NEW MEXICO EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL TOOLKIT

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.

ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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 number and percent of underrepresented students in higher education.*
- ***Academic Pathways*** *– assuring what is taught in high school is well-integrated and aligned with college and career lessons and skills.*
- ***Robust Student Support*** *– offering and providing both academic and advising support services.*
- ***Connections to Career*** *– strengthening the bond of education and careers through workplace and experiential learning experiences.*
- ***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 ECHSs 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 ECHSs through professional development and professional learning communities.*

As we enter this next decade of ECHSs, 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

ECHSs 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, ECHSs 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 ECHSs students taking individual college-level courses that are not necessarily part of a plan of study.

ECHSs 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 ECHSs nationwide:

- ECHSs serve students underrepresented in higher education. This includes minorities and students who would be the first-in family to attend college.
- ECHSs 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' transferrable 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.
- ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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* 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

NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE ECHS MODEL

In 2017-2018, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NM PED) sponsored a series of ECHS podcasts looking at best practices and important considerations in the implementation of ECHSs in the state. One of these podcasts was a conversation between Dr. Joseph Goins, CEO, NS4ed, who hosted the podcast, and Dr. Joseph Vargas, Vice President, Jobs for the Future (JFF). *Both Dr. Goins and Dr. Vargas are national thought leaders in the development of ECHSs.*

The conversation provided the NM PED and educational leaders across the state with insights on where ECHSs fit as an innovative model for school reform, and the direction ECHS programs are taking. The conversation has become a meaningful contribution to ongoing national conversations about the ECHS model and has yielded important insights on why and how ECHSs are successful.

What transition points do ECHSs make easier?

Transition points hold the greatest challenges for disadvantaged and underrepresented students, Currently, there are too many identified transitions—e.g., middle to high school; general math to Algebra; less rigorous to more rigorous coursework; high school to college; high school and college to the workplace; and, perhaps most important, from a self-image of failure to successful learner. ECHSs represent an opportunity to make sure those transitions are hard-wired into the system.

How does the ECHS model demonstrate a *shared delivery* with high schools and colleges?

When a high school and college are engaged in a true early college partnership, they are:

- *Co-designing* their curricular pathways so that every pathway leads to an associate degree or another credential that has high value in the labor market.
- *Co-delivering* the educational experience by sharing teaching and guidance staff, and, in some cases, physical space such as classrooms and laboratories.
- *Co-teaching* some courses.
- *Sharing* data and using it to support their *shared* responsibility for making sure no student ever gets dropped or sorted out.

How do ECHSs change the role of school leaders and educators?

For school leaders, ECHS is a different way of operating and managing what they consider to be part of their responsibility. For educators, teaching and learning happen differently. Instruction has to be better. It has to be at a higher, more engaging level. Teachers have to engage students in collaborative group work and problem solving, a meta-cognitive kind of self-management of their learning. Student success hinges on the school culture piloted by school leaders, and the teaching and learning which goes on in the classrooms.

What are the goals for ECHSs and the pathways taken to get there?

The end goal of high school is more than just getting students into college; it is getting students into careers. ECHSs capture this understanding by creating pathways from high school to postsecondary experiences, to the workplace, and to careers. ECHSs give students the launch pad they need to succeed.

To reach this goal, the ECHS model's greatest strength is its flexibility, enabling it to respond to local educational, economic, and workplace factors rather than box local districts into an inflexible design structure. This flexibility allows each program to design how they want to integrate technical learning and/or two- or four-year college goals into a rigorous curriculum. Regardless of the implementation selected, each ECHS program serves marginalized students so that it *cannot* fall into the trap of just creating a gifted and talented program masquerading as an early college model.

Financial and academic support

Starting students early on a pathway to college creates a free environment, at no cost. The savings for families is significant and opens access for marginalized students where there was no access before. Coupled with mentoring and co-supports built in while students are still in high school, ECHSs represent new opportunities by building access and supporting persistence.

ECHS programs are not just about getting kids to take as much college credit as possible. More than this, ECHS programs are about creating a more robust learning environment. Intentional academic scaffolding transitions students from high school to postsecondary education by embedding the future in the high schools. With this academic support, ECHS programs demonstrate their understanding of how important it is for students to have an idea of *what comes next* and a chance to explore and understand these next steps.

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 ECHSs 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 assure broad support for this major initiative, in 2016, NM PED launched the largest-ever state education listening tour to determine support for ECHSs and their perceived impact on workforce demands.[1] Findings were compiled into three reports showing broad support across educational, business and industry, and workforce sectors in New Mexico.[2]

The state's embrace of ECHSs reflects its recognition and understanding of ECHSs 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 ECHSs:

- ECHSs 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.
- ECHSs 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.
- ECHSs will expose students to rigorous academics and career technical education coursework.
- ECHSs will provide a program of study toward a postsecondary credential or degree without tuition cost to the participant or the participant's family.
- ECHSs will establish formalized partnerships with colleges, universities, and industry partners to create a model of shared responsibility for student success.
- ECHSs 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.

CURRENT NEW MEXICO ECHS PARTICIPANTS

As of school year 2019, New Mexico has 19 designated ECHSs across 17 school districts, serving 3,393 students. Three additional schools are currently seeking designation. Of these22 schools, 5 are charter schools and 17 are district schools. A total of 13 are freestanding, dedicated ECHSs located either separately from or on the postsecondary partner campus, and 9 are academies, ECHS programs within traditional 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 ECHSs. Business partnerships represent a wide range of industries as well as large and small businesses, operating

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

[2] 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.

locally, regionally, and nationally with a presence in New Mexico. All are providing 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[12]. The study compared student outcomes for students who attended one of two of New Mexico's earliest ECHSs 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 ECHSs. Study results, while limited to those colleges reporting data to the National Student Clearinghouse, showed that students who attended one of these ECHSs 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[3].
- 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 ECHSs to change the educational environment in New Mexico. The state is working with NS4ed 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

[3] Some ECHSs 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.

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 ECHSs at the time of the survey.

- **Partnerships:** Community colleges were most frequently an ECHS partner: 92% of the ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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.

NEW MEXICO STATE CONVERSATIONS

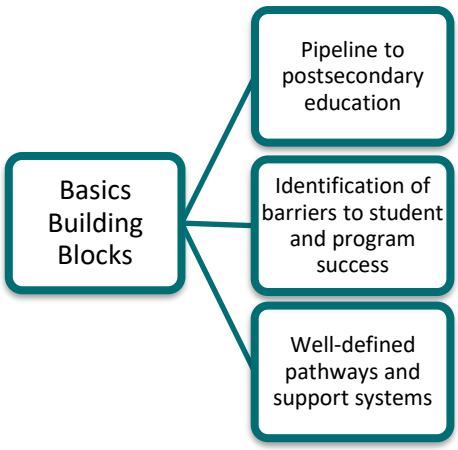
In 2019-2020, NS4ed and the New Mexico Public Education Department (NM PED) again led a series of ECHS podcasts with ECHS leaders across the state to identify best practices in their ECHS models. These podcasts are currently being compiled for inclusion in this manual at a later date.

BECOMING AN ECHS: FIRST STEPS

The New Mexico EDHS Toolkit—developed and adapted[13] by NS4ed in 2016, 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 http://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.



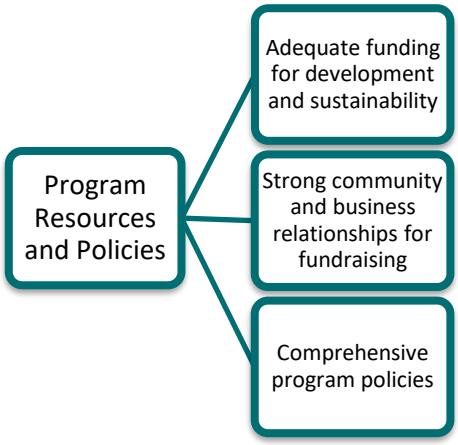
In addition to students, the program may encounter start-up barriers that need to be addressed, i.e., resources, locations, and partnership development.

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. Examples of 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.

IDENTIFYING PROGRAM RESOURCES AND POLICIES

ECHSs can be expensive with the money needed to pay tuition, books and fees for the college credit-bearing courses students take; and to allocate costs for student support systems, both in the community and school. For rural and remote ECHSs, transportation between the postsecondary partner college campus and the high school may further increase costs per student for your ECHS. You will need to assure 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.



While research indicates ECHSs 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.[14] 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 (Appendix B).

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[15]:

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 ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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 ECHSs represent.

