



## Early College High School Initiative

# Integrating Grades 9 Through 14

*State Policies to Support and Sustain  
Early College High Schools*

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## About the Early College High School Initiative

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Early college high schools are small schools from which students leave with not only a high school diploma but also an Associate's degree or up to two years of college credit toward a Bachelor's degree. By changing the structure of the high school years and compressing the number of years to a college degree, early college high schools have the potential to improve graduation rates and better prepare students for entry into high-skill careers. This approach helps young people to progress toward the education and experience they need to succeed in life and a family-supporting career.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, along with Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is funding the Early College High School Initiative. By 2008, the partner organizations will create or redesign more than 180 pioneering small high schools. Jobs for the Future coordinates the Early College High School Initiative and provides support to the partners and to the effort as a whole.



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# Integrating Grades 9 Through 14

## State Policies to Support and Sustain Early College High Schools

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As a supplement to this report, Jobs for the Future is preparing state-specific summaries of “Policies and Regulations Relating to Early College High Schools.” Currently available or in preparation are summaries for California, Georgia, Illinois, New York, Ohio, Texas, and Utah. For information, contact [info@jff.org](mailto:info@jff.org).



# Integrating Grades 9 Through 14

## State Policies to Support and Sustain Early College High Schools

### *Executive Summary*

Across the country, increasing numbers of high school students are getting a head start on college by completing some college-level work in high school. Opportunities such as Advanced Placement courses and dual enrollment not only boost college-going rates but also save money for families and, potentially, for taxpayers and states. In particular, approximately 180 early college high schools being implemented over the next four years are designed to enable underrepresented students to graduate in four to five years with a high school diploma and up to an Associate's degree or sufficient credit to enter a Bachelor's degree program as a junior. In essence, these schools blend secondary and postsecondary education.

The prospect of moving students more efficiently through the pipeline raises new and complex policy and finance issues for states: in order to integrate secondary and postsecondary education within a single, small school, states and districts must be able to facilitate funding, staffing, and the crediting of courses across educational sectors. Drawing on lessons learned over the first two years of the Early College High School Initiative, this brief recommends state policies that would support these new schools.

Because early college high schools *blend secondary and postsecondary* education, the public policies most relevant to these schools are legislation and regulations that define the jurisdictions of the secondary and postsecondary sectors and those that attempt to better align the two.

Six types of policy can support early college high school:

- *Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit:* College courses can supplant high school courses.
- *Eligibility for College Courses:* Eligibility requirements for college courses are based on student readiness in the subject area.
- *Transfer:* Credits for early college high school courses are transferable to two- and four-year institutions.
- *Teacher Certification:* Teacher certification is flexible: college faculty can teach in high schools.
- *Funding:* Secondary and postsecondary funding streams can be merged.
- *Autonomy:* Schools have key autonomies (e.g., hiring, curriculum, budget).

No state has in place all the policies needed to support early college high schools. However, some states have policies that can be reshaped to meet ECHS goals.

This brief also points to broader policy changes that would benefit early college high schools *and* advance the agenda of creating a seamless K-16 system that promotes smooth transitions from one education level to the next, a system in which students can advance fluidly based on what they learn rather than in lockstep based on what time they spend in school. The broader agenda to increase postsecondary success rates would be enhanced by continued efforts to align standards for secondary and postsecondary exit, entrance, and placement. States should create formal decision-making vehicles—such as joint legislative committees—to govern across secondary and postsecondary education.

## Summary of State Policies to Support and Sustain Early College High Schools\*

Principle	Typical Policy Barriers	Recommendations
<i>Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit:</i> ECHS college courses can count simultaneously for high school graduation, college credit, and high school day/minute requirements.	<p>Restrictions on the use of college courses to fulfill requirements for high school seat time or Carnegie Units</p> <p>Choice of either high school or college credit but not both</p> <p>Caps on number of college courses high school students may take</p>	<p>Give discretion to secondary and postsecondary schools to grant dual credit toward program and graduation requirements.</p> <p>Permit college course work to count toward seat-time requirements for high school.</p> <p>Authorize high schools to determine how many college courses a student may take in a given period.</p>
<i>Eligibility for College Courses:</i> Eligibility requirements for college courses assess academic readiness but do not exclude students based on “all-or-nothing” criteria.	<p>Restrictions on access to any dual enrollment course based on combined assessment scores or GPA</p> <p>Restrictions based on age or grade level</p>	<p>Base eligibility on performance criteria, not age or grade-level.</p> <p>Regulate access on a subject-specific basis corresponding to subject-specific performance.</p> <p><b>Alternative Approach</b> Allow open access but grant college course credit only after students pass an external exam or assessment.</p>
<i>Transfer:</i> ECHS-generated college course credits can be transferred to meet general education and academic major requirements for Associate’s and Bachelor’s degrees.	<p>No systematic means of equating courses across states’ higher education institutions</p> <p>Unique prerequisites set by academic departments that can only be fulfilled within the same institution</p> <p>Uncertainty from four-year colleges regarding admission status of students with dual credit courses</p>	<p>Mandate formal articulation agreements within and across state higher ed systems.</p> <p>Make prerequisites transparent for transfer into general education and major requirements for degree programs.</p> <p>Make transfer agreements widely accessible to schools and individuals.</p> <p>Require public higher education institutions to accept dual credit courses as equivalent to courses transferable under articulation agreements.</p>
<i>Teacher Certification:</i> High school teachers are permitted to teach college-level, credit-bearing courses, and college professors are permitted to teach high school students within an early college high school.	<p>State and union regulations that prohibit college instructors from teaching high school students</p> <p>High school teachers who cannot meet hiring criteria to become adjunct professors at selective postsecondary institutions</p>	<p>Designate college instructors as “highly qualified” under NCLB and state rules if they have taught for three years in their discipline.</p> <p>Provide incentives, such as adjunct professor status, to teachers in return for allowing college instructors to teach in high schools.</p> <p>Reward postsecondary institutions that encourage faculty to work in local high schools.</p>
<i>Funding:</i> Early college high schools can combine funding streams: high school per-pupil allocations, postsecondary per-credit allocations, and state financial aid or incentive dollars.	<p>Lack of FTE reimbursement for dual enrollees at four-year public colleges</p> <p>Ineligibility of high school students for federal and state financial aid</p> <p>High school loses dollars when students leave, discouraging high school participation in dual enrollment</p> <p>Inflexibility of funding rules to pay for per-credit costs of cohorts of students</p>	<p>Allow schools to claim K-12 per-pupil ADA until age 21.</p> <p>Permit a portion of per-pupil ADA to follow students to pay for college credits.</p> <p>Give high school students access to financial aid if 50% or more of their coursework is college-level in ECHS courses.</p> <p>Allow four-year public colleges to claim FTE reimbursement for dual enrollees.</p> <p><b>Alternative Approach</b> Create a K-16 Innovation Fund of combined secondary-postsecondary per-pupil revenues.</p>
<i>Autonomy:</i> Schools have autonomy to make decisions that enable accelerated advancement and integration of secondary and postsecondary education.	<p>Insufficient autonomy at the school-level from state and district controls</p> <p>Policies that do not comparably fund charter schools or do not hold them accountable distinctively from district schools</p>	<p>Encourage agreements at the district or state level that grant autonomy in exchange for accountability.</p> <p>Fund such schools at the same rate as other public schools in the districts in which they are located.</p> <p>Hold schools accountable only for students they serve, and allow some districts to operate charter-like schools.</p>

