NEW MEXICO
EARLY COLLEGE
HIGH SCHOOL

Toolkit
and
Policy
Manual

Contents

INTRODUCTION

The Early College High School (ECHS) model, begun in 2002, was an innovative educational response to lack of college readiness and enrollment in postsecondary education for underrepresented and disadvantaged students, who constituted more than half of all public school students. The problem had reached critical levels in light of several factors: (1) postsecondary enrollment and graduation rates were low, and continue to be, for these students; and (2) these same students struggled most to succeed in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). To this latter factor, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates through 2024, 73% of occupations with the highest projected growth will require education beyond high school, and 40% will require a credential beyond the high-school diploma.[1]

The purpose of the Early College Initiative is to create and maintain partnerships connecting our state's districts and high schools with our state's colleges in order to give thousands of students—especially first-generation college-goers—access to college completion and career success. What the ECHS model has succeeded in doing is *sealing the cracks through which many disadvantaged students fall* by providing them with a personalized and rigorous program that creates a smooth transition from high school to college. The ECHS model motivates more low-income youth to go to college and gives them a head start on their careers. "It's not just about exposure to college; it's about increased support and helping students to self-identify as learners."[2]

The ECHS model makes sense: It assumes students who engage in rigorous coursework in high school are better prepared for college-level work and more likely to earn a postsecondary degree. The model's mission to engage historically underrepresented student populations is the most impactful element of the ECHS model.

Early College High Schools are a "good chance" educational paradigm: We engage students who were otherwise being left behind and motivate them on their way "early" to college. We raise the expectations underserved and high-risk students have for themselves by offering them access to advanced high-school courses and college courses. The advantage of this approach is that students are exposed to higher education earlier in their lives while in a familiar, more comfortable learning environment.

Educators are taking heed of the strong outcomes being reported from more than 300 ECHS model schools nationwide, particularly for low-income, high-need, and under-represented students.[3,4,5,6,7] Nine years of research show Early College High Schools worked for a large segment of the students they targeted. These outcomes are worth noting as more schools consider transitioning from a traditional high school to an ECHS.

The U.S. Department of Education research division identifies Early College High Schools as evidence-based models shown to have positive effects on high-school completion, credit accumulation, college enrollment, and college degree attainment: Data outcomes for college outcomes showed from 9% to 20% increases in enrollment and postsecondary degree achievement[8]. Other data, reported by the Alliance for Excellent Education[9] show outcomes for the ECHS model far exceed those from other traditional high-school programs, including other credit-accelerating programs:

♦ ECHS students earn an average of 21.6 college credits by the time they graduate high school, compared to 2.8 credits earned in other high-school programs. Thus, ECHS programs save students time and money toward college as 94% earn some college credits before they graduate. This is especially important for students from low-income families.

♦ 30.1% of ECHS students complete postsecondary credentials within four years of high-school graduation, compared with 4.2% of students in traditional high-school programs.

♦ In the first year out of high school, students from Early College High Schools enroll in postsecondary education at a rate 38% higher than students from traditional high schools, and 19% higher than students from other accelerating high-school programs.

♦ Minority students and those from low-income families who graduate from an ECHS are more likely (10 times and 8.5

times respectively) to obtain a college degree than students from traditional high-school programs.

♦ ECHS 9th grade students who had not taken Algebra 1 in 8th grade successfully completed Algebra 1 at higher rates than 9th grade students in traditional high school programs.

♦ ECHS students showed better outcomes in: (1) narrowing minority/nonminority performance gaps; (2) increasing engagement as measured through increased attendance rates; (3) reducing behavioral incidents in school; and (4) self-reporting more positive school experiences.[10]

While ECHS models across the country provide unique programs reflective of their local and regional cultures and economies, almost all share core student-focused **design components,** which ease the path from high school to college to highly skilled jobs in demand for our highest need students. These components reflect the belief that *all* students deserve the opportunity for higher education and good jobs, and that preparation beginning in high school can support success. The core components are:

♦ *Equitable Access* – *increasing the enrollment of underrepresented students in higher education, ensuring all students have the opportunity for higher learning.*

♦ *Academic Pathways* – *ensuring high school curricula is well-integrated and aligned with college and career lessons and skills for seamless progression.*

♦ *Robust Student Support* –*providing comprehensive academic and advising support services to help students succeed both academically and personally.*

♦ *Connections to Career* – *strengthening the link between education and careers through workplace and experiential learning experiences, offering students insight into their future careers.*

♦ *High-quality, Deep Partnerships* – *building and sustaining collaborations between high schools and colleges to coordinate student learning and preparation.*

To these design components for ECHS programs, the state of New Mexico adds an additional component believed to be integral to the success of Early College High Schools and for which New Mexico serves as a model nationwide with its commitment to its educational leaders:

♦ *Exceptional Leadership Skills* – *supporting school administrators and educators as leaders of successful Early College High Schools through professional development and professional learning communities.*

As we are firmly in a time where Early College High Schools are a research-based and proven model, we anticipate expanding the reach of this educational program to penetrate further into communities where students will be the first in their families to attend college, matriculate, and be well-prepared for our ever-growing global marketplace.

UNDERSTANDING EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS

Early College High Schools are dual-credit or dual-enrollment models designed to help students graduate from high school while simultaneously earning college credits and/or career certifications. In partnership with a community college or four-year college or university, Early College High Schools offer a cohesive curriculum that integrates both high school and college-level coursework into a single course of study. It is this "cohesiveness" that distinguishes Early College High Schools students taking individual college-level courses that are not necessarily part of a plan of study.

Early College High Schools are specifically designed to target students who are underrepresented in higher education, such as low-income and first-generation college students. Proponents of the ECHS model point to several benefits for students, including a head start on a degree or certification and cost savings through early completion of college credits, and in some cases, early graduation from a four-year college. Five core principles guide Early College High Schools nationwide:

♦ Early College High Schools serve students underrepresented in higher education. This includes minorities and students who would be the first-in family to attend college.

♦ Early College High Schools are created and sustained in partnership with a school/district, institution of higher education, and the community. All are jointly accountable for student success.

♦ Partners jointly develop an integrated academic program in which all students earn one to two years' transferable college credit leading to college completion.

♦ All students are part of a comprehensive support system that develops academic and social skills as well as the behaviors and conditions needed to complete college.

♦ Early College High Schools work within a professional community on behalf of support policies to ensure sustainability and advancement of the early college model in education.

The model, based on location, of Early College High Schools is flexible. It can be *freestanding* (separate from the high school) and may be located contiguous, close to, or directly on the postsecondary partner's campus. Another model is the *academy model* where the ECHS program is located within a traditional high school. In both models, college-level courses are taught by college instructors or high-school instructors accredited to teach college courses.

NEW MEXICO: A STATE-LEVEL COMMITMENT TO THE ECHS MODEL

THE NEW MEXICO ECHS INITIATIVE

In 2017, New Mexico had the second-lowest four-year high school graduation rate in the country at 71%, with the rates roughly 5% lower for English learners and economically disadvantaged students. College-entry achievement gaps were 37% for White state residents earning a four-year or higher degree, compared to 13% and 9% respectively for Hispanic and Native American residents.[11] Faced with these grim educational outcomes—and the desire to build a "better tomorrow" for all students, the state of New Mexico made a bold commitment to change: In 2013, the governor included within the executive budget an appropriation for what was called "New Mexico Graduates Now" to start Early College High Schools in the state. The ECHS model was selected by state leaders for several reasons. First, it was *evidence-based,* and has shown positive effects in other states—including increased graduation rates, higher college enrollment rates, and higher college degree-earning rates. And second, the ECHS paradigm was designed to reverse poor outcomes among marginalized students.

To ensure broad support for this major initiative, in 2016, NM PED launched the largest-ever state education listening tour to determine support for Early College High Schools and their perceived impact on workforce demands.[12] Findings were compiled into three reports showing broad support across educational, business and industry, and workforce sectors in New Mexico.[13]

The state's embrace of Early College High Schools reflects its recognition and understanding of Early College High Schools as a change model for high-risk students and underrepresented students for whom college is a challenge. Aligning with the basic tenets of the ECHS model, the state has put forth the following guiding vision for Early College High Schools :

♦ Early College High Schools will be dedicated to enrolling and supporting low-income youth, first-generation collegegoers, racially and ethnically diverse students, and other students underrepresented in higher education.
♦ Early College High Schools will use transformative strategies to bring college into high school by simultaneously offering a high-school diploma and a college-level credential or degree upon high-school graduation.
♦ Early College High Schools will expose students to rigorous academics and career technical education coursework.
♦ Early College High Schools will provide a program of study toward a postsecondary credential or degree without tuition cost to the participant or the participant's family.
♦ Early College High Schools will establish formalized partnerships with colleges, universities, and industry partners to create a model of shared responsibility for student success.
♦ Early College High Schools will include meaningful work-based learning experiences aligned to dynamic sectors of the state's economy and a structured CTE sequence leading to credentials recognized by business and industry.

