TEXAS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

The Early College High School Blueprint

The Early College High School (ECHS) Blueprint provides foundational principles and standards for innovative partnerships with colleges and universities.

Design Elements

All Early College High Schools are required to meet all the design elements for each benchmark annually.

Outcomes Based Measures (OBMs)

All Early College High Schools are required to meet Outcomes-Based Measures (OBMs) on data indicators related to access, attainment, and achievement.

Early College High School Designation

OBMs will phase in for opening Provisional ECHSs as the entering cohort of 9th graders advance through graduation. Upon the completion of the Provisional period, a campus must meet the state's Designated OBM criteria. OBMs will be phased in for all ECHSs through 2021-22. OBM will be used to determine campus designation status for 2022-23, and thereafter.

Fidelity of Implementation

TEA provides technical assistance to promote implementation of the ECHS model with fidelity. Campuses that meet the Distinguished OBM criteria for any of the three OBM categories of access, attainment, and achievement will receive Distinctions status.

Provisional Early College High School

Provisional Early Colleges are new ECHSs that demonstrate they can implement all design elements for each benchmark and meet the Provisional Early College OBMs. For public purposes, campuses are identified as Early College.

Early College High School

Early College designees maintain designation by demonstrating they can implement each of the design elements for each benchmark and meet the Early College OBMs.

Outcomes Based Measures (OBMs): *Distinctions*

Campuses may receive individual Distinctions in Access, Attainment, and Achievement for exemplar service to ECHS students.

Benchmark 1: Target Population

The Early College High School shall serve, or include plans to scale up to serve, students in grades 9 through 12, and shall target and enroll students who are at risk of dropping out of school as defined by statute (Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.908) and the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and who might not otherwise go to college.

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following requirements:

1. The ECHS recruitment and enrollment processes shall identify, recruit, and enroll the subpopulations of at-risk students (as defined by Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.081 and PEIMS), including, but not limited to, students who have not passed two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year, students who are of limited English proficiency, or students who have failed a state administered assessment. Enrollment decisions shall not be based on state assessment scores, discipline history, teacher recommendations, parent or student essays, minimum grade point average (GPA), or other criteria that create barriers for student enrollment.
2. The ECHS shall identify, recruit, and enroll subpopulations (in addition to those who are at risk as defined by PEIMS) that are historically underrepresented in college courses (e.g., first generation college goers, students of low socioeconomic status, English learners, and students with disabilities). The ECHS shall coordinate activities with feeder middle school(s), and higher education partner(s) shall coordinate with the ECHS to participate in recruitment activities to target promotional efforts at priority populations. Enrollment of target student populations should be representative of a district's demographic make-up.
3. The ECHS shall clearly document recruitment and enrollment policies and practices, refining and improving them annually based on data reviews.
4. Recruitment and enrollment processes (including marketing and recruitment plans, materials, and timelines) shall include input from key stakeholders (e.g., parents, community members, higher education partners) and target student populations as described in 1 and 2 above and shall include regular activities to educate students, counselors, principals, parents, and school board and community members.
5. For any ECHS at capacity, the ECHS shall use either a performance-blind, open-access lottery system that encourages and considers applications from all students (all students have an equal opportunity for acceptance, regardless of background or academic performance) or a weighted lottery that favors students who are at risk or who are part of the targeted subpopulations for the ECHS. Districts are encouraged to standardize lottery practices across campuses implementing the College and Career Readiness School Models.

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Products:

- Written lottery procedures (district-level or campus-level)
- Written admission policy, and enrollment application
- Written recruitment plan, including a timeline of recruitment and enrollment events, and recruitment materials for distribution at feeder middle schools and other appropriate locations in the community
- Brochures and marketing in Spanish, English, and/or other relevant language(s)
- Written communication plan for targeting identified audiences (e.g., parents, community members, school boards, higher education personnel, etc.)

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Benchmark 2: Partnership Agreement

The Early College High School shall have a current, signed memorandum of understanding (MOU), interlocal agreement (ILA) for each school year that:

- Defines the partnership between the school district(s) and the institution(s) of higher education (IHE) and addresses topics including, but not limited to, the ECHS location; transferability and applicability of college credit between a 2 year and 4 year institution; the allocation of costs for tuition, fees, and textbooks; and student transportation;
- States that the school district or charter in which the student is enrolled shall pay for college tuition (for all dual credit courses, including retakes), fees (including TSI administration fees), and required textbooks to the extent those charges are not waived by the partner IHE;
- Defines an active partnership between the school district(s) and the IHE(s), which shall include joint decision making procedures that allow for the planning and implementation of a coherent program across institutions; and
- Includes a data sharing agreement that promotes collaborative interventions with processes for collecting, sharing, and reviewing program and student data to assess the progress of students served by the ECHS.

