: 95%

First-Generation College Goers: 99%

Target Population: Lower-achieving students, as indicated by a score within the 25th–45th percentile on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in sixth grade

Selection: Lottery, with the exception of siblings (six in the incoming class)

Staffing, 2007–08: Principal, school administrative manager, six teachers (two language arts, two math, and two science; all teachers teach social studies)

Counties Served: Baldwin and Putnam Counties, both of which are rural counties in central Georgia

	Baldwin County	Putnam County
Population	44,700	18,812
Median Household Income	\$35,159	\$36,956
Ethnicity		
White	54.2%	67.5%
African American	43.4%	29.9%
Hispanic	1.4%	2.2%
Native American	0.2%	0.2%
Asian	1.0%	0.7%
Some Other Race	0.5%	0.8%
Two or More Races	0.7%	0.9%

Georgia College & State University

Begun as Georgia Normal and Industrial College in 1889, Georgia College & State University was originally a teachers' college. In 1996, the Georgia Board of Regents officially identified GCSU as the state's public liberal arts university.

GCSU has a history of commitment to education, diversity, and service, and of collaboration with surrounding school districts. At one time, it had a laboratory school on the main campus in Milledgeville. There are two additional campuses, in Macon and Warner Robins.

Enrollment, 2006–07: 5,500

Empowering Students:

How Georgia College Early College Changes Student Aspirations

Introduction

When you enter Georgia College Early College, you can feel the energy within its walls. Housed in the Georgia College & State University School of Education, the school offers hope of a brighter future to its students and their families in this rural community. A strong sense of community, a focus on “transferring agency” (enabling students to move easily between the two cultures of early college and college), an emphasis on keeping students at the center of decision making, and the continual reminder that college is at the end of students’ journey all distinguish this school.

This case study examines the features of Georgia College Early College, including its exemplary partnership with Georgia College & State University, which enable it to achieve its mission of college success for all students. The school deliberately recruits students from the community who are performing below grade level (i.e., scoring in the 25th-45th percentile range on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills), and it gives them the support they need to excel academically. The college-going culture, small class sizes, and the adults and college students who work with the early college’s students enable these young people to believe in themselves as learners, achieve academically and socially, and raise their aspirations.

Georgia College Early College is the result of a partnership among two school districts (Baldwin and Putnam County Schools), Georgia College & State University, and the Oconee Regional Educational Service Agency. From the beginning, Dorothy Leland, president of GCSU, has made GCEC a priority. Her leadership has been crucial both in substance and in setting a collaborative tone on the college campus. In addition to the support from both districts and the RESA, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia has supported GCEC as a part of the national Early College High School Initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. *(See the inside front cover for information on the national initiative.)*

Inducting New Students to a College-going Culture

Incoming seventh graders begin with a summer academy in mid-June, and from the first day they and the school staff have their sights set on the end goal of college for all. After welcomes from college administrators, the principal, and the teachers, the new GCEC students receive college IDs and t-shirts with the college’s

Early Indicators of Student Success at Georgia College Early College

Evidence is beginning to show that GCEC students are benefiting from their early college experience. In spring 2007, all eighth graders passed Georgia’s language arts, criterion-referenced competency tests. As incoming seventh graders, 22 of them had not passed the state’s math CRCT. This year, only four of those 22 students did not pass.

Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test	GCEC Sixth Grade Met or Exceeded Standards on CRCT	GCEC Seventh Grade Met or Exceeded Standards on CRCT
	2005–06	2006–07
Reading	91%	96.4%
Language Arts	98.2%	100%
Social Studies	96.4%	92.8%
Math	40%	89%
Science	45%	62%

Students’ aspirations have also risen through the early college experience. The superintendent of Baldwin County compared the college-going goals of the GCEC cohort with their counterparts at Oak Hill Middle School; he found that GCEC students’ aspirations were much higher. The college-going culture of the school, the small class sizes, and the adults and college students working with them have enabled these students to believe in themselves as learners, achieve academically and socially, and raise their aspirations.

bobcat mascot. The IDs give the students access to all of the facilities on the college campus (the library, sports facilities and events, computer labs), and—if they apply funds to their cards—buying power at the college bookstore or cafeteria.

