

# Bard Sequence

*Bringing college to high school*

## **SUMMARY**

Building on Bard College's signature interdisciplinary humanities Seminar Sequence, the Sequence is comprised of two courses, taught over four semesters, and provides students with the opportunity to earn **12 tuition-free transferable college credits** from Bard College with a trained college instructor in a supportive, familiar learning environment. The Sequence gives students exposure to a free, authentic college experience, increasing their readiness for college and allowing them to get a head start on their degrees.

## **WHY THIS WORK MATTERS**

In an effort to address challenges of equity of access and success in higher education, the Bard Sequence works to provide a meaningful bridge between high school and college. Unlike test-based accelerated learning models, the Bard Sequence offers students the opportunity to engage in an authentic college experience. Taught by college professors selected, trained, and mentored in early college pedagogy by Bard, the Bard Sequence builds high school students' writing, critical thinking, textual analysis, and communication skills as well as their academic confidence in an interactive, seminar-based college environment. The Bard Sequence aims to enhance students' high school experience and college aspirations and increase their chances of success in postsecondary programs.

The Bard Sequence creates a new space between high school and college, one in which a young person's first exposure to higher education is rigorous and intellectually inspiring while also providing them with the support they need to become confident, self-motivated college students. For many young people, particularly those in underserved communities, the first experience of college is a remedial course or an unfamiliar experience away from home. Sequence is based on the belief that all students – and especially those statistically at risk of not completing college – benefit from a safe space in which they can learn to succeed in college by taking risks in the classroom, failing forward, and finding their voices as collegiate learners.

## **QUALITATIVE, INCLUSIVE ADMISSIONS**

Through the Sequence, Bard seeks to serve students who demonstrate motivation and readiness to take on the challenge of a college education at an earlier age, particularly those who can most benefit from access to the free college program, including first-generation college students, low-income students, and students from backgrounds underrepresented in higher education. To that end, Bard acts as a resource and guide for partners when selecting students for admission. Applicants participate in a qualitative admissions process designed by Bard, which includes an interview and a writing assessment, modeled on the assessment used at the Bard Early College campuses. However, Bard believes that partners know their students best, and welcomes students into the classroom whom the partners identify as demonstrating readiness and motivation to participate in an interactive, intensive liberal arts college program. Overall, Bard admissions is based on the belief that early college is a transformative resource for a wide range of students, not just those with the top scores in secondary school.

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## **TAILORED EARLY COLLEGE INSTRUCTION**

Bard Sequence faculty are critical to student success. Students are encouraged to develop close relationships with professors, learn from and with them, and learn how to ask for help, thereby developing their voice, academic confidence, and sense of belonging in college.

Faculty are recruited, selected (with the approval of the partner), trained, and mentored by Bard. All faculty teaching the Bard Sequence have a terminal degree in the humanities or social sciences and prior teaching experience. Partner schools have the option to bring faculty into their school as full-time instructors or part-time adjunct professors. Faculty training includes pre- and in-service professional development and ongoing coaching in early college pedagogy, drawn from Bard's deep experience training college instructors to teach younger scholars, to support instructors in presenting the early college curriculum to students at the specific partner institution.

Schools that are interested in implementing the Bard Sequence have the opportunity to offer dual enrollment courses to their students in their school building with courses built into the school schedule. To ensure that students are working in an environment most conducive to college learning and receiving appropriate academic support, there is a cap of 20 students per course section.

## **PROVEN CURRICULUM**

The Bard Sequence consists of two year-long courses (totaling 12 Bard College credits) in the humanities that build upon one another, exploring themes of identity, disruption, and civilization through the exploration of canonical texts in history, literature, and philosophy. A version of Freshman and Sophomore Seminar Sequence is taught at all Bard College campuses (including the Bard Early Colleges) and is the foundational course through which Bard students develop skills necessary to succeed in college, including critical thinking, textual analysis and interrogation, academic research, college writing, and debate.

The Bard Sequence curriculum and associated resources are developed by Bard Early College faculty and draw on experience and expertise from across Bard's 18-year-old network of public early college campuses. The curricular resources include syllabi, lesson and unit plans, and sample questions and assessments. Bard College provides support for Sequence professors in adapting this curriculum to specific student contexts, while maintaining the academic integrity and core components of the course.

## **STRONG PARTNERSHIPS**

Bard is committed to forming lasting partnerships with schools offering the Bard Sequence. The Director of the Bard Sequence and the partner school's designated liaison work together to ensure effective implementation of the courses. Bard Early College staff support the program by providing ongoing academic support and oversight and making programmatic adjustments as needed.

The Bard Sequence costs include compensation for the instructor (either embedded as a full-time employee or paid as an adjunct), professional development (either for the Sequence instructor alone or for some or all teachers at the school), and Bard College academic oversight and support. Bard

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College works with partner sites to determine a sustainable pricing model.

In addition to supporting students, the Bard Sequence seeks to strengthen the learning environment of the partner schools as a whole. By implementing a college curriculum in the same space and community as a high school program, participants in the Sequence bring new practices from the Bard courses into their high school classrooms. In addition, high school and college instructors are placed in dialogue and provided formal and informal opportunities to strengthen their pedagogical practice. Finally – and most crucially – by establishing a course of study within high school, Bard Sequence draws away the veil of mystery and fear surrounding college study, transforming the pursuit of college-level learning and a college degree into a concrete, immediate, and attainable goal.

## **BARD'S RECORD IN EARLY COLLEGE EDUCATION**

The Bard Early Colleges are conceived around three core commitments: that the liberal arts inspire young learners, that immersing young people in college is the best preparation for college, and that students – when taken seriously and empowered in the classroom – will rise to meet extraordinary challenges.

Founded in 1860, Bard College is an independent nonprofit liberal arts college with a commitment to equity and excellence in higher education. In service of this commitment, Bard operates a network of tuition-free early colleges in partnership with public school systems in New York, Newark, Cleveland, Baltimore, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C.. The Bard Early College model has proven effective in a range of contexts since the founding of the first campus in 2001. In the Bard High School Early College Class of 2018, 97% of students earned a high school diploma and on average 59 transferable college credits, and approximately 85% of students continued their education at four-year colleges and universities. Approximately 80% of Bard High School Early College alumni who continue their college education attain a four-year degree within six years. In independent studies conducted within both the New York City and Newark Public School systems, students enrolled in the Bard Early Colleges were shown to be **more likely to enroll and persist** in four-year college programs.

Bard's ultimate goal is to catalyze the redesign of American secondary education to allow students in every school system to have access to an authentic, free post-secondary experience during high school. The Bard Sequence is a powerful way to expand access and move the field towards that goal.

