

Early College High School Blueprint

Overview of Early College High School Model

Early College High Schools (ECHS) are open-enrollment programs that allow students least likely to attend college, as defined by the TEC, §29.081, or who wish to accelerate completion of high school, to combine high school courses and college-level courses while participating in rigorous and accelerated instruction.

Early College High School Blueprint



The Blueprint identifies five **benchmarks** which serve as the foundational elements of the model and describes essential **design elements** for each benchmark.



The Blueprint outlines the required design element **artifacts** to be published publicly and made available to TEA upon request.



The Blueprint defines **Outcomes-Based Measures** (OBMs) for required data indicators related to access, achievement, and attainment.

ECHS programs are required to adopt the design elements in each benchmark and meet OBMs to receive the Texas Education Agency (TEA) ECHS designation.

Early College High School Designation Process

The TEA designed a designation process for ECHS under the authority of Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.908(b) (2019) and Title 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §102.1091 (effective 2007).



Designation is the process by which the TEA determines whether a school can fully implement the design elements of each benchmark and meet the OBMs.



Designation, through the Program Application Cycle (PAC), is an annual requirement for ECHS programs.



ECHS students earn a high school diploma in addition to up to 60 college credit hours or an associate degree.

BLUEPRINT BENCHMARKS

Benchmark 1: School Design

Benchmark 2: Partnerships

Benchmark 3: Target Population

Benchmark 4: Academic Infrastructure

Benchmark 5: Student Supports



Path to ECHS Designation



Planning Year

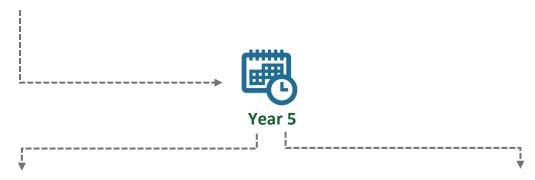
- Engage in 12-18 months of ECHS planning.
- Recruit the first 9th grade ECHS cohort.



Years 1-5

Provisional

- Grow cohorts, improve programming, and build strong partnerships.
- Implement all benchmark design elements.
- Receive OBM data for informational purposes only.



Designated (Year 6)

Campuses that meet access, achievement, and attainment OBM criteria and implement all design elements receive Designated status.



Year 7+

Designated

Meet Designated OBMs and implement all design elements.

Campuses must continue to meet Designation OBM criteria yearly to maintain Designated status.



Year 7+

Designated with Distinctions

A campus Is

eligible for Designated with

Distinction status if the campus is

Designated and

meets

Distinction OBM criteria and

Needs Improvement (Year 6)

Campuses that do not meet access, achievement, and attainment OBM criteria are considered Needs Improvement.



Receive targeted technical assistance to improve OBMs. Campuses may receive Designation status if criteria are met prior to Year 9.



Receive Designated status if OBMs met. Removed from network if Designation OBMs not met.



BENCHMARK 1: SCHOOL DESIGN

The Early College High School (ECHS) shall establish school structures and policies, regularly convene leadership teams and ensure adequate staff capacity for the successful implementation and sustainability of the ECHS program.

Design Elements:

Student Cost

The ECHS program shall be offered at no cost to students.

1.2 School Location

The ECHS location shall be:

- a. On a college or university campus, or
- b. In a high school—as a standalone high school campus or in a smaller learning community within a larger high school.
- 1.3 Student Cohorts

ECHS students shall be placed in a cohort for core classes to the extent possible; this does not exclude non-ECHS students from enrolling in the same class(es).

Flexible Scheduling 1.4

The ECHS program shall provide flexible, individualized scheduling that allows students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and enables a student to combine high school courses and college-level courses with the goal of earning an associate degree or up to 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree.

TSIA Testing Site 1.5

The ECHS shall be a TSI assessment site or is in the process of becoming a TSI assessment site. The ECHS shall provide opportunities throughout the year for students to take the TSI assessment.