As of school year 2024, New Mexico has 21 designated Early College High Schools. Postsecondary partners include the University of New Mexico and its many campuses across the state; and many of the community colleges in the same district or community as the Early College High Schools . Business partnerships represent a wide range of industries as well as large and small businesses, operating locally, regionally, and nationally with a presence in New Mexico. All provide workplace learning opportunities and many are involved in the development of curricula.

EARLY RESEARCH FINDINGS IN NEW MEXICO

Independent Research Study

The New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee partnered with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) of the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology to develop and conduct a quasi-experimental analysis to determine whether attending a New Mexico ECHS leads to greater degree attainment for students[14]. The study compared student outcomes for students who attended one of two of New Mexico's earliest Early College High Schools that held random admissions lotteries—the Middle College High School in Gallup and the Masters Program in Santa Fe—with students who did not attend Early College High Schools. Study results, while limited to those colleges reporting data to the National Student Clearinghouse, showed that students who attended one of these Early College High Schools had better postsecondary outcomes than students who did not attend an ECHS. Specifically:

♦ The likelihood of receiving a postsecondary degree for ECHS students increased by 10%.
♦ 24% of ECHS students attained a postsecondary degree (associates, bachelors, or master's) compared to 14% of non-ECHS students.
♦ *Increased student engagement* is a key factor: Those students who attended all three years of the ECHS (10th through 12th grades) were more than twice as likely to obtain an associate degree, and nearly 75% more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree than non-ECHS students.[15]
♦ ECHS schools receive better grades than other schools statewide on school report cards, with 85% receiving an A or B grade compared to 39% of all schools in the state.

These findings, coupled with statewide testing data, are encouraging and most certainly shine a light on the potential of Early College High Schools to change the educational environment in New Mexico. The state is working with Pathway2Careers (P2C) and other researchers to structure more comprehensive and rigorous evaluations in the near future, as more schools are in operation for more years, and funding for research studies is successfully secured.

New Mexico College and University Survey

In 2016, NM PED commissioned a study to document current needs of ECHS programs and the nature of the ECHS models in the state. The survey included perspectives of the colleges and universities. These findings represent 26 respondents from nine community colleges, colleges, and universities, all of which worked with high schools to offer dual credits. Of the respondents, 56% partnered directly with Early College High Schools at the time of the survey.

♦ **Partnerships:** Community colleges were most frequently an ECHS partner: 92% of the Early College High Schools in New Mexico partnered with a community college, and 46% partnered with a four-year public higher education institution (alone or in addition to the community-college partnership).
♦ **Workforce Credentials and Experiences:** A total of 67% of the respondents offered workforce credentials in three sectors: (1) human services; (2) law, public safety, corrections, and security; and (3) the STEM disciplines. While few offered credentialing in health sciences, 89% offered workforce experiences in these areas. Fully 67% offered workforce experiences in arts, audiovisual technology, and communications.
♦ **Purpose:** From the college and university perspective, the top priorities of the Early College High Schools were to support students from groups traditionally underserved in postsecondary education, compress the time to completion, and increase economic viability in the community.
♦ **Student Groups Targeted:** When asked to rank high-school students by which group would benefit most from ECHS, 83% responded 1st generation college students, 71% said underserved students, 63% said minority students, 46% said college-bound students, and 38% responded high-achieving students. Of note, minority students are represented in all these categories.
♦ **Student Skills for Success:** Respondents identified the need for Early College High Schools to provide students with a broad support system that included soft skills, mentoring, and career counseling: 68% recommended explicit teaching of self-direction in learning, 58% career counseling, 47% individual coaching and mentoring, 37% mentorship, and 32% the explicit teaching of evidence-based reasoning skills.

- **Technology:** All respondents offered technology-based support for ECHS students. For example, 88% allow students to access college course resources and take the college courses online, with online feedback from college instructors; 71% allow students to turn in their homework digitally; and 47% offered online career counseling.
- **Support Services:** Colleges and universities reported a wide range of collaborative and support services to their ECHS partners: 47% report ECHS student progress to ECHS faculty, 42% schedule collaborative sessions with ECHS faculty and offer special transcripts, 37% provide coaching/mentoring beyond what they have for regular college students, and 26% have special tutoring services.
- **Fiscal and Operational Impact/Effectiveness:** Respondents' perspectives on the fiscal impact of the ECHS on their institutions were mixed. Those indicating a positive response to the fiscal and operational impact of the ECHS cite students' transitioning into full-time students after high-school graduation; and Early College High Schools opening doors for the college/university to create strong relationships with local businesses. Negative impacts were the use of college science laboratories and consumables at the college's expense, tuition support, and instructor time.

Overall, 84% described their partnership with an ECHS as highly effective/effective with mutually beneficial outcomes.

P2C PATHWAY 2 CAREERS

BECOMING AN ECHS: FIRST STEPS

The New Mexico ECHS Toolkit—developed and adapted[16] by Pathway2Careers (P2C), helps educators in their journey to build and implement their ECHS programs. Beginning with key assumptions, the toolkit includes well-defined, targeted student populations, clearly defined and measurable outcome goals, strong postsecondary partnerships, rigorous academic standards (including course design, learning outcomes, and sequencing), and a comprehensive student support system. The full toolkit, including design components introduced in following sections, is available at https://www.echs-nm.com/.
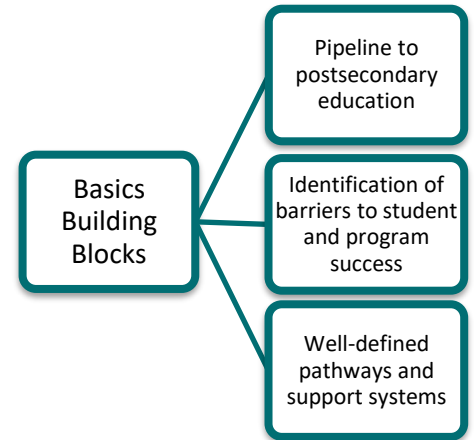
STARTING WITH BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS

Bottom-line basics state that ECHS students are in a pipeline toward postsecondary education whether through college enrollment or career education. Along this pipeline, students can experience personal and/or academic challenges and barriers which could force them out prior to starting or engaging in the ECHS program.

In addition to students, the program may encounter start-up barriers that need to be addressed, i.e., resources, locations, and partnership development.

A key strategy to removing potential and real barriers is to develop well-defined pathways and support systems—varying by type, granting institution, and level of credential—for the successful transition to, and completion of, postsecondary education. Well-defined pathways include rigorous academic standards, vetted curriculum, comprehensive student support, tutoring, carefully tracked student academic plans, and detailed career and degree agreements between the ECHS and its postsecondary partner. Examples of support systems include tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and peer support groups.

As you write down the basic building blocks and associated assumptions about your ECHS, you begin the development process. This simple exercise is the starting point as you define and develop program and student outcomes, implementation strategies, resources, and policies that distinguish your ECHS model.

Basics Building Blocks
- Pipeline to postsecondary education
- Identification of barriers to student and program success
- Well-defined pathways and support systems

IDENTIFYING PROGRAM RESOURCES AND POLICIES

Early College High Schools can be expensive with the money needed to pay tuition, books and fees for the college credit-bearing courses students take; and allocating costs for student support systems, both in the community and school. For rural and remote Early College High Schools, transportation between the postsecondary partner college campus and the high school may further increase costs per student for your ECHS. You will need to ensure adequate funds are allocated to support these costs. As you move forward with first steps, budget funds need to be committed and fundraising strategies will need to be in place to support sustainability.

