

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An Early College High School (ECHS) is a high school that blends high school and college level coursework to provide 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. The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) was among the first Texas school districts to establish an ECHS in 2006 and has grown to 26 ECHSs (Table 1). In 2021-22, ECHS campuses were supported by \$12,343,417 in Dallas ISD general operating funds. This was a decrease of 5.9 percent compared to 2020-21 (\$13,121,904) and a 13.6 percent decrease over 2019-20 (\$14,292,375).

Table 1: 2021-22 Dallas ISD Early College High Schools

Early College High Schools	Dallas College Campus
Traditional Early College High Schools (ECHS)	
Garza ECHS	Mountain View Campus
Gilliam ECHS	Cedar Valley Campus
Lassiter ECHS	El Centro Campus
North Lake ECHS	North Lake Campus
Samuell ECHS	Eastfield Campus
Skyline CA	Cedar Valley Campus
Spruce ECHS	Eastfield Campus
Sunset Collegiate Academy	Mountain View Campus
Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH)	
Adams P-TECH	Eastfield Campus
Adamson P-TECH	El Centro Campus
Carter P-TECH	Cedar Valley Campus
Conrad H-TECH	Richland Campus
Hillcrest E-TECH	Richland Campus
Jefferson P-TECH	Brookhaven Campus
Kimball E-TECH	Mountain View Campus
Lincoln B-TECH	El Centro Campus
Madison P-TECH	El Centro Campus
Molina B-TECH	Mountain View Campus
North Dallas P-TECH	Brookhaven Campus
Pinkston H-TECH	El Centro Campus
Roosevelt H-TECH	El Centro Campus
Seagoville P-TECH	Eastfield Campus
South Oak Cliff P-TECH	Mountain View Campus
Sunset P-TECH	Mountain View Campus
White B-TECH	Brookhaven Campus
Wilmer-Hutchins E-TECH	North Lake Campus

Source: ECHS program documents and ECHS website accessed 05/03/22.

Note: B-TECH, E-TECH and H-TECH are P-TECH schools focusing on business, electronic technology and engineering, and health-sciences, respectively.

The 26 ECHSs include eight traditional ECHSs and 18 Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH). The ECHS program at the Dallas ISD is

coordinated by the Early College Programs division within the Postsecondary Partnerships and Programs department.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the components of the ECHS program?

TEA Requirements.

For schools to be designated by TEA as early college high schools, they must meet the criteria articulated in the ECHS and P-TECH Blueprints.

Dallas ISD ECHS Structure

- Four of the 26 ECHSs are “stand alone” campuses and solely educate ECHS students (Garza, Gilliam, Lassiter, and North Lake Collegiate Academy).
- The remaining 22 schools operate as a “school within a school” to provide a sense of cohesiveness for students within the comprehensive high school.
- Students are accepted into ECHS programs as freshmen and matriculate as a cohort as they progress through high school.
- Students attended grade nine and grade 10 dual credit classes at their high school campuses while students in grades 11 and 12 attended classes on a partner campus of the Dallas College. The Dallas ISD provided transportation to partner community college campuses at no charge.

Pathways and Industry Partners

- P-TECH students select a pathway in grade nine to guide them towards a specialized field.
- Overall, 48 industry partners provided students with related learning experiences in 2021-22, and 219 students participated in internships.

Student Applications

- Online applications are accepted from interested eighth grade students (incoming freshman) from November through the end of January every school year.
- All students who apply are invited for an interview.
- Acceptance letters are sent to applicants in February.
- In 2021-22, ECHS campuses accepted between 42 to 124 grade nine students.

Summer Programs

- The **Summer Bridge program** is a one-week long program for incoming grade nine students to prepare them for higher education and to meet *TSIA* requirements. The program is not mandatory.