Design Elements

***All* ECHSs shall develop, sign, and execute an MOU, ILA, or similar agreement that includes the following components (at a minimum):**

1. Components that enhance pathway development, including:
    - A description of how the goals of the dual credit program align with to Texas Statewide Dual Credit Goals
    - Courses of study, which enables a student to combine high school courses and college-level courses to complete the Texas Core Curriculum and earn either an associate degree or at least 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree
    - Curriculum alignment for each degree plan with a course equivalency crosswalk equating high school courses with college courses and the number of credits that may be earned for each course completed through the dual credit program
    - Assurances that ECHS students are treated as dual credit students until graduation from the ECHS program. As such, they may take dual credit courses during the fall, spring, and summer sessions to meet the goals of the ECHS program.
    - Assurances to ensure the IHE transcripts college credit earned through dual credit in the same semester that credit is earned
    - Advising services for students on the transferability and applicability to baccalaureate degree plans for all college credit offered and earned. College credits earned during high school should promote transfer success from an associate degree to a bachelor's degree and beyond in their chosen field.

© Texas Education Agency 2020

2. Components that articulate joint pracitces regarding:
    - Respective roles and responsibilities for the campus/LEA and IHE in providing for and ensuring the quality and instructional rigor of the dual credit program
    - ECHS students' and staff's access to the IHE facilities, services and resources
    - Academic supports and guidance that will be provided to students participating in the dual credit program
    - Student enrollment and attendance
    - Grading and grading periods, including academic probation
    - Instructional calendar, including location of each course that will be offered
    - Disability services available to students in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for college courses for dual credit
    - Teacher qualification processes, instructor availability, and course offerings
    - Administration of statewide assessments of academic skills (TEC, Subchapter B, Chapter 39)
    - Joint professional development for ECHS faculty and college and counselors/advisors (including both district and IHE faculty/staff)
    - Provisions for discontinuing ECHS operation and to ensure students previously enrolled will have the opportunity to complete their course of study
3. Components that determine how costs will be shared:
    - Sources of funding for dual credit courses offered through the program
    - Instructional materials to be used and textbook adoption
    - Transportation costs and fees
    - Eligibility of ECHS students for financial assistance from the higher education partner(s), specifically, waivers for tuition and fees
    - Opportunities for expanding access to student data, such as granting ECHS teachers of record and campus administrators full instructor access

© Texas Education Agency 2020

4. A data sharing agreement that includes provisions for student data provided by the college to the high school, and enables collaborative data sharing on a regular basis to promote student support interventions during the semester and that also includes:
    - Teacher data such as qualifications
    - Student-level data such as credit hours taken and earned, GPA, student academic progress, college and career readiness metrics (e.g., SAT/ACT), and formative regularly updated or real-time data (e.g., course enrollment/dropout, TSIA scores, 6-/9-week or mid-term grades, attendance for students at the high school)
    - Policies for expanding access to student data, such as granting ECHS teachers of record and campus administrators full instructor access

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and ~~be~~ made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.
- MOU/ILA must be reviewed annually with the goal of improving programmatic supports and services for students and alignment to the Texas Statewide Dual Credit Goals.
- Campuses must submit their final signed MOU/ILA to TEA when initially applying for early college designation or are Provisionally designated.
- ECHS Campuses that are Designated early college or Distinguished early college are not required to submit the MOU/ILA during the annual designation process (but must have it available upon TEA request).
- ECHS campuses that are unable to meet state designation standards for outcomes-based measures upon completion of the provisional period may be required to resubmit their MOU/ILA to TEA.

Products:

Final, signed, and executed MOU/ILA or similar agreement

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Benchmark 3: P 16 Leadership Initiatives

The school district and institution(s) of higher education (IHE) partners shall develop and maintain a leadership team that meets regularly (e.g., quarterly or monthly) to address issues of design, implementation, ongoing implementation, and sustainability. Membership should include the Early College High School leader and individuals with decision making authority from the district(s) and IHE(s).

