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:

1.1 *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).

1.4 *Flexible Scheduling*

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.

1.5 *TSIA Testing Site*

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

1.6 *Leadership Team Strategic Priorities*

The ECHS shall establish a leadership team that includes high-level personnel from the school district, campus, and institute of higher education (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

Required Artifacts:

- *ECHS/IHE leadership meeting agenda*
- *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*

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):

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

Required Artifact:

- *Description of each member and role in committee*

1.8 *ECHS Staff*

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. Highly qualified ECHS high school counselor who collaborates directly and frequently with the IHE advisor or liaison to support the ECHS students. The ECHS counselor and IHE advisor shall jointly support ECHS students through IHE course registration and shall monitor high school and college courses and transcripts to ensure programmatic requirements for both the high school and IHE are met

Required Artifact:

- *ECHS leader/liaison meeting agendas and relevant materials*

1.9 *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. 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
c. 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)

Required Artifacts:

- *Mentor/induction program plans*
- *Annual training or professional development plan for ECHS & IHE faculty*

1.10 *Sustainability Structures*

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