\* Specific recommendations may vary based in part upon differences in secondary and postsecondary institutions and policies.

## Introduction

*For low-income youth, first-generation college goers, and students of color, unfulfilled aspirations to attend college can lead to dashed dreams. For every ten students who start high school, eight get a diploma. Even with a high school diploma in hand and admission to a postsecondary institution assured, one-third of students drop out during their first year of college.*

*Only about half of those who start college attain a Bachelor's degree. For students of color, the percentages are substantially worse.*



In March 2002, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, began funding an unusual experiment. They granted \$40 million to create 70 small schools that would blend high school and the first two years of college, with the goal of moving low-income and poorly prepared students toward the Associate's or Bachelor's degree in fewer than the six years it would normally take to get from grades 9 through 14. The Early College High School Initiative contributes to the growing activity in states and districts to enable high school students—and not just those classified as gifted—to do college-level work in high school. It tests the hypothesis that, with proper support, students at risk of not gaining postsecondary credentials benefit from taking college-level courses and earning college credit while in high school.

Early college high school puts cohorts of students into small, autonomous schools and moves them through high school and into college in a single institution, allowing them to start college-level work as soon as they are able, sometimes as early as the ninth or tenth grade. Most early college high schools are located on or near a college campus where young people experience the academic and social environment of college from an early age. The postsecondary institution, by dealing directly with high school students, gains knowledge about how to improve both the transition to college and retention rates in the first years of college.

Early college high school draws on and shares characteristics of other approaches to college-level work in high school: dual or concurrent enrollment options, middle colleges, tech prep, Advanced

Placement, and International Baccalaureate. Based on research and practice about what helps underrepresented young people move into and through postsecondary education, early college high schools have several key features:

- Students are motivated by the opportunity to accelerate into college-level work as soon as they are prepared for it.
- Students are rewarded for hard work with the opportunity to earn two years of college credit for free.
- Learning takes place in small, personalized learning environments that demand rigorous, high-quality work and provide extensive support.
- The physical transition between high school and college is eliminated—and with it the need to apply for college and for financial aid.

For states, the attraction of early college high school—beyond potential cost savings as students accelerate and the redundancies of high school and college courses are eliminated—is that these new institutions physically “blend” or integrate secondary and postsecondary sectors in a single small school. That is, ECHS provides a window into what a seamless K-16 system might look like. Organizations concerned with education achievement and access—such as the Education Trust and Achieve—have shown clearly that a large gap exists between what high schools expect students to learn and what colleges and employers expect high school graduates to know. As a result, many states are attempting to align high school curricula, standards, and assessments with prerequisite postsecondary skills. To the extent that these alignment

**The Early College High School Initiative contributes to the growing activity in states and districts to enable high school students—and not just those classified as gifted—to do college-level work in high school.**

**From the perspective of early college high schools, ideal policies promote performance-based advancement and motivate students with financial incentives.**

efforts succeed, students who graduate from high school will be better prepared for college, transitioning seamlessly based on their academic performance. By designing a blended curriculum and education experience, early college high school teachers and administrators engage real-time in aligning high school and postsecondary learning standards and can serve as exemplars for alignment efforts at the policy level.

Now with an investment of over \$120 million, about 180 schools are under development. Among the partners in the Early College High School initiative are such diverse organizations as the Utah Partnership for Education and Economic Development, the KnowledgeWorks Foundation working across Ohio, the National Council of La Raza working with affiliated community-based organizations, the states of Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas, and Antioch University Seattle, which works with schools for Native Americans.<sup>1</sup> As of December 2004, 46 early college high schools were in operation, created through partnerships of public school districts with public and private, four-year and two-year postsecondary institutions. They take the form of public, contract,<sup>2</sup> and charter schools.

### **Early College Vision and State Policy: Purpose of this Brief**

Jobs for the Future, a national policy and research organization, guides and manages the Early College High School Initiative, tracks the schools' on-the-ground progress, and provides technical assistance to the partner organizations. JFF also provides information and guidance on state and institutional policies related to establishing and sustaining early college high schools or other types of blended institutions. In addition, the initiative parallels JFF's broader strategy to support the academic advancement of underserved youth. Early college high school provides a lens for analyzing the efficacy of an array of state-initiated pathways intended to boost postsecondary credential rates for underserved young people.