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following requirements:

1. The ECHS shall establish a leadership team that includes high-level personnel with decision-making authority who meet regularly and report to each organization. Regularly scheduled meetings must address the following topics:
    a. Identify members and the role each member will play in the design, governance, operations, accountability, curriculum development, professional development, outreach, sustainability, and continuous monitoring and improvement of the ECHS
    b. Assume shared responsibility (between the school district and the IHE) for annually reviewing the MOU/ILA or similar agreement for necessary revisions
    c. Assume shared responsibility (between the school district and the IHE) for meeting annual outcomes-based measures and providing annual reports to their district and IHE boards, as well as to the public.
    d. Monitor progress on meeting the Blueprint, including reviewing formative data to ensure the ECHS is on-track to meet outcomes-based measures
    e. Guide mid-course corrections as needed
2. The leadership team shall develop long-term strategic priorities for the ECHS program along with a work plan for how to achieve programmatic goals in coordination with district and campus improvement planning. The leadership team shall include and meet regularly—in person and/or virtually—with the leaders from the district and IHE who have decision-making authority to execute changes toward this end:

    District leaders (may include):

    - Superintendent
    - Assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, or equivalent position
    - ECHS principal or director
    - ECHS liaison to the IHE

© Texas Education Agency 2020

- CTE Director (if applicable to the ECHS model)
- Department Chairs
- School counselors
- School-business partners
- Parent representative

IHE leaders (may include):

- College or university president
- Provost
- Department Chairs for core academic disciplines
- ECHS liaison to the ECHS
- Advising or student support director
- Dual credit officer

3. Sustainability structures shall be identified and implemented to address and minimize the challenges of staff turnover and potential fluctuations in funding.

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Products:

- ECHS/IHE leadership meeting agendas
- School board and board of regents' presentations
- Description of each member and role in committee
- Document(s) outlining the strategic priorities for the current academic year and/or long-term priorities of the ECHS partnership

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Benchmark 4: Curriculum and Support

The Early College High School shall provide a rigorous course of study that enables a participating student to receive a high school diploma and complete the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) core curriculum (as defined by Title 19 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §4.28), obtain certifications, or earn an associate degree, or earn at least 60 credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree during grades 9 12. The ECHS shall provide students with academic, social, and emotional support in their course of study.

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following requirements:

1. The ECHS shall provide a course of study that enables participating students the opportunity to complete high school graduation requirements and earn an associate degree or at least 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree. A four-year crosswalk must be in place detailing how students will progress toward this goal, including alignment of high school and college level courses. This crosswalk must provide pathways to postsecondary credentials, including Level 1 and/or Level 2 certificate, completion of the Texas Core Curriculum, an associate degree, or a baccalaureate degree and must follow the courses and fields of study listed in the THECB Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM) and/or the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM).
2. The campus may implement multiple dual enrollment delivery models, including:
    a. College courses taught on the college campus by college faculty
    b. College courses taught on the high school campus by college faculty
    c. College courses taught on the high school campus by high school educators who meet faculty requirements
    d. College courses taught virtually, via distance/online/blended learning
3. The ECHS shall collaborate with their college partner(s) to support students in their course of study.
    a. The ECHS shall provide academic support to the students by personalizing the learning environment in the following ways:
        - Developing individualized student plans for ongoing academic support, filing a degree plan, and the attainment of long-term goals
        - Developing a process for collaboration to provide an academic bridge across two educational systems
        - Developing robust college advising systems to advance academic progress
        - Administering interventions as needed, monitoring academic progress with formative data
        - Providing tutoring and/or Saturday school for identified students in need of academic supports
        - Providing advisory and/or college readiness and support time built into the instructional sequence for all students

© Texas Education Agency 2020

- Establishing a mentorship program available to all students

b. The ECHS shall provide social and emotional support to the students as needed, including:
    - Connections to social services
    - Layered social and emotional supports to students
    - Parent outreach and involvement opportunities
    - Family engagement to support rigorous course enrollment and college and career planning
c. The ECHS shall provide enrichment opportunities, including:
    - A structured program of community service to promote community involvement
    - Partnering with community businesses to expose students to a variety of potential career options and possible internship opportunities
    - Providing college awareness to current and prospective students and families, including:
        1. Application assistance
        2. Financial aid counseling
        3. College and career counseling

4. The ECHS shall provide a variety of opportunities for students to earn college credit (e.g., a portfolio approach may include dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), OnRamps, CLEP assessments, and local articulation agreements for specific courses in partnership with a local college) with applicability of college credits in mind.
5. The ECHS shall biannually implement structured data review processes designed to identify student strengths and weaknesses and develop individual instructional support plans. The ECHS, in conjunction with the college/university dual credit program specialist(s), shall collaborate and create a plan for students off-track for success in the ECHS program. Support systems shall include infrastructure, resources, and personnel to enable every possibility to retain the student in the ECHS program so that students can obtain high school and college credit.