Program accountability

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

Administrative support

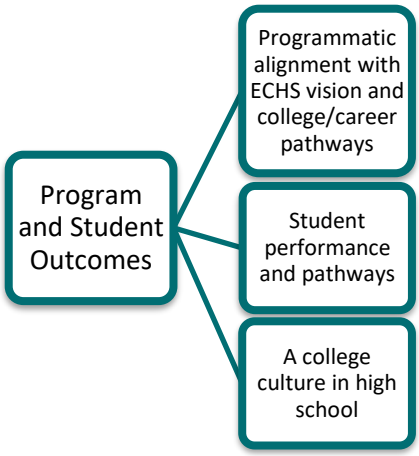
- Work with the state and local education partners to develop and prepare training programs for school leaders and educators as they transition to and continue in an ECHS.
- Develop and maintain a program of continuing professional development.
- Work with your postsecondary partner to establish credentialing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



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. ECHSs 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).

ECHSs 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 ECHSs on a college campus addresses the *power of place,* a key element of the ECHS design. Supporting this, several students show that ECHSs located on a college campus have more positive outcomes in proficiencies, college credits earned, attendance, and engagement.[4]

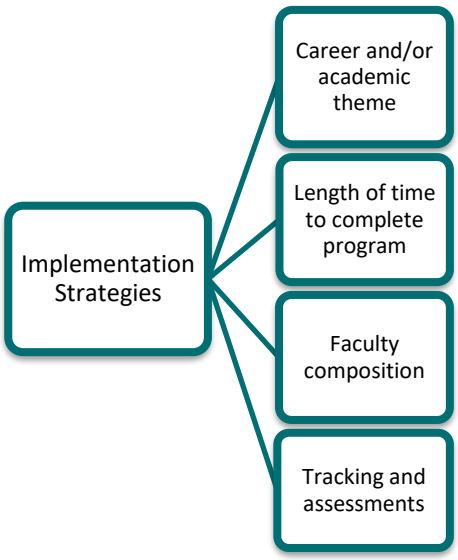
[4] References for these studies are noted in the Introduction for this manual and listed in Appendix F.

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 assure 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 assure 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, also offers opportunities for young people."[16] Your ECHS may further review these trends with local business and industry 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 assure they remain on track to succeed. .

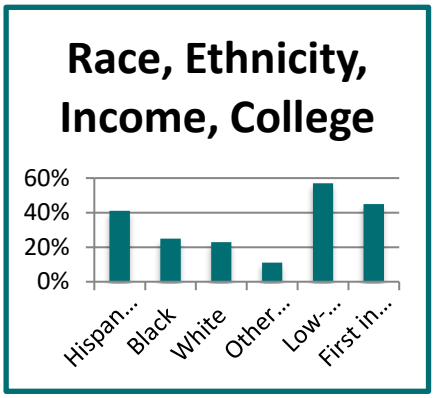
In addition to serving as safeguards for student success, the tracking and assessment process will identify an ECHS's best practices, training needs, and adjustments to support program outcomes.

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 ECHSs on achieving a more equitable access to college and career pathways while in high school.[17]

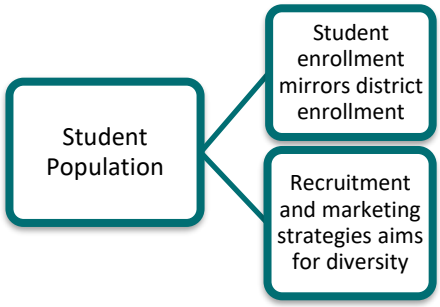


- ECHSs are effectively reaching disadvantaged students to get them on a pathway to college. Of the students enrolled, 77% are minority students, 57% are from low-income families, and 45% are the first in their immediate families to attend college.
- High-school graduation rates increased to 93%, versus 78% in traditional programs.
- 30% of all students in ECHSs 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 ECHSs.

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 under-represented in higher education, disadvantaged students, and first-generation college-goers. Thus, selection of 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 ECHSs. 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.

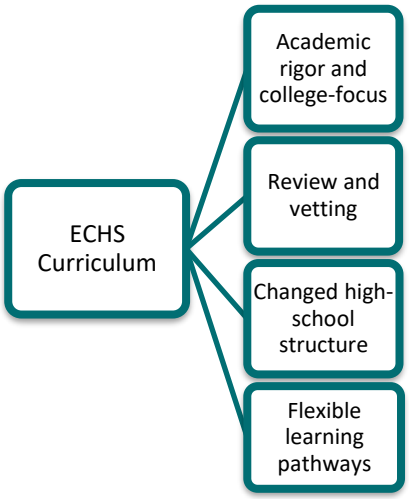
As a follow-up to recruitment, your ECHS will need to establish application criteria. These may include teacher recommendations, attendance, test scores and grades, student and parent commitment, or a combination of each of these. As you establish your ECHS admission criteria, it is important to use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

Parents and students alike must be well-informed about ECHSs. 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.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 2: ACADEMIC PATHWAYS

DEVELOPING YOUR ECHS CURRICULUM

ECHSs 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.

ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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, and industry certification, and up to 60 credit hours of postsecondary coursework.
- When students continue their postsecondary education at a four-year university, they enter as a junior since their credits earned in high school will be articulated.

Because ECHSs 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 ECHSs, 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,

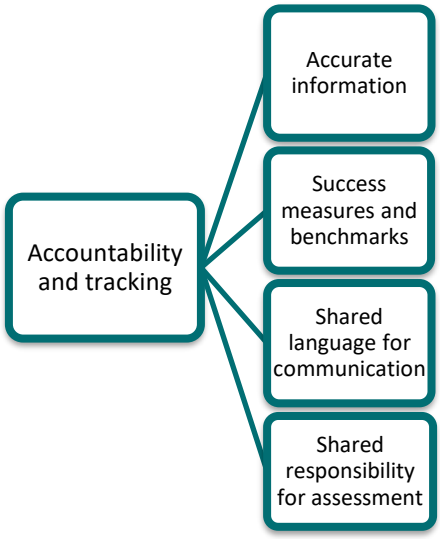
- ECHSs can pace the integration of college courses into the curriculum. An ECHS program may be structured so that students advance through high school with no credit-bearing classes in 9th grade, up to 10 credits in 10th grade, and 24 to 26 credit hours in the 11th and 12th grades.
- Some ECHSs develop 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 the 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.



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

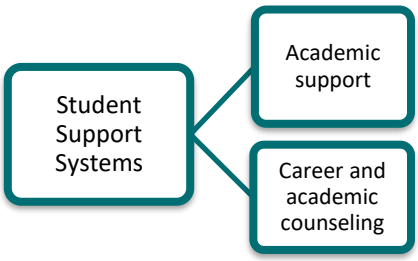
tracking and assessment now includes measures of academic success, social integration, support systems, and engagement in high school to college to career pathways. With guidance and leadership from your ECHS leadership and your partners, this new language will become a shared form of communication.

- 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 are 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.

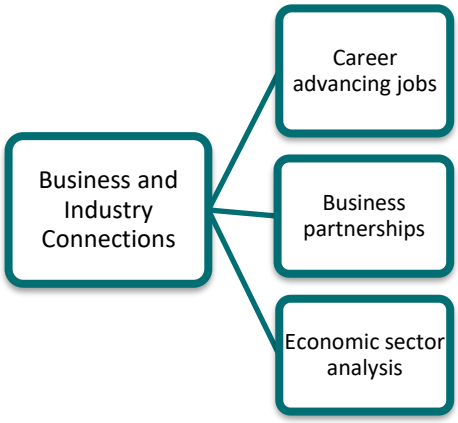
There are two types of student support systems you need to develop for your ECHS: academic support, and career and academic counseling.

- 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 ECHSs, 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.[18] 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 assure your program is relevant.

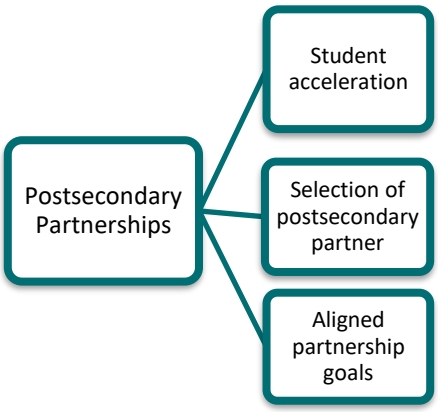
ECHSs require *business partnerships* to provide work-based experiences and ensure educational pathways are relevant to workforce demands. Some partnerships further include business and industry in curricular development. This approach is ideal for any ECHS—i.e., where business and industry help define 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 ECHSs 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 ECHSs 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.

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 assure 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 ECHSs, 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 ECHSs in 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 teaching in *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.