Based on the lessons learned by JFF and the ECHS partner organizations about state policies governing the intersection between secondary and postsecondary education, this paper:<sup>3</sup>

- Categorizes, describes, and recommends specific policies for supporting, expanding, and sustaining early college high schools in states, state higher education systems, and secondary systems; and,
- Points to broader policy changes that would both benefit early college high schools *and* advance the agenda of creating a seamless K-16 system.

The policy recommendations begin with the key design elements for early college high school. The paper then looks at what needs to be created or fixed in legislation, regulations, and the rules of secondary and postsecondary systems to enable these new arrangements to take hold. Because of the salient characteristic of ECHS—*they blend secondary and postsecondary education*—the types of policy most relevant to ECHS are laws and regulations that define the jurisdictions of the secondary and postsecondary sectors and those that better align these two sectors—that is, policies related to dual enrollment, transfer of credit, teacher certification, funding formulas and structures, and K-16 governance. No state has adopted all the policies needed to support early college high schools. However, some states have policies that can be reshaped to meet ECHS goals. “ECHS-friendly” state policies enable institutions to structure coherent high school/college curricula so that duplication is eliminated and courses progress logically in difficulty from advanced high school work into beginning college work.

Ideal policies promote performance-based advancement and motivate students with financial incentives—for example, scholarship aid linked to meeting college course or exit assessment requirements. This is in keeping with an underlying assumption of ECHS: students are motivated by challenge, not remediation, and by the opportunity to move into free college courses while in high school.<sup>4</sup> If the data gathered about early college high schools confirm that assumption, the next step will be to modify state policies in ways that expand postsecondary opportunities for all high school students. Indeed, Virginia, and Florida are already implementing ECHS-like plans that blend the systems at twelfth grade and the first year of postsecondary education and provide wider access than dual enrollment.

## State Policies Key to Early College High Schools

*Because the first group of early college high schools was small, the schools could either work creatively around existing state policies (e.g., they found loopholes) or negotiate local pacts that did not come to the attention of state officials. But as the number and visibility of these schools grows, idiosyncratic negotiations will no longer suffice. Indeed, early college high schools cannot exist under the radar if the initiative is to make the case that institutions integrating secondary and postsecondary education can result in equitable and cost-effective postsecondary outcomes for students, parents, school districts, and states.*



To demonstrate their full potential, early college high schools will require a specific set of policy conditions:

1. *Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit:* College courses taken within an early college high school count for college credit *and* toward meeting high school graduation requirements. College credit hours fulfill state requirements for days and minutes that students must complete in secondary school.
2. *Eligibility for College Courses:* Eligibility requirements for college courses assess academic readiness without excluding students based on all-or-nothing criteria.
3. *Transfer:* Students can transfer ECHS-generated credits for college-level courses to meet general education and academic major requirements for Associate's and Bachelor's degrees.
4. *Teacher Certification:* High school teachers are permitted to teach college-level, credit-bearing courses, and college faculty are permitted to teach high school students within an early college high school.
5. *Funding:* Early college high schools can combine funding streams: high school per-pupil allocations (ADA), postsecondary per-credit allocations (FTE), and state financial aid or incentive dollars.
6. *Autonomy:* Schools have autonomy to make curricular, structural, and personnel decisions that enable them to accelerate academic advancement for students and to integrate secondary and postsecondary education.

### **1 Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit: College courses taken within an early college high school count for college credit and toward meeting high school graduation requirements. College credit hours fulfill state requirements for days and minutes that students must complete in secondary school.**

To enable students to progress more efficiently from secondary to postsecondary course work and standards, early college high schools are designed to address the redundancy and lack of alignment within the educational pipeline. Thus, ECHS has the potential to reduce college expenses for families and lessen per-student education costs for taxpayers. In addition, because ECHS blends secondary and postsecondary curricula into a coherent course of study, students can advance based on performance rather than seat time.

To meet these goals, early college high schools must be able to mix and match high school and college courses and content to construct accelerated pathways toward a high school diploma and a postsecondary credential. For example, college courses and credits earned should substitute for similar or less advanced courses required for high school graduation. With a standard Carnegie Unit/college credit equivalency system in place, schools would be able to track simultaneous progress toward high school and college credentials. Students would be able to participate in an integrated high school/college curriculum.

### **1 North Carolina: Dual credit for dual enrollment**

Under North Carolina's "Huskins Bill," enacted in 1983, high schools and community colleges may enter into agreements that provide college courses specifically for the enrichment of groups of high school students. However, these courses cannot be a part of a high school student's basic education plan of courses required for graduation. The courses must be above and beyond the graduation requirements.

If North Carolina modified rules to allow college courses to fulfill high school graduation requirements at early college high schools, the state's dual enrollment policies would support ECHS students' efficient progression to and through the first two years of college.



## 2 Georgia: Exempting ECHS from all-or-nothing eligibility criteria

Georgia's "ACCEL" (formerly "Postsecondary Options" program) regulations limit funding to schools for dual enrollment based on the number of students classified as juniors or seniors. In addition, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia requires that students admitted under its joint enrollment program score 970 or higher on the SAT and have a 3.0 GPA.

In anticipation of implementing early college high schools, the University System of Georgia's P-16 office has obtained an exemption from these requirements for ECHS students who do not have to meet the SAT or GPA requirements. A framework of P-14 learning standards, which is under development in Georgia, represents a potentially promising alternative for gauging students' readiness for college courses.

## What needs to be fixed in states?

Some state dual enrollment rules do not allow college courses to count toward course-taking requirements for high school graduation. Some rules require students to choose high school *or* college credit. Some states do not permit students to replace high school "seat time"—the number of high school enrollment hours needed for graduation—with college credit hours; as a result, students who take college courses must do so on top of the regular school day. These rules are often tied to state financing regulations that treat the secondary and postsecondary sectors as discrete, not inter-related, or that prohibit "double dipping" (in which a state pays twice for the education of the same student because she is in a college course while still in high school). (See point 5 below for more about finance.) Other states set caps on the number of college courses high school students can take in a given semester.