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Required Activities and Products
Activities: • All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and made available to TEA upon request. • All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy. **Products:** • Crosswalk aligning high school and college courses, grades 9 through 12, which enables a student to earn an associate degree or 60 college credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree • Calendar of family outreach events • Professional learning community agendas • Advisory/study skills curriculum material • Master schedules

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Benchmark 5: Academic Rigor and Readiness

The Early College High School shall administer a Texas Success Initiative (TSI) college placement exam (as defined by TAC §4.53) to all accepted ECHS students to assess college readiness, design individual instructional support plans, and enable students to begin college courses based on their performance on the exam.

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following requirements:

1. The ECHS shall provide a TSI assessment to accepted students as early as incoming 9th graders (however, not as a prerequisite for admissions to the ECHS).
    a. The ECHS shall implement a plan for TSI success, including academic preparation classes for accepted students, academic interventions for students who do not pass TSI, and assessments fee waivers for all administrations of the TSI test.
    b. The ECHS shall publish on their website the dates, time, and location that the TSI will be administered.
    c. The ECHS shall review TSI testing data, particularly the number/percentage of students who have currently passed each section of the TSI assessment, to ensure the ECHS is on track to meeting outcomes-based measures (see below).
2. The ECHS is a TSI assessment site, or is in the process of becoming a TSI assessment site, allowing frequent testing and access to raw data that can be used to identify student weaknesses, and create tailored interventions and individualized instructional plans to improve student readiness and success.
    a. The ECHS shall provide opportunities throughout the year to take the TSI assessment.
    b. The ECHS shall leverage diagnostic data to prescribe accelerated instruction to support students.
    c. Interventions (e.g., tutorials, workshops, testing strategies) and accelerated instruction shall be provided before retesting students.
3. The ECHS provides a bridge program (an intensive academic preparation program that provides opportunities to strengthen academic skills necessary for high school and college readiness) to prepare students for TSI and provide academic interventions for those who do not pass TSI.

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and ~~be~~ made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Products:

- Calendar of TSI scheduled test administration dates, sign-up process, and intervention expectations
- Aggregate reports of TSI exam performance
- Tutoring and bridge program schedules
- Bridge program curriculum

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Benchmark 6: School Design

The Early College High School must provide a full day program (i.e., full day as defined in PEIMS) at an autonomous high school (i.e., a high school with ECHS leader assigned to ECHS responsibilities who has scheduling, hiring, and budget authority), an IHE liaison with decision making authority, and a highly qualified staff with support and training.

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following:

1. The ECHS location shall be:
    a. On a college or university campus, or
    b. In a high school—as a standalone high school campus or in a smaller learning community within a larger high school.
2. ECHS staff shall include:
    a. An ECHS leader who has autonomy for course and instructor scheduling, staff and faculty hiring, and budget development
    b. An IHE liaison with decision-making authority who interacts directly and frequently (in-person or virtually) with the ECHS leader and the dual credit provider
    c. Highly qualified ECHS teachers who work directly with the ECHS students, which may include high school faculty who must meet faculty requirements that are set by the regional accrediting association of the community college and/or university to teach college-level courses, instructors for virtual college courses, and instructors for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses.
    d. Counseling/advising staff who may be provided by, or shared with, the IHE partner who support the ECHS students, through activities, such as: coordinating with the IHE for registration, monitoring of students' high school and college transcripts, monitoring of high school and college courses to ensure programmatic requirements for both the high school and the partnering institution are met, and planning for future credentials and career entry.
3. The ECHS students shall be cohorted for core classes to the extent possible; this does not exclude non-ECHS students from enrolling in the same class.
4. The ECHS shall implement an annual professional development plan (i.e, calendar of events/activities) for teachers and staff, focused on research-based instructional strategies for increasing rigor and college- and career-readiness, is based on needs assessment of student data, and include both high school and dual credit teachers. Professional development should include, but is not limited to:

© Texas Education Agency 2020

a. A mentoring and induction program for newly hired staff, providing them with the instructional and interpersonal skills and capacities needed for success in an ECHS.

b. Opportunities for ECHS teachers and higher-education faculty to receive extensive training and support through regularly scheduled formative peer observations and collaboration opportunities with IHE faculty.

c. Opportunities for joint training among ECHS and higher-education college advisors and faculty (e.g., course requirements and addressing the social and emotional needs of students).

