

# Introduction

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# BACKGROUND

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# Section 1: History and Purpose of Early College High Schools

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## ***1.1 Pressing Problems in Education Led Educators to Seek Strong Solutions***

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Many of our high schools, particularly in high-poverty areas, are struggling to help our children:

- ◆ More than 50% of public school students are from low-income families and/or are students of color.
- ◆ And yet, 48% of American high schools don't offer students rigorous coursework.

We need to develop innovative programs that prepare *all* students for success in high school, college, and careers, particularly as projections are that by 2025, 68% of jobs will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school.

Over the past decade, education, the economy, and workforce readiness have converged to redefine what our students require from schools before high school graduation. Multiple factors led this convergence—traditionally underserved student populations constituting a growing proportion of the US school population, the low number of high-school graduates enrolling in postsecondary education, and projections that more occupations in the future would require education beyond high school.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that through 2024, 11 of the 15 (73%) occupations with the highest projected growth will require education beyond high school, and 6 (40%) will require a credential beyond the high-school diploma<sup>1</sup>.

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In light of projections such as these, we need to direct our children to a college education, particularly our low-income students, those whose families have not attended college in the past, and minorities. All these population groups are dramatically underrepresented in college and in high-skilled jobs in the workplace.

Other problems emerge as state, district, and local educators begin to develop policies for new educational models such as ECHSs.

- ◆ Many students from underserved areas will be the first in their family to attend college. Not having the experience of higher education, parents may be unsure or how to guide their children through the college and career options facing them. Parents themselves may need the support of educators as well.

## ***1.2 History and Purpose of Early College High Schools***

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The Early College High School (ECHS) model began in 2002 with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to *improve college readiness and completion rates for students underrepresented in postsecondary education.*

**According to Tom VanderArk, Executive Director of Education for the Gates Foundation, “*It’s no wonder students drop out: They are shuffled through the system with adults who hardly know them.... we need to engage and motivate students by giving them the personalized and rigorous courses they need to make a smooth transition to college or the workplace. Early college high school programs are an effective way to accomplish this.*”**

This new model for high schools came about in response to the need to increase high-school graduation rates and equip *all* students with the skills they need to successfully complete college-level work and meet the needs of today’s workplace. Too

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many students are being left behind every day, unprepared to study further or secure good jobs in today's economy. Now, however, we have a good change strategy—ECHSs, which respond to the needs of students who would otherwise be left behind, engaging and motivating them, and setting them on their way “early” to college.

With the ECHS model, we raise the expectations traditionally underserved and high-risk students have for themselves by offering them access to advanced high-school courses and college courses. Students take a blend of high-school and college courses, simultaneously pursuing a high-school diploma *and* either an associate's degree or up to two years' college credits. The advantage of this approach is that students are exposed to higher education early in their lives.

Several characteristics generally distinguish ECHSs. These include:

- ◆ Their small size, typically with up to 100 students per grade level.
- ◆ Responsible growth. ECHSs typically begin in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and take four years to reach full capacity.
- ◆ A close proximity to the postsecondary partner, in some cases directly on the college campus.
- ◆ Block scheduling of classes to allow for acceleration of the graduation requirements so students can simultaneously take college courses.
- ◆ Limited high school electives since most elective credits are earned through dual-credit coursework.

Clearly, the ECHS model makes sense. It assumes students who engage in rigorous coursework in high school are better ready for college-level work and more

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likely to earn a postsecondary degree. And most impactful, the model remains true to its mission of engaging historically underrepresented student populations.

## ***1.3 Comparisons of Early College High Schools with Other Dual Credit Programs***

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Over the past decades, other “accelerating” programs have been introduced to secondary school students. A short comparison of these with the ECHS model affirms the strength of ECHSs in making a difference in learning and achievement for so many students.

When comparing **dual enrollment** programs with ECHS, it becomes clear ECHSs are a more structured dual enrollment strategy specifically targeted at traditionally underserved students, and which has demonstrated its effectiveness in increasing postsecondary participation and attainment rates for this high-need population. Dual Enrollment differs from the ECHS model in very clear ways. A comparison of outcomes affirms this value of ECHSs versus dual enrollment:

- ◆ While dual-enrollment programs tend to draw students who are mid- to high-achieving, most students in ECHSs are minority (77%) and low-income (57%). Just 37% of dual enrollment students come from low-income families.
- ◆ In dual enrollment, students select individual courses that potentially allow them to earn both high-school and postsecondary credit. ECHSs present a cohesive curriculum *integrating* high-school and college-level coursework into a single program.

A comparison of ECHSs with the International Baccalaureate (IB) programs show an even more marked difference from the dual enrollment and ECHS programs. While ECHS programs set a priority for enrollment on underserved and underrepresented

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student populations, IB programs do not target a specific population. In fact, research shows that both AP and IB programs offer the “biggest mismatch for students of color and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds” due to the absence of appropriate and strong support services to help these often unprepared students to succeed<sup>2</sup>

## ***1.4 How Early College High Schools Work***

Early college high schools have the potential to improve high school graduation rates and better prepare students for family-supporting careers by changing the structure of the high-school years, reducing the number of years to a college degree, and removing financial and other barriers to college. While the implementation design for ECHSs varies from site to site, the framework remains constant.

- ◆ Starting in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade, students engage in a curriculum of high school and *increasingly* postsecondary coursework.
- ◆ Depending on the high school, the curricula for both high school and college can be career-focused through Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs or academies within the school.
- ◆ By the end of 12<sup>th</sup> grade, students who remain in the program will have concurrently earned a high-school diploma as well as an associate’s degree, technical credential, or 60 credit hours of postsecondary coursework.
- ◆ When students continue their postsecondary education in a four-year university, they enter as a junior.

The physical site of ECHSs varies—from location on a high-school campus in a school-within-a-school format, on a college or university campus, or in a stand-alone ECHS campus. Wherever it is located, ECHS college courses are taught by instructors

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from the college or university partnering with the high school, and by high-school teachers accredited to teach college courses.

Because ECHSs serve high-need students, programs need to remain flexible to accommodate challenges students may have to succeed. Examples of this flexibility are shown following:

### **Rigorous curriculum**

Regardless of their background, when students arrive at ECHSs, they are there to learn.

- ◆ Each ECHS sets its own curriculum and pacing to help their students succeed.
- ◆ Some ECHSs integrate college courses into the curriculum—but at a slower pace. For example, students advance through high school with *no credit-bearing classes* in 9th grade, up to 10 credits in 10th grade, and 24 to 26 credit hours in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.
- ◆ Other ECHSs have developed plans for two years of credit with expectations that only some students will achieve this goal.
- ◆ Still other ECHSs have reduced attainment goals for all students.

