The Early College High School Blueprint

Design Elements

All designated ECHSs (Provisional, Early College, Distinguished Early College) are required to meet all of the design elements for each benchmark annually.

Outcomes-Based Measures (OBMs)

All designated ECHSs (Provisional, Early College, Distinguished Early College) are required to meet OBMs on data indicators related to access, achievement, and attainment.

ECHS PROVISIONAL EARLY COLLEGE

Provisional Early Colleges are new ECHSs that demonstrate they can implement all the design elements for each benchmark and meet the Provisional Early College OBMs. For public purposes, campuses are identified as Early College.

ECHS EARLY COLLEGE

Early College designees maintain designation by demonstrating they can implement all of the design elements for each benchmark and meet the Early College OBMs.

ECHS DISTINGUISHED EARLY COLLEGE ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Distinguished Early Colleges have been designated as Early Colleges for at least five years, and demonstrate that they can implement all of the design elements for each benchmark and meet the Distinguished Early College OBMs.

Needs Improvement

At any time, if an ECHS doesn't meet the OBMs, the ECHS may be categorized as needs improvement and will receive targeted technical assistance and has no more than two years to meet the OBMs or no longer receive designation. If a Distinguished Early College doesn't meet the OBMs, the ECHS will be designated as an Early College, given that they meet the Early College OBMs.

TEA is currently in a phase-in process for the new ECHS Blueprint. These data are for information and planning purposes only. This information will not be used to determine designation status.

ECHS TEXAS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Benchmark 1: Target Population

The Early College High School shall serve, or include plans to scale up to serve, students in grades 9 through 12, and shall target and enroll students who are at risk of dropping out of school as defined by the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and who might not otherwise go to college.

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following requirements:

1. The ECHS recruitment and enrollment processes shall identify, recruit, and enroll the subpopulations of at-risk students (as defined by PEIMS), including, but not limited to, students who are of limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, or students who have failed a state administered assessment. Enrollment decisions shall not be based on state assessment scores, discipline history, teacher recommendation, parent or student essays, minimum grade point average (GPA), or other criteria that create barriers for student enrollment.

2. The ECHS shall identify, recruit, and enroll subpopulations (in addition to those who are at risk as defined by PEIMS) that are historically underrepresented in college courses (e.g., first generation college goers, students of low socioeconomic status, African American, Hispanic, Native American.)

3. The ECHS shall clearly document recruitment and enrollment policies and practices; refining and improving them annually based on data reviews.

4. Recruitment and enrollment processes (including marketing and recruitment plans, materials, and timelines) shall include input from key stakeholders (e.g., parents and community members; postsecondary partners); target student populations as described in 1 and 2 above; and include regular activities to educate students, counselors, principals, parents, and school board and community members.

5. For admissions, the ECHS shall use either a performance-blind, open-access lottery system that encourages and considers applications from all students (all students have an equal opportunity for acceptance, regardless of background or academic performance) or a weighted lottery that favors students who are at risk or who are part of the targeted subpopulations for the ECHS.

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and be made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Products:

- Written admission policy and enrollment application
- Written recruitment plan including a timeline of recruitment and enrollment events, and recruitment materials for distribution at feeder schools and other appropriate locations in the community
- Brochures and marketing in Spanish, English, and/or other relevant language(s)
- Written communication plan for targeting identified audiences, parents, community members, school board, higher education personnel, etc.

TEXAS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Benchmark 2: Partnership Agreement

The Early College High School shall have a current, signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for each school year that:

- Defines the partnership between the school district(s) and the institution(s) of higher education (IHE) and addresses topics including, but not limited to, the ECHS location; transferability of college credit between a 2-year and 4-year institution; the allocation of costs for tuition, fees, and textbooks; and student transportation;
- States that the school district or charter in which the student is enrolled shall pay for college tuition (for all dual credit courses, including retakes), fees (including TSI administration fees), and required textbooks to the extent those charges are not waived by the partner IHE;
- Defines an active partnership between the school district(s) and the IHE(s), which shall include joint decision-making procedures that allow for the planning and implementation of a coherent program across institutions; and
- Includes provisions and processes for collecting, sharing, and reviewing program and student data to assess the progress of the ECHS.

