

# North Carolina Cooperative Innovative High Schools Design and Implementation Guide

## Historical Overview of Cooperative Innovative High Schools

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), in collaboration with the North Carolina Community Colleges System (NCCCS), the University of North Carolina General Administration (UNCGA), and the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU), initially established Cooperative Innovative High Schools (CIHS) in 2004, in response to legislation from the NC General Assembly. Originally called the Learn and Earn Initiative and updated with the Innovative Education Initiatives Act and the Career College Promise Program, this legislation establishes guidelines for the creation and operation of CIHS in North Carolina.

Session Law 2011-145, the Appropriations Act of 2011, established the Career and College Promise program, effective January 1, 2012. The purpose of Career and College Promise is to offer structured opportunities for qualified high school students to dually enroll in community college courses that provide pathways that lead to a certificate, diploma, or degree as well as provide entry-level jobs skills.

The three pathways include: 1. College Transfer Pathways (CTP) require the completion of a transfer pathway approved by the State Board of Community Colleges, including transfer courses in English and mathematics; 2. Career and Technical Education Pathways (CTE) lead to a certificate or diploma aligned with a high school career cluster; 3. Cooperative Innovative High School Programs (CIHS).

CIHS include Early College High Schools (ECHS), Middle Colleges, STEM-themed high schools, Career Academies, and other innovative models. All CIHS partner with an institution of higher education (IHE) and most are located on the campus of their higher education partner. All CIHS offer students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and to begin or complete

an associate degree program, master a certificate or vocational program, or earn up to two years of college credit within five years. CIHS are small schools, serving no more than 100 students per grade. CIHS target students who would be the first in their families to graduate from college, students who are at risk of dropping out of high school, and students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction.

For many years, much of this work was led by NC New Schools, a public-private partnership originally created with grant funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and matching funding from the State of North Carolina. NC New Schools partnered with 83 ECHS before ceasing operations in April 2016.

Today North Carolina leads the nation in expanding this innovative model, with 125 CIHS across the state. As CIHS continue to open in more school districts, a growing number of students are benefiting from new opportunities, leading to higher rates of achievement, graduation, and post-secondary enrollment. Together, these schools are transforming teaching and learning for their students, while also helping to promote the growth of innovative practices in many other schools and districts.

This CIHS Design and Implementation Guide is developed with input from CIHS principals and staff from across the state. The purpose of the Guide is to encourage and support a design approach to the creation and continuous improvement of CIHS across North Carolina. It is offered as a resource, aligned to legislation, to support CIHS staff, as well as district and IHE partners, as they collaborate to develop and sustain innovative structures, policies and practices to ensure the continued success of CIHS students and schools.



## Definition of CIHS Purpose and Target Student Population (N.C.G.A. § 115C-238.50)

“The purpose of this Part is to authorize local boards of education to jointly establish with one or more boards of trustees cooperative innovative programs in high schools and colleges or universities that will expand students’ opportunities for educational success through high quality instructional programming.

These cooperative innovative high school programs shall target any of the following groups:

- *High school students who are at risk of dropping out of school before attaining a high school diploma.*
- *High school students with parents who did not continue education beyond high school.*
- *High school students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction.*

All the cooperative innovative high school programs established under this Part shall:

- *Enable students to concurrently obtain a high school diploma and begin or complete an associate degree program, master a certificate or vocational program, or earn up to two years of college credit within five years.*
- *Prepare students adequately for future learning in the workforce or in an institution of higher education.*
- *Encourage the cooperative or shared use of resources, personnel, and facilities between public schools and colleges or universities, or both.*
- *Emphasize parental involvement and provide consistent counseling, advising, and parent conferencing so that parents and students can make responsible decisions regarding course taking and can track the students’ academic progress and success.*
- *Develop methods for early identification of potential participating students in the middle grades and through high school and provide outreach to those students to promote academic preparation and awareness of the cooperative innovative high school programs.”*

## Operation of CIHS (N.C.G.A. § 115C-238.53)

“Operation of cooperative innovative high schools:

- *A cooperative innovative high school approved by the State is accountable to the local board of education.*
- *A cooperative innovative high school approved under this Part shall operate under the terms of a written agreement signed by the local board of education, local board of trustees, State Board of Education, and applicable governing Board. The agreement shall incorporate the information provided in the application, as modified during the approval process, and any terms and conditions imposed on the school by the State Board of Education and the applicable governing Board. The agreement may be for a term of no longer than five school years.”*

“Except as provided in this Part and under the terms of the agreement, cooperative innovative high schools:

- *Shall have the same exemptions from statutes and rules as charter schools operating under Article 14A of this Chapter, other than those pertaining to personnel.*
- *May be exempted by the State Board of Education or by the applicable governing Board from laws and rules applicable to a local board of education, a local school administrative unit, a community college, a constituent institution, or a local board of trustees.”*

You can read the full legislation governing CIHS here:  
<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/advancedlearning/cihs/legislation/cihs-egislation-fall2015.pdf>



# Cooperative Innovative High Schools Design and Implementation Elements

## Future Ready Graduates

All CIHS staff members commit to ensuring every student graduates prepared and credentialed to succeed in post-secondary education and careers as a globally engaged and productive citizen. All staff collaborate to design, redesign, and sustain a powerful school culture where the whole child is developed, challenged, and supported to succeed in his or her chosen pathway of study.