In all these programs, the intent is to make the curriculum as rigorous as possible without shutting the door on any student.

### **Alternative pathways**

- ◆ Students interested in industry-based careers may want to earn industry-approved certifications in high school rather than prepare for a two- or four-year degree programs.

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- ◆ While these credentials may be more relevant to student interests, they are often less academically rigorous, so that students who are performing at a lower academic level can still achieve high standards of learning and invaluable industry-endorsed certification through a different pathway.

### **Compressed learning time**

In the ECHS model, students can complete up to six years of work in just four years. This compressed time frame presents obvious opportunities and challenges, particularly for students who are under-prepared entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

- ◆ To reduce these challenges, some ECHSs include a fifth year of high school and build middle-school outreach to get students ready sooner.

### **Student support**

ECHSs provide strong support systems to assure students can succeed. Examples may include: academic advising, parent involvement and communications, tutoring, review sessions, homework guidance, summer sessions, learning labs, skill development classes, college planning sessions, and college application and funding workshops.

### **Community partnerships**

ECHSs naturally form partnership with colleges and universities as well as businesses to help students meet their goals and remove financial obstacles associated with earning college credit and/or certifications.

## ***1.5 Early College High Schools and ESSA***

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed into law in December 2015, reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. The ECHS model supports and provides funding for ECHSs in several areas:

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- ◆ ESSA requires states to set challenging academic standards in reading/language arts and mathematics that are aligned with:
  - Entrance requires for credit-bearing coursework in a state's system of higher education.
  - Relevant state career and technical education standards.
  - When implementing ECHSs, districts may target Title I funds to high schools with a poverty rate of 50% or higher. ESSA Sec. 1113(a)(3)(B).
- ◆ District plans must facilitate effective transitions from high school to postsecondary education through, if applicable:
  - Coordination with colleges and universities, employers, and other local partners.
  - Increased student access to ECHSs or dual or concurrent enrollment opportunities, or career counseling to identify students' interests and skills.
- ◆ Title II (professional development funding) may be used to provide training on "effective strategies to integrate rigorous academic content, career and technical education, and work-based learning (if appropriate), which may include providing common planning time...." ESSA Sec. 2103(b)(3)(O).
- ◆ Title III (instruction for limited English-proficient and immigrant students funding) may be used to offer ECHS or dual- or concurrent-enrollment programs, or courses designed to help English learners achieve success in postsecondary education. ESSA Sec. 3115(d)(8).
- ◆ Direct Student Services funding may be used to provide for enrollment and participation in academic courses not otherwise available. These include advanced courses and career and technical education coursework that is

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aligned with challenging state academic standards and lead to industry-recognized credentials. ESSA Sec. 1003A(c)(3)(A).

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## Section 2: The Language of Early College High Schools— Understanding the Terms

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To better understand the ECHSs, it is important to become familiar with some of the basic definitions that distinguish the model.

- ◆ **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** Courses directly related to the preparation of individuals for the employment in current or emerging occupations requiring an industry-recognized credential, certificate or degree.

While not all ECHSs are CTE programs, most have career pathways or academies through which students earn industry credentials prior to graduation. Other ECHSs may primarily focus on earning college credits in an academic area such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) or computer science.

- ◆ **CTE Standards:** Performance standards for students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) coursework.
- ◆ **Dual Credit/Enrollment:** High-school student enrollment in college-level courses offered by a postsecondary institution that allows students to earn credit toward high-school graduation and a postsecondary degree or certificate simultaneously.
- ◆ **Postsecondary Partner:** Postsecondary educational institution that has an agreement or memorandum of understanding with an ECHS.

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- ◆ **Pathway:** Sequence of classes at the ECHS in partnership with the postsecondary partner, which leads to a certification, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree.\
- ◆ **Work-Based Learning:** Activities that provide students while authentic workplace experiences while in high school. These strengthen a student's engagement with their learning, build their understanding of the importance of college, and affirm their commitment to and interest in their chosen careers. Work-based learning includes job shadowing, internships, or youth pre-apprenticeships.
- ◆ **Workforce Recognized Credential:** Industry-recognized workforce credentials, certificates, associate's degrees, or bachelor's degrees from a postsecondary partner.
- ◆ **Workforce Partner:** Local business, regional workforce investment board, chamber of commerce, economic development corporation, or other industry representative that provides ongoing support and involvement with course development including projects for project-based learning, relevant content, and work skills as well as mentoring and on-the-job experience.

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## Section 3: How Well Early College High Schools are doing Nationwide

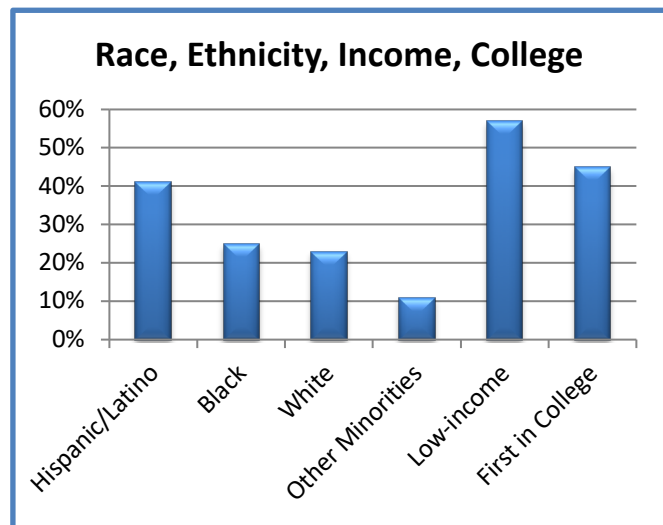
Educators are taking heed of the strong outcomes being reported for the ECHS model, particularly for low-income, high-need, and under-represented students<sup>3,4,5,6,7</sup>. These outcomes are worth noting as more schools consider transitioning from a traditional high school to an ECHS.

Confirmed by rigorous third-party evaluation studies, Jobs for the Future (2011) paints a strong portrait of how well ECHS graduates do:<sup>8</sup>

As of 2016, more than 400 ECHSs were operating nationwide, with roughly 100 students per grade level. Of these:

- ◆ 77% are minority students.
- ◆ 57% are from low-income families.
- ◆ 45% are the first in their immediate families to attend college.
- ◆ 93% graduate high school versus 78% in traditional programs.

Figure 1. Underrepresented Students<sup>9</sup>



### Notes

- ◆ 30% graduate high school with an Associate's degree or college certificate along with a high-school diploma.
- ◆ 78% of ECHS graduates directly enroll in college. This is 8% higher than the national average, 14% higher than the national average for Blacks, 16% higher than the national average for Latinos, and 26% higher than the national average for low-income students.