Design Elements

All ECHSs shall develop, sign, and execute a MOU that includes the following components (at a minimum):

- Courses of study, which enables a student to combine high school courses and college-level courses to earn either an associate degree or at least 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree
- Curriculum alignment
- Policy for advising students on the transferability of all college credit offered and earned
- Policy to ensure the IHE transcripts college credit earned through dual credit in the same semester that credit is earned
- Policy regarding advising students as to the transferability and applicability to baccalaureate degree plans for all college credit offered and earned (college credits earned during high school should allow students to progress from an associates degree to a bachelor's degree and beyond in their chosen field)
- ECHS students access to the IHE facilities, services and resources
- Policies regarding eligibility of ECHS students for financial assistance from the higher education partner(s), specifically, waivers for tuition and fees
- Professional development for ECHS faculty (including both district and IHE faculty/staff)
- Data sharing agreement that includes provisions for:
- Teacher data such as qualifications
- Student level data such as credit hours taken and earned; GPA, formative data to assess if student is on track to be successful in college level courses
- Administration of statewide instruments under TEC Subchapter B, Chapter 39
- Transportation costs and fees

TEXAS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

- Grading periods and policies
- Instructional materials
- Instructional calendar including location of each course that will be offered
- Student enrollment and attendance policies
- Provisions for discontinuing ECHS operation and the ensure students previously enrolled will have opportunity to complete their course of study

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and be made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.
- Campuses must submit their final signed MOU to TEA when initially applying for early college designation or are provisionally designated.
- ECHS Campuses that are designated early college or distinguished early college are not required to submit the MOU during the annual designation process (but must have it available upon TEA request).
- ECHS campuses in needs improvement may be required to resubmit their MOU to TEA.

Products:

- Final, signed, and executed MOU

Benchmark 3: P-16 Leadership Initiatives

The school district and institution(s) of higher education (IHE) partners shall develop and maintain a leadership team that meets regularly (e.g., quarterly) to address issues of design, implementation, ongoing implementation, and sustainability. Membership should include the Early College High School leader and individuals with decision-making authority from the district(s) and IHE(s).

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following requirements:

1. The ECHS shall establish a leadership team that includes high-level personnel with decision-making authority who meet regularly and report to each organization. Regularly scheduled meetings must address the following topics:

   a. Identify members and the role each member will play in the design, governance, operations, accountability, curriculum development, professional development, outreach, sustainability, and continuous monitoring and improvement of the ECHS

   b. Annually review the MOU for necessary revisions

   c. Assume shared responsibility (between the school district and the IHE) for meeting annual outcomes-based measures and providing annual reports to their district and IHE boards, as well as to the public.

   d. Monitor progress on meeting the Blueprint, including reviewing data to ensure the ECHS is on-track to meet outcomes-based measures

   e. Guide mid-course corrections as needed

2. The leadership team shall include and meet regularly—in person and/or virtually—with the leaders from the district and IHE who have decision-making authority:

   District leaders (may include):

   - Superintendent
   - Assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, or equivalent position
   - ECHS principal or director
   - CTE Director (if applicable to the ECHS model)
   - Department Chairs
   - School counselors
   - School-business partners

   IHE leaders (may include):

   - College or university president
   - Provost
   - Department Chairs for core academic disciplines
   - ECHS liaison

TEXAS
EARLY COLLEGE
HIGH SCHOOL

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

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and be made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Products:

- ECHS/IHE leadership meeting agendas and minutes
- School board and board of regents' presentations
- Description of each member and role in committee

Benchmark 4: Curriculum and Support

The Early College High School shall provide a rigorous course of study that enables a participating student to receive a high school diploma and complete the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) core curriculum (as defined by the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §4.28), obtain certifications, or earn an associate's degree, or earn at least 60 credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree during grades 9-12. The ECHS shall provide students with academic, social, and emotional support in their course of study.

