



Early college offers a way up, not a way out.

Canton invests in the future with Timkin Early College High School.

For many students, challenges that they can't control can often feel like limits on all things that are possible. The student with younger siblings to care for at home, with one or both parents at work and no other outside support. The student whose test scores or academic performance might make it easy to write them off as going nowhere, fast. The student who only gets their meals at school. Students that are characterized as "those students." At Timkin Early College High School (TECHS) in Canton, Ohio those students, and all students who rise to meet the challenge, are given the opportunity to grow and succeed.

The current principal of TECHS is Kenneth Brunner, who was a founding teacher and one of the creators of the Early College Academy, a middle school that deepens the community's commitment to early college and whose students transition seamlessly to TECHS. He encourages students and staff not just to "dream big," but to "make it a reality." And they are.

GOAL:

Increase college access for first-generation and economically disadvantaged and students

SOLUTION:

Early college high school in partnership with Stark State College

RESULTS:

67% of the class of 2015 graduated with two associate degrees, 85% post-secondary enrollment

Prior to the implementation of the early college, students were receiving, on average, fewer than 10 college credit hours through a post-secondary program with Stark State College. By comparison, 67 percent of the graduating class of 2015 graduated with not one but two associate's degrees. Every single student enrolled in TECHS is earning college credit, and at a rate significantly higher than the national average.

And they're not the only ones who benefit.

10 YEARS, A LIFETIME OF CHANGE.

In 2005, only 12.5 percent of Canton's adults had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 81 percent of students were living in poverty. But the picture of Canton is changing: the percentage of young adults within the community with some college or higher has increased to 57 percent. According to the Stark Education Partnership, a nonprofit education reform support organization in Stark County, Ohio, even if graduates do not progress any further in their education, they will produce additional lifetime earnings and taxes exceeding \$110 million for themselves and their communities.

But many do dream bigger, pursuing Bachelor's degrees, graduate school, and opportunities to give back to the community that gave so much to them.

"I realized junior year that I wanted to become a doctor, and with an associate's degree in science, I can become a doctor faster," says senior Jada Jones, who plans to attend Wayne University in Michigan upon graduation.



"I'll be the first doctor in my family, who wouldn't be proud of that?"

"Family" is a word you hear a lot on TECHS' campus. Many students are the second or third child in their families to attend the early college, and describe themselves as "lucky" to have the opportunity of two years of free schooling, and access to the tight-knit community the early college provides. Though the college experience isn't one they would typically have access to – nearly all TECHS students are first generation college-goers, and from low income families – their achievements aren't the product of luck, but very hard work.

"With the pressure that we're under, it forces us to come together, to form study groups, to get together after school and work on assignments and projects," says senior Isaiah Bingham, who hopes to



336

Total enrollment



47%

Total minority enrollment
(% of total)



85%

Total economically disadvantaged
(% of total)

Partnered with **Stark State College**, TECHS is one of two high school options in Canton, Ohio. It officially opened in **2005**.

The Timkin Early College High School

Mission Statement

Every student of the Canton City Schools will achieve at high levels and graduate from high school prepared to enter the workforce.

attend Tiffin University next autumn. 62 percent of TECHS' student body are on the honor or merit roll, and 100 percent graduate on time. **100 percent.** Compared to a 93 percent on-time graduation rate for other early colleges and an 86 percent graduation rate from a traditional high school, that's a powerful number.

BEING HERE CHANGES YOU.

While students at TECHS have plenty to say about the rigors of the academics, they stand to benefit just as much, if not more, from the soft skills they're perfecting through collaborating with peers, networking with career professionals, and challenging themselves with more independent, skill-focused coursework. Rather than falling into the cliques they might have in a traditional high school setting, students at TECHS have to learn to work together, to compromise and communicate with individuals whose interests and background might diverge significantly from their own.

"When I came to the early college, my parents couldn't help me with any of my homework," says Jones. "At school I got more help because we were all in the same situation. I didn't rely on my parents as much." Learning to ask for help and recognize the value in another's perspective is a skill some adults never master – but students at TECHS learn it early, and they learn it fast.

Over the course of the last four years, TECHS has focused on cultivating course pathways that allow students to pursue an associate of arts or an associate of science, and have successfully implemented an internship and service learning program that further prepares students college and career readiness in their community. In 2015, juniors and seniors began taking classes on the Stark State campus, rather than only inviting college professors to the high school, and the challenge is only the latest in an effort to foster learning and independence in TECHS students.



100% graduate on-time compared to **93 percent** ECHS and 86 percent national average; 67 percent graduate with not one but two associate's degrees

IF THEY CAN DO IT, I CAN DO IT.

Brunner and his staff are currently focused not only on growing the program, but also on retaining students during the critical sophomore year, when some students may elect to return to a less rigorous traditional high school environment. Debbie Turner, a former English teacher with the school in her third year as College Readiness Advisor, has been a vital part of that work. Serving as a liaison between students, their college instructors, and the support teachers, Turner meets with the students regularly, and with seniors on a weekly basis, checking in with them on grades, any challenges that they may be facing, and helping them to develop the critical soft skills that will make the biggest impact on their future: time management, organizational skills, and critical thinking.

"I don't think that kids in general have a chance to practice those upper-level thinking skills required to

be successful in college courses,” says Turner. “Early college gives them the chance to practice so that development happens before it’s too late.”

From stories of students who resisted the program to those who embraced it from day one, Turner is confident that every graduate of TECHS sees the benefit of their education in time because they take such an active role in their learning. TECHS students choose to be there, and the number of students opting out when it gets tough is shrinking. The chance to work closely with their peers on real-world applicable projects, to seek internships and volunteer opportunities within their community, and to hear from alumni of the early college are all powerful motivators.

But nothing moves this community like graduation day.

“The reaction of the audience when our kids march down the aisle to receive their diplomas, every single year it’s a standing ovation,” says Turner. There are tears in her eyes. “I want that to keep on going.”

And she’s not the only one. From parents who’ve seen one or more children get a head start on their future to community and school leaders who stand to benefit from a highly educated, energized youth population, everyone is a witness to the power of a public education framed around the idea that every child can succeed. The graduates of TECHS aren’t just changing the outcomes for themselves, they’re changing the outcomes for their entire community.

“You’ll hear the parents talking, saying that if their kids can do this, they can do it, too,” says Brunner. “I don’t think the students realize the impact they have on Canton city as a whole.” ■



Interested in scheduling a visit to an early college high school? Please get in touch with us at info@knowledgeworks.org

SPOTLIGHT ON COACHING

KnowledgeWorks coaching focuses on providing the supports needed not only to instructors but to administrators, as well, facilitating a whole-school culture that believes each and every student can achieve great things.

For teachers, KnowledgeWorks provides instructional coaching two to three times a month for:

- classroom management
- expanding and deepening teaching strategies—especially in regards to literacy and numeracy
- implementing best practice
- college collaboration
- student assessment
- academic and effective support for students
- democratic school governance

For administrators, KnowledgeWorks coaches provide guidance one to two times a month to aid schools in:

- creating and maintaining a clear and cohesive approach for students to earn and associate’s degree or two years of college credit
- designing ongoing, structured support systems and small learning communities for students
- integrating high school and college course sequences

KnowledgeWorks is focused on ensuring that every student experiences meaningful personalized learning that allows them to thrive in college, career and civic life. We develop the capabilities of educators to implement and sustain competency-based and early college schools, work with state and federal leaders to establish aligned policy conditions and provide national thought leadership around the future of learning.