

2018-19 Evaluation of Early College High School Programs

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At-a-Glance

An Early College High School (ECHS) is a high school that provides traditionally underserved students the opportunity to earn an associate degree or up to 60 hours of tuition-free college credit by the time of high school graduation. Students become familiar with the effort required to successfully complete college-level coursework while in high school and can enter the workforce with a work-ready skill upon graduation. Each ECHS has a higher education partner and offers its own academic pathway leading to an associate degree (Table 1). In addition to five existing traditional ECHSs (Trinidad Garza, Kathlyn Joy Gilliam Collegiate Academy, Wright L. Lassiter Jr., W.W. Samuell, and H. Grady Spruce), 18 campuses have received a Pathway to Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) designation since 2016, eight in the fall of 2016 and 10 in the fall of 2017, bringing the total number of Early College High Schools to 23. P-TECHs are similar to traditional early college high schools but with an industry partner that provides mentoring and workplace skills. In addition to the potential to earn an associate degree, students can earn industry certificates in their selected career pathways and gain opportunities potentially leading to paid internships and job placement after graduation.

Table 1: 2018-19 Dallas ISD Early College High Schools and Education Partners

Early College High Schools	Higher Education Partner
Bryan Adams	Eastfield College
W.H. Adamson	El Centro College
David W. Carter	Cedar Valley College
Emmett J. Conrad	Richland College
Trinidad Garza	Mountain View College
Kathlyn Joy Gilliam	Cedar Valley College
Hillcrest	Richland College
Thomas Jefferson	Brookhaven College
Justin F. Kimball	Mountain View College
Dr. Wright L. Lassiter Jr.	El Centro College
Lincoln	El Centro College
James Madison	El Centro College
Moisés Molina	Mountain View College
North Dallas	Brookhaven College
L.G. Pinkston	El Centro College
Franklin D. Roosevelt	El Centro College
W.W. Samuell	Eastfield College
Seagoville	Eastfield College
South Oak Cliff	Mountain View College
H. Grady Spruce	Eastfield College
Sunset	Mountain View College
W.T. White	Brookhaven College
Wilmer-Hutchins	North Lake College

Source: ECHS program documents.

The ECHS model begins in grade nine as students are only accepted into the program as freshmen. They matriculate as a cohort as they progress through high school. The total 2018-19 budget for ECHS campus-level organizations was \$11,871,142 which was higher than 2017-18 (\$10,458,764).

Purpose and Methods of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the implementation of the ECHS program based on outlined program goals and objectives. The evaluation examined the source and amount of funding for the program, outlined the context and components of the program, examined ECHS student characteristics, and analyzed dual credit, degree, certification, achievement, attendance, retention and graduation outcomes. The evaluation team reviewed program documents and corresponded with program staff to provide data for the context and components of the ECHS program. The evaluator conducted frequency and crosstab analyses to examine various academic outcomes.

What were the components of Early College High Schools?

School Design

Three of the 23 ECHSs were designed as “stand alone.” and solely educate ECHS students (Garza, Gilliam, and Lassiter). The remaining 20 schools were designed as a “school within a school” facility and are housed on comprehensive high school campuses. ECHS students spend grades nine and ten taking core courses in a dedicated wing while attending classes for fine arts, health, physical education, and foreign languages at the comprehensive high school. The district provided transportation to and from college partner campuses, as needed. ECHS students from these 20 campuses are expected to spend grades eleven and twelve on their DCCCD partner campus.

Student Applications

Dallas ISD had an enrollment goal of approximately 100 to 125 students per campus per year. Between December and the end of January, the district accepted online applications from grade eight students who expect to be promoted to the grade nine the following school year. Students from across the district could select their top three choices among the district's ECHSs. All students who applied participated in an interview. Acceptance letters were sent to applicants in March.

Campus Staffing

Dedicated ECHS staff include one assistant principal to serve as campus administrator, one workplace learning coordinator, one dedicated counselor, and one dedicated clerk.