- Overall, 1,946 incoming ECHS students attended at least one day of the Summer Bridge Program between June 28 and July 2, 2021 (74% of all incoming grade nine ECHS students).
- **Summer Hub program** provided additional support to grade nine to 12 students who took dual credit courses at Dallas College during the May (May 14 – June 2, 2021), Summer I (June 3 – July 1, 2021) and Summer II (July 6 – August 5, 2021) semesters. Program staff noted that this extra support was crucial in helping students complete their college courses.
- During the May semester, 290 students enrolled in 291 dual credit courses. Of these, 261 students (90%) completed 250 courses (86%).
- During the Summer I semester, 1,602 students enrolled in 1,924 courses. Of these, 1,363 students (85%) completed 1,457 courses (76%).
- During the Summer II semester, 827 students enrolled in 1,036 courses but no grading information was shared.
- **Acceleration in Physics and Geometry Program** was held July 12 to July 30, 2021. Of the 1,106 students that enrolled, 828 students attended one or more days in the program. No grading information was shared.

What were the demographic characteristics of ECHS students?

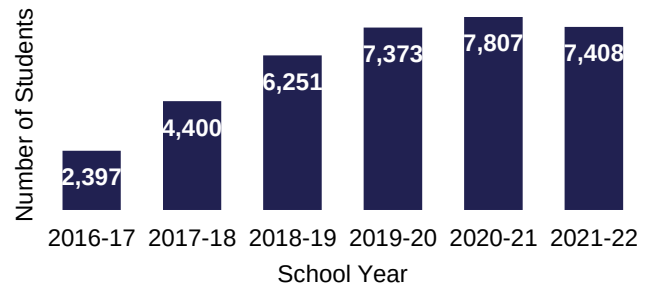
During the 2021-22 school year, a total of 7,408 students were enrolled in an ECHS.

- The ethnic composition of ECHS students was similar to Dallas ISD high school students.
- There were more female ECHS students (58%) than male ECHS students (42%) than the district (50% male and female).
- A slightly higher percentage of ECHS students were economically disadvantaged (85%) than for Dallas ISD high school students overall (81%).
- There were fewer special education students at ECHSs (3%) than the district (9%).
- Demographic characteristics of traditional ECHS students were comparable to P-TECH students except in four aspects:
 - First, a higher percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in traditional ECHSs than P-TECHs (82% vs 75%).
 - Second, a higher percentage of African American students enrolled in P-TECHs than traditional ECHSs (21% vs 15%).
 - Third, a higher percentage of traditional ECHS students were TAG eligible (32% vs 23%).
 - Fourth, a smaller percentage of traditional ECHS students were at-risk of dropping out of school (54% vs 67%).

What were the student enrollment characteristics?

With the opening of additional ECHSs and higher enrollment numbers at existing schools, enrollment numbers have grown significantly over the past five years from 4,400 in 2017-18 to 7,408 students in 2021-22 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 2016-17 to 2021-22 Student Enrollment in Early College High School Programs



Source: End-of-year demographic files dated 06/05/17 (2016-17), 06/04/18 (2017-18), 05/28/19 (2018-19), 05/29/20 (2019-20), 06/07/21 (2020-21), and 06/06/22 (2021-22), and ECHS identification file 08/31/22 (2021-22).

Note: Methodology for identifying ECHS students changed with the 2021-22 school year. Therefore, enrollment changes between years should be viewed with caution.

Thirty-two percent of students (n=2,349) were enrolled in grade nine, 26 percent in grade 10 (n=1,928), 23 percent in grade 11 (n=1,690), and 20 percent in grade 12 (n=1,441).

Attendance Rates

- The average attendance rate for district ECHS students was eight percentage points higher than non-ECHS students (94.0% versus 86%).
- Students enrolled in traditional ECHSs had an average attendance rate of 94.4 percent, while students at P-TECHs had an average attendance rate of 93.2 percent.

Student Retention Rates

Overall, retention rates were higher for ECHS students than comprehensive high school students enrolled in campuses offering the ECHS program.