## Recommendations

- Allow students to obtain dual credit for college or integrated secondary/postsecondary courses and to substitute these for courses fulfilling high school graduation requirements at public institutions, or grant this discretion to the secondary and postsecondary schools in which students concurrently enroll.
- Permit students to count college coursework toward minimum seat-time requirements for high school, using a standard system to reconcile college enrollment hours with high school enrollment hours.
- In lieu of state-established caps, authorize high schools to determine how many college courses a student may take in a given period.

## 2 Eligibility for College Courses: Eligibility requirements for college courses assess academic readiness without excluding students based on all-or-nothing criteria.

Early college high schools blur the boundary between K-12 and postsecondary education. They provide one solution to the joint problem of a senior year of high school that is frequently wasted and high remediation rates in the first year of college. An underlying principle of ECHS is that students can progress into and through college courses as soon as they are able. That is, the gifted math student who struggles with history can move

onto advanced math while shoring up his or her high school history research skills. In this way, ECHS departs from the modal organization of academic advancement that assumes students are only ready for college-level work after they complete a full high school course of study in all required disciplines and meet all high school exit and college admissions requirements.<sup>5</sup>

## What needs to be fixed in states?

Some state and institutional eligibility requirements for dual enrollment impede performance-based advancement because they are based on an all-or-nothing premise: students cannot move into advanced courses in any discipline before they meet the assessment measures for all disciplines. For example, some states restrict access to dual enrollment course-taking based on a student's grade level (typically restricted to grades 11 and 12), cumulative GPA, or combined assessment scores.

These rules run counter to what is known about the intellectual development of young people: at any given time they may be adept and ready for higher-level learning in one academic domain yet not in another. Correspondingly, to enable students to attain a postsecondary degree in a compressed timeframe, an early college high school must have the flexibility to accelerate a student's academic advancement in some disciplines, even if the same student needs more time to prepare in other disciplines.

Thus, the access of ECHS students to college work should be based on precise assessments of their skills, specific to particular disciplines. For example, given the supports and academic guidance provided in ECHS, states could permit students to move into college-level work in those disciplines in which they pass the required high school and college assessments. As a hypothetical case, assume that an ECHS student is eligible for college-level English on the basis of his or her score on the English Language Arts MCAS test in Massachusetts. This student would be able to take college-credit courses in English or in other subject areas for which ELA skills are a prerequisite (e.g., history, humanities) even if he or she has not met the MCAS standard in mathematics.

## Recommendations

- Base eligibility for students to do college work on their performance. Remove eligibility restrictions that are based on the grade level or age of students.
- Permit students who have proper support from a high school to move into college-level courses in those subject areas for which they meet the criteria or pass the required assessments.
- *Alternative Approach:* Another way to regulate eligibility for college courses would be to link college credit to end-of-course assessments rather than to an eligibility or entrance requirement. A state could allow students in an ECHS to take any college course at the school's discretion, but the student would get college credit only by passing a required assessment. This approach resembles the crediting procedures used for Advanced Placement courses: students get college credit after passing the AP exam. In addition, research shows that lower-performing students who take demanding high school courses—regardless of their grades in those courses—demonstrate greater learning gains and college success than those who do not (Adelman 1999; Haycock and Barth 2004).

### 3 **Transfer: Students can transfer ECHS-generated credits for college-level courses to meet general education and academic major requirements for Associate's and Bachelor's degrees.**

Early college high schools have the potential to save tuition costs for families and to use taxpayer dollars more efficiently because students spend fewer years advancing from ninth grade through the completion of a postsecondary degree. An ECHS ninth grader who pursues a Bachelor's degree should be able to accomplish within six to seven years what normally would take eight years or more.

To achieve those goals, a four-year institution that admits the ECHS graduate as a transferring junior must accept all the credits earned from the ECHS postsecondary partner. Also necessary is a transparent articulation of courses within and across two- and four-year state colleges and universities to help ensure the methodical progress of ECHS students on curricular sequences leading to a postsecondary degree.

## What needs to be fixed in states?

Few states have a systematic means (e.g., a common numbering system) for determining the equivalency of courses across their various higher education systems. In addition, many academic departments retain “gatekeeper status” with regard to conferring credit in the academic major. They set out prerequisite courses, often in math and science, that are acceptable only if taken at their institutions. The uncertainties of transferring credit among institutions make it difficult for early college high schools to plan for students to take the appropriate prerequisite courses and to avoid having ECHS graduates backtrack or retake similar courses.

The problem is compounded for ECHS because the courses in question for transfer into upper-division college work may be credits earned in a blended school. Four-year colleges, in particular, may be confused about how, for the purposes of admission or transfer, to treat students who have courses on their transcripts for both high school and college credit. This increases the chances that students will not be permitted to accelerate within degree programs.

## Recommendations

- States mandate that state community college, college, and university systems—and their campuses and departments—establish formal articulation agreements within and across the systems.<sup>6</sup> Transferability should be facilitated and made transparent through classifications of what set of courses will allow students to meet general education and major requirements for Associate's and Bachelor's degrees.
- States make information about those transfer requirements widely available to schools and students, including via the Internet.
- In accepting ECHS students for transfer, public institutions must accept dual credit courses as equivalent to courses designated transferable under postsecondary articulation agreements.

### 3 **California: Thinking through transfer issues**

Despite a long tradition of articulation between California Community Colleges and the University of California—with a defined course-taking pattern and numbering system for general transfer—there is no such tradition between the UC system and the four-year California State University system. UC campuses still have difficulty discerning how to evaluate applicants who have graduated from high school with two years of college credits earned at community colleges.

Leaders of early college high schools are discussing transferability issues with UC admissions officials.