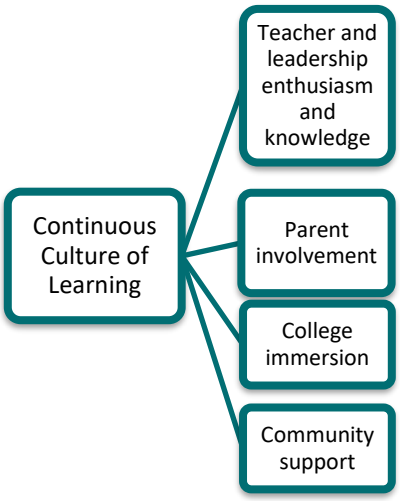
The types of roles and responsibilities business and community partners have with ECHSs varied, from advisory to financial to direct services. As you develop your ECHS, you should include a business advisory board to infuse the curriculum with real-life learning and projects, and to plan for workforce 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 ECHSs, 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.

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, 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

ECHSs, an exemplary educational reform high-school model, 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 ECHSs.

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 ECHSs, school leaders must also serve as ambassadors for their school and partners with businesses across the community. One of the greatest impacts on ECHSs is the solid link between effective leadership and the ECHS reform models they shepherd.

ECHSs 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, ECHSs 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 ECHSs support school administrators and educators through professional development and professional learning communities.

A proven strategy for building professional leaderships within and across ECHSs is to develop comprehensive professional programs and a professional learning community of best practices[5] 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.

[5]Across New Mexico, NS4ed has developed a professional community of best practices for ECHSs and has continued to build leadership across ECHSs in the state.

For ECHSs 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.
- How to establish postsecondary partners.
- Adhering to designation criteria framed by the ECHC guiding principles.
- Fully understanding the value of sector analyses of ECHSs' geographic areas to ensure career and college pathways are reflective of the realities of the marketplace.
- Sustainability and scale-up.
- Building a community of practice and leadership around ECHSs.

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 ECHSs 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:
  - Provide an accelerated timeline for high-school students to complete college.
  - Be delivered through one or more postsecondary partner.
  - Be tuition-free.
  - Be taught by instructors who meet the Higher Learning Commission qualifications for college instructors.
  - Use innovative, interactive, research-based support structures.
  - 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 ECHSs 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 compliance. 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

ECHS applicants must meet all of the qualifications provided and submit an application form by July 1 of the desired first school year for the proposed ECHS. 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. Include STARS course names and numbers for CTE courses and program names for postsecondary partner, dual credit courses. Provide a Next Step Plan designed for each pathway offered for ECHS students.
- 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**. Describe the demographics of students enrolled and student participation in each pathway.
- A description of **outreach and recruiting processes** that incorporate targeted efforts to reach underrepresented populations. The ECHSs 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. Indicate wrap-around service supports efforts for successful student outcomes. 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 **(written agreements),** 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.

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 E 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.

Schools seeking initial designation as a department-approved ECHS shall submit an application to the NM PED ECHS Application Manager department by July 1 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 no later than August 1. Schools not receiving initial approval may request reconsideration from the state.

DESIGNATION EVALUATION

The following factors have been assigned point values by NM PED. Applicants are evaluated on these factors.

Mandatory Factors:
The items listed below are required. Failure to submit the following items will result in disqualification of the application.

Accountability	Pass	Fail
1. ECHS Assurances Signature Letter		
2. Information Sheet		
3. Written agreement with postsecondary		
4. Written agreement with workforce partner(s)		
5. Next Step Plan per pathway on Program of Study Template		
6. Course Catalogue		
7. Master Schedule		

Evaluation Factors:

Criteria	Possible Points	Points Awarded
Total points possible:	[450]	
1. Staffing	50	
2. Proposed pathway(s) description & Next Step Plans	50	
3. Workforce-recognized credentials for each pathway	50	
4. Students served	50	
5. Outreach and recruitment process	50	
6. Written agreement with postsecondary	50	
7. Written agreement(s) with workforce	50	
8. Sustainability Plan	50	
9. Tribal Consultation	50	
	Total Points:	

The department shall review initial applications for approval and confirm application acceptance or rejection by no later than August 1. At the discretion of the department, schools not receiving initial approval may request an extension to address any department concerns. Applicants who submit a revised application will have their points recalculated accordingly. A serious deficiency response to any one factor may be grounds for rejection, regardless of the overall score.

ONGOING COMPLIANCE AND RENEWAL

To evaluate program compliance with the qualifications outlined in the ECHS standards, NM PED annually reviews data collected through the department data reporting system. Data evaluated to determine compliance shall include but not be limited to: (1) student attainment of workforce recognized credentials; and (2) student participation in work-based learning experiences. Students earning college credit will be evaluated for the following minimum expectations:

- All students completing 11th grade have attempted a minimum of 3 postsecondary credit hours toward a workforce recognized credential.
- At least 80% of students completing 12th grade have completed a minimum of 12 postsecondary credit hours toward a workforce recognized credential.

The Department shall review additional data, which includes:

- The number of students enrolled.
- Student participation.
- Percentage of low-income students enrolled in the ECHS compared to the percentage of low-income high-school students enrolled in the district in which the ECHS is located.

Renewals are automatic, based on a review of the data submitted in the annual data reviews. Based on this review, NM PED will either renew the ECHS without conditions or designate an ECHS on probation for noncompliance.

Schools receiving notice of non-compliance shall maintain their status as a department-approved ECHS and be placed on one-year probation during which time schools can make necessary changes to be in full compliance.

Upon receipt of notice of non-compliance, schools shall submit an improvement plan within 30 days. NM PED offers technical assistance to schools during the implementation of the improvement plan.

Schools may apply for an extension of the probationary period. Schools not demonstrating compliance following probation will lose their designation as a department-approved ECHS and will have to wait one school year before reapplying as a NM PED-approved ECHS.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Several school leaders in New Mexico shared challenges they faced as they built their ECHSs. While some of the challenges below may be unique to specific schools, they are important for districts and schools to consider as they begin to develop and implement new ECHSs or enhance current ECHSs. It is important to note that NM PED recognizes the challenges shared below and will work with new and current ECHSs toward continuous improvement, especially where target population is concerned. NM PED will clarify additional challenges, including specific questions regarding target population, admissions, academic rigor, and funding as needed with ECHS leaders. (Please refer to the rubric in Appendix C on page 63 for additional implementation guidance.)

Student population and admissions

- As a school of choice, we don't control the admissions process.
- Our open enrollment policy tends to lead to higher SES students as part of the lottery process.
- Using students on free or reduced lunch (FRDL) as criteria for admission is difficult.
- We have a problem with school choice and soliciting low-income students. Some students don't complete the FRDL form, making it difficult to determine if our recruitment and admission efforts will result in enrollment mirroring the demographics of the surrounding district's high school population.
- With 60% FRDL, we come close to the criteria for most programs but not for others. For example, our school meets the criteria for the welding certification but not for the associate degree.

Academic Rigor

- Our program gets many students who are behind academically. We need clarification on the acceleration component and what workforce credential the state recommends.
- Students do not enter our ECHS until 10th grade. If a student meets the Accuplacer score, they are admitted.

Funding

- We need to better understand the waiver process as there is a financial aid issue.

APPENDICES

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

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

Career and Technical Education (CTE): 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 ECHSs are CTE programs, almost all have career pathways or academies through which students earn industry credentials before graduation. Other ECHSs 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.

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

Common Core State Standards (CCSS): 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.

Dual Credit/Enrollment: 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 ECHSs.

Early College High School: 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 ECHSs.

ECHS Design Models: Varying design models for ECHSs 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.

Industry Certification/Credential: 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).

International Baccalaureate (IB): 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.[xix]

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): A formal commitment between the ECHS and its postsecondary partner(s). MOU's can also be developed with the ECHSs 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's 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. Funding Factors for Early College High Schools

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law in December 2015, reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. The ECHS model supports and provides funding for ECHSs in several areas:

- ESSA requires states to set challenging academic standards in reading/language arts and mathematics that are aligned with:
  - Entrance requirements for credit-bearing coursework in a state's system of higher education.
  - Relevant state career and technical education standards.

  When implementing ECHSs, districts may target Title I funds to high schools with a poverty rate of 50% of higher. ESSA Sec. 1113(a)(3)(B).

- District plans must facilitate effective transitions from high school to postsecondary education through, if applicable:
  - Coordination with colleges and universities, employers, and other local partners.
  - Increased student access to ECHSs or dual or concurrent enrollment opportunities, or career counseling to identify students' interests and skills.

- Title II (professional development funding) may be used to provide training on "effective strategies to integrate rigorous academic content, career and technical education, and work-based learning (if appropriate), which may include providing common planning time…." ESSA Sec. 2103(b)(3)(O).

- Title III (instruction for limited English-proficient and immigrant students funding) may be used to offer ECHS or dual or concurrent enrollment programs, or courses designed to help English learners achieve success in postsecondary education. ESSA Sec. 3115(d)(8).

- Direct Student Services funding may be used to provide for enrollment and participation in academic courses not otherwise available. These include advanced courses and career and technical education coursework that are aligned with challenging state academic standards and lead to industry-recognized credentials. ESSA Sec. 1003A(c)(3)(A).