Program Resources and Policies

- Adequate funding for development and sustainability
- Strong community and business relationships for fundraising
- Comprehensive program policies
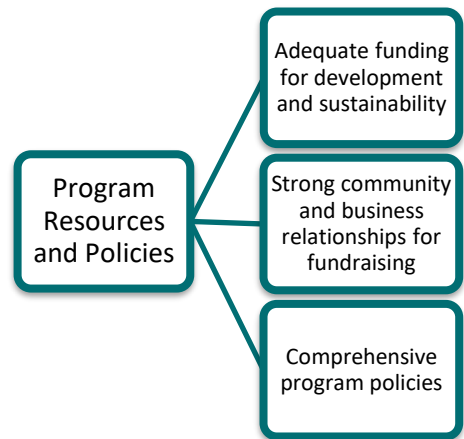
While research indicates Early College High Schools average $3,800 extra per student, research suggests these school pay for themselves through long-term benefits to both students and the community. ECHS students graduate college in greater numbers, and their expected future earnings and public subsidy savings more than offset the cost of the ECHS—with an ROI of 15:1 thanks to expected higher salaries and reduced welfare costs.[17] These are important research findings to share with businesses and the community. Strong relationships with community organizations, business and industry leaders, and other stakeholders can provide ongoing fundraising opportunities to augment federal, state, and local educational funding. Also of value are public and private grant opportunities. Students attending schools in need of improvement, high-priority schools, or students from lower SES could qualify for ESSA funding.

Strong policies will support your ECHS model as an effective change agent that helps close academic gaps in education and diversity gaps in the workforce. Because the ECHS model targets a specific student population, has a clear curricular model, and is built upon partnerships with higher education, *schools need to be thoughtful* when developing policies and procedures for their ECHS. Keep in mind that in all cases, policy and operational applications of these policies should reflect the culture and economic environment of the community. The following paragraphs summarize eight important policy categories and suggestions for content of the policy:[18]

Access and support for students and their families
- Notify students and parents of the availability of ECHS programs while students are still in middle school or 9th grade (if your program begins in 10th grade).
- To bolster parent engagement, work closely with parents who may not be familiar with college opportunities and requirements.
- Consider whether to include nonacademic support services for students who face challenges in learning, through linkages with community resources.

Program quality
- Align all ECHS curricular content to the state's core academic standards.
- Ensure designated college-level coursework mirrors the same rigor and pacing as when delivered on a college campus.
- Confirm all higher education partnerships are in place, and college instructors or college-certified high-school teachers are teaching all college-credit ECHS courses.

Student and program outcomes
- Establish consensus written goals, with measurable outcomes for students and the program.
- Identify measurable outcomes for your ECHS, such as high-school graduation and dropout rates, attendance rates, college credits earned, certification and associate degree completion, admission to four-year institutions, and employment in career or study-related fields.

Workforce alignment
- Use current labor market information and local business input so that curricular content and career pathways in Early College High Schools reflect the current and projected local labor market demand for high-skilled jobs in your community.

- Work with area business partners to infuse the curricula with real-life business projects.
- Work with business partners to establish workplace experiences such as mentoring, shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships.

Credit transfer
- Establish that all college-level course credits earned by students in Early College High Schools are transferable to other public two- and four-year colleges and universities; make sure written articulation agreements are in place.
- Communicate with parents and students the college cost savings Early College High Schools represent.

Program accountability
- Develop and implement an evaluation process to determine program effectiveness.
- Establish shared accountability procedures with higher education partners.

Administrative support
- Work with the state and local education partners to develop and prepare training programs for school leaders and educators as they transition to and continue in an ECHS.
- Develop and maintain a program of continuing professional development.
- Work with your postsecondary partner to establish credentialing programs for ECHS teachers who wish to be college-level certified teachers.

Facilities and finance
- Identify ECHS facilities and any capital needs.
- Establish avenues for coverage of college tuition costs, through the state, postsecondary and business partners, and other sources.
- Identify sources of funding from local business partners.

DEFINING STUDENT AND PROGRAM OUTCOMES

At the program level, your outcomes will broadly reflect how well you achieved equitable access, whether curricula is strong and rigorous, whether what students are learning reflects a clear pathway to future career opportunities, and whether you built partnerships to support the integration of college and work opportunities while in high school. Taking these outcomes together, your ECHS will be a reflection of the culture and needs of your program stakeholders and the community. Often, to achieve this clarity, development of program outcomes will need to begin with assessments of the current educational, economic and workforce landscape of the community.

Program and Student Outcomes

- Programmatic alignment with ECHS vision and college/career pathways
- Student performance and pathways
- A college culture in high school
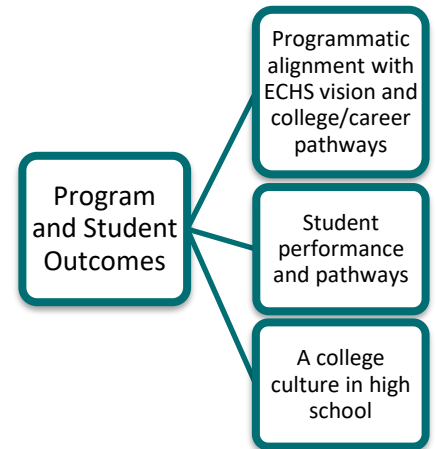
Student outcomes will be more imbedded in how well students performed in a smaller, more personalized, and more supportive school experience for a district's or school's disadvantaged population. Thus, student outcomes will look toward academic achievements, graduation rates, program completions, pathways to college, and credits and certifications earned (i.e., an associate degree, a workforce credential, technical certifications/workforce credentials, or a combination of each, with credits articulated toward further postsecondary programs).

When one of your student outcomes does include earning technical certifications/workforce credentials, you will need to review all industry and state-mandated learning outcomes for CTE programs to meet requirements. Early College High Schools that include focused technical training must graduate students who can enter the workforce with the required skills and abilities needed for employment in high-demand, high-skilled, and well-paying jobs without the immediate need for additional training or further education (although that may be a pathway they take for career advancement at a later date).

Early College High Schools provide students with the opportunity to be part of a combined high school/college program. In addition to the cost savings of this design and the head start disadvantaged and under-represented students get on their future, the program exposes students to a *college culture* while in high school. Establishing Early College High Schools on a college campus addresses the *power of place,* a key element of the ECHS design. Supporting this, several students show that Early College High Schools located on a college campus have more positive outcomes in proficiencies, college credits earned, attendance, and engagement.

Locating an ECHS in a high school (academy model) may be the only appropriate design for rural or isolated communities. The reason for this is that many of these schools are not located near a college campus, and transportation would be a financial and logistical barrier. For these schools, the challenge and opportunity is for high schools and colleges to work together to develop new, new creative ways to build college cultures.

In each of these cases, the program and student outcome is to ensure the college immersion experience is not sacrificed.

DEFINING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Implementation strategies will include defining the thematic structure of the ECHS, projecting the number of students/number of grades to achieve desired outcomes, configurations of teaching staff, and assessment and continuous quality review. Other implementation strategies not addressed herein include timelines and management structure (district and school levels). An implementation plan is often part of a program management plan and, as such, is a *fluid* guideline for strategic planning initially and going forward with your program. Thus, building an effective implementation plan, with benchmarks and assessments will ensure your ECHS is effective in brokering the intersection of your community's education, economy, and workforce sectors.

Thematic implementation: A first step in building the implementation plan is determining if your program will have a stand-out career or academic theme. Two examples of this may include a medical pathway, reflecting current and projected workforce needs in your region; or STEM education, reflecting a rigorous curriculum in high-demand career knowledge.
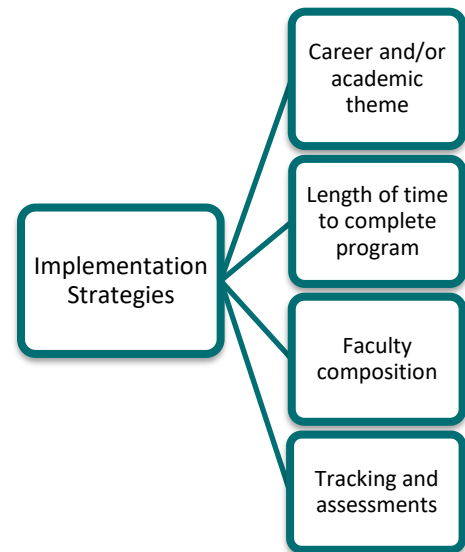
Your analyses to identify themes for your ECHS may include additional research into trends identified not just locally. For example, The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Youth reported on a shift to greener jobs, saying: "Millions of green jobs have been created across a range of sectors and there are more work opportunities ahead. The shift to a greener economy could generate 24 million additional jobs globally by 2030, and lift tens of millions of workers out of poverty, and it also offers opportunities for young people."[19] Your ECHS may further review these trends with local business and industry leaders to determine if they will impact the local workforce.

Size and length: The length of the program will be determined by your assessment of how many grades are needed to make up the program *in order for* students to achieve desired program and student outcomes. You may decide to begin with fewer students in 10th to 12th grade and add both more students per grade and a grade 9 in subsequent years, following initial assessment on program success.

