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Early College Program to Give At-Risk Students Taste of Higher Ed

by Associated Press
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MACON, Ga.

Starting this fall, about 55 seventh-graders from central Georgia will be attending Early College, statewide program that aims to give students who aren't on track for higher education a taste of coll

"A lot of these kids ... people think they drop out because they're not smart," says Sara Connor, c an outreach arm of the University System of Georgia. "But oftentimes it's because they're not cf This work is much more challenging for them."

The students from Baldwin and Putnam counties will take regular high school curriculum through and then work on core college classes for the last two years, says Camille Tyson, director of Earl on the Georgia College & State University campus.

They will earn both a high school diploma and two years of college credit toward a bachelor's degre

The program, for which students apply and then are selected through a lottery, seeks to "use the pc place to really encourage these students to push themselves," Tyson says. She says she hopes stu imitate the work ethic of the college students around them.

According to Conner, students who are at risk of not finishing high school or not enrolling in higher c are the ones encouraged to apply to Early College. Minorities, non-native English speakers and firs generation college-bound students are considered at particular risk for failing before they graduate i school.

For Georgia's Early College, students will be bused in every day and have access to all campus fac including libraries and science labs. The plan is to add a new class of 55 seventh-graders each yea

Angela Lindsey, whose son, Seth, will attend Early College in the fall, says she hopes smaller class individualized attention will help Seth fight the distractions that have made him struggle in middle sc

"It will afford him opportunities I was never given, as far as school and years from now," Lindsay sa

The program is one of four set to open statewide this fall. Georgia's first Early College opened last y cooperative effort between Atlanta public schools and Georgia State University, Connor says. Natio there are about 71 such schools with more than 11,000 students, according to the Early College Hig Initiative. The first opened in 2002.

— *Associated Press*

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