Other data, reported by the Alliance for Excellent Education<sup>10</sup> show the ECHS model far exceeds other traditional high-school programs, including dual-enrollment, IB, and AP:

- ◆ ECHS students earn an average of 21.6 college credits by the time they graduate high school, compared to 2.8 credits earned in other high-school programs.
- ◆ 30.1% of ECHS students complete postsecondary credentials within four years of high-school graduation, compared with 4.2% of students in traditional high-school programs.
- ◆ In the first year out of high school, students from ECHSs enroll in postsecondary education at a rate 38% higher than students from traditional high schools, and 19% higher than students from dual-enrollment high-school programs.
- ◆ Minority students and those from low-income families are nearly ten times and 8.5 times respectively more likely to obtain a college degree than students from traditional high-school programs.
- ◆ ECHS 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who had not taken Algebra 1 in 8<sup>th</sup> grade were successfully completing Algebra 1 in the ECHS at higher rates than 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in traditional high school programs. The ECHS students also showed related improvements in student outcomes—e.g., narrowing minority/

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nonminority performance gaps, increasing attendance, increasing engagement, reducing behavioral incidents, and reporting more positive school experiences<sup>11</sup>.

Of particular importance for low-income students, ECHSs save time and money toward college as 94% earn some college credits before they graduate.

- ◆ The average ECHS graduate earns 36 college credits saving 30% off a Bachelor's degree and 60% off an Associate's degree.

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## Section 4: Best Practices Nationwide

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### ***4.1 A Conversation about Early College High Schools***

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In 2017-2018, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NM PED) sponsored a series of ECHS podcasts looking at best practices and important considerations in the implementation of ECHSs. One of these podcasts was a conversation between Dr. Joseph Goins, CEO, hosting the podcast, and Dr. Joseph Vargas, Vice President, Jobs for the Future (JFF). Both Dr. Goins and Dr. Vargas are national thought leaders in the development of ECHSs nationwide. JFF is a nonprofit organization focused on ensuring that more low-income youth and adults obtain the skills and credentials they need to be successful in today's workplace, which increasingly demands skilled workers. The purpose of this conversation with Dr. Vargas was to get his insights at the national level on where he thinks ECHSs fit in an innovative model for school reform, and where he sees ECHSs going in the future.

In the following conversation, Dr. Goins' questions and comments are summarized and in italics.

*Dr. Vargas, can you give us a little background on the work JFF is doing and the direction they see for education?*

The ECHS approach JFF has been asked to lead and manage is groundbreaking and offers a systemic solution for education and the economy. Currently, there are too many transition points where these [underrepresented] populations don't make successful transitions to the next step. JFF is trying to support systemic changes that

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help make sure those transitions actually occur. Innovations like ECHSs represent an opportunity to make sure those transitions are actually hard-wired into the system so we get more of a labor force that we need in the economy.

*I think sometimes we see the end goal from high-school experiences is to get students into college. Really, the end goal is a career. It's more critical for colleges and ECHS programs to help create these pathways for students and give them that launch pad. How did JFF see the ECHS model as a way to do that?*

I became involved with the ECHS movement in 2001. There were a lot of antecedents to ECHSs including efforts by Bard College to create partnerships and a high school that connected to the campus. Middle college schools were high schools based on community college campuses. Around the same time, the Gates Foundation became interested in the idea of an early college approach as part of its portfolio of small schools. The foundation asked JFF to work with a group of national partners to shape the design, codify it, and test the model in the field. That became known as the ECHS Initiative.

*What were the core best practices that were embedded in an ECHS?*

First, we defined the target population we were trying to serve... under-served populations of students who would not normally go to college or complete. That was one tenet. A second tenet was that ECHSs had to have strong partnerships with local colleges. A third tenet was that this all had to be at no cost to students. They had to have embedded within them support systems that ensure students completed high school and were prepared for college. The prime indication for this was the completed college credits by the time they finished high schools.

When a high school and college are engaged in a true early college partnership they are really *co-designing* their curricular pathway so that every one of them leads to an associate's degree or another credential, which has high value in the labor market. They are *co-delivering* the education experience so they are *sharing* a physical space

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and staff, even guidance counseling services. High-school and college faculty may be *co-teaching* courses.

The ECHS design is a *shared* delivery. The partners are also *sharing* data and using it to support their *shared* responsibility for making sure no student ever gets dropped or sorted out.

*When we talk about best practices, the first question is who is your higher education partner, how are they working with you, are they co-developing. Obviously, in an early college environment like this, you can't offer an entire program of studies like a typical college. So, you're picking the pathways that you want to offer and develop, and that have high labor market value. When you first started seeing the early college models develop, what were some of those elements that were the hardest for schools to adapt? Was it focusing on the population? Was it developing the higher education partnership? Was it identifying the correct labor market pathways to develop?*

School leaders were presented with a different way of operating and managing what they considered to be part of their responsibility. They had to create space to collaborate and coordinate with the partnering college, including for their staff and teachers. Successful ECHSs would employ a liaison between the school and the college to run interference and work out the kinks in the system, and to keep track of the students and the data.

As we developed the model, we underestimated the need for teaching and learning to be happening differently. Instruction had to be better. It had to be at a higher, more engaging level. Teachers really had to engage students in collaborative group work and problem solving, a meta-cognitive kind of self-management of their own learning. We offered coaching and professional development because, at the end of the day, we knew success for the students and this initiative would hinge on the teaching and learning that went on in the classrooms.

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## **Notes**

*In New Mexico, the majority of the ECHSs are freestanding. Can you address the different implementations?*

Freestanding is one design. Charter schools are also emerging. Depending on what state you are in and the charter laws, it may be easier with charter schools due to flexibility. Generally, ECHSs include a technical school or two-year college higher education partner. A significant number have four-year college partners, and many of these have both a two- and four-year college partner. This advantage of this is to make sure all coursework has articulated so students can continue toward a bachelor's degree.

It is important to follow the tenet of serving marginalized students, and this is really important to codify. Otherwise, you fall down the trap of just creating a gifted and talented program masquerading as an early college model. We have a couple of schools that are schools of choice so they don't control who applies, and they need to actually go out and recruit.

If we can get students at an earlier age and get them to complete a minimum of two college courses, we can start them on a pathway into college. It's a free environment, at no cost. And, with an ECHS, you have those mentoring and co-supports built in while they are still in high school. We are creating both access and persistence.

*What would be your advice for starting the journey to building an ECHS program? What is the process and the challenges?*

The school district and school building leaders need to be thinking about the design they want and about the college partnership. I would emphasize the college partnership theme again. You need an official memorandum of understanding between the partners, but the paper is only as good as the spirit behind the letter that's on the paper.

