

Texas Education Agency

# Introduction to Designing an ECHS

Guidance for Early College High Schools

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## What is Early College High School?

### An Early College High School is ...

- An innovative high school located on or in close proximity to a college campus.
- A school that targets students who would not otherwise go to college and provides them with up to 60 college credit hours – for free.
- A school developed in close partnership between a school district and a college.
- A high school reform model based on building a college-going culture and providing structured student supports.
- A lot of work!
- Worth the effort if you serve the target population.
- **All of the Above**

## Who is the Target Population?

### ECHS targets traditionally underserved students who may not otherwise attend college including:

- At-Risk (as defined by PEIMS)
- English Language Learners (as defined by PEIMS)
- Economically Disadvantaged
- First Generation College-Goers

## The Need for Early College High School

High school graduation rates are not where they should be, either in Texas or across the country and there is a mismatch between student expectations and college readiness. For those students who do attend college, their levels of success are lower than expected. Finally, wages and employment are affected by education.

### High School Graduation Rates

- Nationally, about one-third of high school students graduate on time and ready for postsecondary work.
- Another third earn a diploma, but are not academically prepared for college-level work.
- The final third do not graduate at all.

### College Success

- In Texas, approximately 50% of community college freshmen and 20% of university freshmen enroll in at least one remedial course.
- Only 20% of the Texas freshmen who enroll in remedial courses will persist and earn a bachelor's degree within six years.
- Source: The Charles A. Dana Center, University of Texas at Austin – The cost of developmental education in Texas, March 2007

### Wages and Employment are Affected by Education

- By 2040, approximately 30% of the labor force will not have a high school diploma, up from 18% in 2000.
- Lower levels of education means lower levels of income – a high school diploma alone is not enough family wage jobs.
- Source: Houston Chronicle, Houston and Texas News: A warning signaled for Latinos and Texas, May 17, 2010

### Student Expectations:

- 4<sup>th</sup> graders were asked: “How many of you want to go to a college or university when you graduate from high school?” – 100% said I Do.
- 9<sup>th</sup> graders were asked: “How many of you want to go to a college or university when you graduate from high school?” – 100% said I Do.
- 9<sup>th</sup> graders were asked the following questions – 95% said I Don't Know
  - what courses do you need in high school in order to go to college?
  - how much does college cost?
  - what tests do you need to take to get into college?
- Source: University of Texas at Brownville, Parent, student and teacher survey for GEAR UP grant, 2005

## What are the Impacts and Outcomes for Early College High School?

**State Evaluation:** ECHS students are:

- 27% more likely than their peers to pass 9<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS
- 20% more likely than students across the state to pass 9<sup>th</sup> grade TAKS
- 21% more likely than peers to earn Commended on 9<sup>th</sup> grade math TAKS
- 5% more likely than students across the state to earn Commended on 9<sup>th</sup> grade math TAKS
- 14.5 times more likely to be promoted from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade
- 15 times more likely to participate in accelerated courses such as dual credit, AP, or IB in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade
- In 2008-2009, 1,100 students in Texas Early Colleges earned an average of 16 credit hours each - this was a savings of approximately \$4,000 per student or a total of \$4.5 million in college tuition.
- In 2009-2010, the first cohort of Texas Early College students graduated:
  - 900 students graduated from 11 Early Colleges across the state
  - 308 of these students earned an associate's degree and their high school diploma at the same time

### National Evaluation

- In 2009, average attendance rate for Early College High Schools was 94%
- 85% of students at Early Colleges nationwide stay at their school and progress to the next grade each year
- In 2009, 3,000 students graduated from the 64 early college schools open for four or more years:
  - They earned an average 20-plus college credits
  - 39 percent earned at least a year of transferable college credit
  - 25 percent earned two full years of college credit or an Associate's degree

## Benefits of Early College High School

### Benefits for Institutions

- Increases high school graduation rates and college access
- Increases college enrollment
- Decreases the need for college remediation
- Helps meet the Closing the Gaps goals set out by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Sharing resources between institutions can reduce administration costs