- The two-year retention rate difference two percentage points (78% versus 76%).
- The three-year retention rate difference was eight percentage points (71% versus 63%).
- The four-year retention rate difference was six percentage points (57% versus 51%).
- Traditional ECHS students had a higher retention rate than P-TECH students for all cohorts. The retention rate difference for the 2020-21 cohort was eight percentage points, for the 2019-20 cohort 10 percentage points, and for the 2018-19 cohort 12 percentage points.

Graduation Rates

- The average four-year graduation rate for the 2018-19 ECHS cohort was 56 percent; five percentage points higher than Dallas ISD comprehensive high school students.

- The graduation rate of traditional ECHS students was 14 percentage points higher than that of P-TECH students (67% versus 53%).
- Traditional ECHS students who were enrolled in the program for four consecutive years had a slightly higher graduation rate than similarly enrolled P-TECH students (100% vs 97%).
- Overall, the graduation rate for continuously enrolled students differed by 12 percentage points between ECHS students (98%) and comprehensive high school students (86%).
- Graduation rates across all Dallas ISD students slightly increased by one percentage points between the 2017-18 and 2018-19 cohorts (56% vs 57%), while the graduation rate of continuously enrolled students increased from 86 percent to 89 percent.

What were the academic performances of ECHS students on post-secondary readiness assessments?

SAT

Overall, 3,131 ECHS students enrolled in grade 11 (2019-20 cohort) and grade 12 (2018-19 cohort).

- Thirty-nine percent of grades 11 and 12 met the TSI SAT benchmark on ERW (480).
- Sixteen percent met the TSI SAT benchmark on mathematics (530).
- Traditional ECHS students met TSI SAT benchmarks at a higher rate than P-TECH students (difference of 20 percentage points for mathematics to 27 percentage points for ERW).
- In comparison, 16 percent of non-ECHS students enrolled in comprehensive high schools offering ECHS program met the TSI benchmark for ERW, and six percent met the TSI benchmark for mathematics.

ACT

Overall, 1,441 ECHS students enrolled in grade 12 (2018-19 cohort).

- Six percent met the TSI ACT benchmark for Mathematics.
- Seven percent met the benchmark on English.
- Traditional ECHS students met TSI ACT benchmarks at a higher rate than P-TECH students (difference of 12 percentage points for mathematics and 13 percentage points for English).
- In comparison, of the 4,796 comprehensive high school students enrolled in campuses offering the ECHS program, one percent met the TSI ACT benchmark for Mathematics and two percent met the benchmark for English.

TSIA

Meeting TSIA benchmarks, or qualifying for an exemption, indicates that students are ready for college-level course work in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

- Of the 1,441 grade 12 ECHS students enrolled in 2021-22, 81 percent met TSIA benchmarks or qualified for an exemption for ELAR, and 76 percent met TSIA benchmarks for mathematics.
- Overall, ECHS students outperformed comprehensive high school students enrolled in campuses offering the ECHS program by 65 (ELAR) to 68 (mathematics) percentage points.

How many Dual Credit Courses and Dual Credit Hours did ECHS students complete?

- Of the 7,408 ECHS students enrolled in 2021-22, 89 percent took dual credit courses through Dallas College.
- A total of 6,008 ECHS students (90.9%) passed one or more courses for a total of 25,470 courses passed (86.4%).
- P-TECH students accounted for the majority of ECHS dual credit students (70%) and dual credit hours earned (66%).
- ECHS students who passed one or more dual credit courses completed on average 13.0 dual credit hours across all grade levels in 2021-22.
- Traditional ECHS students on average completed slightly more dual credit hours per person (14.1 hours) than P-TECH students (12.5 hours).

Did ECHS students earn the targeted number of dual credit hours for each grade level?

Although, all ECHS goals were suspended for 2021-22 by ECHS staff, the percentage of students who met 2019-20 goals were tracked to provide comprehensive achievement data to program staff. To recall, one of the 2019-20 program goals was that 70 percent of ECHS students will have earned three credit hours by the end of grade nine, 12 credit hours by the end of grade 10, 30 credit hours by the end of grade 11, and 60 credit hours by the end of grade 12.