### 3 **Florida: An articulated and transparent course system**

In Florida's comprehensive articulation system, state universities must accept A.A. graduates of state community colleges as juniors, space permitting. All public postsecondary institutions have a common course numbering system. Florida also has a consistent equivalency system for AP and other college-level courses taken in high school, and its department of education manages an online, one-stop guidance system allowing students to compare their college transcripts to degree requirements.

### 3 **National: The National Articulation and Transfer Network**

The National Articulation and Transfer Network, a consortium of urban postsecondary institutions, is constructing an Internet-accessible database of transfer agreements and course prerequisites across member institutions.

#### 4 Washington: Hiring qualified teachers

In Washington state, Antioch University Seattle's Early College Initiative for Native Youth brings college faculty to rural high schools. To solve the certification problem, Antioch teams certified high school teachers with college faculty.

In addition, there is room under the state's "College in the High School" program for agreements between high schools and colleges allowing college faculty or adjunct faculty to deliver dual enrollment courses on high school campuses. However, this option has raised concerns among local teacher unions. Also, No Child Left Behind may affect these agreements; college professors may not meet the criteria of "highly qualified."

#### 4 Teacher Certification: High school teachers are permitted to teach college-level, credit-bearing courses, and college faculty are permitted to teach high school students within an early college high school.

A premise of ECHS is that high school students benefit from early exposure to college teaching and the demands of college-level courses. In the ideal scenario, high school and college teachers have the flexibility to teach according to their expertise and qualifications at any level within an ECHS. The collaboration of high school and college faculty helps eliminate repetition, promotes the alignment of course content and standards, and better prepares students for the college environment.

While it is preferable for ECHS students to be on a college campus in regular college courses, under some circumstances high school teachers certified as adjunct postsecondary faculty should teach college-credit courses in the high school. These circumstances include the high school's distance from a campus, high college tuition costs, a community culture necessitating that students attend high school close to home, and the nature of the course (e.g., a community college single-credit course in study skills taught to ninth graders as an introduction to college work).

#### What needs to be fixed in states?

State teacher certification requirements, union regulations, and postsecondary hiring policies limit flexibility in staffing ECHS courses. State regulations require teacher certification of all public school teachers and, in many states, of charter school teachers as well.

Only two states explicitly address college faculty status in their definitions of "highly qualified teacher" under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In Georgia, a college teacher is considered highly qualified if she or he has a Bachelor's degree and three years of experience in the field and if no acceptable certified teacher is available. In Michigan, college professors may teach in charter schools sponsored by their institution.

Union contracts in many states permit only certified, unionized teachers in classrooms. An inquiry to the American Federation of Teachers yielded only the information that in order to teach high school, college professors must be certified or be supervised by a certified teacher who remains in the

classroom while the professor teaches.

In addition, postsecondary institutions specify qualifications for a person to teach credit-bearing courses by degrees earned, refereed publications, and the reputation of their graduate institution. The more selective the ECHS postsecondary institution, the less likely it is to grant adjunct status to a high school teacher and allow her or him to teach courses bearing college-credit in that institution. Furthermore, postsecondary promotion and tenure systems rarely reward faculty for collaborating with their local high schools.

Anticipating further clarification regarding NCLB, there are two possible short-term ECHS options:

- If students get college "subject area" credit but elective high school credit, the college professors do not require certification. (Certification is in core high school disciplines.)
- If college professors are not on the payroll of the public school system, they should not fall under NCLB provisions and so should be able to teach.

#### Recommendations

- The best solution is to explicitly designate college professors as "highly qualified" under NCLB to teach in their disciplines in high schools for high school credit if they have had three years of teaching experience or the equivalent. Use similar criteria at the state level.<sup>7</sup>
- Negotiate with the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association to exchange high school teacher adjunct professor status for permission of college faculty to teach in high school. The idea is to offer a carrot for a high school teacher to teach college students in a mixed high school/college course.
- Postsecondary accreditation agencies should affirm that colleges can appoint qualified high school teachers as adjunct faculty.
- Offer incentives to state postsecondary institutions that demonstrate they encourage faculty to engage in high school improvement and instruction.

**5 Funding: Early college high schools can combine funding streams: high school per-pupil allocations (ADA), postsecondary per-credit allocations (FTE), and state financial aid or incentive dollars.**

Students are the shared responsibility of the early college high school and the postsecondary institution through the first two years of college. High school and college courses are integrated into a single coherent curriculum, and the ECHS provides guidance and support during the student's integrated high school and college program of study. College courses may begin as early as ninth grade.

To support this shared responsibility, funds must be allocated for three categories of expenditures: the high school education, the partnership, and the college education. "Partnership" costs cover such items as a college liaison to coordinate work across the two institutions, an integrative seminar or other academic support mechanisms, and convening and supporting cooperative curriculum development, professional development, and ECHS governance structures. Postsecondary education costs include what students would normally pay for tuition (i.e., what non-ECHS students are expected to pay with financial aid or family resources) and the institutional contribution (usually allocated to the institution from the state based on credit hours per enrolled student). That is, states make postsecondary education a joint responsibility of taxpayers and families. In addition, early college high schools are responsible for transportation and book costs and laboratory fees (a total of \$300 to \$1,000 per student per year).

The basic revenue streams available to meet these costs include: state and local per-pupil apportionments at the level of the district in which the school is situated or at the rate allocated for charter or contract schools; the reimbursement a state allocates to postsecondary institutions based on the number of college credits a student is taking; and means-tested or merit-based federal or state financial aid.

The general funding model for a new ECHS has several components.<sup>8</sup> The early college high school sends cohorts of students into a postsecondary institution to earn enough college credits for an Associate's degree or to enter a Bachelor's degree program as a junior during the four or five years in high school; thus, these small schools need fewer teachers and less capacity to provide advanced work. The dollars saved by the high school because

it has a smaller teaching staff can be devoted to supporting some of the per-credit college course costs and costs of the ECHS partnership. Postsecondary costs may also be offset by the state reimbursement generated by an ECHS student's enrollment (as with "regular" college students) and by federal and state financial aid. In some states, early college high schools may access state dual enrollment funds to pay for costs of college courses, tuition, fees, and books.