The ECHS shall establish a leadership team that includes high-level personnel from the school district, campus, and IHE. Each representative must report to the organization they represent and have decision-making authority. The leadership team shall develop long-term strategic priorities for the ECHS program along with a work plan for how to achieve programmatic goals in coordination with district and campus improvement planning. Regularly scheduled meetings in person and/or virtual—must address the following objectives:

- a. Establish and maintain the role each member will play in the design, governance, operations, accountability, curriculum development, professional development, outreach, sustainability, monitoring, and continuous improvement of the ECHS
- b. Collectively develop an MOU and review annually for necessary revisions
- c. Define shared responsibility (between the school district and the IHE) for meeting annual outcomes-based measures (OBMs) and providing annual reports to district and IHE boards, as well as to the public
- d. Monitor progress on meeting the Blueprint Design Elements, including reviewing formative data to ensure the ECHS is on-track to meet OBMs
- e. Guide mid-course corrections as needed

Leadership Team Key Roles

The leadership team shall include leaders from the district, campus, and IHE who have decision-making authority to execute changes toward this end:

District leaders (may include):

1.7

- a. Superintendent
- b. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, or equivalent position
- c. ECHS principal or director
- d. ECHS liaison to the IHE or department chairs
- e. School-business partner or CTE director (if applicable to the ECHS model)
- f. School counselors
- g. Parent representative

IHE leaders (may include):

- a. College or university president
- b. Department chairs for core academic disciplines
- c. Liaison to the ECHS or Dual Credit Officer
- d. Advising or student support director

ECHS Staff

1.8

1.9

1.10

ECHS staff shall include the following:

- a. An ECHS leader who has authority over course and instructor scheduling, staff and faculty hiring, and budget development
- b. An IHE liaison with decision-making authority who interacts directly and frequently (in-person or virtually) with the ECHS leader and the dual credit provider
- c. Highly qualified ECHS teachers who work directly with the ECHS students, which may include high school faculty who must meet faculty requirements that are set by the regional accrediting association of the community college and/or university to teach college-level courses, instructors for virtual college courses, and instructors for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses
- d. Advising staff who may be provided by, or shared with, the IHE partner who support the ECHS students through activities such as coordinating with the IHE for registration, monitoring of students' high school and college transcripts, monitoring of high school and college courses to ensure programmatic requirements for both the high school and the partnering institution are met, and who plan for future credentials and career entry

ECHS Staff Professional Development

The ECHS shall implement an annual professional development plan (i.e, calendar of events/activities) for teachers and staff, focused on research-based instructional strategies for increasing rigor and college- and career-readiness, that is based on needs assessment of student data, and includes both high school and dual credit teachers. Professional development should include, but is not limited to the following:

- A mentoring and induction program for newly hired staff, providing them with the instructional and interpersonal skills and capacities needed for success in an ECHS
- b. Opportunities for ECHS teachers and higher-education faculty to receive extensive support through regularly scheduled formative peer observations and collaboration opportunities with feeder pattern focus group and/or IHE faculty
- Joint training among ECHS and higher-education college advisors and faculty (e.g., related to course requirements and addressing layered wrap-around supports for students)

Sustainability Structures

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



BENCHMARK 2: PARTNERSHIPS

The Early College High School (ECHS) must have a current, signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) or interlocal agreement (ILA) with each Institution of Higher Education (IHE) that outlines key issues related to the planning, implementation, and sustainability of the ECHS program. Stakeholders shall review the MOU or ILA annually. The agreement shall include the components described in the Design Elements below.

Design Elements:

2.1 Goal of Higher Education Partnerships

The MOU or ILA shall include the goal of the ECHS and IHE partnership and a description of how the goals of the dual credit program align to the Texas Statewide Dual Credit Goals.

Roles and Responsibilities 2.2

The MOU or ILA shall include the respective roles and responsibilities for the campus/LEA and IHE in providing for and ensuring the quality and instructional rigor of the dual credit program.