During the summer academy, students are placed in groups of 18 with a group leader who is an early college teacher. They are introduced to the culture, norms, and expectations of the early college; tour the college library, bookstore, and the Governor’s Mansion; participate in a college-wide scavenger hunt; work on creative writing, reading, and math; receive their summer reading book; and are introduced to the literacy circles format of instruction. They also meet their eighth-grade mentor, who shares what he or she has learned about the school—for example, the importance of attending school every day and completing all homework, the expectations for behavior, and the appropriate attire for a college campus.

Over the summer, to encourage written expression and connection to the school, each student must write a letter to her or his group leader before school starts. The group leader, in turn, responds to the student in writing. Most students write two or three letters before school begins.

When students enter GCEC in the fall, the principal and teachers place each in a three- or four-person small learning community—one that goes with them from class to class, day in and day out. These communities allow students to solve problems, articulate their learning and pose questions to trusted peers, and become familiar with a study-group structure that will help them succeed in school and college. When needed, teachers and students can initiate changes in groupings.

Instructional Philosophy and Strategies to Promote Academic Success

GCEC emphasizes cross-curricular and cooperative learning, with teachers focusing on reading, writing, and thinking skills. The small learning communities provide a vehicle for daily collaborative learning in every classroom. Common strategies the teachers use include:

- Reading, writing, speaking, and college-level thinking across the curriculum;
- Integrated lessons (e.g., a unit on respiration that integrates science and art);
- Book/literacy circles and Socratic dialogues that prompt conversation and dialogue;
- Active learning (e.g., researching and creating projects);
- Authentic tasks (e.g., social studies lessons that involve reading an article on events or issues in *The New York Times*, discussing its themes and how they relate to students’ lives);

- A focus on understanding new vocabulary in context;
- Emphasis on habits of mind (e.g., persistence, proofing, and revising);
- Frequent mixing of early college students with undergraduate and graduate college mentors in specific academic areas; and
- Flexible scheduling.

“It is critically important to empower students by giving them as much choice and voice as possible. Everything we do is a subtle reorientation of agency, efficacy.”

—Liana Nix, Seventh-grade Math Teacher

In the eyes of the adults, empowering students and giving them a voice is critical to ensuring their success in school, college, and life. GCEC puts a heavy emphasis on providing opportunities for students to formulate and express their opinions. For example, to celebrate Constitution Week, the “legacy class”—the first class that will graduate from GCEC—wrote and signed its own constitution for the early college, identifying the beliefs, values, and rules by which they, and future classes, will abide.

Together, students and adults are building a culture of problem solving and preparing for a seamless transition to college. Students write in a journal in English and science every day and frequently in math, and they often assess their own or their peers’ work. Questions prompt critical and creative thinking: If humans didn’t have lungs, how might they breathe? What is the difference between a character the reader knows and another character’s perception of that individual?

School-level decisions are based on what is most powerful for kids. Camille Daniel-Tyson, the principal, is in and out of classrooms three to five times per day, and she constantly asks teachers how they are serving each student and why.

One of the teachers described the school as “a fluid ecosystem”—one that changes mid-stream if something is not working for students. For example, planned lessons are put aside if an educational opportunity arises at the college, such as a chance to hear and question visiting Tibetan monks.

“The sense of community is the school’s most powerful tool.”

—Ed Averett, Seventh-grade English Teacher

“We [students, teachers, principal, professors] are all learners, all teachers. We’re all co-constructing community.”

—Liana Nix, Seventh-grade Math Teacher

Mentoring and Tutoring

Their relationships with the GCEC principal, teachers, college professors, college students, and community members instill in students the vision of attending and graduating from college. In particular, mentoring relationships play a pivotal role in supporting student success and taking the mystery out of college. (See *Appendix A: Changing Aspirations.*)

GCEC uses two types of mentoring, depending on each student’s needs: small group and individual intensive. All students have at least two small-group mentoring experiences each year. Students who need it also participate in individual intensive mentoring.