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## **Notes**

ECHS is not just about getting kids to take as much college credit as possible. It's about creating a more robust learning environment, where students really create intentional scaffolding in their transition from K-12 to postsecondary education. It's important for young people to just have an idea of what comes next and to have a chance to explore and understand that through actual experience. This is about embedding the future in the high schools much earlier than we have previously.

## ***4.2 Examples of Major Implementations and Best Practices Nationwide***

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# NEW MEXICO EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS

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# Section 5: New Mexico's Early College High Schools

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## ***5.1 Background on State Commitment to Early College High Schools***

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*Information for this section was provided by Eric Spencer, Principal, Carlsbad Early College High School, who was previously employed by the state and working at the NMPED when the state's commitment to the ECHS model was formalized. .*

Just five years ago, with New Mexico's graduation rate at 70%, we began looking at new models of education that might make a difference. CTE programs, with deliberate course sequencing, were consistently registering higher achievement scores and graduation rates.

The major difference was that CTE students were committed to their career pathways and knew they could apply what they learned. Looking at the ECHS model, we knew we wanted to assure students had a career path associated with their participation in an accelerated framework that would provide them with a head start in college.

We reviewed the national studies on ECHSs and were impressed with the outcomes for youth who were underrepresented in college and high-skilled jobs. We also believed that just because a student is performing below average doesn't mean they don't have the capacity to perform at a higher level; perhaps something might be in the way of that. And sometimes that something else is the traditional school setting, the traditional calendar, the traditional school day. We wanted to think outside the box

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about how we could provide opportunities for these students as well to have access to an advanced education and a career path of choice.

In 2013, the governor included within the executive budget an appropriation for what was called “New Mexico Graduates Now” to start ECHS in the state.

## ***5.2 New Mexico’s Vision for Early College High Schools***

New Mexico is one of several states that have, at the state level, embraced ECHSs as an effective model for quality secondary education, partnerships, and experiential learning. The state’s commitment to ECHSs reflects its recognition and understanding of ECHSs transformational strategies, cost savings, rigor, target populations, partnerships, and experiential learning:

- ◆ ECHSs will use transformational strategies to bring college into high school by simultaneously offering a high-school diploma and a college-level credential and/or degree.
  - Students can simultaneously complete requirements toward earning a regular high school diploma and to earn not less than 12 credits toward a college-level certificate, associate degree, or bachelor’s degree at the partner institution of higher education.
  - Advanced placement and dual credit courses help high-school students make a seamless transition into college.
- ◆ ECHSs will expose students to rigorous academics and career technical education coursework.
  - Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are integrated into a structured program of study meeting local/state graduation requirements.
  - For career technical education courses, Common Career Technical Core

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Standards (CCTCS) support core academic growth.

- ◆ ECHSs will remain dedicated to enrolling and supporting low-income youth, first-generation college-goers, racially and ethnically diverse students, and other young people underrepresented in higher education.
  - The proportion of low-income students in the student body is at least as high as that of the district in which the ECHS is located. National School Lunch Program (NSLP) data can be one of the indicators of poverty.
  - A lottery or other blind admission processes may be used to ensure equitable access.
- ◆ ECHS's will provide a program of study toward a postsecondary credential or degree without tuition cost to the participant or the participant's family.
- ◆ ECHSs will establish formalized partnerships with colleges, universities, and industry partners to create a model of shared responsibility for student success.
- ◆ ECHSs will include meaningful work-based learning experiences that align to dynamic sectors of New Mexico's economy, and a structured CTE sequence that leads to credentials recognized by business and industry.

### ***5.3 The New Mexico Public Education Department Early College High School Initiative***

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Since the initial appropriations, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NM PED) has demonstrated its support for ECHSs financially and programmatically through a wide range of strategies to gather the maximum amount of input from the maximum number of stakeholders across the state.

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### ***Notes***

- ◆ Since 2016, NM PED worked with the non-partisan public policy organization, New Mexico First, to launch the largest ever state education listening tour, *New Mexico Rising*.
- ◆ As part of the *New Mexico Rising tour*, K-12 school districts, colleges and universities, and business and community organizations were surveyed on their support of ECHSs and the impact they felt it could have on workforce demands. All of the stakeholders applauded the level of workforce readiness the ECHS model carried, and the opportunity to bring a more diverse qualified pool of applicants to the workplace.
- ◆ NM PED used feedback from the tour to inform the specifics of the state's plan for federal funding under the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA).

NM PED's commitment continued, through ongoing reviews to determine the support required by districts and schools to successfully change to an ECHS model:

- ◆ NM PED contracted with NS4ed to conduct a one-year comprehensive review, alignment, and integration of the state's workforce, education, and economy sectors, with the goal to promote sound education and workforce policies.
- ◆ NM PED reviewed results for input to the State's plan for student accountability.
- ◆ Administrators, counselors, and teachers across the state were surveyed to determine the areas of support they needed to transform their existing high schools into ECHSs or to develop new ECHSs in their districts.
- ◆ PED reviewed results—focused on meeting challenges related to instructional practice, adherence to administrative code and statutes, and applying best practices—to determine the regional supports the Department could offer to move the ECHS model forward.

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- ◆ NM PED supported an ECHS Summit for stakeholders across the state, and the development of a Webpage to disseminate information to ECHSs in New Mexico.

## ***5.4 Survey Results: A Profile of Early College High Schools in New Mexico***

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As noted above, in 2016, the NM PED commissioned a study to document the current needs of ECHS programs and the nature of the ECHS models that had evolved (or were evolving) in the state. Survey data in this section were collected from the school districts. Results of the survey for college/university and business/community organization respondents are reported on in the Partnership section of this manual.

A total of 14 New Mexico ECHS's participated in this survey—five charter schools, eight public high schools, and one APS Magnet School of Choice. Respondents included a principal or school administrator from each of the ECHSs, 18 teachers, and seven guidance counselors. The ECHSs were both older and newer, with implementation dates from SY 2002 to 2016.

### **Needs**

Identified academic and community needs that prompted the districts to establish the ECHSs included low graduation rates; the need to find alternatives that work for disenfranchised students, and to help them realize that college is an option for them; communities' inability to attract new industry to the area due to a lack of skilled worker; a reduction in college enrollments due to financial challenges for students.

### **Goals**

- ◆ Priority goals ranged from support for underrepresented students to increased economic viability of a community:
- ◆ 93% - Support students from underrepresented groups in postsecondary

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institutions.

- ◆ 71% - Enable students to earn workforce credentials or certificates.
- ◆ 50% - Compress the number of years it takes students to attain postsecondary degrees.
- ◆ 29% each – Increase students' job readiness and thus the economic viability in the community.