Teacher implementation: The ECHS model requires college coursework to be taught by either partner college faculty, high-school teachers who meet the adjunct criteria for the ECHS postsecondary partner, or both. As part of your memorandum of understanding with your postsecondary partner and implementation processes going forward, you will need to develop protocols between the ECHS and the college to discuss teaching assignments and progress reports, and ensure open lines of communication to make the teaching process seamless.

Tracking and assessment: The implementation plan for your ECHS should include a clear policy for tracking, assessment, and continuous quality improvement. Student assessments should be a shared data-collection process with the college instructors and high-school teachers to determine support needs so that students can remain on track to complete the program. The assessments will assist you as you assess when students are ready for college-level work.

The development of an ECHS in a school district is an evidence-based, yet ambitious, undertaking for improving access to college for disadvantaged students who are significantly under-represented in postsecondary education and high-demand careers. To this end, collaborative continuous improvement must be defined within the implementation plan. By including both high-school and college teaching staff and administrators in the improvement process, support services can be readily provided for students to ensure they remain on track to succeed.

Implementation Strategies
- Career and/or academic theme
- Length of time to complete program
- Faculty composition
- Tracking and assessments

In addition to serving as safeguards for student success, the tracking and assessment process will identify an ECHS's best practices, training needs, and adjustments to support program outcomes.

BECOMING AN ECHS: SIX CORE ECHS DESIGN PRINCIPLES

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 1: EQUITABLE ACCESS

ECHS EQUITABLE ACCESS NATIONWIDE SURVEY RESULTS

A 2011 review by Jobs for the Future of its national student information database, coupled with an independent study of ECHS outcomes, characterizes the impact and success of Early College High Schools on achieving a more equitable access to college and career pathways while in high school.[20]

- Early College High Schools are effectively reaching disadvantaged students to get them on a pathway to college. Of the students enrolled, 77% are minority students, 57% are from low-income families, and 45% are the first in their immediate families to attend college.

- High-school graduation rates increased to 93%, versus 78% in traditional programs.

- 30% of all students in Early College High Schools graduate high school with an associate degree or industry certification along with a high-school diploma, compared to very few nationally.

- 94% of ECHS students earn college credit while in high school, compared with less than 10% nationwide.

- 71% of ECHS graduates directly enroll in college following high school. This enrollment percentage is 8% higher than the national average, 14% higher than the national average for African Americans, 16% higher than the national average for Latinos, and 26% higher than the national average for low-income students.
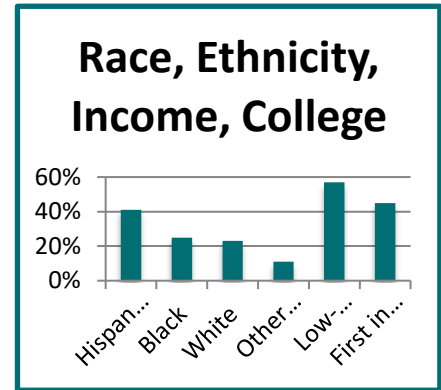
These data remain fairly consistent today, with equitable access being a clear outcome for Early College High Schools .

Race, Ethnicity, Income, College

A bar chart showing percentages (0% to 60%) for categories: Hispan..., Black, White, Other..., Low-..., First in...

BUILDING YOUR STUDENT POPULATION

The demographic composition of your ECHS population should mirror that of your district, while adhering to and reflecting the core vision of the ECHS model—that is, to engage students underrepresented in higher education, disadvantaged students, and first-generation college-goers. Thus, recruiting students is a conscious process.

This process of selecting students begins with each school defining which groups of low-income and underserved populations will be targeted and in what ratios they will be recruited to reflect the district composition. As you establish your policies, you will need to determine how to recruit from the various subgroups that constitute your low-income and underserved populations. Examples may include ESL students, recent immigrants, students with poor attendance, students struggling academically at their current grade level, and other factors.
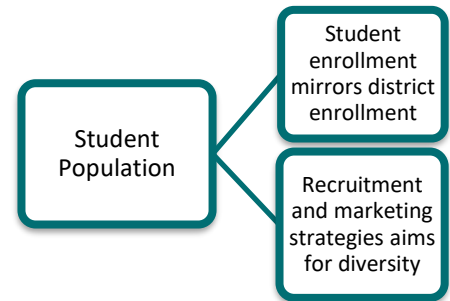
It should be noted that selection solely by lottery cannot guarantee the ECHS student population reflects the same student population and diversity of the district and may require modifications.

The most effective tools for building your student population are recruitment and marketing. A detailed recruitment and marketing strategy will help establish the application and acceptance processes in Early College High Schools. Examples of recruitment and marketing include brochures and letters sent to middle- and high-school counselors and parents; informational materials provided to rising 8th-grade students and 9th grade students; and school-based meetings and presentations. Presenters can include ECHS leaders, postsecondary partners, and business partners. Another effective strategy is the use of print and broadcast media. You will need to develop a flow of responsibility for the recruitment and marketing process.

As a follow-up to recruitment, your ECHS will need to establish application criteria. These may include teacher recommendations, attendance, test scores and grades, student and parent commitment, or a combination of each of these. As you establish your ECHS admission criteria, it is important to use measures that ensure students with low cultural capital, little family support, or both are not further disenfranchised from educational and career opportunities. There should be few, if any, barriers to student participation.

Parents and students alike must be well-informed about Early College High Schools . This information should be available to them during the recruitment and application timeline each year and from individual meetings with school counselors and administrators throughout the year. This is particularly important during the recruitment and application period.

Student Population → Student enrollment mirrors district enrollment

Student Population → Recruitment and marketing strategies aims for diversity

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 2: ACADEMIC PATHWAYS

DEVELOPING YOUR ECHS CURRICULUM

Early College High Schools provide a *rigorous* academic program that can increase the educational achievement of traditionally underserved, underperforming students. All curricular pathways in the ECHS model are *college focused*. That is, the curriculum is designed and sequenced to prepare *all* students for success at a postsecondary level, with an appropriate level of challenge to keep students engaged but not discouraged.

A formal *review and vetting* process will need to be conducted by postsecondary and industry partners. Postsecondary partners will need to review courses and pathways to: (1) articulate credits for continued study in college or university following high-school graduation; and (2) ensure college courses in high school are of the same rigor provided on the college campus. Industry leaders will need to review and vet the curriculum and course content to ensure certifications and credentials being provided in career pathways and programs are industry-approved.

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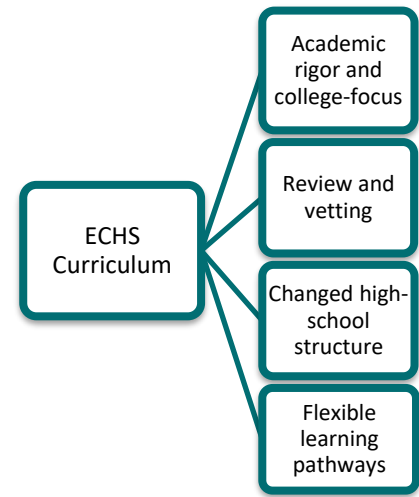
Early College High Schools have the potential to improve high-school graduation rates and better prepare students for family-supporting careers by *changing the structure* of the high-school years to include the ability to pursue college credits (thus reducing the number of years to get a degree after high school), and removing financial and other barriers to college. While the curricular design for Early College High Schools varies from site to site, the framework remains constant.

- Starting in 9th or 10th grade, students engage in a curriculum of high school and *increasingly* postsecondary coursework.
- Depending on the high school, the curricula for both high school and college is generally career-focused and can be delivered through career and technical education programs, school academies, or integrated students in the ECHS.
- By the end of 12th grade, students who remained in the program for its entirety will have concurrently earned a high-school diploma as well as credits toward, or completion of, an associate degree, a technical credential, industry certification, and/or up to 60 credit hours of postsecondary coursework.
- When students continue their postsecondary education at a four-year university, they should enter as a junior since their credits earned in high school will be articulated and, ideally, transferable.

Because Early College High Schools serve high-need students, *teaching and learning is flexible* to accommodate challenges students may experience. For example, curriculum may be paced and/or include alternative pathways,

Paced curriculum: Regardless of their background, when students arrive at Early College High Schools , they are there to learn. To support this learning, each ECHS sets its curriculum and pacing with the student in mind, to help him succeed. For example,

- Early College High Schools can pace the integration of college courses into the curriculum. An ECHS program may be structured so that students advance through high school with no credit-bearing classes in 9th grade, up to 10 credits in 10th grade, and 24 to 26 credit hours in the 11th and 12th grades.
- Some Early College High Schools develop plans for two years of credit, with expectations that not all students will achieve this goal. This might reflect reduced attainment goals for all students, depending on the initial goals for the program.