Funding 2.3

The MOU or ILA shall identify how costs will be shared, including for the following:

- a. Dual credit courses offered through the program
- b. Instructional materials to be used and textbook adoption
- c. Transportation costs and fees
- d. Eligibility of ECHS students for financial assistance from the IHE(s), specifically, waivers for tuition and fees

2.4 Academic Plan

The MOU or ILA shall articulate the academic plan, including the following:

- a. Courses of study that enable a student to combine high school courses and collegelevel courses with the goal of earning an associate degree or up to 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree
- b. Curriculum alignment for each degree plan with a course equivalency crosswalk equating high school courses with college courses and the number of college credits that may be earned for each course completed through the dual credit program
- c. Transferable and applicable college credits earned during high school

Transcription of Credit 2.5

The MOU or ILA shall include components that enhance transcription of credit, including the following:

- Assurances that the IHE will transcribe college credit earned through dual credit in the same semester that credit is earned
- b. Assurances that the ECHS will adhere to the grading periods and policies of the IHE for dual credit and college courses, including academic probation

Course Delivery and Scheduling 2.6

The MOU or ILA shall articulate course delivery and scheduling including the following:

- a. The instructional calendar, including location of each course that will be offered
- b. Assurances that ECHS students are treated as dual credit students until graduation from the ECHS program. As such, they may take dual credit courses during the fall, spring, and summer sessions to meet the goals of the ECHS program

Staffing Plan 2.7

2.9

The MOU or ILA shall include a staffing plan for the ECHS, including the following:

- a. Teacher qualification processes, instructor availability, and course offerings
- b. Joint professional development for ECHS faculty and college and counselors/advisors (including both district and IHE faculty/staff)

Instructional Materials and Textbooks 2.8

The MOU or ILA shall articulate instructional materials and textbook policies, including the following:

- a. The duration for which textbooks can be used
- b. Instructional materials and textbook costs and fees

Access to Higher Education Resources

The MOU or ILA shall articulate that students will be granted access to higher education resources, including the following:

- a. ECHS students' access to the IHE facilities, services and resources
- b. Disability services available to students in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for college courses for dual credit

Transportation 2.10

The MOU or ILA shall address transportation, including the following:

- a. Transportation policies, including the ECHS and IHE respective roles and responsibilities related to transportation
- b. Transportation costs and fees funding

Collaborative Outreach Efforts 2.11

The MOU or ILA shall outline the commitment that the ECHS and IHE will implement purposeful and collaborative outreach efforts to inform all students and parents of the benefits and costs of dual credit, including enrollment and fee policies.

Student Participation 2.12

The MOU or ILA shall articulate student participation, including the following:

- a. Policy on minimum class size per dual credit course
- Student enrollment policies, including student eligibility for enrollment and prerequisite policies
- c. Student attendance policies
- d. Code of conduct policies
- Administration of statewide assessments of academic skills (TEC, Subchapter B, Chapter 39)
- f. Provisions for discontinuing ECHS operation and ensuring students previously enrolled will have the opportunity to complete their course of study

Academic Supports 2.13

The MOU or ILA shall identify how the ECHS and the IHE will provide academic supports including the following:

- a. Academic and college readiness advising with access to student support services to bridge students successfully into college course completion
- b. Advising services for students on the transferability and applicability to baccalaureate degree plans for all college credit offered and earned
- c. Policies related to student intervention

Data Sharing 2.14

2.15

The MOU or ILA shall include a data sharing agreement that outlines provisions for student data to be provided by the college to the high school and enables collaborative data sharing on a regular basis to promote student support interventions during the semester. The MOU and ILA shall also include the following:

- a. Teacher data such as qualifications
- b. Student-level data such as credit hours taken and earned, GPA, student academic progress, college, and career readiness metrics (e.g., SAT/ACT), and formative regularly updated or real-time data (e.g., course enrollment/ dropout, TSIA scores, 6-/9-week or midterm grades, attendance for students at the high school)
- c. Policies for expanding access to student data, such as granting ECHS teachers of record and campus administrators full instructor access

ECHS Program Data Analysis

The MOU or ILA shall identify the CCRSM program data analysis that the ECHS will complete, including but not limited to:

- a. Dual credit program outcomes that assist high school students in the successful transition to and acceleration through postsecondary education
- The quality and rigor of dual credit courses will be sufficient to ensure student success in subsequent courses



BENCHMARK 3: TARGET POPULATION

The Early College High School (ECHS) shall target and enroll historically underserved students. The campus must enable students who are at-risk of dropping out or those who wish to accelerate completion of high school to combine high school courses and college-level courses. Every ECHS must enroll at least a 9th grade class during their first year of implementation. If an ECHS phases out their services, the academy must be prepared to provide services to each enrolled cohort through graduation.