### **Location**

While most ECHSs were located on a community college campus, other sites were used as well:

- ◆ 46% located on a community college campus.
- ◆ 23% - located in a stand-alone high school.
- ◆ 15% located on a four-year college/university campus or an existing high school.

Apart from the actual location of the ECHS, opportunities to earn college credit through college-credit classes delivered in a variety of locations:

- ◆ 92% on community college campus.
- ◆ 46% on the ECHS campus.
- ◆ 38% online or at a four-year university campus.
- ◆ 8% in the community.

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Respondents reported college campuses at a distance from an ECHS presented challenges, and online courses needed more structure to keep students paced appropriately.

### **Rigor**

When asked about the ECHS courses for college credit, 83% of respondents felt the ECHS courses were more rigorous and complex than the regular high-school courses; 75% said the ECHS courses for college credit required more student effort and community than classes at traditional high schools.

### **Acceleration**

- ◆ ECHS programs were significantly more likely to have:
  - Workforce experiences - (79% for ECHS vs. 43% for non-ECHS).
  - Associate's or applied associate's degrees (64% for ECHS vs. 14% for non-ECHS).
  - Workforce credentials (43% for ECHS vs. 14% for non-ECHS).

### **Demographics and Outcomes**

The percent of underserved students ranged from 58% to 100%, with the average being 79%.

While 43% of the schools in the survey reported graduation rates of 90% or above, others ranged from 42% to 88%.

Outcome data for the following benchmarks were based on 11 ECHSs for whom we had data, representing 571 graduates:

- ◆ 40% of ECHS graduates earned their associates degree.
- ◆ 46% earned the equivalent of 2 years in college.

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## ***Notes***

- ◆ 26% earned a workforce credential.
- ◆ 23% graduated to attend a community college.
- ◆ 67% went on to a 4-year degree.
- ◆ 11% secured jobs.

The ECHSs offered significant support systems for their students. A total of 75% of the respondents characterized the support as strong through career counseling; 58% strong through regularly scheduled sessions for study and homework; 50% for teaching of soft skills and mentoring.

### **Recruitment and Admissions**

Recruitment strategies included social media, print and broadcast media, websites, in-person meetings and community fairs, word of mouth, and presentations and middle schools and parent meetings.

Each ECHS has developed its own admissions criteria including grade levels, GPA, attendance, teacher recommendations, writing samples, progress toward graduation, earned credits, and test scores.

- ◆ 46% - gave priority to students who are traditionally underrepresented in colleges and universities.
- ◆ 23% - noted one or more of the following:
  - Encouraging underrepresented students to apply.
  - Open to any student through a lottery process.
  - All students who meet the criteria can participate.

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## ***Notes***

From 33% to 100% of the students who apply are accepted at the ECHSs. In many cases, this is due to the desire to keep class sizes lower.

### **Strengths and Challenges of the ECHS Model**

Respondents mentioned many strengths of the ECHS program including the value of their partner and stakeholder partnerships, collaborations, and contributions. They appreciate the access to the rigor of college courses and the broad support systems at the ECHSs which help students succeed.

The most often cited challenges were financial sustainability, growth, and potential changes in policies. Also mentioned were issues of community perception, student recruitment, growth capacity of the college partners, and operational issues such as space, transportation, and scheduling.

## ***5.5 Profiles by the Numbers***

The following page includes a chart of the current ECHSs as currently reported, with district, the year the ECHS began, enrollment data, and postsecondary partners.

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### ***Notes***

			<b>Enrollment</b>						
School	District	Year Begun	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	Total for SY 2018-19	Total Teachers & Administrators	Postsecondary Partner
Taos Academy Charter	Taos Academy	2010	27	34	23	24	123	5	UNM Taos
Middle College HS	Gallup-McKinley	2010	0	25	40	35	120	6	UNM Gallup
The MASTERS Program	Santa Fe	2010	0	70	70	70	205	10	Santa Fe CC
University HS	Roswell ISD	2014	54	42	22	0	192	9	Eastern NM – Roswell
San Juan College HS	Farmington MSD	2016	71	0	0	0	171	5.5	San Juan College
Carlsbad ECHS	Carlsbad MS	2014	62	59	54	0	70	9	NMSU – Carlsbad
College & Career HS	Albuquerque PS	2013	0	42	55	44	180	12	CNM
Early College Academy	Albuquerque PS	2016	59	56	47	49	217	51	CNM, UNM, IAIA
Arrowhead Park ECHS	Las Cruces PS	2010	113	87	97	111	460	24	Dona Ana CC
Rio Grande Prep Inst.	Las Cruces PS								
Ruidoso HS	Ruidoso MSD	2013	35	35	35	35	150	5	Eastern NM
Hobbs High ECS	Hobbs MS	2014	0	0	13	29	42	NA	NM Junior College
Peñasco ECHS	Peñasco IS	2013	3	6	15	10	35	3	Norther NM College
Robertson HS	Las Vegas CS	2016	0	0	0	45	45	0	NM Highlands U
Alta Vista ECH	Gadsden ISD	2015	32	69	35	15	151	18	Doña Ana CC
CLIFF HS	Silver Cons Sch	--	21	24	18	21	125	12	Western NMU
Opportunity HS	Silver Cons Sch	2010	7	21	29	24	81	10	Western MNU
Mesa Vista HS	Mesa Vista CS	2008	22	25	30	33	110	25	Northern NM College
School of Dreams Acad	Los Lunas PS	2008	72	73	73	73	378	26	UNM
Walatowa High	Walatowa Chart	2013	12	12	16	14	54	7	UNM, multiple

## Notes



Bond Wilson Tech Ctr	Central Cons SD	2018					60		Navaho Technical U
<b>Totals</b>			<b>590</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>2,969</b>	<b>232.5</b>	

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***Notes***

## ***5.6 Shining a Light on Two New Mexico ECHSs***

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The following examples of ECHSs in New Mexico represent an established, award-winning ECHS, and a new Native American model opening this year:

### **Arrowhead Park Early College High School and Medical Academy, Las Cruces Public Schools**

Arrowhead Park ECHS opened in 2010, and is located on the campus of New Mexico State University, and was New Mexico's first ECHS. Arrowhead Park ECHS and its neighboring early college campus, Arrowhead Park Medical Academy together serve more than 600 students. The two early college campuses have 13 STEM-related pathways of instruction and six medical pathways. In May 2017, 101 graduates had earned 139 Associate's degrees and 113 certifications, while 25 students were named as NMSU crimson scholars. Roughly 52% of these students are the first in their families to attend college. In 2017, Arrowhead Park ECHS was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the US Department of Education, and the only New Mexico school recognized as an "Exemplary High Performing School."