Small-group Mentoring

To provide academic support, socialization, and the vision that one day they could be college students, GCEC pairs students from GCSU’s Master of Arts in Teaching Early Childhood and Middle Grades Program with learning communities of three students from the seventh or eighth grade. Each mentor meets with the three students on Fridays throughout the year. The mentors are prepared for this assignment, which is a requirement for the completion of their graduate program, through a summer course conducted by the college professors who co-lead the MAT program.

The seventh-grade mentors begin the year by accompanying their GCEC students through the first five days of school to acclimate them to the school’s culture. In fall 2007, GCEC assigned all incoming seventh-grade students an eighth-grade mentor, who will guide them through their first year at the early college. In addition, college students from the Coverdell Institute’s Leadership Community, a two-year residential program focused on leadership and citizenship and integrating academic work with community service, and from the Economics Department engage with specific teachers and small groups of students throughout the year.

Individual Intensive Mentoring

Based on teacher recommendations, writing samples, test scores (ACT Explore in January), and individual assessments by a professor in the Early Childhood and Middle Grades Program, GCEC provides students who have intense needs with a volunteer mentor from the college or the Oconee Regional Education Service Agency. These mentors meet with students at least one hour per week and, depending on need, they may stay with them for more

than a year. Respecting everyone’s schedules, meeting times are flexible and determined by the mentor pairs. For one RESA mentor, it means devoting at least one afternoon per week to tutoring a student after school, taking her out to eat, and driving her home. For another, it involves working with students who entered GCEC reading at a second-grade level, mentoring them all year, and meeting with them in the summer to review skills and discuss independent reading.

After-school Support

In the 2006-07 school year, early college teachers tutored students after school on Mondays through Thursdays and during a 60-minute block on Fridays. In May 2007, GCSU received a Georgia Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Center grant to support an academic and enrichment program for students in grades 6-12 at GCEC and two other schools. The grant supports student transportation and after-school pay for teachers to provide academic assistance from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Enrichment activities are offered from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays at the schools and the recreation department. These include self-expression through the arts; lifetime sports; job club; science, technology, engineering, and math studies; and power group, which includes ropes courses and service learning.

Instilling Goals: Changing Aspirations Through Early Exposure to College

During the summer, the bobcat t-shirt and the college ID offer the first association with the college for students. Their participation in the college’s First-Year Convocation with GCSU’s freshmen each fall is their second formal interaction with the college. During a candlelit ceremony on the college lawn, each college freshmen and GCEC students, with families in attendance, receive pins with their college graduation dates on them.

Although the school’s emphasis on shifting students’ aspirations to college going and completion is prominent in classrooms every day of the week, it is most obvious to students on Fridays. This is a day filled with interactions with college students and professors around academics. (See *Appendix B: 2006-07 Seventh-Grade Student Schedule.*) Again, the stress is on enabling students to find their own voice; to read, write, and think critically; and to become accustomed to college—its faculty, students, and expectations.

The day begins with “Times Talk,” a social studies class based on articles from the *New York Times*. This is followed by a variety of college-connection activities. (See *Appendix C: College Connections.*) In each venue, groups of five or six students work with a college student or a professor.

Times Talk

For 90 minutes each Friday morning, undergraduate college students in the Coverdell Institute's Leadership Community work with students in *Times Talk*. This class is part of the American Democracy Project, sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the *New York Times*. The sessions help early college students learn more about the United States and the world, relate what is happening in the country or the world to their lives, learn the importance of newspapers, and further develop critical thinking skills.

Working under the guidance of Gregg Kaufman, director of the Coverdell Institute, each of the 15 *Times Talk* facilitators is assigned to a specific early college teacher. For each session, the facilitator selects a newspaper article based on a topic being covered in the teacher's classroom or aligned with their students' interests. The facilitator then builds a lesson around the article—often using ideas and resources on the *New York Times* Learning Network Web site (www.nytimes.com/learning). Working with students in small groups, they focus on defining unknown words or looking them up in the dictionary, connecting the article to the students' lives, and completing an activity (e.g., a video link on the *Times* Web site).