Appendix C. ECHS Designation Rubric

For rubric in .pdf format see ECHS website.

Page 1 of ECHS Designation Rubric

Early College High School Designation

School:_____Location: _____

Contact:_____Date: _____

In order to be designated as an Early College High School the school must meet the Early College High School Designation in all criteria for success and in the out-comes based measures below.

- Conditional Early College: If the ECHS does not meet ALL of the foundational requirements – they will be marked as conditional and given additional technical assistance to move into the Early College designee.
- Early College Designee: To be designated as an Early College the ECHS MUST meets all Foundational Requirements.
- Exemplary Early College: To be designated as exemplarily the ECHS must meet all foundational requirements AND exceed these requirements by demonstrating research- based ECHS best practices in at least one or more of the criteria.

Foundational Criteria for Success	Conditional Early College	Early College Designee	Exemplary Early College
Staffing Model			
Proposed pathway(s) description & Next Step Plans			
Workforce-recognized credentials for each pathway			
Students served			
Outreach and recruitment process			
Written agreement with postsecondary			
Written agreement(s) with workforce			
Sustainability plan			
Tribal consultation			
Overall Designation			

Accountability	Fail	Pass
1. ECHS Assurances Signature Letter		
2. Information Sheet		
3. Course Catalogue		
4. Master Schedule		

Staffing Model	
Meets foundational ECHS requirements ☐ Describes location in proximity to the postsecondary partner. The system of delivery of dual credit courses to students is logical and sustainable. ☐ The plan includes hours of operation, and other relevant program details. ☐ Indicates how adults are organized in the building, including the scheduling structure and wrap-around services to support student success in college level courses. ☐ Describes the system for ensuring each student completes an annual Next Step Plan, which includes dual credit courses and pathway of study aligned with future career goals. ☐ Includes a plan to meet the required seat time per Section 22-2-8.1 NMSA 1978. ☐ Describes the staffing model for the ECHS including teacher licensure and professional qualifications for staff to teach dual credit as adjunct faculty for the postsecondary partner.	
Meets at least one additional ECHS best practices ☐ ECHS is located on the postsecondary campus. ☐ ECHS postsecondary courses are taught on the college campus by college faculty. ☐ Provides advisory and/or college readiness support systems built into the program of study and school schedule. ☐ Provides a breakdown of staff equity, showing relative diversity with process to recruit faculty representing the student community served.	
Feedback	Indicate Designation Reached

Proposed pathway(s) description & Next Step Plans	
Meets foundational ECHS requirements ☐ A Next Step Plan designed for each pathway offered demonstrates the 4-year crosswalk of how students will progress towards workforce recognized credential goals and complete high school graduation requirements. Plan includes demonstrated curriculum alignment with postsecondary partners for ALL pathways offered. ☐ For each program of study offered ECHS must include documentation (in the form of a next step plan and master schedule) detailing vertical alignment of secondary and postsecondary courses leading to a workforce credential. ☐ If the ECHS offers a general studies or liberal arts pathway, the school must offer at least one additionally defined program of study that is based on relevant regional and state workforce data, leading towards a workforce credential. ☐ The Master Schedule is included and demonstrates how the ECHS will support students in obtaining a workforce recognized credential, while fulfilling NM graduation requirements. ☐ Course catalogue is robust and offers multiple pathways for students that are aligned with the regional workforce need for training in high wage, high demand careers. ☐ Schedule includes evidence of work-based learning and additional wrap-around supports for students to be successful in college level courses. ☐ Include STARS course names and numbers for CTE courses and program names for postsecondary partner, dual credit courses.	
Meets at least one additional ECHS best practice ☐ School offers at least one relevant career and technical student organizations (CTSO) for at least one pathway. ☐ Schedule and/or narrative demonstrates a thoughtful and clear plan to ensure all students participate in a wide-range of work-based learning activities including internships and apprenticeships.	
Feedback	Indicate Designation Reached

Workforce-recognized credentials for each pathway	
Meets foundational ECHS requirements ☐ Details workforce recognized credentials for each pathway. Which includes an industry certification that has value in the workplace, or clear pathway to an associate's degree, or at least 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree. ☐ Provides a plan of how the school will track and report student attainment of workforce recognized credentials.	
Meets at least one additional ECHS best practice ☐ Demonstrates a clear plan for students to obtain *stackable* credentials, which are valued in the workplace, for at least one program of study.	
Feedback	Indicate Designation Reached

Students Served	
Meets foundational ECHS requirements ☐ Includes list of projected/current students to serve, and plan is within recommended guidelines for size and scope of ECHS Populations. ☐ Populations served falls within the targeted proportions for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. New Mexico Public Education Department will conduct data analysis for prior year enrollment data for ECHS and District/LEA. (see chart below)	
Meets at least one additional ECHS best practice ☐ Populations served falls in the exemplary category for targeted proportions of students served for from at least four of the targeted populations. New Mexico Public Education Department will conduct data analysis for prior year enrollment data for ECHS and District/LEA. ☐ Contains a clear and thoughtful description of how the ECHS model aligns with the overall District/LEA strategy of supporting all students, and in particular students from underserved populations.	
Feedback	Indicate Designation Reached

Outcome Based Measures			
Targeted Student Populations Served: Must meet three of the following criteria for ECHS designation and four of the criteria for exemplary.			
Data Indicators	**Conditional ECHS**	**ECHS Designee**	**Exemplary ECHS**
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents district economically disadvantaged students	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents African American students	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents American Indian students	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents Hispanic students	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents EL	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents Students with Disabilities	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district

Outreach and recruitment process	
Meets foundational ECHS requirements ☐ Clearly documents recruitment and enrollment policies. ☐ Outreach and recruitment efforts include plans to increase the proportion of low-income students served. ☐ Focused recruiting efforts encourage applicants from underrepresented populations to enroll in ECHS. ☐ Plan describes how the school will analyze student demographic data to ensure equitable access to the ECHS. ☐ Use of performance-blind, open-access lottery to enroll students. All students are encouraged to apply and obtain admissions regardless of background or prior academic achievement.	
Meets at least one additional ECHS best practice ☐ Evidence of input on recruitment materials from key stakeholders (including community members, parents, students, Tribal Councils, etc.).	
Feedback	Indicate Designation Reached

Written agreement(s) with postsecondary	
Meets foundational ECHS requirements ☐ Postsecondary agreement shows evidence of dual credit course offerings for the pathway(s) offered and evidence of vertical curriculum alignment across programs of study. ☐ Indicates wrap-around service supports efforts for successful student outcomes. ☐ Provides a plan of how the school will track the number of college credit earned by ECHS students.	
Meets at least one additional ECHS best practice ☐ Agreements are obtained from postsecondary institutions for all programs of study offered. ☐ Agreement includes a policy for advising students on the transferability of college credit offered and earned.	
Feedback	Indicate Designation Reached

Written agreement(s) with postsecondary	
Meets foundational ECHS requirements ☐ Postsecondary agreement shows evidence of dual credit course offerings for the pathway(s) offered and evidence of vertical curriculum alignment across programs of study. ☐ Indicates wrap-around service supports efforts for successful student outcomes. ☐ Provides a plan of how the school will track the number of college credit earned by ECHS students.	
Meets at least one additional ECHS best practice ☐ Agreements are obtained from postsecondary institutions for all programs of study offered. ☐ Agreement includes a policy for advising students on the transferability of college credit offered and earned.	
Feedback	Indicate Designation Reached

Written agreement(s) with postsecondary	
Meets foundational ECHS requirements ☐ Postsecondary agreement shows evidence of dual credit course offerings for the pathway(s) offered and evidence of vertical curriculum alignment across programs of study. ☐ Indicates wrap-around service supports efforts for successful student outcomes. ☐ Provides a plan of how the school will track the number of college credit earned by ECHS students.	
Meets at least one additional ECHS best practice ☐ Agreements are obtained from postsecondary institutions for all programs of study offered. ☐ Agreement includes a policy for advising students on the transferability of college credit offered and earned.	
Feedback	Indicate Designation Reached

Tribal Consultation (if applicable)	
Meets foundational ECHS requirements ☐ Describes the school and district/charter plan to consult with tribal leaders annually. This is to satisfy the goals of Indian Education Act (IEA) 22-23A NMSA 1978 Article 23A which includes documentation of tribal consultation to be submitted annually to the department.	
Meets at least one additional ECHS best practice ☐ Evidence of meaningful consultation with tribal stakeholders is included throughout the ECHS strategic plan and clear evidence of culturally competent teaching practices, informed by tribal consultation, is evident. ☐ Culturally relevant program of study developed with tribal stakeholder input.	
Feedback	Indicate Designation Reached

Appendix D. ECHS Stars

Pharr-San Juan-Alamo (PSJA) Independent School District - Texas

PSJA serves more than 32,000 students in the Rio Grande Valley, near the U.S.-Mexico border. PSJA works closely with South Texas College and other partners toward a single goal: ensuring that every high school graduate is ready for college, connected to college, and, ultimately, able to complete college. PSJA has dubbed this "College Cubed" (College3). Since the ECHS collaboration began, graduation rates have increased 28% and thousands of PSJA students have earned significant college credit—for free. Hundreds of seniors each year are graduating with postsecondary credentials and degrees already in hand.

