*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley*Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:**  | May 17, 2023 |
| **Subject:** | Early College Update |

**Introduction**

Early College programs are intentionally designed to empower students traditionally underrepresented in higher education. MA Early College Designated Programs work to blend elements of high school and college to provide students with the opportunity to experience and complete college level academic coursework on a clearly articulated pathway and simultaneously gain exposure to a variety of career opportunities. Early college programs also reduce the time and expense of earning a college credential while increasing the likelihood of completion.

In 2017, the Boards of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and Higher Education (BHE) jointly launched an initiative intended to support the expansion of Early College and establish the Early College Designation. The boards also created an Early College Joint Committee (ECJC), charged with developing the Early College Designation Process for the Commonwealth. Currently, BESE Chair Katherine Craven and member Matt Hills serve as voting members on the ECJC with BHE Chair Chris Gabrieli and member Paul Toner, and Secretary Tutwiler. Chair Gabrieli chairs the ECJC. Commissioner of Higher Education Ortega and I serve as non-voting members.

In December 2023 the Office of Early College was officially established here at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the staff working on this initiative was expanded to include a new Executive Director, Phylitia Jamerson. Since then, the team has been finalizing the review of this year’s Designation applicants, as well as providing technical assistance to applicants and Designees, including hosting a statewide convening, managing the fiscal administration including grant support, continuing to improve data collection, and preparing for a new Designation cycle, while also participating in a strategic review of the initiative.

This memorandum provides an overview of some recent work to expand and strengthen the Early College initiative.

**March 2023 Program Designations**

On March 15, 2023, the Early College Joint Committee approved nine new programs for Designation to be launched in fall 2023:

* Athol High School (Athol Royalston Regional School District) and Mount Wachusett Community College and Fitchburg State University
* Boston Community Leadership Academy (Boston Public Schools) and University of Massachusetts Boston
* Brighton High School (Boston Public Schools) and Bunker Hill Community College
* Drury High School (North Adams Public Schools) and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
* Fenway High School (Boston Public Schools) and University of Massachusetts - Boston
* Malden High School (Malden Public Schools) and Bunker Hill Community College
* New Mission High School (Boston Public Schools) and University of Massachusetts - Boston
* Revere High School (Revere Public Schools) and North Shore Community College
* Veritas Prep Charter School and Springfield Technical Community College and Worcester State University

In total these programs will enroll a projected 1,800 students in the Early College program statewide by School Year 2027-28.  There will likely be additional programs recommended for Designation status in June 2023.

When Early College was established in 2018-2019 school year, there were 495 total students enrolled in the program statewide. At the start of the currently school year (2022-2023), there are a total of 6,054 students enrolled in the program.

**Federal Grants**

DESE has allocated a portion of federal ESSER funds to be used to support three Early College-related grants. These grants are all expected to increase access and supports for students to engage in college coursework while in high school, with a priority for students underrepresented in higher education.

***Full School Impact Grant***

The purpose of this grant is to provide significant planning and resources to support a district and/or high school and college partner in designing, developing and, if approved through the Early College process, implementing an impactful, large scale or "full school" immersive Early College program model.

Full School Impact or immersive models typically entail either a full school being enrolled in an Early College program (often called "Wall to Wall"), or a scaled program that enrolls at least 400 students. These program models would be structured to award a minimum of 30 college credits to Early College students prior to their high school graduation.

There are currently five Full School Impact recipients in Year 2 of a 3-year grant. Four of the five have already been approved for Designation.

1. Bard College at Simon's Rock/Mt Everett High School
2. Claremont High School: Quinsigamond Community College and Worcester State
3. Veritas Preparatory Charter School/Springfield Technical Community College
4. Drury High School/ Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
5. Saugus Public Schools/Northshore Community College

***Expansion Grant***

The purpose of this competitive targeted grant is to provide significant planning and support resources to currently Designated Early College programs to increase the scale of their programs and in turn the number of underrepresented students accessing postsecondary education in Massachusetts.

For this grant opportunity, expansion means programs will commit to significantly and thoughtfully expanding the current scale of their program, typically with a ramp up to at least 25% of the school population being served.

There are currently eight expansion grant recipients in Year 2 of a 3-year grant.

1. Holyoke Public Schools (with Holyoke Community College)
2. Haverhill Public Schools (with Northshore Community College)
3. Quinsigamond Community College (with Worcester Public Schools)
4. Fall River Public Schools (Drury HS with Bristol and Bridgewater State University)
5. Lawrence Public Schools (Northshore Community College)
6. Salem State University (Salem Public Schools)
7. Marlborough High School with Quinsigamond Community College
8. Framingham High School, (Framingham State University and MassBay Community College)

***Incubator Grant***

The purpose of this competitive grant is to provide significant planning and support resources to non-Designated Early College programs to build out innovative Early College models that will increase the number of underrepresented students served in the Commonwealth through thoughtful implementation plans.

For this grant opportunity, incubator refers to the opportunity for non-designated programs to test creative alternatives to the requirements of Designation in their proposed program design and pilots to demonstrate whether they can increase opportunities for students. Applicants were innovative in their approach, through course delivery methods, use of technology, and unconventional student supports to broaden equitable access to students.

There are eight incubator grant recipients in Year 1 (with UMass receiving two awards for each of the two campuses involved in this pilot). Highlights include the development of the Frederick Douglass Academy, a new Lynn Early College High School located on the campus of North Shore Community College, and the Commonwealth Collegiate Academy, a project of UMass that is providing access to virtual college courses to regional high school students, along with a residential summer opportunity.

1. Digital Ready (Revere Public Schools)
2. Brockton High School
3. Greenfield Community College
4. South Shore Consortium
5. Lynn Public Schools
6. Merrimack College
7. UMASS Lowell and UMASS Dartmouth
8. Boston Public Schools

**Other Program Updates**

DESE’s Office of Early College, in collaboration with technical service provider NS4ed hosted a statewide convening at Fitchburg State University on April 12, 2023. Almost 200 attendees, representing both K-12 and higher education partners, were in attendance. Secretary Tutwiler, Commissioner Ortega, and I greeted participants and shared our vision for Early College.

Site visits have been conducted by our program evaluation provider, AIR, this past spring.

Executive Director Jamerson is currently leading the effort to support the work of EY Parthenon as they develop a strategic review of the statewide Early College initiative. EY Parthenon will be presenting the first part of their findings to the ECJC on May 24th.

The Early College team is getting ready to launch the Designation process for those who would like to launch an approved Designation in fall 2024.

DESE and DHE continue to meet on a regular basis as part of a “Data Summit” to address remaining challenges to providing public data points on Early College programs and outcomes. It is the intent of this team to have a strong data plan in place for fall 2023.

At the May 23, 2023, BESE meeting, Executive Director Jamerson, Director of Planning and Policy Hunt, and Early College Program Specialist Barr will give a brief presentation on the Early College initiative and respond to your questions.