**What needs to be fixed in states?**

All of the potential ECHS funding streams—ADA, FTE, and financial aid—exist in most states. Yet state regulations restrict the access of ECHS to one or more of them. For example, community colleges in most states receive state FTE reimbursement for "special admits" such as ECHS students, but four-year colleges and universities do not. Thus, an ECHS partnered with a four-year institution must find another way to fund fully the cost of an ECHS student. Federal financial aid, such as Pell Grants, is not available to students enrolled in high school, even if they are taking half of their courses in a postsecondary institution. State aid is similarly constrained because it is linked to federal aid in most states.

The existence of dual enrollment legislation can prove more cumbersome in implementing ECHS than its absence. For example, Ohio provides funds for students taking college courses in high school, but the student is placed in a course only after college students are placed. Moreover, the institution is reimbursed only after the completion of the course. For such a program to benefit an ECHS, the school would have to be able to aggregate the funds to pay tuition for a cohort of students. The school would also need assurances that the courses required in the ECHS curriculum were available, and the dollars would have to be allocated in a timely fashion—not after the completion of the course.

In some states, specific funding streams are not flexible enough to pay for the combined component of ECHS. For example, California sets many stipulations on the use of K-12 per-pupil dollars to contract for services (see the Gateway to College example on page 11).

With more flexible uses of funding, states will, over time, save money per college graduate. Cost savings would be realized because the student attains the Associate's degree more quickly and through elimi-

**5 Ohio: Finding incentives for secondary/postsecondary partnerships**

KnowledgeWorks Foundation anticipated that early college high schools would benefit greatly from Ohio's dual enrollment legislation: the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program provides incentives for students to participate in dual enrollment by requiring that the ADM (i.e., ADA<sup>9</sup>) funding normally apportioned to their high schools follow them to cover the cost of college courses. However, high schools often resist losing students and their ADM to colleges. This zero-sum funding dynamic created hurdles in implementing ECHS as a shared responsibility.

KnowledgeWorks Foundation is considering funding streams for early college high schools that will hold harmless public schools sending students into college courses.

## 5 Georgia: Offering early HOPE to early college high school students

Georgia ECHS students can tap early into state financial aid. Dual enrollment students taking a state-approved college course are eligible for “ACCEL” awards (also see page 6), granted at the same full public tuition rate as the state’s “HOPE” Scholarships. ACCEL awards are subtracted from each student’s HOPE eligibility credit-hour cap: ECHS graduates who transfer as juniors into a state postsecondary institution still can use their remaining HOPE scholarships to complete a Bachelor’s degree.

Georgia changed dual enrollment financing rules prior to implementing ECHS. Formerly, it had reimbursed postsecondary institutions for dual enrollment students at a rate of 73.5 percent of matriculation, tuition, and lab fees.

nating the repetition of courses at the high school and college levels. A recent JFF analysis found the average per-student cost of ECHS (\$7,595) to be comparable to the national average per-pupil expenditure for typical high schools (\$7,875) (Webb 2004). Although this comparison is made cautiously due to differences in district and state funding formulae, it is remarkable given that ECHS graduates earn college credits and credentials on top of a high school diploma. This suggests that early college high schools actually save state money that would otherwise subsidize students’ subsequent two years of enrollment at postsecondary institutions (\$6,262 FTE national average).<sup>10</sup> Paradoxically, early college high schools still face budget shortfalls ranging from 4.5 percent to 12 percent, largely because they cannot access and combine existing, but inflexible, state funding streams.

ECHS should yield additional public dividends by increasing state revenue from improvements in earnings by graduates and by decreasing the number of youth who drop out and enter the second chance system or receive welfare, unemployment, or other services for the poor. States should also benefit from decreased investments in college remediation and from alleviation of postsecondary enrollment pressures.

In the best case scenario, along with flexible ADA and FTE, the state also has means-tested incentive scholarships targeted to high school students who meet certain academic standards and/or accelerate high school graduation. Here, especially, the optimum policy set depends on the way the state funds postsecondary education, and whether incentive policies and targets are already in place for increasing the number of low-income students achieving credentials.

Some early college high schools that serve large numbers of undocumented immigrant students may encounter special challenges in funding students’ college coursework. Undocumented students are generally ineligible for state and federal financial aid. Also, only a handful of states have authorized public postsecondary institutions to offer resident tuition rates to undocumented students; in those that have, state policies may conflict with federal law under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996.<sup>11</sup> Thus, early college high schools that finance college credits through tuition payment transactions to

postsecondary partners should be aware of the unresolved legal questions surrounding accessibility to resident tuition rates.

## Recommendations

- Allow students to receive ADA through the age of 21 or high school graduation. Some states currently cut off ADA at age 18 regardless of whether or not a student has graduated from high school.
- Some portion of ADA follows the student to pay for postsecondary credits.
- A student taking at least half of his or her course work in college and who is enrolled in a college program is eligible for state and federal need-based financial aid. Under current regulations, students enrolled in high school are ineligible for federal aid. State financial aid uses the same form (FAFSFA) as federal, thus imposing the same limits.
- Four-year institutions receive the same FTE allocation for ECHS students as do two-year institutions.

These recommendations are premised on a student’s being enrolled in ECHS and taking at least half of his or her course work over four to five years in college and enrolled in a coherent college program. A formula for dollars following the student, assuming a “regular” public school with ADA at district rate, would allow a portion of ADA to pay for the per-credit costs of students taking up to half of their courses in college while allowing high schools to keep a majority of ADA. For students taking between 50 percent and 100 percent of courses in college, most ADA would follow them to cover course costs while a portion remained in the high school.