College-Connection Activities

On Friday afternoons, early college students take part in a variety of college-connection activities. Among the offerings are hour-long activities focused on economics, creative writing (90 minutes), physical education (fall semester), and art (spring semester). Each one provides a time for undergraduate or graduate college students, professors, or community members to expose small groups of early college students to new academic experiences.

These activities, along with the efforts of the principal, teachers, and college mentors and the power of place, have helped to make the vision of college real for these early college students. Through the process, they have gained a better sense of self and the options that lie ahead for them.

Economics. Among Georgia's end-of-course test for high school students, the passing rate has been lowest for economics. Moreover, nearly half of the young people in this country don't understand how to save and invest, handle credit cards and bank accounts, or describe the difference between inflation and recession. Based on this information, the college's Economics Department and its students have focused their early college efforts on personal finance. During 2006-07, college seniors majoring in economics worked with small groups of seventh graders under the guidance of an economics professor to teach GCEC students about topics in personal finance. For the 2007-08 school year, the college and

GCEC have obtained a \$5,000 grant to continue the personal finance course with seventh graders and to begin a unit on the stock market with eighth graders.

Creative Writing. This program focuses on teaching early college students ways to tap their imagination and express themselves in writing, as well as to open up, bond with one another, and create compelling poetry and fiction—"to write from the heart." Martin Lammon, a professor of English, speech, and journalism at the college and chairman of its Creative Writing Program, conceived the program. A graduate student in the creative writing program directs it, trains 12 creative writing majors (juniors and seniors with at least 18 hours in creative writing classes) in classroom management and pedagogy, and circulates from group to group on Friday. Each creative writing major mentors five or six students on poetry and creative writing. The early college teachers attend these classes, which are located on the college campus, participate in debriefs convened by the leader for college mentors after each lesson, and offer guidance to mentors on group dynamics and pedagogy.

"Our focus is on empowering kids—making them understand that what they have to say is important."

—Stephen Cavitt, Leader, Creative Writing College Connections Course

The first GCEC Creative Writing Program culminated in two events: the publication of *The Peacock's Feather*, a literary journal patterned after the college's journal, *The Peacock's Feet*, and a community night in which students read their journal pieces to families, friends, and community members. In preparation for community night, the students rehearsed several times in the auditorium with the leader and the journalism professor.

The Peacock's Feather will remain an annual project for seventh graders. The school's eighth graders will create a book of collected stories about Milledgeville, which will be part of their Georgia history project.

The leader and mentors of the GCEC Creative Writing Program faced two major challenges. First, it took time to establish trust between the students and their mentors and for seventh graders to trust themselves enough to open up through writing. The emphasis that early college teachers placed on thinking skills, as well as the presence of positive role models in the mentors, helped to break down those barriers. Second, some of the mentors lacked teaching experience. The training in pedagogy helped, as did the debriefing sessions, but in 2007-08 the graduate assistants are putting more emphasis on "teachers first, friends second" and on consistency in pedagogy. Through funding from GCEC and the college's Creative Writing Program, the leaders, their undergraduate mentors, and

early college teachers are being trained by Writers in the Schools to enhance quality and achieve more uniform pedagogy across the small groups.

Physical Education. As a precursor to their student teaching assignment in the spring, physical education majors work with early college students in the fall in the college gym under the guidance of a professor of kinesiology. This provides another exposure to the college for middle school students and assists in fulfilling the state’s physical education requirement.

Art. In spring 2007, ten professors from the college’s Art Department helped early college students mount an art show, “A Celebration of Family,” featuring students’ black-and-white photography. Early college students received a camera and were asked to carry it home, study their own lives, and photograph what represented family to them. The art professors advised them how to crop and devise appropriate titles for their photographs. A reception, open to parents and community members, took place on opening night in the college’s Mayfair Gallery, and the photographs were reproduced in the *Peacock’s Feather*. The project allowed students to think about their lives through a different lens, while it provided their teachers with a glimpse into their students’ lives outside of school.