Alternative pathways: Students interested in industry-based careers may want to earn industry-approved certifications in high school rather than prepare for two- or four-year degree programs. While these credentials may be more relevant to student interests, they are often less academically rigorous, so that students who are performing at a lower academic level can still achieve high standards of learning and invaluable industry-endorsed certification through a different pathway.

In all these implementation structures, the intent remains constant: to make the curriculum as rigorous as possible without shutting the door on any student.

EMBEDDING TRACKING SYSTEMS INTO ECHS CURRICULA

An integral part of academic pathways is the tracking system that measures and shares student progress and benchmarks between the two academic partners—the high school and the college. This progress tracking allows early identification and response to individual needs and challenges students may be facing. (It may require signed FERPA release forms for some information to be shared with the high school.)

Four areas of accountability are addressed within an institutionally based tracking system. These include accuracy, benchmarks, shared language, and shared responsibility:

♦ Information contained in the data system must be accurate.

♦ Each student outcome must define success measures and include benchmarks of performance and program successes using current education attainment data as a baseline.

♦ Because the language used to describe benchmarks helps direct approaches and allocation of resources, it must be clear. This will be a new learning process for all stakeholders in the ECHS since tracking and assessment now includes measures of academic success, social integration, support systems, and engagement in high school to college to career pathways. With guidance and leadership from your ECHS leadership and your partners, this new language will become a shared form of communication.

♦ Shared responsibility in ECHS tracking systems is bi-directional. That is: (1) students are active partners in their education, with a shared responsibility for engaging institutional support systems to achieve their educational goals; and (2) institutions are partners in the student's educational journal by providing guidance, learning opportunities that support student success, and structured support systems that provide targeted resources based on student needs.
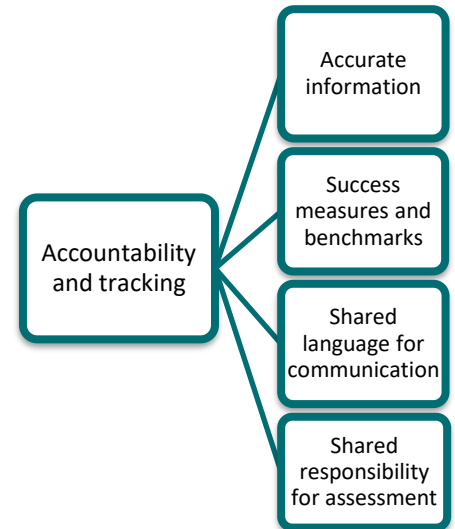
DESIGN PRINCIPLE 3: ROBUST STUDENT SUPPORT

PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

In the ECHS model, students can complete up to six years of work in just four years. While this compressed time frame presents many opportunities, it also presents many challenges—particularly for students who are under-prepared entering 9th grade. Student support systems are a proven way to support students with diverse levels of academic achievement and learning experiences and successes.

With this exposure to more complex learning systems, i.e., with integrated high-school and college academics, students are facing an academic environment with which they may not be familiar. Thus, a wraparound, interwoven system of student support services is a requirement in your ECHS if students are to succeed in their postsecondary attainment prior to, and continuing after, high-school graduation.
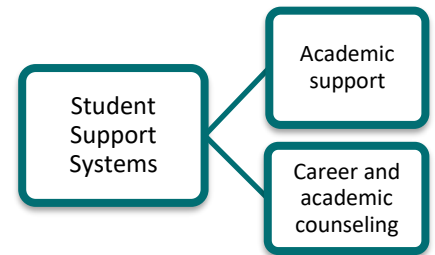
There are two types of student support systems you need to develop for your ECHS: academic support, and career and academic counseling.

♦ For *academic support,* the curriculum should include a system of student support through teacher contact, tutoring, study groups, review sessions, homework guidance, summer sessions, learning labs, skill development classes, staged course sequencing, and peer-based student support groups.

♦ For *career and academic counseling,* the student support system should include career and academic counseling; college planning sessions, college application and funding workshops; linkage with business mentors including workplace experiences; academic development tracking and review; and increased, sometimes gradual, exposure to postsecondary institutions and processes.

In all of these support systems, parent participation should be encouraged.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 4: CONNECTION TO CAREER

INTERSECTING EDUCATION, THE ECONOMY, AND THE WORKFORCE

The changing nature of work requires broadening the scope of high-school education to fill available *career-advancing jobs* through postsecondary education and credentials. National associations are keeping up with this new paradigm, so well demonstrated in Early College High Schools, as these professional groups consider the changing nature of workforce preparedness and necessary skills to fill available career-advancing jobs. For example, citing figures from the National Science and Engineering Indicators and research on the "Hidden STEM Economy" by the Brookings Institute, the National Science Board acknowledged the different levels of college preparation that could qualify individuals for jobs, e.g., a two- or four year degree, college credits toward earned credentials.[21] With this broader approach to technical requirements in the workforce, you can develop your ECHS to prepare a greater number of students to take full advantage of today's economy. It is important that, as part of your ECHS development, you are aware of these trends in education and the workforce to ensure your program is relevant.
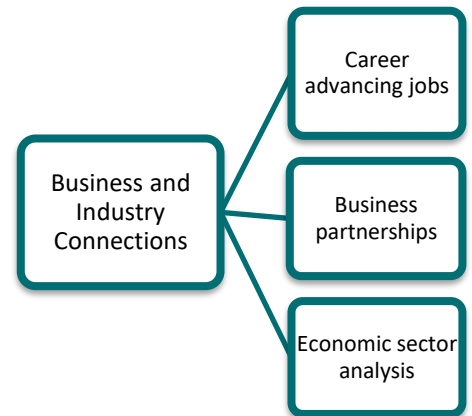
Early College High Schools require *business partnerships* to provide work-based experiences and ensure educational pathways are relevant to workforce demands. Some partnerships further include business and industry in curricular development. This approach is ideal for any ECHS—i.e., where business and industry help define pathways in education, and, in turn, education is responsive to labor market projections and advisement from business partners.
When developing workforce partnerships and defining the types of support between education and the workplace, you should first complete sector analyses of labor markets so education can become coterminous with workforce regions and high-demand industries. With this data in hand, your ECHS can convene, along with their business/industry sector and college/university partners, to develop sector-specific recommendations for workplace development.

Understanding the economic environment of the geographic area which the ECHS serves provides you with valuable information about what careers are in high demand. This allows you to build career and college pathways and partnerships that reflect the realities of the workplace. Awareness of job demands may help your ECHS program link with high-demand area businesses, which are open to providing operational support for the program. Industry sector strategies have the potential to provide a unifying vision of postsecondary courses and pathways beginning in high school—the ECHS model.

# DESIGN PRINCIPLE 5: HIGH-QUALITY AND DEEP PARTNERSHIPS

BUILDING STRONG POSTSECONDARY PARTNERSHIPS

The partnership between Early College High Schools and a two- or four-year postsecondary institution represents *student acceleration.* It is the foundation for the ECHS model, which is designed to propel students toward high-school graduation while simultaneously earning college credit toward career certifications, two-year degrees, and/or credits that can be transferred toward the completion of four-year degrees.

While the models vary, the partnership between Early College High Schools and colleges remains firm. Typically, students start the acceleration in grades 9 or 10 by completing a significant portion of their high-school course requirements for graduation. Then, in grades 11 and 12, students primarily take their courses through the program's postsecondary partner to earn an associate degree, workforce credential, or credits toward a two- or four-year degree, awarded with their high-school diploma.

Postsecondary Partnerships
- Student acceleration
- Selection of postsecondary partner
- Aligned partnership goals

In addition to geographic proximity, when you *select* your higher education partner, you may want to consider whether your program design is more aligned with a community college or university curriculum and pathway. This decision will reflect the structure and emphasis of your ECHS and whether it is a springboard to a four-year degree; or whether it prioritizes industry-approved certifications and a two-year degree. You may make this decision based on the demographic composition of your district as well as the economic and workforce needs of your community. Once you have finalized selection of your partnership, you will need to ensure a formalized memorandum of understanding with defined lines of responsibility is in place.