- *Pathways to Completion: All students graduate with an associate degree, two years of transferable credit, or having mastered a certificate or vocational program.*
  - *All students on a College Transfer Pathway will graduate with the minimum admission standards for the UNC System colleges and universities.*
  - *All students on a CTE Pathway will graduate with a career certificate, diploma, or the associate of applied science (AAS) degree.*
- *Effective Use of Data: Formative and summative assessment data is used to inform instruction, including PSAT and pre-ACT data. Data from graduates and graduating seniors is used to inform school improvement.*
- *Intentional College and Career Ready Advising: Every student has a personalized four or five-year plan of study and is supported to become an advocate for her or his own learning to achieve college and career aspirations. See Personalized Student Supports.*
- *Intentional development of college and career ready skills: Every student demonstrates college and career ready skills through authentic assessments, including presentations to diverse audiences, projects mapped to standards with local or global relevance, and formal academic writing.*
- *Every student engages in research, college and career exploration and, wherever possible, work-based learning opportunities such as internships with business partners to explore career opportunities and to gain experience in career settings.*
- *Every student will explore post-secondary pathways and careers, such as visiting multiple IHEs to explore college and university settings and engaging local and regional employment opportunities.*
- *Every student and family will be supported in college and career planning, including support for college applications and admissions, financial aid, and scholarship applications.*

## Collaborative Partnerships

Each CIHS is established and sustained through a foundational partnership with one school district and one IHE. A highly effective partnership between the school district, the CIHS, and its IHE is essential to the success of CIHS students. CIHS also develop and sustain meaningful partnerships with business, industry, and community partners, and collaborate with other schools in their districts to promote innovation and the success of all students.

- *CIHS staff ensure consistent, effective communication and collaboration with the IHE to optimize opportunities and success for all students. CIHS and IHE staff collaborate regularly to ensure timely identification of poor attendance or performance, with timely interventions and effective supports for students who struggle.*
- *The school district and the IHE approve and implement a formal agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that articulates the roles, responsibilities, governing structures, and policies that ensure a true partnership and shared ownership of the CIHS.*
- *The school district and the IHE support the CIHS by reviewing the formal agreement or MOU annually and revising policies or procedures that act as barriers to innovation, student success, or sustainability of the CIHS.*
- *CIHS seek to maximize dual credit opportunities while ensuring personalized pathways for all students to complete certificates, diplomas, degrees, or two years of transferable credit. See Personalized Student Supports section.*
- *School district partners: CIHS provide vital choices to students and families within the public school system. CIHS have the flexibility to pilot innovative structures and strategies and to share innovative practices with other schools in their districts.*
- *Community Partners: All CIHS are encouraged to develop and sustain effective community partnerships to broaden learning opportunities and to support student success. Partnerships such as the following are encouraged:*
  - *Business Advisory Councils offer a wealth of community connections and opportunities, such as participation in project-based learning, input on student outcomes related to career-ready skills and workforce development needs, internships for students, externships for teachers, job shadowing, guest speakers, etc.*
  - *Feeder middle schools – pro-active communication and ongoing collaboration ensure early identification of target populations and other students who would most benefit from the CIHS experience.*
  - *Community and faith-based organizations offer a wealth of opportunities for recruitment, participation in project-based learning, service-based learning, etc.*



## Innovative Design and Operations

By legislation, CIHS are designed to partner with an institution of higher education to enable students to obtain concurrently a high school diploma and begin or complete an associate degree program, master a certificate or vocational program, or earn up to two years of college credit within five years. CIHS are designed to blend secondary and post-secondary experiences in innovative ways and to ensure successful implementation of the other CIHS design elements described in this guide.

- *CIHS target for recruitment and admission any or all the identified target populations:*
  - *Students who would be the first in their families to graduate from college*
  - *Student at risk of dropping out of high school*
  - *Students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction*
- *CIHS recognize that students from populations traditionally underrepresented in higher education are often students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction, especially in an innovative school with a strong culture of personalized student supports.*
- *CIHS serve no more than 100 students per grade level. All schools are encouraged to serve as many students as possible up to 100 students per grade level.*
- *CIHS are approved to operate by the State Board of Education and the applicable governing board of their IHE. Approved CIHS applications are renewed every five years.*
- *CIHS are designed to offer students opportunities beyond those available to traditional high school students through Career and College Promise, including expanded opportunities for dual enrollment and a college going campus and culture.*
- *Effective community outreach and communications with all stakeholders ensure successful recruitment of target population students. See Collaborative Partnerships.*
- *Student selection and admissions processes ensure target populations are served and do not create barriers to their enrollment.*
- *The school calendar and schedule are designed to ensure flexibility to optimize outcomes for all students and to maximize partnership opportunities with the IHE and other partners, including opportunities for work-based and community-based learning.*
- *School and college staff meet regularly to support the success of every student.*
- *Facilities, staffing, resources and technology are sufficient to ensure the successful design and implementation of the CIHS model, aligned to the design elements described in this guide.*
- *CIHS staff submit an annual report to NCDPI with data and details of student target population, grade levels offered, programs of service, student enrollment, school effectiveness measures, and success stories.*

## Innovative Instructional Practice

All CIHS staff members commit to ensuring every student is actively engaged, challenged, and supported, in all classes, every day, to succeed in rigorous course work, leading to completion of a high school diploma, an associate degree, two years of transferable credit, or CTE credentials, such as certificates or diplomas. All staff members commit to deep inquiry and consistent collaboration to design, facilitate, assess, and redesign learning activities that ensure these student outcomes.