Pathways and Industry Partners

ECHS P-TECH students selected pathways to guide their progress from grade nine toward a specialized field. To supplement education related to selected pathways, industry partners provided students with related hands-on learning experiences. Partnership with industry partners provided students with essential mentoring, internship opportunities, and other support to prepare them to enter the workforce career-ready. The career pathways available to students ranged from health sciences, business administration and management, information technology, pre-engineering, network administration and support, hospitality management, and law enforcement, among others.

Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA)

To be eligible for dual credit coursework, ECHS students were required to demonstrate college readiness by achieving the minimum passing standard on The Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA).¹ Results of the TSIA indicated whether students were ready for college-level course work in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Students who did not pass the exam after the first two tries on the campus of a higher education partner could take advantage of additional testing opportunities through the district. The goal for ECHS students was to meet the minimum standard on the TSIA by the end of grade ten.

Summer Bridge Program

Dallas ISD ECHS partnered with DCCCD to offer a summer bridge program. The goal of this two-week long program was to prepare incoming grade nine students to meet TSIA requirements. The summer bridge program in 2018-19 ran from the week of June 11th through June 15th and June 18th through June 22nd. Attendance was not mandatory. There were 1,983 incoming ECHS students who attended at least one day of the summer bridge program (83.9% of all incoming freshmen).

What were the characteristics of Early College High School students?

There were 6,143 Dallas ISD students enrolled in an ECHS in 2018-19. Enrollment has increased from 1,453 students in 2015-16 to 6,143 in 2018-19 due to expansion. As shown in Table 2, three quarters (75.5%)

of ECHS students were in grade nine (38.5%) or grade ten (37.0%). There were more female ECHS students (55.7%) than male students (44.3%). A small percentage of ECHS students received special education services ($n = 169$, 2.8%). A higher percentage of ECHS students were economically disadvantaged (83.9%) than Dallas ISD high school students (78.7%).

Table 2: Early College High School and District Student Characteristics: 2018-19

Variable	ECHS		Dallas ISD High Schools	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Grade				
Grade 9	2,364	38.5	12,192	30.0
Grade 10	2,272	37.0	10,605	26.1
Grade 11	1,131	18.4	9,398	23.1
Grade 12	376	6.1	8,500	20.9
Race/Ethnicity				
Hispanic	4,459	72.6	28,925	71.3
African American	1,425	23.2	8,645	21.3
White	103	1.7	1,902	4.7
Asian	78	1.3	580	1.4
Other	58	0.8	514	1.3
Gender				
Female	3,422	55.7	20,414	50.2
Male	2,721	44.3	20,281	49.8
English Learner				
English Learner	1,903	31.0	13,365	32.8
Special Education				
SPED	169	2.8	3,494	8.6
Socioeconomic Status				
Econ Dis	5,154	83.9	32,017	78.7
At Risk				
At Risk	2,348	38.2	17,329	42.6

Source: District Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) demographic data file: 10/26/2018.

Note: ECHS = Early College High School. Econ Dis = economically disadvantaged. Percentages may not equal 100 when added together due to rounding. Totals may differ due to missing data in some variables (e.g., ethnicity).

How many associate degrees and dual credits did Early College High School students earn?

Dual Credits Earned

Despite representing 15.1 percent of all Dallas ISD high school students, ECHS students completed slightly more than three-quarters (77.5%, $n = 17,663$) of all dual credit courses in the district in 2018-19. ECHS students, across all grades, completed an average of 2.9 dual credit courses (Table 3). ECHS students in grade 11 on average completed more dual credit courses (6.0) than students in grade 12 (4.4), grade 10 (2.9), and grade 9 (1.1). The highest number of dual credit courses completed on average were earned at Lassiter (5.3), Garza (4.7), Pinkston (4.0), Spruce (3.9), Conrad (3.7),

¹ In addition, students were required to have completed any prerequisite coursework.

and Carter (3.5). A slightly higher percentage of ECHS students passed a dual credit course (90.8%) than non-ECHS students (87.9%) at comprehensive P-TECH campuses

Table 3: Average Number of Dual Credit Courses Completed by ECHS Students by Grade: 2018-19