### **Bond Wilson Technical Center, Central Consolidated School District (scheduled to open SY 2018/2019)**

The Bond Wilson Technical Center has developed a strong partnership with the Navajo Technical University (NTU). Its career-focused College Academies reflect local labor market demand reported by employers and within the *Navajo Nation Economic Roadmap*. The district is almost 100% Native American, who has the lowest rates of enrollment in and graduation from college of all minority groups. NTU has developed an onsite *Innovation Center* at the ECHS to act as a small business incubator for current and former students and local employees. The Innovation Center will be an additional experiential opportunity for students to gain course credits and workplace experiences,

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## ***Notes***

as they participate in development of emerging businesses. NTU is also opening a Fabrication Laboratory at the ECHS to reflect a high-demand from local businesses.

# IMPLEMENTATION

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***Notes***

## Section 6: Beginning an Early College High School in New Mexico

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### ***6.1 New Mexico's General Requirements***

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The New Mexico Public Education Department (NM PED) has established qualifications that schools must meet to be designated as an approved ECHS. The overarching goal is for all students enrolled in an ECHS to simultaneously earn a New Mexico high-school diploma and a workforce-recognized credential through the ECHS's postsecondary partner. To qualify as a state-approved ECHS, a school must:

- ◆ Integrate state standards into courses within a structured pathway that meets local and state graduation requirements.
- ◆ Follow a pathway that results in a workforce-recognized credential without tuition cost to the student or the student's family.
- ◆ Focus on efforts to reach youth underrepresented in higher education by establishing outreach and recruiting processes striving for equitable access, and to encourage applicants from underrepresented populations to enroll in an ECHS.
- ◆ Accelerate student learning through the use of dual credit courses beginning no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

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### ***Notes***

- ◆ Have at least one workforce partner, which will provide meaningful work-based learning experiences and CTE courses that use career and technical education standards to support core academic growth.
- ◆ College-credit courses must help high-school students complete college faster; be delivered through a post-secondary partner and taught by a higher learning commission qualified instructor; be free-of-charge; and align with the pathway indicated on the student's next step plan, the established New Mexico higher education Gen. Ed. curriculum, and either the student's declared CTE pathway or declared major or meta major.

## ***6.2 Submitting an Application***

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ECHS applicants must meet all of the qualifications provided and submit an application form by July 1 of the desired first school year for the proposed ECHS. The application must include:

- ◆ A description of the proposed series of structured and connected education programs and support (pathways).
- ◆ A description of the proposed workforce-recognized credential for each pathway.
- ◆ The projected number of students to be served.
- ◆ A description of outreach and recruiting processes that incorporate targeted efforts to reach underrepresented populations.
- ◆ A partnership with at least one postsecondary partner that includes evidence of college-credit course offerings and support structures.

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## ***Notes***

- ◆ Documentation of a partnership with at least one workforce partner that includes evidence of meaningful work-based learning experiences.
- ◆ A sustainability plan that addresses continuing financial support and the support of the school board or governing body.
- ◆ Assurances that all district and school personnel are knowledgeable of the requirements to comply with:
  - State code 6.30.13 (referring to Educational Standards for Early College High Schools).
  - Evidence of tribal consultation to satisfy the goals of the Indian Education Act (to ensure equitable and culturally relevant learning environments, educational opportunities and culturally relevant instructional materials for Native American students enrolled in public schools) including documentation of tribal consultation submitted annually to the department.

When applying, schools may request waivers for areas such as individual class load and teaching load, length of school day, staffing patterns, subject areas, purchase of instructional materials, and course work requirements.

NM PED reviews initial applications for approval and confirms acceptance or rejection by no later than August 1. Schools not receiving initial approval may request reconsideration.

## ***6.3 Accountability and Annual Data Reviews***

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### ***Notes***

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To evaluate program compliance with the qualifications outlined in the ECHS standards, NM PED annually reviews data collected through the department data reporting system. Data evaluated to determine compliance shall include but not be limited to:

- ◆ Student attainment of work-force recognized credentials.
- ◆ Student participation in work-based learning experiences.

Students earning college credit will be evaluated for the following minimum expectations:

- ◆ All students completing 11<sup>th</sup> grade have attempted a minimum of 3 postsecondary credit hours toward a workforce recognized credential.
- ◆ At least 80% of students completing 12<sup>th</sup> grade have successfully completed a minimum of 12 postsecondary credit hours toward a workforce recognized credential).

The Department shall review additional data, which include:

- ◆ The number of students enrolled.
- ◆ Student participation.
- ◆ Percentage of low-income students enrolled in the ECHS compared to the percentage of low-income high-school students enrolled in the district in which the ECHS is located.

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## ***Notes***

## ***6.4 Renewal and Compliance***

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Renewals are automatic, based on a review of the data submitted in the annual data reviews. Based on this review, NM PED will either renew the ECHS without conditions, or designate an ECHS on probation for noncompliance.

Schools receiving a notice of non-compliance shall maintain their status as a department-approved ECHS and be placed on a one-year probation during which time schools can make necessary changes to be in full compliance.

Upon receipt of notice of non-compliance, schools shall submit an improvement plan within 30 days. NM PED offers technical assistance to schools during the implementation of the improvement plan.

Schools may apply for an extension of the probationary period.

Schools not demonstrating compliance following probation will lose their designation as a department-approved ECHS and will have to wait one school year before reapplying as a NM PED-approved ECHS.

## ***6.5 School Leadership and Teacher Excellence***

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A recent study found a strong link between postsecondary success and teacher enthusiasm and effectiveness. High-school students who were taught by teachers who had expertise in a specific teaching subject were more likely to graduate from college.<sup>12</sup>

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### ***Notes***



The study concluded that teacher quality was the most influential factor that determines student success. Highly qualified teachers are more likely to expand students' desired to learn and succeed.

ECHSs look toward transformative leadership and a high-quality teaching staff to support the diverse and traditionally underrepresented student population headed for college. Subject matter expertise is also reinforced by college instructors teaching ECHS students in their subject matter areas.

To continue to build and maintain this level of quality and accountability, ECHSs must engage a professional development program that demonstrates how to build leadership skills, foster partners, and support data-informed decision making.

## ***6.6 Challenges in Implementation of Early College High Schools***

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Several school leaders in New Mexico shared challenges they face as they build their ECHSs. These are important for districts and schools to consider as they begin to develop and implement new ECHSs or enhance current ECHSs.

### **Student population and admissions**

- ◆ As a school of choice, we don't control the admissions process.
- ◆ Our open enrollment policy tends to lead to higher SES students as part of the lottery process.
- ◆ We would like to see "low-achieving" removed from the definition.