Tutoring. Participation in tutoring on Friday can be initiated by a teacher or a student. On any given day, from five to twenty-five students are tutored instead of participating in a college connection activity in art or economics.

“Being here at GCEC has impacted my life dramatically. I plan to have a great education when I’m an adult. Now that I’m part of GCEC, I know I have a great future ahead of me.”

—Eighth-grade Student

“GCEC has really changed me. It has made me more responsible and organized. At first I wouldn’t think about what I wanted to do when I got older or what college I would like to attend, but now I think about all those things. I’m very glad I go to GCEC. It has really changed my life.”

—Eighth-grade Student

Collaborative Decision Making Among Partners

Collaboration with the community is critical to the success of Georgia College Early College. To create the original proposal for the school, Linda Irwin-DeVitis, dean of the college’s School of Education, convened a task force of approximately 40 people—including representatives from the college, the districts, and the community. They worked in small groups to plan curriculum, school climate, funding, and staffing.

Currently, an executive committee of 16 decision makers—individuals from the task force—and a subcommittee of its members guide the early college. The subcommittee gathers information, reviews policies, reaches consensus, and presents recommendations to the executive committee. Among the issues that have been resolved through these two bodies have been the calendar, schedules, discipline codes, and transportation.

Executive Committee Members	Subcommittee Members
Director and Assistant Director, Oconee RESA	Assistant Director, Oconee RESA (subcommittee chair)
Dean, School of Education, GCSU	Dean, School of Education or designee
Current and former GCSU professors	Baldwin and Putnam County Public Schools’ Middle School Principals, and Assistant Superintendents of Curriculum and Instruction
Baldwin and Putnam County Public Schools’ Superintendents, Middle School Principals, and Assistant Superintendents of Curriculum and Instruction	Principal, GCEC
Principal, GCEC	

An example of the collaborative spirit in decision making is evident in the selection of new teachers. The principal of GCEC, the early college teachers, two college professors, and the principal of the middle school in Baldwin County interview prospective teachers and make recommendations on selection. Authority to hire and fire the principal rests with a subgroup of the executive committee—the two superintendents, the dean of the school of education, and the director of the RESA.

The principal has control over scheduling, how to deploy staff, and grant funds held by the college. One of Daniel-Tyson's initial staffing decisions—to have all teachers teach social studies—has been a unifying factor for the faculty. It is the one course they plan together, and it has led to the creation of additional interrelated units.

“You need to have enough autonomy to conduct school differently. You need to take risks, and then evaluate and adjust when necessary.”

—Camille Daniel-Tyson, Principal, GCEC

Benefits to Partners

What's in it for the college?

In collaborating on the development and implementation of GCEC, the college hopes to create a new model of collaboration between colleges and communities to create schools that can change communities and the aspirations of their underserved students. GCEC allows university faculty to understand what works and what doesn't in middle school classrooms, which reinforces their own practice at the college level, particularly in their work with undergraduate teaching majors. GCEC professors can put into practice the pedagogical tools they promote among aspiring teachers—especially the habit of constantly evaluating and readjusting instruction to ensure that students are learning.

“GCEC provides a lab school in which GCSU's pre-service teachers can observe project-based learning in action, watch teaching that doesn't rely on textbooks, and see a cross-curricular emphasis on reading, writing, thinking, and speaking for everyone on a daily basis. They can observe and understand how a school like this works, talk about its impact on students and teachers, and understand its challenges and successes.”

—Linda Irwin-DeVitis, Dean, School of Education, GCSU

Each year, some undergraduates from the Early Childhood and Middle Grades Program complete their student teaching at GCEC (two in 2006-07 and six in 2007-08). Their placement is for a year—with two blocks of teaching (October to December and February to April) and two blocks of college classes (August to September and January). They participate in the summer academy and mentor a seventh- or eighth-grade small learning community throughout the year.

What's in it for the districts?