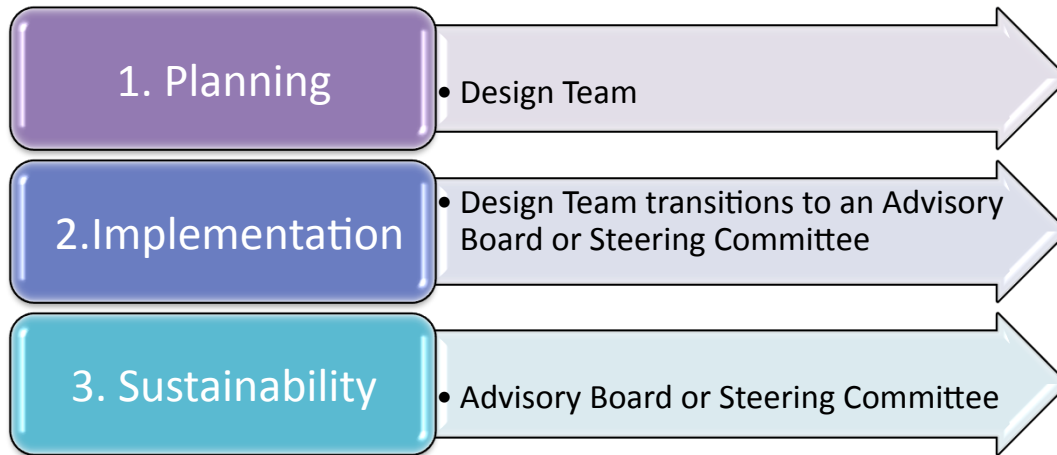
### Benefits for Students and Families

- Increase high school degree acquisition
- Removes barriers to college entry by providing students with “college knowledge”
- Students and families save money on tuition costs
- Increases college persistence by supporting students past the 20 credit threshold
- Provides opportunities for students to earn higher wages

## Dual Credit vs. Early College High School

Dual Credit	ECHS
Program offered in districts	Autonomous school model
Typically serves college-bound students	Targets at-risk students
Offered to 11 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> graders	Blended high school & college curriculum beginning in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade
24 credit maximum	60 credit goal for all students and planned program of study
Limited or no academic services	Academic and social support services required
Students may (or may not) be charged for courses depending on arrangements with IHE partner	<u>Must</u> be at no cost to students (tuition, textbooks, fees, entrance exams, etc. )

## What are the Phases of ECHS design and Who is Involved in These Phases?



## The ECHS Design Team

- **Decision-Making Authority:** the ECHS design team must include members from the school district and the college who have the authority to make decisions about the design and implementation of the school.
- **Key members:** the Superintendent and the College President or their designees are key members of the design team. Why? Because building an ECHS that is sustainable requires high levels of leadership and commitment from both partners.
- **Getting Started:** the process usually begins when the school district or the college initiate a meeting to discuss the possibility of opening an ECHS. Then, the two partners research the ECHS model and visit campuses to see schools in operation.
- **Areas of Consideration:** It is important to include individuals from the college and the school district in this design team so that both partners can simultaneously learn about the model and identify areas for discussion. Examples of the many areas that the design team will address during the process are:
  - Curriculum and Instruction
  - Staffing
  - Governance
  - Operations
  - Student Support Structures
  - Parent and Community Involvement
- **Frequency of Meetings:** meetings may be infrequent when the research process begins. During the planning process though, meetings should occur at least twice per month for approximately a year. As the plan for the ECHS is developed and a formal system of communication is established between the school district and the college, meetings will taper off.