Design Elements:

3.1 Recruitment and Enrollment Policies

The ECHS shall be open enrollment for all students and shall identify, recruit, and enroll subpopulations that are historically underrepresented in college courses. The ECHS shall coordinate activities with feeder middle school(s) and higher education partner(s) to participate in recruitment activities. The ECHS must enroll a 9th grade class during the first year of implementation and will progressively scale up by adding at least one grade level per year after the first year of implementation.

3.2 **Documenting Enrollment Procedures**

The ECHS shall clearly document recruitment and enrollment policies and practices, refining and improving them annually based on data reviews.

3.3 Stakeholder Engagement

Recruitment and enrollment processes (including marketing and recruitment plans, materials, and timelines) shall include input from key stakeholders (e.g., parents, community members, higher education partners) and shall include regular activities to educate students, counselors, principals, parents, and school board and community members.

3.4 Lottery System

For any ECHS at capacity, the ECHS shall use either a performance-blind, open-access lottery system that encourages and considers applications from all students (all students have an equal opportunity for acceptance, regardless of background or academic performance) or a weighted lottery that favors students who are historically underrepresented students for the ECHS. Districts are encouraged to standardize lottery practices across campuses implementing the College and Career Readiness School Models.



BENCHMARK 4: ACADEMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The Early College High School (ECHS) must provide a rigorous course of study that allows students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and enable a student to combine high school courses and college-level courses with the goal of earning an associate degree or up to 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree.

Design Elements:

4.1

Regional Need

The ECHS shall work with the local workforce development board, local chamber of commerce, and/or local workforce industry representatives to identify and maintain a list of high-demand occupations. The ECHS shall explore how the ECHS academic plan and targeted postsecondary credentials connect with the local economic needs.

4.2

Postsecondary Opportunities

The ECHS program must provide a rigorous course of study that allows students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and enables a student to combine high school courses and collegelevel courses with the goal of earning an associate degree or up to 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree.

4.3

Course Sequence

The ECHS program shall offer a course of study that provides a detailed and relevant course sequence to the postsecondary opportunities aligned to the high school and college courses provided to the ECHS students. This crosswalk must follow the courses and fields of study listed in the THECB Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM) and/or the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM).

4.4

Course Offerings

The ECHS shall provide a variety of opportunities for students to earn college credit (e.g., a portfolio approach may include dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), OnRamps, CLEP assessments, and local articulation agreements for specific courses in partnership with a local college) with applicability of college credits in mind.

Delivery of Courses

4.5

The campus may implement multiple dual enrollment delivery models, including, but not limited to the following:

- a. College courses taught on the college campus by college faculty
- b. College courses taught on the high school campus by college faculty
- c. College courses taught on the high school campus by high school educators who meet faculty requirements
- d. College courses taught virtually, via distance/online/blended learning

Academic Performance in High School 4.6

The ECHS shall implement a plan for End-of-Course (EOC) assessment success, including academic preparation classes for accepted students and academic interventions for students who do not pass EOC assessments.

College Readiness 4.7

The ECHS shall provide a TSI assessment to accepted students as early as incoming 9th graders (Note, this assessment may not be used as a prerequisite for admissions to the ECHS).

- The ECHS shall publish on its website the dates, times, and location(s) for TSI administration
- b. The ECHS shall provide assessment fee waivers for all administrations of the TSI test
- c. The ECHS shall implement a plan for TSI success, including academic preparation classes for accepted students and shall provide academic interventions (e.g., tutorials, workshops, testing strategies, accelerated instruction) for students who do not pass the TSI before retesting
- d. The ECHS shall review TSI testing data, particularly the number/percentage of students who have passed each section of the TSI assessment to prescribe accelerated instruction to support students
- e. The ECHS shall explore alternative measures for students to meet college readiness standards

Student Data Tracking

4.8

4.10

The ECHS shall biannually implement structured data review processes to do the following:

- a. Identify student strengths and areas of growth and develop individual instructional support plans.
- b. Provide an assessment for measuring student progress to ensure students are on track to meet the Outcomes-Based Measures.
- c. Provide an opportunity for the IHE to provide feedback on the value of the ECHS program.