GCEC “provides a professional development site for Baldwin County Public Schools' teachers—a place where they can see best practice,” says BCPS Superintendent Gene Trammell. The school also offers a smaller, more intimate learning environment that enables some of the district's lowest achievers to succeed academically.

What's in it for the Oconee Regional Educational Service Agency?

Regional educational service agencies are an arm of the Georgia Department of Education. They provide shared services to improve the effectiveness of educational programs and services of local school systems, and they provide direct instructional programs to selected public school students. GCEC is a natural alliance for the Oconee RESA, which has partnered with GCSU on 23 projects—the latest one brought the National Writing Project to the college (the Central Georgia Writing Project). It also provides a way for adults to become invested in particular students and give back to the community. Three RESA staff members mentor GCEC students or teachers. All are working with students who need a great deal of support (e.g., one is tutoring two eighth graders who came into GCEC reading several grade levels below, another is working with a student who is easily discouraged).

What's in it for teachers and college faculty?

Opportunities for growth and collaboration abound for GCEC teachers and college faculty. Beginning this year, GCSU will offer graduate courses to GCEC teachers at no cost. Teachers have frequent opportunities to ask questions, try out ideas, and discuss future collaborations with college professors, who are in and out of their classrooms daily.

All of the early college teachers participated in courses at the university in the summer of 2007. The math and science teachers are part of the Science and Mathematics Alliance for Regional Teachers (SMART) Partnership, a collaboration among six rural districts, RESA, and GCSU. SMART's goal is to increase teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge in mathematics and/or science. Liana Nix, a math teacher at GCEC, helps facilitate the SMART

program. The English teachers attended a creative writing course at the university and jointly worked on curriculum for next year.

Student teachers bring new ideas and enthusiasm into GCEC classrooms. As second adults in the classroom, they can explain or delve more deeply into concepts with small groups of students. The student teachers also can provide intensive support to individuals or enable the classroom teacher to work more closely with individuals or groups of students.

The college-connection activities on Fridays allow for common planning time for GCEC teachers. Many of their interdisciplinary activities are planned during this period and during an additional hour of common planning time on Monday through Thursday.

Much of the college faculty's involvement in GCEC is voluntary, an in-kind contribution to the school. In 2007-08, the college has released two professors, who are an integral part of GCEC, from one of their semester classes, and it is funding the replacement cost. The professors are using this time to conduct research with their MAT students, co-develop curriculum, document practice, and provide support to the principal and teachers. A Georgia Board of Regents' policy—Faculty Work in the Schools—encourages colleges and universities with teacher preparation programs to advocate for, assess, recognize, and reward practices that engage college faculty with K-12 public schools.

What's in it for parents?

From parents' perspective, the benefits of GCEC reflect the ways in which it improves their children's lives. First of all, the early college is broadening their children's horizons. It instills a college-going mentality, and it keeps the focus on that goal for all students. The students are blossoming, thinking of themselves as learners, receiving recognition, and looking forward to going to school.

GCEC has also brought parents back to the school as partners in their children's education. Both nights that showcased students' work were standing-room-only affairs.

“The principal makes us—as parents, grandparents, and friends from the community—want to push our kids to succeed. We are our kids' future.”

—Stephen Johnson, Parent

Financing GCEC

Like other early college schools, GCEC operates on a typical public school budget. The Baldwin and Putnam County public school systems have assumed the costs for teachers, transportation, textbooks, supplies, materials, and food. The cost of educating a student in early college is comparable to that for any middle school student in the area; in Baldwin County, for example, the per pupil average is \$4,400 to 4,500 per year. There is an extra cost to transport students from their home school to the early college.

Aside from a start-up grant from the Georgia Board of Regents, GCEC receives no additional funding beyond its public school budget. Start-up funds, totaling \$450,000 over three years, supported professional development during the planning year and continues to fund the cost of the school administrative manager and most of the principal's salary. However, Georgia College & State University enriches the early college programming with multiple in-kind contributions. From planning and conducting the college-connection courses and college electives, to documenting the school's and its students' journeys in video, to publishing *The Peacock's Feather*, to providing six classrooms and office space in the School of Education, Georgia College's in-kind contributions to GCEC are diverse—but difficult to quantify.