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following requirements:

1. The ECHS shall provide a course of study that enables participating students the opportunity to complete high school graduation requirements and earn an associate's degree or at least 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree. A four-year crosswalk must be in place detailing how students will progress toward this goal including alignment of high school and college level courses. This crosswalk must provide pathways to a certification, an associate's degree, or a baccalaureate degree and must follow the courses and fields of study listed in the THECB Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM) and/or the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM). The campus may implement multiple dual enrollment delivery models:

    a. College courses taught on the college campus by college faculty

    b. College courses taught on the high school campus by college faculty

    c. College courses taught on the high school campus by qualified high school faculty

    d. College courses taught virtually, via distance/online/blended learning

2. The ECHS shall support students in their course of study.

    a. The ECHS shall provide academic support to the students by personalizing the learning environment in the following ways:

        • Developing individualized student plans for ongoing academic support,

        • Providing tutoring and/or Saturday school for identified students in need of academic supports,

        • Providing advisory and/or college readiness and support time built into the program of study for all students, and

        • Establishing a mentorship program available to all students.

    b. The ECHS shall provide social and emotional support to the students as needed, including:

        • connections to social services

        • parent outreach and involvement opportunities

    c. The ECHS shall provide enrichment opportunities, including:

        • A structured program of community service to promote community involvement.

        • Partnering with community businesses to expose students to a variety of potential career options and possible internship opportunities.

        • Providing college awareness to current and prospective students and families, including:

            I. Application assistance,

        II.   Financial aid counseling, and

       III.   College and career counseling.

3. The ECHS shall biannually implement a structured data review processes designed to identify student strengths and weaknesses and develop individual instructional support plans.

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and be made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Products:

- 60 college credit hours crosswalk
- Calendar of family outreach events
- Professional learning community agendas and notes
- Advisory/study skills curriculum material
- Master schedules

TEXAS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Benchmark 5: Academic Rigor and Readiness

The Early College High School shall administer a Texas Success Initiative (TSI) college placement exam (as defined by TAC §4.53) to all accepted ECHS students to assess college readiness, design individual instructional support plans, and enable students to begin college courses based on their performance on the exam.

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following requirements:

1. The ECHS shall provide a TSI assessment to accepted students as early as possible (however, not as a prerequisite for admissions to the ECHS).

   a. The ECHS shall implement a plan for TSI success, including academic preparation classes for accepted students, academic interventions for students who do not pass TSI, and assessments fee waivers for all administrations of the TSI test.

   b. The ECHS shall publish on their website the dates the TSI will be administered.

   c. The ECHS shall review TSI testing data, particularly the number/percentage of students who have currently passed each section of the TSI assessment, to ensure the ECHS is on track to meeting outcomes-based measures (see below).

2. The ECHS is a TSI assessment site, or is in the process of becoming a TSI assessment site, allowing frequent testing and access to raw data that can be used to identify student weaknesses and create tailored interventions and individualized instructional plans to improve student readiness and success.

3. The ECHS provides a bridge program (an intensive academic preparation program that provides opportunities to strengthen academic skills necessary for high school and college readiness) to prepare students for TSI and provide academic interventions for those who do not pass TSI.

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and be made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Products:

- Calendar of TSI test administration dates
- Aggregate reports of TSI exam performance
- Tutoring and bridge program schedules
- Bridge program curriclum

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HIGH SCHOOL

Benchmark 6: School Design

The Early College High School must provide a full-day program (i.e., full day as defined in PEIMS) at an autonomous high school (i.e., a high school with ECHS leader assigned to ECHS responsibilities who has scheduling, hiring, and budget authority), an IHE liaison with decision-making authority, and a highly qualified staff with support and training.

Design Elements

All ECHSs must implement and meet the following:

1. The ECHS location shall be:

    a. On a college or university campus, or

    b. In a high school—as a standalone high school campus or in a smaller learning community within a larger high school.

2. ECHS staff shall include:

    a. An ECHS leader who has scheduling, hiring, and budget autonomy

    b. An IHE liaison with decision-making authority and interacts directly and frequently (in-person or virtually) with ECHS the leader and the dual credit provider

    c. Highly qualified ECHS teachers who work directly with the ECHS students, which may include adjunct high school faculty capable of teaching college-level courses

    d. Counseling staff who support the ECHS students, including activities such as: coordinating with the IHE for registration and monitor of students' high school and college transcripts, monitoring high school and college courses to ensure both requirement are met.