- Overall, 4,136 out of 7,408 ECHS students (56%) earned the expected number of dual credit hours.

How many credentials were earned by ECHS students?

- Overall, 296 grade 11 and grade 12 ECHS students completed 414 **educational certificates** while enrolled at Dallas College.
- Students completed between one and four certificates with an average of 1.4 certificates per student.
- P-TECH students accounted for 89 percent of ECHS students who completed a certificate and 92 percent of the 414 completed certificates.
- In addition, 475 ECHS students earned a total of 525 **industry-based certifications** in 2021-22, including 415 certifications listed in the A-F accountability system.
- Overall, 85 percent of students who earned industry-based certifications in 2021-22 were P-TECH students.

How many ECHS graduates earned an associate degree or 60 college credit hours?

Of the 1,435 ECHS students who graduated in 2021-22, 870 students (61%) earned an associate degree or 60 dual credit hours

- Of the ECHS students who met the goal, 94 percent ($n=821$) earned an associate degree while six percent ($n=49$) earned 60 or more dual credit hours.¹
- Sixty-nine percent ($n=598$) of students who met the goal were P-Tech students, while 31 percent ($n=272$) were traditional ECHS students.

What were the college enrollment rates for ECHS graduates?

- According to the 2021-22 NSC data file, 55 percent of 2020-21 ECHS graduates and 40 percent of non-ECHS graduates enrolled in college within one year of graduation.
- More ECHS students (90%) enrolled in a four-year university than non-ECHS students (85%). Similarly, a significantly lower percentage of ECHS students (10%) enrolled in a two-year college or trade school than non-ECHS students (15%).

What were student perceptions of the ECHS programs?

- Forty-one percent of ECHS seniors responded to the ECHS Senior Exit Survey.
- Overall, 94 percent of seniors indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the educational opportunities the Dallas ISD provided.
- Seniors indicated that their high schools prepared them well (i.e. good or excellent) across all life skill areas from critical thinking, communications, and teamwork to conflict resolution. However, seniors also indicated they wished for more job-related skill training.
- Most seniors (82%) indicated that they planned to attend college directly after graduating from the Dallas ISD, followed by joining the workforce (11%).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings, the following recommendations are offered for stakeholders.

Continue to work with the IT Department on accurately tracking ECHS participation. Review of PowerSchool and program provided enrollment data indicated that traditional ECHS and P-TECH students are not accurately identified as such, thus impacting the evaluation. Tracking student enrollment via a dedicated PowerSchool variable may provide a streamlined solution that benefits the program and increases the accuracy of future data analysis.

Continue to support ECHS campuses in monitoring dual-credit course completions. Overall, 56 percent of ECHS students met the targeted cumulative number of dual credit hours by the end of each grade level. While this is an increase of six percentage points over 2020-21 (50%), ECHS department staff and P-TECH/ECHS Program Specialist (ESSER funded) should continue to help campuses identify students early who may not meet the targeted dual credit hours by the end of the school year and provide necessary support.

Continue to promote ECHS students' completion of educational certificates or industry-based certifications. Although 2021-22 seemed to have stopped a three-year long downtrend, the number of students who earned education certificates and industry-based certifications are still below 2018-19 levels. Given that industry-based certifications can provide students with an advantage in finding employment, ECHS staff should, in cooperation with the Career and Technical Education Department, monitor student participation.

Continue to promote career readiness. Thirty-one percent of seniors who responded to the exit survey noted that they would like to have more assistance in developing career options and job seeking skills. Overall, job related skill training was among the top three requests for additional assistance for the past three years. Given the importance placed on career readiness by the Dallas ISD, consider allocating additional resources to these program areas.

Work with program evaluators to increase ECHS student participation in the annual student exit survey. Exit surveys provide unique insight into the ECHS program from students' perspective that is not otherwise available through other data sources. Feedback could help with future program development to ensure the ECHS program addresses student needs.

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¹ In addition, three comprehensive high school students earned an associate degree who were later identified as P-TECH students