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## ***Notes***

- ◆ We are concerned about using FRDL (currently 96%) as a criteria for admission since 30% of our students come from out of the area.
- ◆ We have a problem with school choice and soliciting low-income students (currently 76%). Some students don't complete the FRDL form as they eat at the college.
- ◆ With 60% FRDL, we come close to the criteria for most programs but not for others. For example, we meet the criteria for the welding certification but not for the Associate's degree.

**Academic rigor**

- ◆ Our program gets a lot of students who are behind. We need clarification on the acceleration component and what workforce credential the state recommends.
- ◆ Students do not enter our ECHS until 10<sup>th</sup> grade. If a student meets the Accuplacer score, they are admitted.

**Funding**

- ◆ We need to better understand the waiver process as there is a financial aid issue.

These challenges are being reviewed and considered by the NM PED as they finalize coding of their ECHS requirements and definition.

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***Notes***

# OPERATIONAL TOOLS

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***Notes***

## ***7.1 Operational Considerations***

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The ECHS model is an effective change agent that helps close academic gaps in education and diversity gaps in the workforce.

Because the ECHS model targets a specific student population, has a clear curricular model, and is built upon partnerships with higher education, schools need to be thoughtful when developing policies and procedures for their ECHS. Keep in mind that in all cases, policy and operational applications of these should reflect the culture and economic environment of the community. The following paragraphs list some of the important policy categories and suggestions for content of the policy<sup>13</sup>:

### **Access and support for students and their families**

- ◆ Notify students and parents of the availability of ECHS programs while students are still in middle school.
- ◆ Work closely with parents who may not be familiar with college opportunities and requirements to bolster parent engagement.
- ◆ Consider whether to include in your program design nonacademic support services for students who face challenges to learning, through linkages with community resources.

### **Program quality**

- ◆ Assure all ECHS programs are aligned to the state's core academic standards.
- ◆ Assure the program is of high-quality and that the coursework designated as college-level mirrors the same rigor and pacing as when delivered on a college campus.

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## ***Notes***

- ◆ Assure all higher education partnerships are in place, and that college instructors are teaching all college credit ECHS courses.
- ◆ *Helpful Hint: One educator suggests scheduling high-school courses in the morning and college courses and workplace experiences in the afternoon.*

**Workforce alignment**

- ◆ Use current labor market information and local business input to assure curricular content and career pathways in ECHSs reflect the current and projected local labor market demand for high-skilled jobs.
- ◆ Work with area business partners to infuse the curricula with real-life business projects.
- ◆ Establish workplace experiences with business partners such as mentoring, shadowing, internships, and/or apprenticeships.

**Articulation of credits**

- ◆ Assure that all credits earned by students in ECHSs are transferrable to other public two- and four-year colleges and universities.
- ◆ As part of recruitment, outreach, and marketing for the ECHS, share with program stakeholders, parents, and students the high cost savings for college that credit transfer represents.

**Accountability**

- ◆ Develop and implement an evaluation process to determine program effectiveness.

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## ***Notes***

- ◆ Establish shared accountability procedures with higher education partners.
- ◆ Identify measurable outcomes for your ECHS, such as high-school graduation and dropout rates, attendance rates, college credits earned, certification and associate's degree completion, admission to four-year institutions, and employment in career or study-related fields.

**Administrative support**

- ◆ Work with the state and local education partners to assure school leaders and educators have professional development opportunities to prepare for the transition to an ECHS.
- ◆ Develop and maintain a program of continuing professional development.
- ◆ Work with postsecondary partner to establish credentialing programs for ECHS teachers.

**Finance and facilities**

- ◆ Fully understand state funding distributions.
- ◆ Establish avenues for coverage of college tuition costs, through the state, the postsecondary institution, and other sources.
- ◆ Identify location of ECHS—e.g., current school buildings, college campus, or a stand-alone center.
- ◆ Identify sources of funding from local business partners.

## ***7.2 ECHS Program Toolkit***

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### ***Notes***

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The following excerpts from Adcox and Moore’s High Successful Early College High School Programs, written with support from NS4ed, provides educators with a better understanding of the complex issues in design, structure, and support systems needed to develop successful ECHS programs<sup>14</sup>

Key features of successful ECHS programs will be presented in the following sections. Taken together, these can serve as a toolkit for you to use as you thoughtfully build and implement your ECHS design. These features, which are interwoven into the tools and recommendations below, include well-defined targeted student populations, clearly defined and measurable outcome goals, strong postsecondary partnerships, rigorous academic standards (including course design, learning outcomes, and sequencing), and a comprehensive student support system. The features of successful ECHS programs begin with the key assumptions of the program.

## Assumptions

### Key assumptions

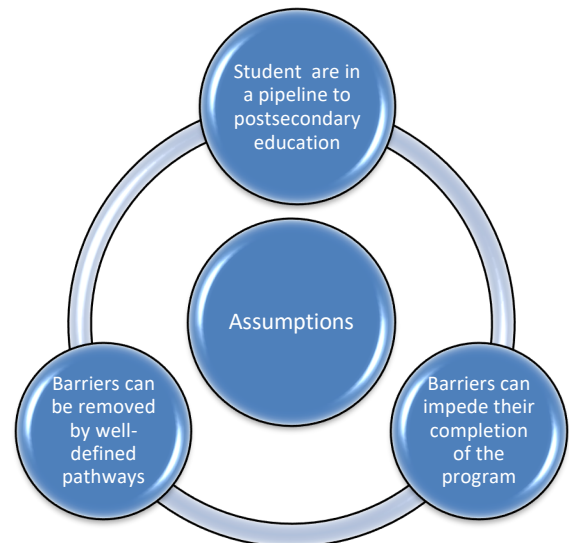
- ◆ ECHS high-school students are in a pipeline toward postsecondary education whether through college enrollment or career education.

### Barriers to assumptions

- ◆ Students can experience obstructions or barriers along this pipeline that could force them out prior to successfully completing the program.

### Eliminating barriers

- ◆ Removal of barriers includes development of well-defined pathways—varying by type, granting institution, and level of credential—for the successful transition to and completion of postsecondary education.