Outcomes and goals for ECHS students must be aligned with individual institutional partnerships to ensure clear lines of completion are developed. You will need to address issues of transfer of credit, degree completion requirements, use of college faculty, ECHS teacher requirements, use of college partner resources (e.g., lab access, library collections, program guidance, graduate student tutors), and the establishment of program pathways for critical need careers.
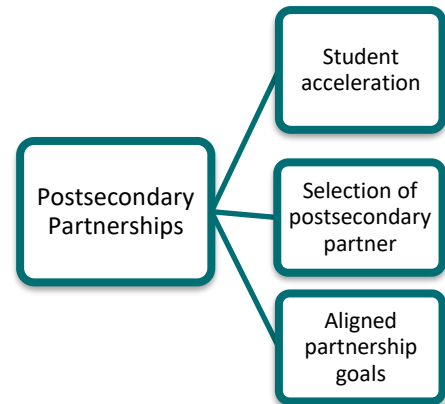
BUILDING BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Across the country and in New Mexico, the workplace is changing. Manufacturing and mining are being largely replaced by service industries that require varying levels of technical skills. This change dictates the importance of Early College High Schools, where planning and *cooperation* among education, the economy, and workforce stakeholders are the foundation for the model.
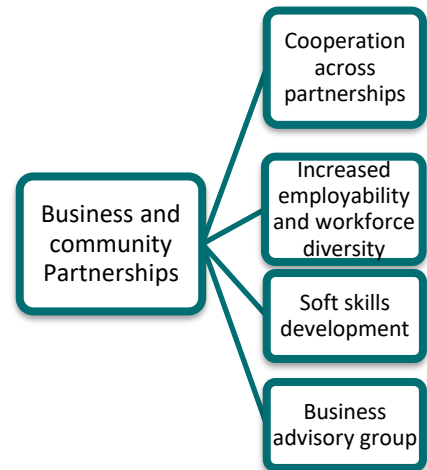
From an educator's point of view, business partnerships bring relevance to an ECHS program by providing real-life experiences in the classroom and onsite at their businesses through workplace experiences. From a business's point of view, business partnerships help educators understand workforce needs. These viewpoints were confirmed in a survey conducted by the NM PED of more than 30 business and industry leaders doing business in New Mexico.

For businesses, the importance of Early College High Schools is improving a student's ability to earn workforce credentials/certificates, and a student's increased *workforce employability* through workforce experiences. Businesses applaud ECHS's support for students from traditionally underrepresented groups for postsecondary learning as this represents an opportunity for business to bring greater *diversity* to their workforce.

Your ECHS must incorporate direct teaching of *soft skills* to prepare students for careers. These include self-direction, taking responsibility, communication, fact-based reasoning and critical thinking, time management, and teamwork. These are critical skills and part of ECHS curricula in almost every instance. These are critical employability skills and cannot be left for the workplace.

The types of roles and responsibilities business and community partners have with Early College High Schools are varied, from advisory to financial to direct services. As you develop your ECHS, you should include a business advisory board to infuse the curriculum with real-life learning and projects, and to plan for workforce experiences for students. These experiences may include mentoring, job shadowing, internships, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships. The advisory board can also be a venue for fundraising from the business community.

Of note, businesses and community partners face challenges in their partnerships with Early College High Schools, such as confidentiality and HIPPA issues with shadowing and onsite work experiences and age requirements for a particular worksite. You will need to work with businesses to find solutions to these issues.

Business and community Partnerships →
- Cooperation across partnerships
- Increased employability and workforce diversity
- Soft skills development
- Business advisory group

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 6: EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

SUPPORT FOR A NEW LEARNING CULTURE

With a new learning culture introduced by the ECHS model, your ECHS leadership team has two primary responsibilities: (1) rethinking the high-school learning experience; and (2) fully supporting a new learning culture in their schools, in students' homes and communities, and in colleges. These new responsibilities require validation for a continuous culture of learning and a leadership environment that embraces the vision of meeting the students where they are. Four areas help define this vision:

Teacher and leadership enthusiasm and knowledge: Your school leaders and teachers need to create and spread a sense of excitement for the ECHS program. They can do this through their enthusiasm and well as by: (1) sharing their knowledge of postsecondary education opportunities with the students; (2) reinforcing the postsecondary attainment expectations of the program; and (3) helping students to develop the academic, personal, and social skills needed for postsecondary educational success. For teachers and school leaders, the new learning culture is an "all-in" effort.
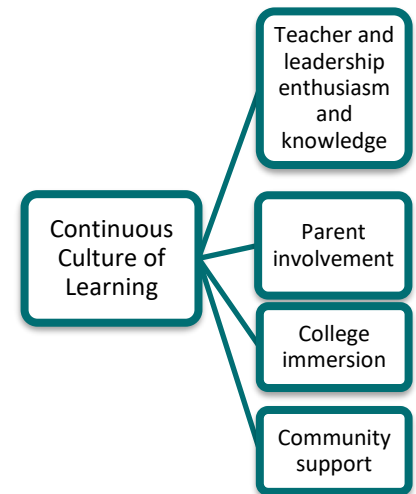
Parent/guardian involvement: Successful ECHS programs include mandatory parent/guardian attendance at informational workshops on college enrollment processes and funding, homework support systems, and student progress reviews. If parents do not meet these expectations, students may reflect this lack of involvement as well. To avoid creating a barrier to success, parents and ECHS faculty should meet a minimum of twice each academic year. Parents should be encouraged to contact teachers any time they have a question or concern. Where parents are not fully involved, your school leaders and/or teachers should reach out to the family.

College immersion: A college culture can be established and reinforced through focused academics, acknowledgment of student successes, opportunities to complete credit-bearing college courses, college pride activities including college field trips and college acceptance celebrations, and interactions with a broader learning community. Campus-focused activities and fairs can help make the ECHS program fully immersive.

Community support: A strong component of the ECHS program is its partnership with business and industry as well as area community organizations. These partners and supporters should be highlighted in students' pathways through mentoring, in-school visits, onsite tours of worksites, and community-sponsored activity days. Building the link between the community and your ECHS program will also build the level of support you receive from your local community.

EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

As an exemplary educational reform high-school model, Early College High Schools require transformative leadership to support a diverse and traditionally underrepresented student population headed for college. To build this leadership, professional development must be in place to build school leadership skills on how to foster partnerships between educational institutions and the workplace and how to sustain peer-supported professional learning communities. This commitment creates the human and professional resources needed to support the success and sustainability of Early College High Schools.

School leaders have five responsibilities they must address in their schools: (1) shaping a vision of success for all; (2) creating a welcoming and safe learning environment; (3) cultivating leadership in others; (4) supporting highly effective teachers; and (5) managing people, data, and processes. With Early College High Schools, school leaders must also serve as ambassadors for their school and partners with businesses across the community. One of the greatest impacts on Early College High Schools is the solid link between effective leadership and the ECHS reform models they shepherd.

Early College High Schools look toward transformative leadership and high-quality teaching staff to support the diverse and traditionally underrepresented student population headed for college. To continue to build and maintain this level of quality and accountability, Early College High Schools must engage in an on-going professional development program that demonstrates how to develop leadership skills, fosters partnerships, and supports data-informed decision making.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Successful Early College High Schools support school administrators and educators through professional development and professional learning communities.

A proven strategy for building professional leaderships within and across Early College High Schools is to develop comprehensive professional programs and a professional learning community of best practices[22] for education and policy leaders. These communities can be structured as local, regional, or statewide groupings. Subjects are addressed in a menu of support including webinar series, workshops, technical assistance, leadership trainings, community *ambassadorships,* and podcasts. These may address clarification of administrative code and statutes; best and promising practices; creating college cultures; and how to best work with business and industry to fully align education, the economy, and the workforce for powerful learning outcomes.

For Early College High Schools seeking state designation, the professional learning opportunities for district and school leadership should include:

♦ An overview of the planning and design efforts needed to receive approval, including sustainability and scale-up
♦ Adhering to designation criteria framed by the ECHS guiding principles
♦ Fully understanding the value of sector analyses of Early College High Schools' geographic areas to ensure career and college pathways are reflective of the realities of the marketplace
♦ Building a community of practice and leadership around Early College High Schools

NEW MEXICO APPLICATION AND DESIGNATION PROCEDURES

NEW MEXICO'S GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

NM PED has established qualifications that schools must meet to be **designated** as an approved ECHS. The overarching goal is for all students enrolled in an ECHS to simultaneously earn a New Mexico high-school diploma and a workforce-recognized credential through the Early College High Schools postsecondary partner. To qualify as a state approved designated ECHS, a school must:

♦ **Integrate state standards** into courses within a structured pathway that meets local and state graduation requirements.

♦ **Follow a pathway that results in a workforce-recognized credential** without tuition cost to the student or the student's family.

♦ Focus on efforts to **reach youth underrepresented in higher education** by establishing outreach and recruiting processes striving for equitable access and encouraging applicants from underrepresented populations to enroll.