Student Persistence 4.9

The ECHS shall create a plan for students off-track for success in the ECHS program. Support systems shall include infrastructure, resources, and personnel to enable every possibility to retain the student in the ECHS program and promote program completion.

Student Pathway Support

The ECHS shall develop a plan to support direct-to-college student enrollment following high school graduation and a strategy to foster long-term workforce readiness.



BENCHMARK 5: STUDENT SUPPORT

The Early College High School (ECHS) must provide wrap-around strategies and services involving multiple stakeholders to strengthen academic, technical, and individual support for students to be successful in their ECHS program.

Design Elements:

5.1 **Bridge Programs**

The ECHS provides a bridge program (an intensive academic preparation program that provides opportunities to strengthen academic skills necessary for high school, college readiness, and career readiness) to prepare students for TSI and provide academic interventions for those who do not pass TSI. The bridge program may also serve to support student transition from middle school to the ECHS program.

5.2 Advising

5.3

The ECHS shall collaborate with its IHE to personalize the learning environment for students by developing individualized student plans for ongoing academic support, filing a degree plan, and the attainment of long-term goals. The ECHS and IHE shall develop robust college and career advising systems to support student plans and advance academic progress and shall develop a process for collaboration to provide an academic bridge across two educational systems.

Student Intervention

The ECHS shall administer interventions as needed, including tutoring and/or Saturday school for identified students in need of academic supports. The ECHS shall monitor academic progress with formative data.

Classroom Supports 5.4

The ECHS shall ensure time for advisory and/or college and career readiness advising is built into the instructional sequence for all students. The ECHS shall provide skill building instruction for students, such as time management, study skills, collaboration, and interpersonal relationship skills.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

The ECHS shall provide a multi-tiered system of supports that encompasses career, academic, behavioral, and mental health supports for all students.

5.6 **Enrichment Opportunities**

5.5

The ECHS shall provide enrichment opportunities, including the following:

- a. A structured program of community service to promote community involvement
- b. Partnering with community businesses to expose students to a variety of potential career options and possible internship opportunities
- c. Establishing a mentorship program available to all students
- d. Parent outreach and involvement opportunities
- e. Family engagement to support rigorous course enrollment and college and career planning

College and Career Preparation 5.7

The ECHS shall provide college and career awareness to current and prospective students and families, including the following:

- a. College application assistance
- b. Financial aid counseling
- c. College and career counseling



REQUIRED ECHS ARTIFACTS

All Early College High School (ECHS) artifacts shall be published on the ECHS's website and made available to TEA upon request. The artifacts shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Not all Benchmark design elements require a published artifact.

Benchmark 1: School Design		
1.6	Leadership Team Strategic Priorities	 ECHS/IHE leadership meeting agendas School board and board of regents' presentations Document(s) outlining the strategic priorities for the current academic year and/or long-term priorities of the ECHS partnership
1.7	Leadership Team Key Roles	Description of each member and role in leadership team
1.8	ECHS Staff	ECHS leader/IHE liaison meeting agendas and relevant materials
1.9	ECHS Staff Professional Development	 Mentor/induction program plans Annual training or professional development plan for ECHS and IHE faculty

Benchmark 2: Partnerships		
2.1	Goal of Higher Education Partnerships	 Final, signed, and executed MOU/ILA or similar agreement MOU/ILA must be reviewed annually with the goal of improving programmatic supports and services for students and alignment to the Texas Statewide Dual Credit Goals.

Benchmark 3: Target Population		
3.2	Documenting Enrollment Procedures	 Written admission policy, and enrollment application Written recruitment plan, including a timeline of recruitment and enrollment events, and recruitment materials for distribution at feeder middle schools and other appropriate locations in the community
3.3	Stakeholder Engagement	 Brochures and marketing in Spanish, English, and/or other relevant language(s) Written communication plan for targeting identified audiences (e.g., parents, community members, school boards, higher education personnel, etc.)
3.4	Lottery System	Written lottery procedures (district-level or campus-level)