Presently, many states have legislated against “double dipping”—a high school and a postsecondary institution both receiving dollars for educating a student simultaneously. However, the formula above is structured explicitly to have some overlap or double dipping because students are a joint responsibility of both sectors. The cost savings are realized because students accelerate their education; thus, they use tax dollars for less time. In addition, because many ECHS students are potential high school dropouts or non-college goers, their academic success through ECHS to the Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree can be calculated as a return on

investment in terms of taxes paid and the avoidance of welfare and other costly social services.

*Alternative Approach:* States could establish a K-16 Innovation Fund to jump start blended and accelerated learning and to eliminate the competition between secondary and postsecondary and retain full funding for students who are concurrently enrolled. A K-16 decision-making body would manage the fund. That body would permit selected high schools and colleges to combine their respective per-pupil state allocations to spend on a jointly governed, blended secondary/postsecondary school or program, in return for tight accountability for student outcomes and close scrutiny of schools' fiscal impact.

### **6 Autonomy: Schools have enough autonomy to make curricular, structural, and personnel decisions that enable them to accelerate academic advancement for students and to integrate secondary and postsecondary education.**

Autonomy is critical for early college high schools: they must be free to design the secondary/postsecondary curriculum that is the foundation for accelerated academic advancement; such a curriculum will likely either not meet some state subject area requirements or replace high school courses in these areas with equivalent or more advanced college courses. In addition, the school must be free to devote fiscal resources to partnership activities on college campuses that build a college-going culture, facilitate integrated professional development for secondary/postsecondary faculty, and support such personnel as a school-college liaison.

Charter school legislation offers one policy vehicle for promoting school-level autonomy. Forty-one states grant charters that typically free schools, in varying detail, from many district and state regulations in exchange for accountability for outcomes defined in the charter and by the state or district.

Charter status is only one option for enhancing school autonomy. Many school districts now grant autonomy to schools, such as the Boston Public Schools' "Pilot" schools, that hire unionized faculty but with the flexibility to fashion job descriptions, change work rules, and set promotion and graduation requirements (Steinberg et al. 2003).

### **What needs to be fixed in states?**

Early college high school leaders need some latitude within state and district regulatory controls in order to implement an effective, integrated secondary-postsecondary educational program. While charter status generally grants the flexibility required for early college high schools, and this approach works well in some states, it is neither a panacea nor the only means of promoting school-level discretion. Indeed, not all states have charter legislation, and even in those that do, charter schools often do not receive maximum per-pupil state or district allocations or cannot tap into local bond funding for capital needs. Also, relations between public school districts and charter schools need improvement: some charter laws inherently build in tension between the two. For example, some laws hold sending districts accountable for student outcomes in charter schools over which they exert limited or no control.

Whatever the means of authorization, early college high schools should not be disadvantaged—fiscally or otherwise—as a condition for gaining increased autonomy from state and district rules.

### **Recommendations**

- Create incentives for states and districts to grant schools appropriate autonomy while holding these schools to required levels of accountability. For example, the Boston Public School district and the Boston Teacher's Union agreed to create a number of Pilot schools with autonomies akin to charter schools regarding scheduling, staffing, curricular, and budgeting decisions.
- Fund these schools at the same rate as other schools in the districts in which they are located.
- Hold these schools accountable for the students they actually serve.

### **6 California: Gaining autonomy through charter**

Charter status has helped to resolve some barriers to replicating Portland Community College's Gateway to College ECHS in California. Gateway enrolls high school dropouts in a community college program taught by college instructors, allowing students to earn a high school diploma while advancing on a pathway to a postsecondary credential. In planning the replication of Gateway in California, Gateway learned that public school per-pupil allocations could be used to pay for college courses only if students were supervised by a school district employee. Charter school funding regulations in California do not impose this restriction.

## Broadening Access to College-Level Work in High School



*Early college high schools are not abstract policies but rather existing schools enrolling real students, with all their individual desires and interests. As a result, ECHS implementation concretely points up the disconnects and dysfunctions preventing us from creating a seamless K-16 system. The barriers identified, for example, have implications for scaling up dual and concurrent enrollment as well as early college high schools.*

**An educated citizenry today means a citizenry with some postsecondary education, so why do we make the transition from high school so confusing and so difficult?**

At a further remove, the experience gained through implementing early college high schools underlines the need for a policy framework built from the assumptions that all students should participate in some postsecondary education, and that they should begin college-level work based on performance, including while still in high school. Such a framework would help all students better navigate the system to and through postsecondary education.

The building of a policy framework begins with the need for three interrelated changes:

- The establishment of governance mechanisms that cross the borders of high school and postsecondary education;
- The alignment of high school exit and college admission and placement requirements; and
- Data management systems enabling states to assess the performance of K-16 education as an interrelated system, with individual student progress and outcomes tracked across education sectors.

States have made progress on these changes, and all are compatible with the U.S. Department of Education's goals for high school reform, which include a growing interest in college-level work in high school.

Almost all the issues identified in implementing early college high school—from disparate and conflicting requirements for teacher certification, to inflexible funding formulas, to incompatible methods for measuring and accounting for student progress through a course of study—confirm the

dysfunctional separation of the secondary and postsecondary sectors of education. If the systems had been designed with incompatibility as a goal, we could not have done a better job. It is no surprise that ECHS implementers find themselves devising ingenious solutions to problems that should have straightforward answers.

A case in point concerns the qualifications of college faculty to teach high school students for high school credit. Several early college high schools have thought of crediting college courses for high school *elective* credit rather than for required courses such as math or English. Neither the state nor NCLB require certification to teach an elective because certification is always in a specific high school discipline. Other schools are asking students to complete high school courses during the school day and college courses after they have satisfied the daily seat-time requirements.