## The ECHS Advisory Board

- **Transition from Design Team to Advisory Board:** when the school moves from design to implementation, the design team transitions to an advisory board or a steering committee. The number of meetings may decrease, but the members should still be individuals with decision-making authority.
- **Communication & P-16 Partnership:** Partnerships between school districts and higher education institutions usually focuses on dual credit and may not necessarily involve regular communication other than updating a memorandum of understanding once a year. However, in order to operate and maintain an Early College High School, both partners must communicate regularly and collaborate effectively. The Advisory Board is a formal mechanism for ensuring communication and collaboration.
- **Areas of Consideration:** As the school moves through the implementation process and scales up to serve grades 9-12, the ECHS and the partnership between the school district and the college will change over time. Many of the areas addressed by the design team will still be relevant, but new, and possibly unexpected topics may include:
  - Community Partnerships
  - Dual Credit
  - Student Supports
  - Expanding the College Culture
- **Frequency of Meetings:** meetings should occur once a month, once a quarter or, at a minimum, once every six months.
- **Sustainability:** The advisory board or steering committee should consider and address issues of sustainability including:
  - Regularly reviewing the memorandum of understanding
  - Discussing budget and cost arrangements
  - Planning for leadership change in the school district or college
  - Expanding and enhancing the partnership

## Budgeting for an Early College High School

- **Financial Partnership:** When students are enrolled in a dual credit course, both the school district and the college receive state funding. This is not the case in all states across the country, so this is considered to be one of the state policies that facilitates the ECHS model. In order to make the best use of state funding, it is important to collaborate and determine what financial and in-kind contributions each partner will make (facilities, tuition & fees, faculty & staff salaries, resources)
- **Account for the Full Cost of Dual Credit:** every ECHS must develop a plan that allows students to earn a minimum of 60 college credit hours. In order to determine the maximum cost for dual credit, assume that all students in your ECHS will take all 60 hours. Multiply this by the cost of dual credit tuition, fees, and textbooks.
- **Varying Cost of Dual Credit:** the cost of dual credit varies based on the arrangements between the high school and the college:
  - Will the IHE waive or reduce tuition and fees?
  - Who is paying for textbooks?
  - Who is teaching dual credit? High school or college teachers?
- **Start-Up Grants:** grants of approximately \$450,000 have been offered by the Texas Education Agency and the Communities Foundation of Texas through the Texas High School Project and by other private foundations in Texas. While these grants have helped provide incentives and support for opening Early Colleges, these grants are small when compared to the full cost of operating the school, which is the responsibility of the school district and the college.

## Considerations for Schools that are Transforming to ECHS

- **Shifting the Culture is Key:** this is a high school redesign and reform model that is designed to function in a new and different way. It is important to understand how ECHS is different and identify what changes will need to occur at your campus in order to ensure that a real change in culture occurs.
- **Support Structures Must be Integrated:** many schools have support structures in place, but in an ECHS the academic and social support structures for students are integrated into the program of study. The goal is to create a system that allows the school to identify areas of student need and immediately provide the appropriate support.
- **The P-16 Partnership is More Than Dual Credit:** many districts and colleges initially become interested in ECHS as a result of wanting to “take dual credit to the next level” or in order to open up opportunities for a new group of students. However, ECHS requires a deeper commitment on the part of the college than what is typical in dual credit. By deciding to develop an ECHS, both partners are agreeing to be jointly accountable for student success and fidelity to the model.

## How Can I Learn More About Early College High Schools?

- Read About ECHS:
  - State ECHS Website: [www.txechs.com](http://www.txechs.com)
  - Texas High School Project: [www.thsp.org](http://www.thsp.org)
  - National Website: [www.earlycolleges.org](http://www.earlycolleges.org)
  - National Technical Assistance Provider:  
<http://www.iff.org/projects/current/education/early-college-high-school-initiative/57>
- Visit or Call an ECHS
  - Map of ECHS with phone numbers: [www.txechs.com](http://www.txechs.com)
- Join the ECHS Listserv
  - Quarterly update on ECHS policy, designation, and grants. Join at: [www.txechs.com](http://www.txechs.com)

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How far in advance should I begin planning my ECHS in order to be ready for the Designation Application process?** It is recommended that a school district and its higher education partner spend at least a year jointly designing and planning for the ECHS.
2. **What if I have questions?** Contact the TEA ECHS Program Manager, Kelty Garbee: [Kelty.garbee@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:Kelty.garbee@tea.state.tx.us) or 512-936-2597