PSJA currently offers support and sequence of courses to earn up to 60 college credits or an associate degree along with their diploma in various ECHS designs: (1) a small school for teenage parents; (2) a 500-student STEM-focused school; (3) large comprehensive high schools converted into an ECHSs; and (4) specialized ECHSs to serve students who have been identified as off-track for high-school graduation or who left school altogether at some point. Three large, comprehensive high schools are redesigning grades 11 and 12 to provide dual enrollment opportunities for all their students.

The PSJA District College3 embraces four strategies: (1) fostering shared ownership among students, teachers, counselors, principals, and district leaders; (2) creating new roles and responsibilities for high school and college staff; (3) aligning district systems and services to support students and staff, including principal training, and early warning systems; and (4) structuring and strengthening college partnerships. For PSJA, the progress is as much about a mindset among leaders and the need to work across sectors as it is about the ECHS model.

Brooklyn P-TECH (Pathways in Technology ECHS) – New York

The most notable adaptation of early college responds to economic imperatives. Launched by IBM in an effort to publicize the value of career-focused ECHS models, Brooklyn P-TECH is a partnership with the City University of New York and the New York City Department of Education. Students complete an associate degree in an IT field, with business internships built into the six-year curriculum. Critical elements of the model include mentors for every student, structured workplace visits, skills-based paid internships, and integration of workplace skills into the curriculum. Updated outcomes continue to show significant student outcomes for ECHS students in this initial New York City urban district: (1) 75% of 4th year students are college ready, compared to 32% of all NYC public school graduates, including just 11% of Black and 9% of Black male students; (2) attendance rate is 92%, high for any urban school and an indicator of student engagement; and (3) the program has a 93% retention rate.

Dayton Early College Academy (DECA) - Ohio

Established in 2003 with support from KnowledgeWorks Foundation, DECA opened as a Dayton Public School partnering with the University of Dayton. In 2007, it reorganized as a charter school on the

university campus, with more locations added. DECA was the first ECHS in Ohio, tenth in the nation, and one of the five most innovative high schools according to the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA).

The DECA Gateways for College Readiness model implements a series of required gateways students must pass through to meet high-school graduation and ECHS program requirements. High-school students, 9th through 12th grades, must pass a series of six DECA gates to graduate. Data feedback on student progress adjusts learning strategies as students move through the DECA gates. Requirements include completion of at least three college courses through which students will be able to earn stackable credentials or an associate degree prior to high-school graduation and transitioning to a college or university. All DECA students are required to complete a minimum of two internships. These unpaid experiences allow each student to be trained and work under the direct supervision of a professional. To complete the internship, each student must create a viable product or service for the sponsor. DECA's internship goal is to connect classroom and college learning to application in the workplace. Because the DECA gateways are progressive, the model supports personalized learning. That is, while all gateways must be completed to graduate, students can complete them at their own pace.

Research on DECA showed significant increases in proficiencies, with 100% of graduating students going directly to college or the military[xx].

Arrowhead Park Early College High School and Medical Academy, Las Cruces Public Schools

Arrowhead Park ECHS, opened in 2010 and located on the campus of New Mexico State University, and was New Mexico's first ECHS. The ECHS and its neighboring early college partner, Arrowhead Park Medical Academy, together serve more than 600 students. The two early college campuses have 13 STEM-related pathways of instruction and six medical pathways. In May 2017, 101 graduates earned 139 associate degrees and 113 certifications, while 25 students were designated as NMSU crimson scholars. Roughly 52% of these students are the first in their families to attend college. In 2017, Arrowhead Park ECHS was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the US Department of Education, and the only New Mexico school recognized as an "Exemplary High Performing School."

Appendix E. New Mexico Sage Advice and Best Practices

In 2017-2018, NM PED sponsored a series of ECHS podcasts looking at best practices and important considerations in the implementation of ECHSs. These podcasts were hosted by Dr. Joseph Goins, CEO, NS4ed. The purpose of these conversations was to look at innovative practices and the transformational work of current ECHSs in New Mexico, gain insights into the experiences the principals have had with ECHS implementation, and begin to develop best practices for the ECHS model in New Mexico.

Dr. Elaine Perea, Director of the College and Career Readiness Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department

Why do you think ECHSs are an important model for New Mexico?
Around two-thirds of all careers need at least some college. It's really important not only that students finish high school, but also that they are thoroughly engaged and excited about the next phase of their education. The ECHS model really builds that relationship for students because they see the transition between high school and college as something that's not only important for them, their future, and their career, but also something that's manageable and obtainable. That's what is so exciting when you see these young people. When you see students who are 15, 16, and 17 years old who are taking college classes and being successful in them, it really does change their life.

In New Mexico, our average graduation rate last year was just above 71%. So, we have an ongoing challenge with keeping students engaged and excited about high school. Students who are involved in CTE and who find something they are interested in and passionate about, take classes in those subject areas—e.g., three classes in agriculture, three classes in computer science, three classes in healthcare. When students do that, when you see this pattern where they are getting more engaged and digging deeper into subjects, that graduation rate, instead of being at 71%, is close to 90% for those students pursuing CTE while in high school.

As the state starts to codify the definition of what it means to be an ECHS, what qualifications do you look for in schools wanting to transition?
There are several key elements that really make an ECHS special. Every student is seen to be capable of *accelerated* work. In fact, the ECHS model is about equity. So, one proposed statute is to test for equity and make sure non-traditional students from families who haven't had access to college are represented in the student body to the same extent they are represented in the district as a whole so that the ECHS is not doing selective recruiting. Thus, the schools need to provide extra supports in order for all students to be successful in acceleration.

Typically, students will take their first college class in 9th or 10th grade, and it will be chosen carefully with your postsecondary partner. The high school will have a lot of scaffolding around the students so they have success in that first college experience. We make sure that by junior year students have attempted several dual credit classes. Students can earn one or more associate degree while they are in high school, but it takes careful stewarding for the student so that they have repeated successes in the post-secondary environment.

ECHSs are smaller schools, not more than 400 students so teachers and school leaders can know each student's unique needs and successes. So, school size needs to be managed. And, college courses must be tuition free.

There must be a strong industry advisory relationship; the business community is a key partner, just like the postsecondary partner. That gives students work-based learning opportunities and authentic assignments in their high school and college classes. It gives them opportunities to interface with businesspeople through class presentations or shadowing opportunities, and demonstrate their growing mastery of soft skills. So that relationship is really a critical one.

Students must be a carefully coached so they follow the tight pathway to getting college credits, a certificate, or an associate degree simultaneously with their high-school diploma. Every course must be well considered and be part of a master plan for that student. Students choose a pathway and the academic advising is done to ensure students are taking the courses they need.

What do you think an effective early college high school looks like? What is ECHS effectiveness?
One thing that has emerged in many of New Mexico's successful ECHSs is an emphasis on teachers who have more experience. Recruiting teachers who hold a master's degree in a subject area allows the school to offer more early dual credit courses. For example, a teacher who has a master's degree in math can teach math at either the high-school or college level. By having a partnership with the postsecondary college, that teacher can be a full-time employee of the ECHS but teach a class for college credit. Not every teacher fits that model but having some teachers like that on staff is an important component for bringing the whole ECHS experience together.

The tension to manage and navigate students through those two worlds [high school and college] is something administrators and counselors need to think about.
I would add one more piece to this: With the focus on equity and first-generation students, counseling must be delivered with *both* compassion and high expectations. Sometimes when people work with first-generation students, compassion can get in the way of high expectations. In the ECHS model, these two must be intertwined and delivered together. Very effective schools understand the dynamic of both—the academic press and the culture of caring.

To have a model in the state that has a 95% to 100% graduation rate year after year is important and inspirational. When you realize ECHSs are taking whatever students apply and helping them finish high

school and some college, you realize you are giving them a clear vision of their future and a path to a career that's going to provide family-sustaining wages in high-demand industries.

Tracy Bryan, Executive Director, The Bridge of Southern New Mexico

The "Bridge Southern New Mexico" is a business-lead, education-focused collaborative. It came to life in Doña Ana County, in 2007, when half our students were not finishing high school. The business community was looking at the impact this was creating in the workforce and on current job demand and future growth. And these young people were making economically devastating decisions very early in their lives. As a result of these conditions, a host of leaders in education, business, economic development, and government came together to try to understand what was going on and what we could do about it.