5. ECHS campuses not located on a college or university campus shall provide students with frequent use of IHE academic and support facilities, such as libraries, labs, advising center, career center, cultural facilities, and sports facilities.

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Products:

- Mentor/induction program plans
- Annual training or professional development plan with ECHS and IHE faculty
- ECHS leader/liaison meeting agendas and informational handouts

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Access Outcomes Based Measures

Definition of Access OBM	Provisional Early College	Early College	Distinctions
	Requirements		
	Must serve **at-risk incoming 9th graders**	Must serve **at-risk incoming 9th graders** and **economically disadvantaged students**	Must serve **at-risk, economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and students with disabilities**
Data Indicators			
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **at-risk students** (incoming 9th graders)	No more than 25% points under district (grades 9-12)	No more than 25% points under district (grades 9-12)	ECHS recruits and serves targeted first generation populations such that at least 80% or greater of campus enrollment represents at-risk (incoming 9th graders), economically disadvantaged, English learners (incoming 9th graders), or students with disabilities
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **economically disadvantaged students** (grades 9-12)	No more than 10% points under district (grades 9-12)	No more than 10% points under district (grades 9-12)	
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **English learners** (incoming 9th graders)	Not taken into account for designation	Not taken into account for designation	
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **students with disabilities** (grades 9-12)	Not taken into account for designation	Not taken into account for designation	

Data on the following populations historically under-represented in higher education will also be provided in your Outcomes-Based Measures Summary Report:

- **African American**
- **Hispanic**
- **Male**

These data are for informational purposes ONLY and are not used to determine an ECHS's designation status.

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Attainment Outcomes Based Measures

Definition of Attainment OBM	Provisional Early College	Early College	Distinctions
	Requirements		
	Must meet persistence, 9 college credits by 10th, and 15 college credits targets	Must meet targets on at least **five** attainment data indicators	Must meet targets on at least **six** attainment data indicators
Data Indicators			
Persistence of 9th grade students (and transfers in grades 10 or 11) through ECHS program into fall of 12th grade	70% of students enrolled remain in the ECHS program	75% of students enrolled remain in the ECHS program	85% of students enrolled remain in the ECHS program
Earning 9 college credits (any) (DC/3+ AP Exam/OnRamps) by end of 10th grade	35% of students	40% of students	50% of students
Earning 15 college credits (any) by graduation	50% of students (by the fourth year of implementation)	65% of students	80% of students
Completing Texas Core Curriculum (Core 42) by graduation	Not taken into account for designation	30% of students	40% of students
Earning postsecondary degree and/or credential by high school graduation (Level 1, Level 2, Associate)	Not taken into account for designation	40% of students	50% of students
Graduating high school in 4 years (4-year cohort graduation rate)	Not taken into account for designation	Within 5% of statewide 4-year graduation rate	Exceeds the statewide 4-year graduation rate
Direct-to-college enrollment into a 2-year or 4-year institution	Not taken into account for designation	45% of students	50% of students

© Texas Education Agency 2020

Achievement Outcomes Based Measures

Definition of Achievement OBM	Provisional Early College	Early College	Distinctions
	Requirements		
Data Indicators	Must meet targets on at least **three** achievement data indicators	Must meet targets on at least **four** achievement data indicators	Must meet targets on all **five** achievement data indicators
TSIA College Readiness Standards in English Language Arts & Reading (ELAR) + Writing OR TSI exemption through successful completion of first college reading/writing course (e.g., ENGL 1301/1302) by end of 11th grade	65% passing rate	70% passing rate	80% passing rate
TSIA College Readiness Standards in math OR TSI exemption through successful completion of first college math course (e.g., MATH 1314 or higher) by end of 11th grade	50% passing rate	60% passing rate	75% passing rate
College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) standards on SAT or ACT by graduation	Not taken into account for designation	45% of students meet college readiness standards	65% of students meet college readiness standards
Algebra I EOC assessment by the end of 9th grade	85% of students pass at Approaches Grade Level Performance	60% of students achieve Meets Grade Level Performance	60% of students achieve Meets Grade Level Performance with 40% achieving Masters Grade Level Performance
English II EOC assessment (grades 9-11)	85% of students pass at Approaches Grade Level Performance	30% of students achieve Meets Grade Level Performance	30% of students achieve Meets Grade Level Performance with 10% achieving Masters Grade Level Performance

© Texas Education Agency 2020