In the future, Georgia's Accel Program will support the cost of college courses in core subjects for GCEC's juniors and seniors. This state program pays for these students' tuition and mandatory fees for courses taken at public colleges, as well as providing students with a book allowance. GCEC and its partners were searching for grant funds to cover similar costs for students who will be ready for college coursework in the second semester of tenth grade. By the time they finish high school, GCEC students will have completed one to two years of college credit or be eligible for Georgia's Hope Scholarship—at no cost to themselves or their families. The Hope Scholarship pays in-state tuition at University System of Georgia schools and provides some money toward books for students who graduate from high school in Georgia with a B average or better in college prep classes.

Moving Forward

In the future, the greatest challenge to GCEC and its collaborators will be identifying the additional college and community resources needed to accommodate an increasing enrollment at the school. With a new group of seventh graders in 2007-08, enrollment doubled this fall and resulted in several adjustments:

- Two graduate assistants are leading the college-connection course on creative writing. Creative writing undergraduate majors are working with the seventh graders. The project's leaders and the early college teachers have developed a curriculum for eighth graders. Although the creative writing majors and leaders do not see the eighth graders weekly, they will have occasional periods with them throughout the school year.
- MAT students will mentor three- or four-person learning communities.
- Every eighth grader is mentoring a seventh grader.

With the belief that mentoring relationships are critical to raising students' aspirations, the school will tap into other sources for mentors in future years, e.g., the college's service-learning students, Georgia Power's community mentoring program, and AmeriCorps. As students progress through the grades, the collaborators plan to have older students take on more complex experiences. In 2007-08, eighth graders will be allowed to audit a college economics course taught by the professor who worked with them in seventh grade. To prepare for content on a given day, GCEC students will be assigned a reading and will process it through discussion before participating in that day's class. In later years, the college connection time on Fridays will be used for service learning placements and internships with the help of college and community resources.

Foremost among the school's current challenges is the need for a new home. It will run out of space in its current site within two years. Several options are being pursued, and the partners appear to be ready to meet this and the above challenges in the collaborative spirit in which the school has been conceived and is being implemented.

The Larger Initiative

As it matures, Georgia College Early College will continue to benefit from two strong allies that have played a major role in the school since its inception: the national Early College High School Initiative and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

Begun in 2002, the national initiative is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, along with Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and other local foundations. By fall 2007, 13 intermediaries, supported by Jobs for the Future, which coordinates and supports the partners and the effort as a whole, had opened 159 early college schools. Over 20,000 students are enrolled in early college schools across the country. Through the Early College High School Initiative, the partners are creating or redesigning more than 250 small schools for disadvantaged and low-income young people and neighborhoods.

GCEC is one of six early college high schools in Georgia, where the Pre-School-College (P-16) Department of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia serves as the intermediary for the state initiative, itself a partnership of the Georgia Department of Education and the University System of Georgia. The Board of Regents provides leadership and support to the schools to ensure a successful experience for students and to study the model with an eye toward replication and scale-up statewide. The Georgia Early College Initiative is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation. The chancellor for the University System has allotted an additional \$1.2 million to open six additional sites in fall 2008.

Part of P-16's mission is to align expectations and student support services between schools and colleges to maximize student progression and success from high school through college. Early college, a key P-16 demonstration project, is an intervention strategy for students who are not well served by traditional high schools. One goal of the new schools is to "claim" higher education for African-American, Latino, and other minority students, as well as for those students who are low income or the first in their family to attend college.

Like GCEC, each early college high school is a partnership between one or more Georgia public school systems and a University System of Georgia college or university. The model blends high school and the first two years of college in order to find ways to educate young people to be prepared to contribute to the state's knowledge-based economy and to improve their overall quality of life.