3. The ECHS students shall be cohorted for core classes to the extent possible; this does not exclude non-ECHS students from enrolling in the same class.

4. ECHS shall implement an annual professional development plan for teachers and staff, focused on research-based instructional strategies that focus on rigor, build college- and career-readiness, is based on needs assessment of student data, and includes both high school and dual credit teachers. Professional development should include, but is not limited to:

    a. A mentoring and induction program for newly hired staff, providing them with the instructional and interpersonal skills and capacities needed for success in an ECHS.

    b. Provide opportunities for ECHS teachers and higher-education faculty to receive extensive training and support through regularly scheduled formative peer observations and collaboration opportunities with IHE faculty.

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and be made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.

Products:

- Mentor/induction program plans
- Annual training or professional development plan with ECHS and IHE faculty
- ECHS leader/liaison meeting agendas and notes

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HIGH SCHOOL

Access Outcomes-Based Measures

TEA is currently in a phase-in process for the new ECHS Blueprint. These data are for information and planning purposes only. This information will not be used to determine designation status.

Data Indicators	Provisional Early College	Early College	Distinguished Early College
Requirements	Must meet **at-risk students for incoming 9th graders** and at least **three** additional target population data indicators	Must meet **at-risk students for incoming 9th graders** and at least **three** additional target population data indicators	Must meet **at-risk students for incoming 9th graders** and at least **four** additional target population data indicators
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **at-risk students for incoming 9th graders**	No more than 20% points under district	No more than 15% points under district	No more than 10% points under district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **economically disadvantaged students**	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **African American students**	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **Hispanic students**	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **males**	No more than 10% points under district	No more than 5% points under district	Meets or over-represents district
ECHS proportionate to or over-represents **ELL and SWDs**	Not taken into account for designation	Not taken into account for designation	No more than 5% points under district

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HIGH SCHOOL

Attainment Outcomes-Based Measures

TEA is currently in a phase-in process for the new ECHS Blueprint. These data are for information and planning purposes only. This information will not be used to determine designation status.

Data Indicators	Provisional Early College	Early College	Distinguished Early College
Requirements	Must meet college English, college math, and 15 college credit targets	Must meet targets on at least **five** attainment data indicators	Must meet targets on at least **six** attainment data indicators
Grade-to-grade persistence by subgroup (weighted)	Not taken into account for designation	Calculated to ensure the school meets the 4-year graduation target	Calculated to ensure the school meets the 4-year graduation target
Completing one college-level English course by end of 11th grade (any)	80% of students (by the fourth year of implementation)	90% of students	100% of students
Completing one college-level math course by end of 11th grade (any)	80% of students (by the fourth year of implementation)	90% of students	100% of students
Earning 15 college credits (any) by graduation	50% of students (by the fourth year of implementation)	80% of students	95% of students
Earning 30 college credits (any) by graduation	Not taken into account for designation	50% of students	65% of students
Earning postsecondary degree and/or credential by high school graduation	Not taken into account for designation	30% of students	40% of students
Graduating high school in 4 years (4-year cohort graduation rate)	Not taken into account for designation	Meets the statewide 4-year graduation rate	Exceeds the statewide 4-year graduation rate

ECHS TEXAS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Achievement Outcomes-Based Measures

TEA is currently in a phase-in process for the new ECHS Blueprint. These data are for information and planning purposes only. This information will not be used to determine designation status.

Data Indicators	Provisional Early College	Early College	Distinguished Early College
Requirements	Must meet at least **three** TSI targets	Must meet at least **four** achievement data indicators	Must meet at least **five** achievement data indicators
TSI College Readiness Standards in reading	65% passing rate	70% passing rate	75% passing rate
TSI College Readiness Standards in writing	75% passing rate	80% passing rate	85% passing rate
TSI College Readiness Standards in math	50% passing rate	60% passing rate	75% passing rate
TSI College Readiness Standards in all 3 subjects	35% passing rate	40% passing rate	50% passing rate
Algebra I EOC assessment in 9th grade	Not taken into account for designation	85% of students passing	45% percent of students passing and meeting the advanced standard
English II EOC assessment (grades 9-11)	Not taken into account for designation	85% of students passing	25% percent of students passing and meeting the advanced standard

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