The first intervention the group identified was the ECHS model, which was working in other states like North Carolina. In 2009, the collaboration was formalized into the nonprofit "Bridge of Southern New Mexico." Twenty acres of land in the middle of the community at that time was a center for drugs and shootings. Bridges looked at what would need to be done to reinvigorate those 20 acres. What happened went the other way—the 20 acres transformed the community as a host of different people and different cultural groups who spoke different languages came together to create change.

Can you describe the involvement of the business community and the other initial drivers you had as you developed this first ECHS?

If you think about it, the business community is the recipient of education. What happened here is the business community became deeply concerned about an education issue, high school graduation rates, and really worked in a collaborative way that you don't see often to really engage with education and understand what was happening. The Las Cruces Public Schools determined Arrowhead Park would be a new school, the dual credit courses would be provided by Doña Ana Community College, and the school itself would be located on the college's campus. While the business community was a very vocal advocate for the ECHS, it was the educational institutions that stepped up to own the ECHS program.

But, what happened next was driven by the students. Our 9th grade students realized they could pass a college-level class and could go on to and be successful in college. So, the ECHS became not just a path to the workforce, but transformed also to a faster, less costly pathway into college. Students who hadn't succeeded had the ability and opportunity to really prove themselves. Thus, the model shifted based on student feedback. With the student input, we saw the power of the model in which students were thinking about careers. All students were in a pathway that pointed to a certification and associate degree that was aligned to a career. So, there was power in getting two outcomes at once—the high-school diploma and a college degree. There was power in thinking about the career application of it and working toward that.

These ideas of purpose and choice stand out in ECHS models. Can you tell us about Arrowhead Park?

Everything we thought would work, did work. Students who were high-performing accelerated their learning quickly. And, by providing them with the right set of supports such as ongoing tutoring, children

from low-income families, children of color, and first-generation college attendees were all succeeding. If you graduate 100% of your students, which we did, you have no gaps. So, the ECHS actually became the proof-point for every single thing that the Bridge advocates for educationally moving forward. When we visited the schools, what struck us is that the students identified themselves as college students, not high-school students taking college classes.

What about economic impact and the impact on a changing workplace?
Earning an associate degree as an 18-year-old has an economic impact. On average in New Mexico, an associate degree out-earns a high-school diploma by an estimated $12,000. A career certification out-earns a high-school diploma by $5,000. Some of our students get both. But what you've done is you've used education as an economic driver.

What we're seeing, important in our county with its high poverty rates, is many people with a high-school diploma out of jobs that have become more technical, e.g., a greater use of robots for streamlining tasks. In this environment, the ECHS model becomes an economic engine driving New Mexico forward.

We help students understand education is not a destination; it is part of the journey. Thus, we help our students earn certificates in their focus career and associate degrees, even if they are on their way to a four-year degree. This has many advantages. First, it will decrease their educational loan debt since they will be able to support themselves better during college. Second, it will add to their employability after they graduate. And, third, it will give them a better idea of the opportunities in the career they are pursuing, i.e., accurate labor market predictions. Letting students see the labor market data is part of the learning experience in ECHSs.

Jennifer Amis, Principal, and Josh Silver, Dean of Students, Arrowhead Park Early College High School

Can you give us some background on your ECHS in Las Cruces?
We opened in 2010 in response to a community group's desire to address the dropout rate in our community (56% in 2008). This is our 8th year and we will have our fifth graduating class. We've graduated 95% and above for each of our graduating cohorts. In 2014, we opened a second school, the Arrowhead Park Medical Academy. This is primarily a school within a school. We will have our first graduating class of the Medical Academy students and are on track to graduate 100% of the students.

Can you tell us about the ECHS enrollment process?
Each year, we actively look for 8th grade students to enroll as our 9th grade cohort. That process begins in November. We have an application-based program, and we get the applications to the counselors at the middle schools. We help the counselors understand our mission is to work with students who have interests in particular career pathways. We also ask the counselors to identify students who meet some of the risk factors, such as first in family to attend college.

How do you explain the acceleration to families and their role?
We explain to families that it's not so much acceleration or speeding through high school to get to college. It's really looking at them both concurrently. We aren't necessarily trying to finish four years of high school in two years and then do college. Rather, we are intentional about combining this program of study so students have the best of both of both worlds while they are high-school students. In years three and four, the students are dual-credit students who need some of the same supports any other high-school student needs. I don't view it as acceleration as much as a different program of study.

What does a typical day for students at Arrowhead Park look like?
We are a project engineering school so when our students start 9th grade, we're really dedicated to immersing them in engineering or computer science experiences. We have an accelerated block schedule in place, so our students go to four classes a day and finish those courses in the fall for four credits and four classes in the spring. In 9th and 10th grades, we have mandatory summer participation, where we have specific high school credits they take care of in the summers, such as the physical education.

In 11th grade, students' schedules look like a college schedule. Students are on our campus, and their entire schedule is college coursework. The college courses are taught by a combination of high-school teachers and adjunct faculty coming into our school. When the spring semester starts for students, it is typically the first semester they are off our campus and doing coursework at the college campuses. Safeguards kick in so we can continue to monitor their progress in class and just be supports for them. The 12th grade is all college with the exception that this is when all students do their government and economics credits for high-school graduation. We have all our seniors on our campus for five days a week for that class. Schedules are flexible—e.g., classes on certain days of the week, in the evening, or online. All courses are collaborations with students' college advisors and the high school.

Most courses are taught by high-school teachers, many who are also qualified to teach the college coursework, which requires the master's degree in the content or a master's degree plus 18 credit hours in the content.

What is your definition of success for your students and how do you measure it?
For us, 85% of each graduating cohort completes an associate degree in addition to an industry certification. Of the other 15%, some have 30 college credit hours and are finishing high school. We double down on the value of the high-school diploma to ensure success for each student.

Can you describe some of the challenges a student might bring to an ECHS and what you do?
One of the biggest challenges is that the students are still kids. They are 16 or 17 years old and sometimes in classes with adult students. They don't always have the confidence, communication skills, and academic or life skills to know how to navigate situations. That is where the high school supports come into play. And, we built in the seminar time to address those fluid challenges they see. These issues may be everything from parking on campus or how to get textbooks.

In Seminars I and II, which we have for 9th and 10th grade students respectively, that's where we've built in the soft skills that businesses seek, and that is where we get positive feedback from employers in the community. Then, in the 11th and twelfth grade seminar, these are more customized for moving students from college to the workplace. That curriculum is always changing based on student needs. It's really exciting.

Eric Spencer, Principal, Carlsbad Early College High School

How does the Carlsbad ECHS flow?

Carlsbad ECHS is housed in a separate building on the campus of New Mexico State University. Now in its 4th year of operation, the school has a full 9th through 12th grade program, with 240 students and 10.5 full-time faculty. In 9th grade, ECHS students take their first college-level course, College Success 101. To give students an orientation as to what college life might look like, this course is provided in a building on campus that is separate from the ECHS location. Also in 9th grade, students engage in a sequence of courses on a modified block schedule—one period of mathematics and one of freshman-level English/Language arts every day. Two science courses are offered—Integrated Science three days a week, and the Southern Regional Education Board's "Innovations in Science and Technology" two days a week. 9th grade students can take an elective course at the traditional high school if they wish, and transportation is provided.

In 10th grade, students continue with math and move to a 10th grade-level English/ Language Arts. They can choose to take, maybe, a social studies classes such as New Mexico History and/or Financial Literacy, two or three days a week. We have found that even though we are on four periods a day, many of our students are taking five to six courses during fall and/or spring semesters to further accelerate their learning. Navigating through each semester and taking grade-level English/Language Arts, students could complete their four years of English/Language Arts high-school credits necessary for graduation by the end of 10th grade. Then, 11th and 12th- grade English and math would be dual credit status with the university. Similar acceleration toward dual credit coursework in math can be followed.

In 11th and 12th grade, all students are required to take a Seminar class in fall and spring of both the junior and senior year. The course includes soft skills training that businesses say are lacking in the workforce. As part of this course, students also participate in a structured work-based learning opportunity, managed and monitored through the Seminar.

Thus, starting slowly in the 9th grade with one dual credit course (College Success 101) and moving forward, each semester students might be taking two to three dual credit courses. By 11th grade, they are pretty much taking a full load of university courses along their academic or career pathway toward their associate degree, two years of credit that articulate toward a bachelor's degree, or transfer credits into a technical school.

Can you tell us about recruitment, marketing, outreach?

In January of each year, we hold an assembly at the Carlsbad Intermediate School for 8th grade students to introduce them to the ECHS model, what they would be committing to, examples their schedules and courses, and how the ECHS differs from the traditional high school. We emphasize that the ECHS is a free public school in the district, and that students have the opportunity to graduate high school with a diploma, an associate degree, or two years of transferrable credit to a university. Current ECHS students attend the presentation to answer questions from their rising peers about their experiences at the ECHS.