Appendix A

Changing Aspirations: College Supports for Students

Program Element	Number of College Students	Function	Funding
Graduate Assistants	6	To lead the College-Connections Creative Writing Program (two); to conduct research and document practice at GCEC (four)	Two funded by Arts and Sciences and four by the School of Education, GCSU
MAT Mentors	36	To mentor early college students; to assist them with their science projects; to co-conduct research with professors	In-kind contribution of GCSU's School of Education
College Connections: Creative Writing	12 creative writing majors (juniors and seniors); 1 graduate assistant (2006-07), 2 graduate assistants (2007-08)	To get early college students to open up, bond, and create compelling poetry and fiction	In-kind contribution of GCSU faculty and students; training for graduate assistants, mentors, and early college teachers by <i>Writers in the Schools</i> , jointly supported by GCEC and GCSU
<i>Times</i> Talk	15 <i>Times</i> Talk facilitators (undergraduate students)	To facilitate learning about concerns and issues of United States and the world, to relate that knowledge to students' lives, and to further develop students' critical thinking skills	In-kind contribution of GCSU's Coverdell Institute, faculty, and students
College Connections: Physical Education	Senior physical education majors	To provide physical education to early college students in the college's facilities	In-kind contribution of GCSU's Department of Kinesiology, faculty, and students

Appendix B

2006–07 Seventh-grade Student Schedule

Monday-Thursday		Friday	
Time Block	Subject	Time Block	Subject/College Connections
8:30–10:00 a.m.	English Language Arts	8:30–10:00 a.m.	Social Studies (<i>Times</i> Talk)
10:00–11:30 a.m.	Mathematics	10:00–11:00 a.m.	Tutoring or Physical Education in the fall and Art in the spring
11:30 a.m.–12:05 p.m.	Lunch	11:00–11:30 a.m.	Lunch
12:05–1:30 p.m.	Science	11:30–2:45 p.m.	College Connections: Creative Writing and Economics
1:30–2:45 p.m.	Social Studies		
2:45–5:30 pm.	After-school Tutoring		

Appendix C

College Connections: Scaffolding for the Future

Experience	Goal(s)	Description
Summer Academy	To acclimate students to early college; to introduce them to the college; to assess their skills; to work on creative writing, reading, and math; and to bond with their classmates	One-week academic and social introduction to early college (will be three weeks in 2008)
First-Year Convocation	To welcome early college students to the college campus; and to begin instilling in them the vision of attending and graduating from college	GCSU's First-Year Convocation is held at the college, and early college students and their families participate. With candles lit, college faculty share their wishes and dreams for college freshmen and the early college students.
College Connections: Creative Writing	To engage students in real, creative, intellectual work; to encourage early college students to think independently, to make connections between the disciplines; to accept responsibility for their own lives; and to integrate the college's creative writing students with early college students, facilitating learning on both sides	Once a week for 90 minutes, undergraduate majors (juniors and seniors) from the MFA Creative Writing Program work with small groups of seventh graders to practice writing poetry and fiction. A book of fiction, poetry, and black-and-white photographs by students resulted from the year's work.
College Connections: Art, Economics, and Physical Education	To engage students in content guided by college students and professors; to increase early college students' comfort in working with college students and professors; to provide a block of common planning time for GCEC's principal and teachers	Sixty-minute blocks of time on Fridays are devoted to art, economics, and physical education. Undergraduate students and professors plan and conduct these courses.

Appendix D

Contacts

Dawn Cooper
 Director, Early College
 Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
 dawn.cooper@usg.edu

Camille Daniel-Tyson
 Principal, GCEC
 camille.daniel-tyson@gcsu.edu

Linda Irwin-DeVitis
 Dean School of Education, GCSU
 linda.irwin-devitis@gcsu.edu

Gene Trammell
 Superintendent, Baldwin County Public Schools
 cetrammell@baldwin.k12.ga.us

Dr. Jim Willis
 Superintendent, Putnam County Schools
 jim_willis@putnam.k12.ga.us

Michael Walker
 Director, Oconee Regional Educational Service Agency
 mwalker@doe.k12.ga.us



Jobs for the Future
88 Broad Street
Boston, MA 02110
617.728.4446
www.jff.org