Campus	Grade Level				All Grades
	9	10	11	12	
Adams	0.9	3.0	N/A	N/A	1.8
Adamson	0.6	2.6	N/A	N/A	1.6
Carter	0.5	1.6	5.5	N/A	3.5
Conrad	0.6	4.6	6.6	N/A	3.7
Garza	5.4	4.5	6.1	2.7	4.7
Gilliam	1.4	3.0	4.9	4.6	3.3
Hillcrest	0.9	4.0	N/A	N/A	2.4
Jefferson	1.1	3.1	4.5	N/A	2.9
Kimball	0.8	3.3	N/A	N/A	2.1
Lassiter	3.4	6.0	7.4	4.5	5.3
Lincoln	0.2	2.3	N/A	N/A	1.1
Madison	0.8	2.8	4.1	N/A	3.4
Molina	1.0	4.0	N/A	N/A	2.5
N. Dallas	0.6	1.3	N/A	N/A	1.0
Pinkston	1.5	3.2	7.2	N/A	4.0
Roosevelt	0.8	2.4	6.6	N/A	2.9
Samuell	0.0	2.1	6.6	5.0	3.2
Seagoville	1.4	1.5	7.6	N/A	3.2
SOC	0.6	1.3	4.6	N/A	2.1
Spruce	0.3	2.7	7.1	6.4	3.9
Sunset	0.8	2.5	N/A	N/A	1.6
White	0.3	1.7	N/A	N/A	1.0
W-Hutchins	1.2	3.2	N/A	N/A	2.1
Total	1.1	2.9	6.0	4.4	2.9

Source: District Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) demographic data file: 10/26/2018. District course file: 08/14/2019.

Note: ECHS = Early College High School. N. Dallas = North Dallas. SOC = South Oak Cliff. N/A = not applicable; no students were enrolled.

Associate Degrees Awarded

More graduating grade 12 ECHS students received an associate degree in the fall and spring of 2018-19 ($n = 232$) than ECHS students in the fall, spring, and summer terms of 2017-18 ($n = 197$) and 2016-17 ($n = 177$). More associate of science degrees were awarded to ECHS students ($n = 186$, 80.2%) than associate of arts ($n = 26$, 11.2%) or associate of applied science ($n = 20$, 8.6%) degrees. Students at Garza received the highest number of associates degrees ($n = 79$, 34.1%) in 2018-19 followed by Samuell ($n = 52$, 22.4%), Gilliam ($n = 41$, 17.7%), Lassiter ($n = 40$, 17.2%), and Spruce ($n = 20$, 8.6%).

How many industry-based certifications did Early College High School students earn in 2018-19?

Overall, 633 ECHS students took 787 industry-based certification exams in 2018-19. Fewer ECHS students received an industry-based certification in 2018-19 than 2017-18 ($n = 966$). Almost every certification exam was passed (99.7%). Non-ECHS students at comprehensive P-TECH campuses demonstrated a

lower certification pass rate (90.8%), a difference of 8.9 percentage points.

How was the academic performance of Early College High School students on achievement assessments?

Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA)

There were 1,451 ECHS students who took the TSIA reading exam one or more times in 2018-19. More ECHS students took the TSIA writing exam at least once ($n = 976$) in 2018-19 than the TSIA mathematics exam ($n = 795$). Seventy-four percent (74.4%) of tested ECHS students passed the TSIA writing exam which was higher than TSIA mathematics (43.9%) and TSIA reading (36.3%).

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness End-of-Course (STAAR EOC)

A higher percentage of ECHS students were at the Approaches+ and Meets+ standards than non-ECHS students on every STAAR EOC exam (Table 4). ECHS students performed at the highest levels of achievement on U.S. History EOC (97.9% at Approaches+, 80.5% at Meets+), Algebra I EOC (95.0% at Approaches+, 78.3% at Meets+), and Biology EOC (95.6% at Approaches+, 74.1% at Meets+).

Table 4: Early College High School and Non-Early College High School Students at Approaches+ and Meets+ by STAAR EOC Exam: 2018-19

Campus	ECHS Students		Non-ECHS Students		Diff. (%)
	N	%	N	%	
Approaches+					
Algebra I	1,526	95.0	4,473	84.1	10.9
English I	2,255	83.0	5,054	50.3	32.7
English II	2,185	86.0	4,446	53.7	32.3
Biology	2,275	95.6	4,914	81.1	14.5
U.S. History	1,576	97.9	5,010	91.7	6.2
Meets+					
Algebra I	1,526	78.3	4,473	55.8	22.5
English I	2,255	68.4	5,054	32.5	35.9
English II	2,185	68.3	4,446	32.3	36.0
Biology	2,275	74.1	4,914	43.7	30.4
U.S. History	1,576	80.5	5,010	66.8	13.7

Source: STAAR EOC data file: 06/04/2019. District Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) demographic data file: 10/26/2018.