The same evening, we hold a community forum on a hosted App to reach out to other potential students who are not part of the intermediate school system—e.g., from charter schools, home schools, private schools. All students and families are given a list of dates when school counselors will be available to discuss the application process and to get information about the ECHS model as well. We provide dates that counselors will be available, and schedule two- to three-hour meetings through February to make sure that there's an opportunity for students and parents to dive a little deeper and ask about the ECHS.

How do you help parents understand the cost savings?

In our marketing and the evening presentation, we emphasize for parents the cost savings for students going on to college. We show them the data for the class of 2018, our first graduating class. On average, students who take 65 credit hours in the ECHS save $3,000 in college tuition at the New Mexico State University in Carlsbad. That doesn't include estimated costs for textbooks, which save another $3,000, for a total savings of $6,000. If parents send their students to the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, paying for tuition, fees, books, and room and board for the first years, the total comes to $40,000. So, we just granted students a $40,000 scholarship. There is significant cost savings to participation in the ECHS program.

Has the admissions process been challenging?

In all presentations, we are clear that ECHSs serve a representative student population---by race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status—and that admission is not just based on grades, which would limit the school to just the highest-performing students.

Supporting this is our data, which show for the class of 2021: (1) 60% of parents of those admitted had a high-school diploma or less; and (2) just 11% of 8th grade students scored proficient on the PARCC assessments when they were admitted. The support systems we have for low-achieving students make a tremendous difference. *Every* 9th grade student is required to have an hour of tutoring per day. That is built into the schedule. Through the tutoring, the College Board springboard curriculum, and the Khan Academy, we have already moved those 89% of students not proficient to 95% proficient by the time they took the PARCC assessment in Algebra I the next year.

What are some of the successes you've seen from students who have gone through the program?

The native student population at the University (non-ECHS students) has a 79% success rate on academic achievement according to grades entered in the system. Our ECHS students are achieving an 89% to 91% success rate, outperforming traditional college students.

While we see our students are college ready, we wanted to assure for our business partners that we were graduating them career ready as well. First, working with the local Workforce Connections office, all 11th and 12th grade students took the Work Keys assessments. A total of 95 of our 112 students took all three assessments required for a career readiness credential. Of those, all but six students qualified. This is an accomplishment the student can carry with them as validation of their skills.

What are the support services that help navigate students down the right path?
Students attend a one-week program in July before they begin at the ECHS to become familiar with the faculty. Counselors also meet with the parents. Students complete a career interest inventory, and we begin mapping out what the sequence of courses will be at the early college, and what degree or certificate program the student might be leaning toward. The school social worker and career guidance counselor meets with the family and student at least twice during the academic year to review goals and determine which college credit pathway (e.g., associate of arts, associate of science) best serves a student's career interests.

How is the school structure a factor in learning?
Whether it's local policy or administrative regulation, state statutes governing education, or minutes of the day the students have to be in school… these policy bumps are faced all of the time and need to be mitigated. Students may not be able to be moved forward in a subject if they don't have the skill set—e.g., they may have to repeat a requirement such as 10th grade English before they can move to 11th grade English. How do we do this? And other students may be ready for university coursework and have to meet the university's class schedule, which might not be congruent to the ECHS bell schedule. We need to be flexible in order to move the ECHS schedule to a university schedule.

For people thinking of starting an ECHS, what are the important things they need to know as they design their program?
First and foremost, is banging up against policy in the implementation of a non-traditional model. The struggle seems exacerbated when the ECHS is housed within a traditional school setting rather located on a post-secondary campus. I have other educators and principals who ask me "how I got from 11% proficiency to 95% proficiency in a year?" This increase was due to dedicated faculty and creating the culture of learning. Being on a campus sets a different tone for expectations. Kids typically will aspire to that normative culture. There was a culture shift for the higher education faculty as well, who found our students aligned well to the university structure. The key is to be mindful and resilient as we implement our ECHS model.

We must make sure the support system is there to help students to ensure persistence. Students, particularly 11th and 12th grade, have to have an ongoing continuous checkpoint of support that they can

come back to… they have to know ECHS is their home. We need to be mindful that it's that constant communication and contact that go a long way.

Anne Salzmann, The Master's Program, Santa Fe

Can you describe your school?

The Master's Program started in the fall of 2010, founded as an ECHS to give students freedom and opportunities. The school is on the campus of Santa Fe Community College (SFCC). The hardest thing is designing the schedule. We individualize every schedule for every student based on their scores on the Accuplacer, which gives levels in math, reading and writing that SFCC uses. We have to determine whether their subject courses are at the high-school or college level (e.g., math, English, Science). So, we created a schedule that could work pretty well with the college and integrate high school and college classes. We have students who are going to apply to the best colleges in the country who've taken calculus three and engineering courses for example. We also have students who are on the other end of the spectrum, who receive a lot of support they had not been able to get in the larger high school structure.

How do you recruit the students?

We began with 22% FRL to more than 50% currently, and from primarily a White student body to more than 70% minority. Many of the students who come to us are children of immigrants and they don't see themselves as college students until they get here. Here, they realize they fit in. We provide a lot of back-up support.

As an independent public charter school, the only way students can get in is by lottery. We recruit through our website and word-of-mouth among immigrant families. Our school starts at 10th grade; students had to have completed 9th grade to apply.

Applicants receive a random number, and we start calling them. Several have changed their mind. We take the class of 10th graders and then if we have spaces to fill at junior year, we will take some juniors. We do not accept seniors.

So, when students come to the Masters Program, is their goal an associate degree or industry certificate?

With some of the students, the goal is to help them understand how important their education is. They are not well connected to the reality that the more education you have, the more opportunities you will have, the better you'll be paid, and the more you'll be able to do what you're passionate about. Other kids come in and are ready to go. We have this huge range.

We are pretty much doing a 100% individualized, personalized learning path for every student. They are all the same classes, but each student is quite different. On a typical day, students show up to their first class at 8 a.m. Classes meet four times a week for an hour, or two times a week for one hour, 20 minutes. All of our sophomore classes, all of our math, and all of our science (except for one or two

college-level classes) our teachers teach. But the students will actually get college credit because they're based on the curriculum that the college uses. Those classes meet four times a week to ensure students' build their skills. Each schedule is different.

Those who are in our college classes generally meet twice a week so they can also fulfill workplace experiences. The exception is Friday, when the entire student body meets at 8:30. The community building is a huge part of what makes the schoolwork. It is a fishbowl, with a center circle. If you are sitting in the center, you can talk about whatever the topic is. It might be a quote, it might be a video that we've seen, and it might be a problem we need to wrestle with as a school. And then if somebody else wants to speak, they walk up, tap the speaker, and take the center seat. It's incredible to watch, the students are fascinated to listen to each other, and faculty joins in on the discussions as well.

Usually, we choose the topic, but if a student comes to us and wants to talk about something, we will. Generally, we have a pretty good sense of what that some of the issues may be. One time, we had a student stealing from the bookstore upstairs. We addressed that in the Friday meeting, without identifying the student. It was a great discussion and one student stood up and said if anyone needs money, please come to me rather than stealing. It's really about how we support each other. We never had any incidents since then.

We also have service projects on Friday following the meeting for the rest of the day. This may include working with someone from fish and wildlife, creating habitats for animals, working at the humane society, taking care of horses that are used for disabled persons, Habitat for Humanity, and more. Our students are out in the community doing various kinds of things, and that's an important part of the school.

How do staff work together to make sure students are on track?

When we came to work on the college campus, we found that we were all going to be working in one room, and the teachers would go out to classrooms nearby. Unlike traditional high schools, the rooms don't belong to us beyond 4 p.m. when they are used by the college. Although the one room was close quarters, its impact was beneficial in that it created the physical setting for a team of people to work together. We have a bigger office now, but still one office. It just builds community. I was speaking to a teacher from the local high school who said she went to school, taught the kids, prepped, or graded papers and saw more kids. Ultimately, she left. She never spoke to another adult. In this light, I think our staff work as a team partly because of the shared space. Unlike in traditional high schools, where English teachers and math teachers generally do not collaborate, in our ECHS, the focus is on the student and all that student's teachers collaborate to ensure success.

If students are not connected, if they are lost, and they don't know their teachers well enough to talk to them about a problem, the students are just "tourists."

We do see students, sometimes more frequently than we want, who by the end of four years are not ready to graduate. We hold on to these students and tell them to come back next year. They can

graduate in December or May. That is really important for students who struggle, not to feel they have to drop out.

We have a competency-based model without time requirements for their postsecondary institutions. If it takes you an extra month to finish a semester course, that's fine. When I look at the number of students who are retaking math, for example, I think if we would break down those content areas, we'd see a different story. The student may not have failed at Algebra, just one section of it.