Beyond identifying loopholes to solve specific problems, there is a larger and more serious issue: an educated citizenry today means a citizenry with some postsecondary education, so why do we make the transition from high school so confusing and so difficult? Why does the transition have so little basis in the intellectual and career interests of students? Early college high school cannot alone solve these problems, yet it can be a “power tool” or lever for change.

For the past 20 years, educators concerned about college access and success, as well as about cost efficiency, have worked to create vehicles for linking secondary and postsecondary education together, whether by statute or by voluntary association.

**Early college high schools might be considered like the butterflies that cause tidal changes continents away.**

Currently, some 25 states have some form of cooperative activity. Some evolved from attempts in the 1980s to legislate co-governance mechanisms. More recently, many states have created voluntary secondary/postsecondary coordinating bodies. The next steps—joint legislative committees and combined, state-level K-12 and higher education agencies—seem far off from current practices, all of which take a light hand.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, there is substantial and promising activity in regard to the item highest on the agenda for fixing the system as it is now configured: aligning high school exit standards and assessments with college entrance and placement standards. The public and policymakers are coming to understand the huge social and educational costs to students and families of incorrect and misleading signals about what it takes to get into and through college. Georgia and Maryland have made particularly promising efforts to link the systems through alignment: these states do not just add new “early intervention-style” programs. Rather they change how schools and colleges operate. For admission and placement, the City University of New York system uses the state’s high school Regents exams, sending strong signals to students about expectations. CUNY also has permitted the system to work closely with the New York City public schools in such college preparatory programs as College Now and, since fall 2003, the establishment of early college high schools.

In addition, two major projects—Standards for Success and the American Diploma Project—address alignment and standards issues from the perspectives of differing constituencies.<sup>13</sup> The audience for Standards for Success is composed of the selective postsecondary institutions “speaking” to K-12 about college readiness and requirements of the first year. ADP’s audience is composed of state policymakers and educators, largely from the K-12 sector. In both cases, the plea is for secondary and postsecondary institutions to write these standards and benchmarks in a common language for all, and for students to know and attain, as ADP says, “the ‘must-have’ competencies” for postsecondary success and productive careers.<sup>14</sup>

Because early college high schools *are* partly postsecondary institutions, and because they are built upon an unorthodox set of assumptions about learning in the first two years of college, they might be considered like the butterflies that cause tidal changes continents away. At the very least, their requirements disrupt business as usual in the postsecondary instructions brave enough to take them on. Perhaps one outcome of such partnerships that could provide lessons across the sector is the consideration that we are undergoing a period of deep reform in high school education, however slowly and haltingly: postsecondary might gain substantially from attending to those emerging successful elements in secondary reform and pledging to change as well.





## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The initiative operates through a collaboration among 12 intermediaries: Antioch University Seattle, City University of New York, Foundation for California Community Colleges, Georgia Department of Education and the University System of Georgia, Jobs for the Future, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, Middle College National Consortium, National Council of La Raza, Portland Community College: Gateway to College, SECME, Utah Partnership for Education and Economic Development, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. In addition, state-based early college high school efforts in North Carolina and Texas are affiliated with the initiative.
- <sup>2</sup> A contract school is managed by a private organization under a performance agreement with a school district.
- <sup>3</sup> The presentation of policies in this brief assumes some familiarity with the principles of dual enrollment, the “highly qualified teacher” provisions of No Child Left Behind, and standard methods for funding secondary and postsecondary education. Information on these topics is available from a variety of sources. On dual enrollment, see, for example, Hoffman (2003), Karp et al. (2004), and Vargas (2004). On No Child Left Behind, two useful source are the Education Week Research Center Web site at [www.edweek.org/rc/issues/no-child-left-behind](http://www.edweek.org/rc/issues/no-child-left-behind) and resources on U.S. Department of Education Web site at [www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=fb](http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=fb). On standard methods for funding, see Education Writers Association (2003) and resources of the Web site of the State Higher Education Executive Officers, [www.shceo.org/pubs/pubs\\_results.asp?issueID=12](http://www.shceo.org/pubs/pubs_results.asp?issueID=12).
- <sup>4</sup> As an example of such a policy, Utah students who graduate from high school with an Associate’s degree receive a 75 percent scholarship for upper-division tuition in the state’s public higher education system.
- <sup>5</sup> Although AP courses give students an opportunity to take college-level courses, students are not always assured of receiving college credit even if they succeed on AP exams.
- <sup>6</sup> Recognizing that course articulation can be a complex, controversial, and long-term undertaking for states and postsecondary institutions, we suggest that in the short term states might use the implementation of early college high school as a vehicle to pilot pathways of aligned courses that are articulated from secondary schools through two-year colleges and the Bachelor’s degree.
- <sup>7</sup> Thus far, informal inquiries have yielded no clarity about the intent of NCLB in regard to college professors who are neither included nor explicitly excluded. It may be possible for states to interpret NCLB to include college teachers as certified in the disciplines of their terminal degrees under HOUSSE—High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation.
- <sup>8</sup> This model is presented using bold strokes because per-pupil apportionment rates and postsecondary tuition and fees vary widely among states. Also, the model does not apply to an existing high school converting into an early college high school.
- <sup>9</sup> In Ohio, the per-pupil apportionment is known as Average Daily Membership rather than Average Daily Attendance.
- <sup>10</sup> Based on 2002 figures from the National Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis citing State Higher Education Executive Officers, accessed at [www.higheredinfo.org](http://www.higheredinfo.org).
- <sup>11</sup> See *The SmartStudent Guide to Financial Aid*. <http://www.finaid.org>
- <sup>12</sup> For more information, see Kirst and Venezia (2004) and Kirst (2004).
- <sup>13</sup> For more information, see: [www.achieve.org/achieve.nsf/AmericanDiplomaProject?openform](http://www.achieve.org/achieve.nsf/AmericanDiplomaProject?openform)
- <sup>14</sup> See American Diploma Project (2004).

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