- *Daily instruction is characterized by student-centered, active learning strategies, including collaborative group work, low-stakes writing, student to student discourse, scaffolding of rigor, and intentional questioning.*
- *CIHS teachers ensure rigor and relevance (including cultural relevance), with scaffolds and supports, are embedded in every class as a part of daily practice, so all students can access rigorous coursework with success.*
- *Instruction is planned using big ideas or essential questions, mapped to standards and to college and career-ready student outcomes, to ensure all students master essential knowledge and skills for future success and apply their learning to improve their lives, their communities, and their planet.*
- *Teachers differentiate and personalize instruction, developing student voice and decision-making, and leverage strong relationships with students to inspire and promote persistence, self-reliance, and self-advocacy.*
- *Teachers collaborate to design and facilitate project-based, inquiry-based, and community-based experiential learning, with cross-curricular learning opportunities for all students.*
- *Staff develop and maintain a resource bank of data proven effective lessons, units of study, and authentic assessments.*
- *CIHS staff collaborate to develop and use common rubrics and intentional, personalized feedback so that students understand criteria for success and how to improve.*
- *Daily instruction features deep discourse, including strategies to promote student to student discourse, with depth and application of understanding.*
- *Teachers make informed decisions about whether, when, and how to use technology to optimize student learning.*
- *Curriculum, instruction, and assessment ensure all students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.*
- *Students and staff use a design approach to connect academic content to complex global, national, and local issues, and to create authentic, relevant student work.*



## Personalized Student Supports

All CIHS staff members commit to ensuring that every student feels known, respected, and cared for by the adults in the school, and that every student is supported to develop his or her full potential. Staff leverage strong personal relationships with students to develop their curiosity, persistence, and intrinsic motivation, as well as their support of each other, to succeed in rigorous coursework, innovative opportunities, and in college and careers.

- *Intentional Advising: Every student has a personalized four or five-year plan that is reviewed and updated when necessary to ensure completion of an associate degree, career credentials or two years of transferable credit.*
- *CIHS provide effective orientation, parent nights, conferences, and other opportunities to promote active participation of students' families and other supportive members of the community.*
- *CIHS provide an advisory or seminar course or program with an established curriculum to develop college and career ready skills and knowledge.*
- *CIHS provide structured and intentional academic and affective supports for every student, in class and outside of class.*
- *Teacher-advisors meet regularly with students to assess progress, identify needs, and provide personalized supports.*
- *CIHS ensure consistent, ongoing communication with students and families about student progress toward completion of personalized four or five-year plans. Staff ensure timely, collaborative interventions when students struggle.*
- *CIHS ensure intentional development of all students' self-advocacy skills, especially in designing their personal pathways, navigating the college environment, and taking full advantage of all available supports and opportunities.*
- *CIHS provide a wide range of opportunities for students to develop self-expression, leadership and social skills, including student-led clubs, intramural teams, service, and other extra-curricular opportunities.*

## Leadership and Professionalism

All staff members commit to a shared responsibility for the success of every student. All staff lead in areas appropriate to their role and expertise. All staff contribute to sustain a supportive and professional school culture that promotes inquiry and the ongoing design work of innovative secondary education.

- *Instructional leadership: Principals and other school leaders support all staff to implement innovative instructional practices. Principals are regularly present in classrooms to experience and participate in classroom culture and to monitor and support instructional practices.*
- *All teachers are leaders in their classrooms and co-leaders of a collaborative school culture that practices inquiry and a design approach to continuous improvement. Teacher input informs instructional decisions, as well as school improvement goals and measures.*
- *All staff celebrate the diversity of staff and student background, expertise, and experience.*
- *Common planning times for teachers support collaborative, innovative practices.*
- *CIHS support innovative instruction by implementing instructional rounds – non-evaluative teacher to teacher classroom visits and feedback, aligned to host teacher's student learning questions, support school-wide implementation of innovative instructional practices.*
- *All staff collaborate in an ongoing design process of continual school improvement – including analysis of data and student outcomes, shared decision making about priorities to develop and sustain innovative design and practice, and ongoing assessment of implementation.*
- *All staff collaborate to make informed decisions about professional development to support school improvement priorities.*

For more information about Cooperative Innovative High Schools, contact the Division of Advanced Learning and Gifted Education at NCDPI:

[cihs@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:cihs@dpi.nc.gov), or (919) 807-4197



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