With teenagers, the other piece of that is just as important as the autonomy. It's being seen for who they are, being listened to, being cared for, feeling like there's somebody that will notice them if they are not doing well. We actually use the word "love," which is what the world needs. That is part of what we are about, expressing kindness. This kindness is the norm of a great school. Students feel like they belong.

Dr. Robert Hunter, CEO. Middle College High School

Can you describe your school for us?

Currently, the Middle College HS has 100 students in grades 10 through 12, with four instructors, all credentialed to teach at both the high-school and college levels. Many of our students are completing their first two years of college with our partner, the University of New Mexico – Gallup. The only associate degree available for the students is the Associate of Arts degree. That is not always the right fit for all students because some of them want to go into the health sciences or engineering fields. Because of this, we don't always push that two-year degree. The advisors at our four-year university partners tell us the students should have taken some chemistry and higher math.

A typical day for a student varies because classes start as early as 8:00 a.m. or as late as 11:00 a.m. At times, the courses go into the evening. Students are completing an average of 15 college credits now. Some of the credits they take may be just high-school courses to meet graduation requires.

Students must have two hours of dedicated tutoring time each day to maintain good grades and help them establish good study habits. Sometimes, we have graduates come back for the student orientations, and the graduates always tell the new students that the tutoring is how they learned to be successful. Not all of our students are pursuing their first two years of college; some students take primarily high-school classes. Either way, the students are getting more individualized attention.

What is the make-up of your student body?

The student body is evenly split by gender, and it is very diverse. The biggest percentage of our student body is Native American, which reflects our community. We follow the New Mexico administrative code, meaning enrollment is open. We cannot give enrollment preference to anybody, and that can be a challenge. As a result, we have an interesting mix of students. One college professor remarked that he could always tell who our students are because they are the two or three top students in his class and at the same time the two or three lowest scoring students. We don't have much middle ground. I think

that's because we attract those students who want to accelerate their education and those who want to get out of a traditional school setting and all those associated challenges such as school cliques and bullying.

What benefits of the ECHS grab the attention of the student and parents?
There is a huge cost savings to families, and it gives opportunities to students for whom college would be unaffordable. Students are getting more refined knowledge of what they want to do in their post-secondary lives. We have one graduate who is at Northern Arizona University and another who just was selected for an internship with the US Foreign Service. She noted she wouldn't have even been eligible at her age had she not had college credits under her belt.

So, we do focus a lot with our students on career exploration, college searches, majors, and financial aid. When I first came here, I sat down with our 10th or 11th grade students and asked what they thought of their ACT tests. I found they hadn't taken it. That has changed. We also looked at the communication piece and how to get them to examine their different majors. How do we get them together when a recruiter is coming to visit? We are creating a required seminar course in the master schedule, where all students are in one place. Parents have noted this as one of the strengths of our school, i.e., how much time and energy we put into postsecondary planning.

What are some of the demands you face that may be related to work?
I think one of the big ones is establishing some good time management skills. Trying to balance a job or a sports schedule with the demand of taking college courses can be a challenge. And, we do have students with jobs, who are helping their families. But, we are upfront about how their priority needs to be on the college courses and the courses they are taking for high school as well.

What advice would you give people wanting to start an ECHS—the challenges they might have?
The first thing is to establish a strong relationship with the college that you're working with by attending their faculty assembly meetings or departmental curriculum meetings. When you bring students on board, you want to make sure you have room in the schedule for personal attention to the student advising process. We handle that now in the ECHS and then refer them to college advisors for some courses.

One of the most difficult things to surmount is that the students are all over the place with respect to weekly schedules. You need to schedule structured time with them. It has been a lifesaver for us introducing the weekly seminar class co-taught by our instructors. It gets our entire sophomore, junior, and senior students in one place at one time to explore the college and career interests and inform them about important announcements such as deadlines for the ACT.

Every Friday afternoon, we have some form of in-house professional development. I've been working with staff on examining depth of knowledge in the tasks that they ask of the students. This may also be time spent discussing ways to support co-teaching. The ECHS is more of a family type of focus and commitment, so it is a nice alternative to your traditional high school setting. In a traditional school

setting, teachers don't get these opportunities often. Here, they hand in their syllabi, they have more planning and prep time, and they have the seminar class. They can ask the questions of what is coming up next week, and what should we be focusing on with the students now. This does allow for those conversations to happen in ways that can be very responsive to students' needs.

Dr. Porter Cuttrell, Principal. Roswell Early College High School

Can you describe your school?

The district had been meeting with business leaders and other community stakeholders to develop an ECHS model and agreed upon an alternative high-school approach that could be paired with the other alternative high school in Roswell. The research showed that ECHSs located on the college campus have the opportunity to succeed and to use that environment to their advantage. The president of the university had a great vision for an outstanding ECHS and how it would work as a partner with this institution. We created an MOU and found some places on the campus where we could house the ECHS, with room to grow as the student population expanded. We began with the freshman year and added one year each year.

We looked at what jobs were in the Roswell area. Looking at these, we had quite a few pathways to offer students, and quite a few options for students to receive associate degrees, and certificate programs. We have located internships and apprenticeships with our local businesses.

What is your recruitment process? When are you recruiting students?

We have an advertisement barrage that we put out both in print and broadcast media in the area. We show students and parents some of the things we do. We also have a speaking circuit: We speak to all the junior high students. We also speak around the community and with different business organizations, giving them an opportunity to ask questions and come to the school to visit. We begin the advertising in February and have an application process in the spring. Really though, our students are our best advertisement. And, we have good marketing materials that convey the costs and benefits for the parents and students.

We have a number of clubs and student organizations. We competed in Skills USA, HOSA, (Health Occupation Science Association), and we compete in Educators Rising. We have a group that is in Key Club. We began a Robotics and Engineering STEM pathway which has been reported on in the newspaper, giving us more exposure. Some of our students' friends see these activities and come out to visit. These are good opportunities for recruitment.

What are the outcomes you've seen from some of your students, and do most of them achieve them?

It's important to know our students are taking those college classes and even though they're offered dual credit, the postsecondary instructors do not lower their standards. We don't even identify our students to their teachers so they are treated and taught the same as everyone else. Expectations are the same. The thing we have seen is our students really can do it. Right now, we are on track for 100% graduation, with 100% earning their associate degree. That's a big win for our program.

What has been the response of the business community to the program?
Our community is really excited. Our school district has been great to help us promote the ECHS to our community members and to our different businesses in the area. We are creating a Business Advisory Board as well. When we first started with our 9th grade cohort, we had the younger students. Now we have some of the older students and they have real skills and are interning. They are not 13 or 14 anymore—they are 18 and 19 years old. We've worked our way to prominence in our business community. Now, people are saying, this school has 14 certificates that are nationally recognized in a wide range of industries. These students could start work tomorrow or continue with their education. Everybody is starting to step up and really realize that the ECHS is valuable for our community.

Do you have a counselor or someone on your staff who works with the students if they fall behind?
We have a part-time counselor, who goes back and forth between our two high schools. And, we have college advisors. There is one person in charge of dual credits, and four other counselors. Our counselor and I check the early warning system and work with students. We use a Saturday school option and after-school tutoring both with the college and high school. Students can go to a college counselor or the college tutoring service as well, if needed.

What do you wish somebody would have told you when you started your ECHS? Now you have the chance to tell others. What advice do you want to give them?
First, we spent a lot of time trying to come up with some type of rubric or a way to look at their past performance. You know, they always say past performance is the best predictor of future success. We spent a lot of time trying to worry about what kid really could be successful and what test score would equal that. As students started to come to us, they really don't have any of their 8th grade PARCC scores we can look at for them. So, really all we have is 7th grade scores and grades. We spent a lot of time putting together a rubric. Then, we discovered that the students we thought were marginal got into a career pathway they really enjoyed, and they really got something done. And some of the ones we thought would be no problem might not have worked out.

After we make those connections with businesses, we bring speakers in to talk to our students. The students can make a connection to somebody who's actually doing something very similar to what they want to do. Now they have somebody they can email or Skype or talk to, creating one more person in their life. This presents a chance for students that is positive and creates energy. I wish I would have had that when I grew up, knowing what jobs were out there. We probably don't even know half the jobs that will be out there. But our students are going to have certain skills to be able to be in the ballgame.

I think career pathways can be brought up even down in the junior highs and maybe even late elementary school. People need to start thinking about what the connection between education and my future is so they aren't asking why they are doing this. We need to make this connection as educators and schools; I think relevance and rigor need to increase. That is one way we can really help American public education.

Appendix F. Assurances Signature Letter

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

The (District/Institution Name) ensures that the following have been included as part of the application for ECHS Designation and that it will 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:

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

(8) 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 by reason 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:_____

Appendix G. References

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