♦ **Accelerate student learning** through the use of dual-credit courses beginning no later than the 10th grade. Dual-credit courses shall:

  o Provide an accelerated timeline for high-school students to complete college.

  o Be delivered through one or more postsecondary partner.

  o Be tuition-free.

  o Be taught by instructors who meet the Higher Learning Commission qualifications for college instructors.

  o Use innovative, interactive, research-based support structures.

  o Align with: (1) the pathway indicated on the student's Next Step Plan; (b) the established New Mexico higher education general education curriculum; and (3) either the student's declared CTE pathway or declared major or meta-major.

♦ **Operate in partnership** with one or more workforce partner who will provide meaningful work-based learning experiences and CTE courses that use career and technical education standards to support core academic growth.

Schools that meet these criteria and are designated will be identified as such on the NM PED website. Schools that are not designated cannot call themselves Early College High Schools nor tag their students as ECHS students for tracking and monitoring purposes.

NM PED will annually review designated schools' data, including the share of low-income students enrolled and the number of credits students complete. This will help determine if programs are in compliance or qualify for exemplary status. Schools that do not meet compliance will be placed on a one-year probation during which they can make required changes. Schools that do not achieve compliance during the probationary year will lose their designation.

SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION

Schools seeking initial designation as a department-approved ECHS shall submit a formal application to the NM PED ECHS Application Manager department by the deadline date as noted in Appendix A of the year in which they seek to begin operating as an ECHS. NM PED reviews initial applications for approval and confirms acceptance or rejection by the date also noted in the timeline included in Appendix B. Schools not receiving initial approval may request reconsideration from the state.

The application must include:

♦ A description of the **design structure** of the ECHS. Designate whether the ECHS is a freestanding model, where all students at the school are enrolled in an ECHS pathway(s), or an academy model, where only a subset of the students at a comprehensive high school are early high school students. Describe where the ECHS is in proximity to the

postsecondary partner (co-located on a college campus, contiguous, other). Also include hours of operation, scheduling structure, and wraparound services to meet the required seat time per Section 22-2-8-1 (New Mexico Statutes 1978). Include descriptions of the ECHS staffing, including teacher licensure and professional qualifications for staff to teach dual credit as adjunct faculty for the postsecondary partner.

♦ A description of the proposed series of structured and connected education programs and support (**proposed pathways**) and how each pathway supports the regional workforce need for training in high-wage, high-demand careers.

♦ Provide a **crosswalk** designed for each pathway offered for ECHS students. Include STARS course names and numbers for CTE courses and program names for postsecondary partner, dual credit courses.

♦ A description of the proposed **workforce-recognized credential for each pathway**. Provide a plan detailing how the school will track and report student attainment of workforce-recognized credentials.

♦ The projected number of **students to be served**. To achieve equitable access and maintain designation, demographics of students enrolled must mirror that of the surrounding district.

♦ A description of the **outreach and recruiting processes** that incorporate targeted efforts to reach underrepresented populations. The Early College High Schools goal is for the proportion of low-income students in the student body to be at least as high as that of the high-school's low-income population in the district. Outreach and recruitment efforts should include plans to increase the proportion of low-income students served. Describe how the school will analyze student demographic data to ensure equitable access to the ECHS and that all students are being served by the ECHS model.

♦ A **written partnership agreement (Memorandum of Understanding)** with at least one postsecondary partner that includes evidence of college-credit course offerings and support structures. The Memorandum of Understanding should show evidence of dual credit course offerings for the pathway(s) offered. It should also indicate wrap-around service supports efforts for successful student outcomes and provide a plan detailing how the school will track the number of college credit earned by ECHS students.

♦ Documentation of collaboration with at least one **workforce partner** that provides evidence of meaningful work-based learning experiences, demonstrating best practice for each industry pathway offered. Describe available work-based learning experiences and how student participation in work-based learning experiences will be tracked.

♦ A **sustainability plan** that addresses continuing financial support and the support of the school board or governing body. Describe the school and district/charter plans to ensure sustainability of the ECHS school model. Describe a plan for sustainability though articulation and documentation of partnerships with the community and local business and industry sectors to prepare students for entry into careers in which state or regional need has been confirmed by New Mexico labor data.

♦ **Tribal Consultation Requirement** that describes the school and district/charter plan to consult with tribal leaders annually. Consultation with tribal leaders annually satisfies the goals of the Indian Education Act (IEA) 22-23A NMSA 1978 Article 23A to ensure equitable and culturally relevant learning environments, educational opportunities and culturally relevant instructional materials for Native American students enrolled in public schools. Include documentation of tribal consultation to be submitted annually to the department. Additionally, consultation with external partners, such as tribal leaders, demonstrates that the school is committed to ensuring that all students have their voices represented. Consider the demographic make-up of your local area, not just your school, in deciding who to bring to the table.

Included with the application must be a Letter of Assurance on the school's letterhead. The required content for this letter is included in Appendix C of this manual.

When applying, schools may request waivers for areas such as individual class load, teaching load, length of school day, staffing patterns, subject areas, purchase of instructional materials, and coursework requirements.

Appendix A. Glossary: The Language of Early College High Schools

To better understand Early College High Schools , it is important to become familiar with some basic definitions that distinguish the model in different implementation sites:

<u>Career and Technical Education (CTE)</u>**:** Organized programs offering a sequence of at least three
    courses which offer academic and technical knowledge in preparation for successful entry into the workforce in
    current or emerging occupations requiring an industry-recognized credential, certificate, or degree. While not all
    Early College High Schools are CTE programs, almost all have career pathways or academies through which
    students earn industry credentials before graduation. Other Early College High Schools may primarily focus on
    earning college credits in an academic area or cluster of disciplines, such as Science, Technology, Engineering,
    Math (STEM) or computer science.

<u>Common Career Technical Core Standards (CCTC)</u>**:** Establishes a set of rigorous, high-quality
    standards for CTE courses within a career pathway program of study.

<u>Common Core State Standards (CCSS)</u>**:** Provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students
    are expected to learn so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help. The standards are designed to be
    robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in
    college and careers.

<u>Dual Credit/Enrollment</u>**:** An accelerating high-school program in which accepted students enroll in
    college-level courses offered by a postsecondary institution. This dual credit/enrollment allows students to earn credit
    toward high-school graduation and a postsecondary degree or certificate simultaneously. Dual-enrollment programs
    tend to draw mid- to high-achieving students, with just 37% of these students from low-income families. Students
    select individual courses toward high-school and post-secondary credit rather than engage in an integrative high-
    school and college-level curriculum such as Early College High Schools .

<u>Early College High School:</u> A structured dual enrollment strategy to improve college readiness and
    completion rates for students underrepresented in postsecondary education. The first large-scale implementation of
    the ECHS model began in 2002, when the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the Early College High School
    Initiative, a $40 million effort to launch a network of Early College High Schools .

<u>ECHS Design Models:</u> Varying design models for Early College High Schools include the following:
    Academy Model: An ECHS design where a subset of the students at a comprehensive high school are pursuing an early
    college high school program. Students receive extra, wrap-around support to encourage them to earn significant
    credit toward a college credential or degree.
    Freestanding Model: An ECHS design where all students are enrolled at an ECHS designated high school. Students
    receive extra, wrap-around support to encourage them to earn significant credit toward a college credential or degree.
    Freestanding ECHS models can be individual sites or co-located in a separate building(s) on a college campus.

<u>Industry Certification/Credential:</u> Includes federal or state regulatory agency-developed
    assessment instruments leading to licensure (e.g., FAA, Dept. of Health, DBPR), industry- developed assessment
    instruments leading to industry certification/credential (e.g., ASE, HVAC Excellence), industry-developed end-of-
    program assessments (e.g., NATEF), proprietary company-developed assessment instruments leading to
    certification or proficiency in one or more company product (e.g., Microsoft, CISCO), and third-party-developed
    assessment instruments (e.g., NOCTI, ASK Institute, Brainbench).

<u>International Baccalaureate (IB):</u> A nonspecific, targeted student dual credit program used in some
    high schools is the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Studies suggest both Advanced Placement (AP) and IB
    programs offer a significant mismatch for students of color and students from economically disadvantaged
    backgrounds of any dual credit program due to the absence of appropriate and robust support services to help these
    often-unprepared students to succeed.[xxiii]

<u>Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):</u> A formal commitment between the ECHS and its
    postsecondary partner(s). MOU's can also be developed with the Early College High Schools business/industry

partner.

Meta Major: A collection of majors with shared or similar coursework in alignment with a career
field.

Next Step Plan: A written plan developed and updated annually by a student at the end of grades
8-12 which targets the student's postsecondary interests and builds the studies and activities he or she will
complete during high school to be on track for graduation, college, and career. (This nomenclature is specific to
New Mexico; other states may have different identifications for their written student plans.)