Note: ECHS = Early College High School. Non-ECHS = students enrolled in a comprehensive high school containing Early College High School programs but not participating in such programs. N = number of students tested. Diff. = difference. Rates only include first time testers for the first and second administrations.

What were the attendance, retention, and graduation rates of Early College High School students?

Attendance

The 2018-19 average attendance rate for ECHS students was higher than non-ECHS students (96.4% ECHS versus 91.4% non-ECHS). Attendance rates for ECHS campuses ranged between 93.2 percent and 98.8 percent.

Student Retention and Graduation

Overall, 94.3 percent of the 2017-18 ECHS grade nine cohort remained enrolled in an ECHS program in 2018-19. Retention rates for ECHS students were higher than the district retention rates for non-ECHS students at the same campuses during the same timeframe (94.3% versus 78.6%, respectively). Four-fifths (80.7%) of the 2016-17 ECHS grade nine cohort remained enrolled in an ECHS program in 2018-19. Retention rates for ECHS students were higher than the district retention rates for non-ECHS students at the same campuses during the same timeframe (80.7% versus 61.0%, respectively).

The 2014-15 ECHS cohort had the highest four-year graduation rate (90.0%) followed by the 2015-16 cohort (88.5%) and 2013-14 cohort (88.3%) (Table 5). A significantly higher percentage of grade nine ECHS students graduated from Dallas ISD in four years than all district grade nine students in 2016-17 (27.0 percentage point difference), 2017-18 (29.0 percentage point difference), and 2018-19 (28.1 percentage point difference).

Table 5: Dallas ISD Four-Year Graduation Rates of Grade Nine Early College High School Cohorts by Campus

Campus	2013-14 Cohort		2014-15 Cohort		2015-16 Cohort	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Garza	103	93.2	105	96.2	112	96.4
Gilliam	100	87.0	89	88.8	96	90.6
Lassiter	61	82.0	63	90.5	64	93.8
Samuell	N/A	N/A	92	83.7	110	80.9
Spruce	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	63	79.4
All ECHS	264	88.3	349	90.0	445	88.5
District	11,101	61.3	11,768	61.0	12,078	60.4

Source: District Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) demographic data files: 10/28/2013, 10/31/2014, and 10/30/2015. District graduation file: 06/25/19.

Note: ECHS = Early College High School. N = number of students in each grade nine cohort. % = the percentage of students to graduate from the Dallas Independent School District (ISD) within four years. N/A = not applicable; no students were enrolled.

Recommendations

- **Record the date when applicable grade 12 students are expected to receive associate degrees.** Students were not required to graduate with an associate degree and had the option to earn up to 60 hours of college credit to transfer to a four-year university. In addition, some associate degree plans required five years of study, one additional year at a DCCCD partner campus after high school graduation. Understanding the educational plans of non-associate degree seeking students and students in four-year and five-year programs would grant a more complete perspective about the expected outcomes of the program.
- **Check the Postsecondary Success Dual Credit Dashboard data consistently for missing data and inconsistencies with district course files.** The Postsecondary Success Dual Credit Dashboard contains data that is invaluable in calculating accumulated college credit. Unfortunately, this data could not be used in this evaluation due to missing data for some student cohorts. Dashboard data should be consistently checked for accuracy against district student course files to rectify potential issues as needed.
- **Collect data from students and campus-based staff in future program evaluations.** Information collected from focus groups and/or surveys could be used to help understand campus-level perceptions of support, communication, and transportation among other topics that cannot be analyzed with existing data sources. This data would help identify areas of strength, weakness, and areas for improvement.

Reference

Meharie, A. (August 2018). 2017-18 Evaluation of Early College High Schools. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

An electronic version of this report as well as the full 2018-19 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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