Benchmark 4: Academic Infrastructure		
4.1	Regional Need	 Documentation detailing examples that make the connection between regional need and student pathways Current dated regional high-demand occupation list
4.3	Course Sequence	 Crosswalk aligning high school and college courses, grades 9 through 12, which enables a student to earn an associate degree or up to 60 college credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree Master schedules
4.7	College Readiness	 Calendar of TSI scheduled test administration dates, sign-up process, and intervention expectations Aggregate reports of TSI exam performance Testing calendar and schedule for SAT, ACT, or other college readiness assessments

Benchmark 5: Student Supports 5.1 **Bridge Programs** • Bridge program curriculum and schedule Schedule of advising events and records of completion for these support 5.2 **Advising** services Student Tutoring schedules 5.3 Intervention Classroom Advisory/study skills curriculum material 5.4 Supports **Multi-tiered** 5.5 System of Calendar of family outreach events Supports **Enrichment** 5.6 Professional learning community agendas **Opportunities**

Early College High School Outcomes-Based Measures

ACCESS OUTCOMES-BASED MEASURES

Student representation in the ECHS program.

	Requirements	
	Designated ECHS	Designated with Distinction
Data Indicators	Must meet targets on "At-Risk Students" and "Economically- Disadvantaged Students"	Must meet targets on at least <mark>two</mark> access distinction data indicators
	No more than 25% under district (grades 9-12)	No more than 20% under district (grades 9-12)
Economically- Disadvantaged Students	No more than 10% under district (grades 9-12)	No more than 5% under district (grades 9-12)
Emergent Bilingual Students	Not considered for designation	No more than 10% under district
Students with Disabilities	Not considered for designation	No more than 10% under district

ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES-BASED MEASURES

Student achievement through high school-based opportunities.

	Requirements		
Data kadi satawa	Designated ECHS	Designated with Distinction	
Data Indicators	Must meet targets on at least three achievement designated data indicators	Must meet targets on at least three achievement distinction data indicators	
Algebra I EOC Assessment	60% of students achieve "Meets Grade Level Performance" by the end of 9 th grade	70% of students achieve "Meets Grade Level Performance" by the end of 9 th grade	
English II EOC Assessment	65% of students achieve "Meets Grade Level Performance" by the end of 11 th grade	75% of students achieve "Meets Grade Level Performance" by the end of 11 th grade	
TSIA Mathematics College Readiness	60% of students achieve passing rate by the end of 11 th grade	70% of students achieve passing or TSI exemption by the end of 11 th grade	
TSIA ELAR and Writing College Readiness	70% of students achieve passing rate by the end of 11 th grade	80% of students achieve passing rate or TSI exemption by the end of 11 th grade	
High School Graduation Rate	Within 5% of statewide 4-year graduation rate	Exceeds the statewide 4-year graduation rate	
SAT/ACT College Readiness	45% of students achieve College, Career and Military Readiness standards on SAT or ACT by graduation	55% of students meet college readiness standards	

ATTAINMENT OUTCOMES-BASED MEASURES

Student attainment of postsecondary opportunities such as Dual Credit, up to 60 college credit hours, or an Associate Degree.

	Requirements		
	Designated ECHS	Designated with Distinction	
Data Indicators	Must meet targets on at least three attainment designation data indicators	Must meet targets on at least three attainment distinction data indicators	
Earn 9 College Credits by the end of 10 th grade	40% of students earn 9 college credits (any) by the end of 10 th grade	50% of students earn 9 college credits (any) by the end of 10 th grade	
Earn at least 3 College Credits in ELA or Mathematics by the end of 11 th grade	60% of students earn an ENGL or MATH college credit by the end of 11 th grade	70% of students earn an ENGL or MATH college credit by the end of 11 th grade	
Earn 15 College Credits	65% of students earn 15 college credits (any) by graduation	75% of students earn 15 college credits (any) by graduation	
Earn an Associate Degree	50% of students earn an associate degree by graduation	60% of students earn an associate degree by graduation	
Persistence	75% of students enrolled remain in the ECHS program through graduation	85% of students enrolled remain in the ECHS program through graduation	
Direct-to-College Enrollment	45% of students enroll into a 2-year or 4-year institution after graduation	55% of students enroll into a 2-year or 4-year institution after graduation	