Pathway: Sequence of classes at the ECHS in partnership with the postsecondary partner, which
leads to a certification, associate degree, or bachelor's degree.

Postsecondary Institution: any accredited school beyond high school, as designated by an
accrediting agency.

Postsecondary Partner: A postsecondary educational institution that has an agreement or
memorandum of understanding with an ECHS to provide college-level courses and other support services.

Sustainability:
The continued life of an ECHS for at least three years following the initial year of implementation.

Work-Based Learning: Activities that provide students with authentic workplace experiences while in
high school. These experiences strengthen a student's engagement with their learning, build their understanding of
the importance of college, and affirm their commitment to, and interest in, their chosen careers. Work-based learning
may include mentoring, job shadowing, internships, youth pre-apprenticeships, summer programs, or full
apprenticeships. For New Mexico, pre-apprenticeships are aligned with a registered apprenticeship program under the
New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions.

Workforce Recognized Credential: Industry-recognized workforce credentials, certificates,
associate degrees or bachelor's degrees from a postsecondary partner.

Workforce Partner: Local business, regional workforce investment board, chamber of commerce,
economic development corporation or another industry representative that provides ongoing
support and involvement across the ECHS program. This support includes participation in
course development, building curricular projects for project-based learning, ensuring relevant
content that reflects real-work environments, review of work skills, mentoring, and/or on-the-
job experience. Workforce partners provide these experiences to connect ECHS students to employment settings that
help them develop employability skills.

Appendix B: 2024 ECHS-NM Designation Timeline

January 9, 2024, through February 29, 2024 – Application Window

- Designation Support Sessions:
  - January 9, 2024 – ECHS-NM Designation Orientation and Information Session
  - January 16, 2024 – "Nuts and Bolts" of ECHS-NM Designation
  - January 23, 2024 – Applying the Design Principles to Program Planning and Implementation (Part I: Equitable Access, Connection to Career, and Exceptional Leadership Skills)
  - January 30, 2024 - Applying the Design Principles to Program Planning and Implementation (Part II: Academic Pathways, Robust Student Support, and High-quality & Deep Partnerships)
  - February 20, 2024 – Are You Ready to Submit Your Application?
- Weekly Office Hours beginning January 11, 2024, and continuing through February 29, 2024
- Deadline to submit online application is no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 29, 2024
- March of 2024 – Pathway2Careers reviews applications (with PED)
  - March 29, 2024 – Deadline to make recommendations for designation to PED
- April-May of 2024 – PED determines programs to be designated

Appendix C. Assurances Signature Letter

On School District or State Charter letterhead, submit this Assurances Signature letter. Identify the inclusive partnering organizations for which the Assurances letter is being submitted and include primary business partner(s) signature. Assurance letter must include the following statement:

The (District/Institution Name) ensures that the following are factual in program implementation and that we will continue to abide by each requirement:

A.   Integrates New Mexico Public Education Department-approved standards into courses within a structured pathway that meets local and state graduation requirements.

B.   Follows a pathway that results in a workforce recognized credential without tuition cost to the student or the student's family.

C.   Focuses on efforts to reach youth underrepresented in higher education by establishing outreach and recruiting processes striving for equitable access. Focused recruiting efforts shall encourage applicants from underrepresented populations.

D.   Accelerates student learning through the use of dual credit courses beginning no later than tenth grade. Dual credit courses shall:

    (1) accelerate the timeline for high school students to complete college;

    (2) be delivered through one or more postsecondary partners;

    (3) be tuition free;

    (4) be taught by instructors who meet the higher learning commission qualifications for college instructors;

    (5) use innovative, interactive, research-based support structures; and

    (6) align with:

        (a) the pathway indicated on the student's Next Step Plan;

        (b) the established New Mexico higher education general education curriculum; and

        (c) either the student's declared CTE pathway or declared major or meta major.

E.   Operates in partnership with one or more workforce partners. Partnerships shall include:

    (1) meaningful work-based learning experiences in alignment with student pathways; and

    (2) CTE courses that use career and technical education standards to support core academic growth.

F.   Assurances that all district and school personnel are knowledgeable of the requirements to comply with any waivers identified in 6.30.13.13 NMAC; and

G.   Evidence of tribal consultation to satisfy the goals of **Indian Education Act (IEA) 22-23A NMSA 1978** Article 23A including documentation of tribal consultation submitted annually to the department.

I hereby certify that the information contained in this application for ECHS Designation with the state of New Mexico is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and that I am authorized to submit this application. I further certify, to the best of my knowledge, that Early College High School activity will be conducted in accordance with all applicable State and local laws and regulations, application guidelines and standards. It is also understood that immediate written notice will be provided to the designated Application Manager if at any time the applicant learns that its certification was erroneous because of changed circumstances.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the information herein is true and correct and the applicant will comply with the above certifications and assurances.

Superintendent and Signature

Print:_____

Signature: _____

Title:_____

Date: _____

School Principal and Signature

Print:_____

Signature: _____

Title:_____

Date: _____

Postsecondary President and Signature

Print:_____

Signature: _____

Title:_____

Date:_____

Endnotes

[1]Zinth, J. D. (2016). Policy analysis: Early college high schools: Model policy components. Education Commission of the States.

[2] Barshay, J. (2020 February 24). Research on early college high schools indicate they may pay for themselves in the long run. The Hechinger Report. **https://hechingerreport.org/research-on-early-college-high-schools-indicates-they-may-pay-for-themselves-in-the-long-run/**

[3] Berger, A.; Turk-Bicakci, L.; Garet, M.; Song, M.; Knudson, J. et. al. (2013 September). Early College, early success: Early college high school initiative impact study. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, AIR.

[4]Berger, A.; Turk-Bicakci, L.; Garet, M.; Knudson, J.; Hoshen, G. (2014). *Early College, continued success*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, AIR.

[5]Edmunds, J.A.; Bernstein, L.; Unlu, F.; Glennie, E.; et. al. (2012) Expanding the start of the college pipeline: Ninth grade findings from an experimental study of the impact of the Early College High School model. *Journal for Research on Educational Effectiveness.* 5(2); 136-159.

[6]Edmunds, J.; Willse, J.; Arshavsky, N.; Dallas, A. (2013). Mandated engagement: The impact of early college high schools. *Teachers College Record.* 115(7).

[7]Edmunds, J. Unlu, F.; Glennie, E.; Bernstein, L.; et. al. (2017). Smoothing the transition to postsecondary education: The impact of the early college model. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness.* 10(2).

[8]New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee. 2019 July 12. Research brief: Early College High Schools at a glance. Prepared by the Program Evaluation Unit of the Legislative Finance Committee.

[9]Alliance for Excellent Education. (nd). Ten facts about dual-enrollment and early college high school programs. **https://all4ed.org/ten-facts-about-dual-enrollment-and-early-college-high-school-programs/.**

[10]Edmunds. J. (2010). A better 9th grade: Early results from an experimental study of the early college high school model. SERVE Center, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

[11] New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, 2019.

[12] The tour was led by New Mexico First, a non-partisan public policy organization.

[13] Reports were compiled by NS4ed, a national educational research and support organization with expertise in ECHS development. Through NM PED, NS4ed continues to work with the state, engaging school leaders and educators in a robust professional development program to build capacity and professional community within and across ECHS implementations.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Some Early College High Schools integrate a mandated engagement component in their design. For example, the College and Career High School, an ECHS in Albuquerque, uses an early warning system that allows administrators and teachers to closely monitor weekly every student's academic performance, attendance, and other indicators. The school assigns a staff member to intervene when students are flagged as at-risk of disengaging.

[16] Adcox, J.G.; Moore, C.P. (2016 December). Highly successful early college high school programs: Designing effective implementation strategies. Knoxville, TN: NS4ed.

[17] Barshay, J., 2020.

[18] Zinth, 2016.

[19]UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2019 April 3). Green economy could create 24 million new jobs. Sustainable Development Goals. **https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/04/green-economy-could-create-24-million-new-jobs/.**

[20]Webb, M.; Gerwin, C. (2014 March). Early college expansion: Propelling students to postsecondary success, at a school near you. Jobs for the Future. Retrieved: **https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED559689.pdf.**

[21] Ambrose, M. (2017 February 28). National Science Board Considering Focus on 'Blue Collar STEM.' *FYI: Science Policy News from AIP American Institute of Physics.* Retrieved: **https://www.aip.org/fyi/2017/national-science-board-considering-focus-%E2%80%98blue-collar-stem%E2%80%99**

[22] Across New Mexico, NS4ed has developed a professional community of best practices for Early College High Schools and has continued to build leadership across Early College High Schools in the state.