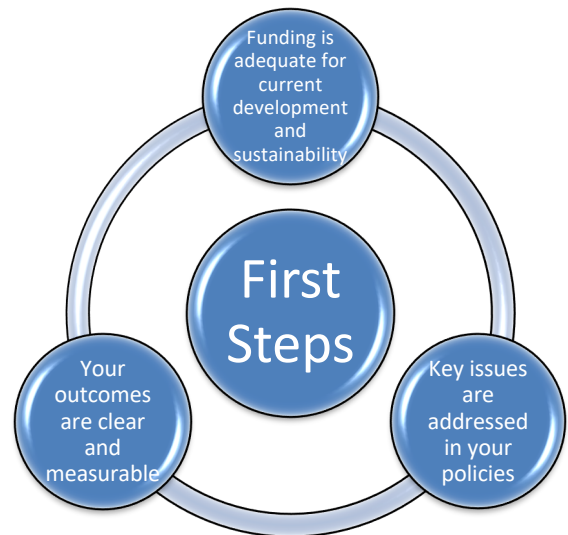
## Notes

- Examples are rigorous academic standards, vetted curriculum, comprehensive student support, carefully tracked student academic plans, and detailed career and degree agreements between the ECHS and its postsecondary partner.

### **First steps**

The following three first steps will begin design of your ECHS, establishing a foundation for development.

- ◆ Assure you have committed budget funds to increase sustainability and scalability, and understand fundraising is regular and ongoing.
  - ECHSs can be expensive with money needed to pay tuition, books, and fees for the college credit-bearing courses students take.
  - You may need to consider student transportation fees when the ECHS is located on a college campus—both for students and parents to remain involved.
  - You will also need funds to support the comprehensive student support systems so crucial to program success.
  - Relationships with community organizations, business and industry leaders, and others are integral to keeping funding pipelines. Also of value are public and private grant opportunities.




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### ***Notes***

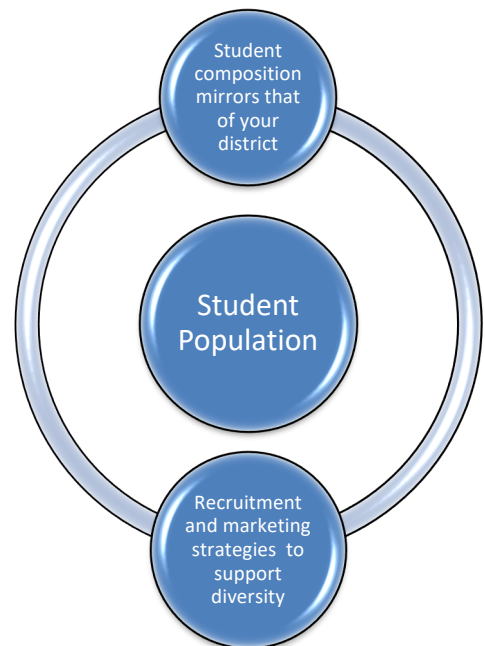


- Students attending schools in need of improvement, high-priority schools, or students from lower SES could qualify for ESSA funding, discussed earlier in this manual.
- ◆ When developing your policies and procedures, make sure you address the most important issues to your design.
- ◆ Establish clearly written goals, with measurable outcomes for students and the program.

### **Building your student population**

Your student population must be reflective of the basic vision of the ECHS model.

- ◆ Make sure the demographic composition of your ECHS population mirrors that of the district in which it operates.
  - Selection solely by lottery is not sufficient to carry out this vision. Schools must take into account how to define “low income,” which groups of low-income and underserved populations will be targeted, and in what ratios will they be recruited to reflect the district composition. Some examples are to determine whether your program aim includes ESL students, recent immigrants, students with poor attendance, students struggling with academics at their current grade level, and others.



## **Notes**

- How many students are needed to mirror the district’s demographics in corresponding subgroups?
- ◆ A detailed recruitment and marketing strategy will help establish the application and acceptance processes in ECHSs.
  - You will need to establish a flow of responsibility for the recruitment and marketing process. This may include presentations by ECHS leaders, postsecondary partners, and business partners as well.
  - Consider what you will require for application criteria—e.g., teacher recommendation, test scores, grades, and/or student and parent commitment.
  - It is important to use measures that ensure students with low cultural capital and/or low family support are not further disenfranchised from educational and career opportunities.

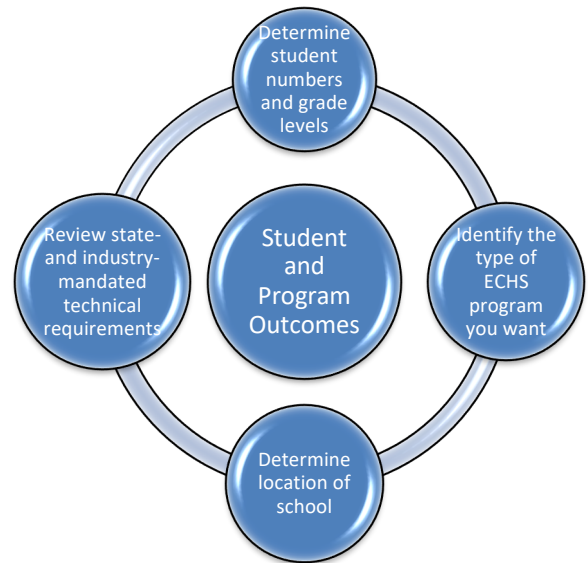
Parents and students alike must be well-informed on the ECHSs. This information should be available to them during the recruitment and application timeline each year, and from individual meetings with school counselors throughout the year, although particularly during the application period.

### **Building measurable, clearly defined student and program outcomes**

---

## ***Notes***

One purpose of this manual is to help you understand the many options available to you as you build, enhance, or expand your ECHS program design. To this end, your design process must begin with an unbiased assessment of the current educational, economic, and workforce landscape of your community to assure your ECHS reflects the culture and needs of your program stakeholders and the community.



- ◆ As part of the design process, you will need to decide how many students will be served and what grade levels will be part of the ECHS.
  - Remember that ECHSs were created to offer a smaller, more personalized, and more supportive school experience for the school's disadvantaged population.
- ◆ You will need to identify the type of ECHS program you wish to implement. This can be a design that allows students to earn some college credit, an associate's degree, a workforce credential, and/or technical certifications.
  - When looking at this, it is important that you consider your student population and the workforce needs of your community so that all work in the ECHS is relevant to labor market information.
- ◆ An important consideration in your design is where you are going to locate your program. No matter your decision, your postsecondary partner campus should be close to your ECHS so that the college immersion experience is not sacrificed.

## *Notes*

- Locating ECHSs on a college campus addresses the *power of place*, a key element of the ECHS design. Furthermore, to date, those ECHSs located on a college campus have more positive outcomes in the areas of proficiency on state assessments, number of college credits earned, attendance, engagement, and aspirations.
  - Because of transportation issues with a postsecondary partner, students may not have the flexibility in their schedules to take full advantage of courses offered (e.g., evening classes may be more difficult).
  - Locating an ECHS in a high school is an appropriate model for rural or isolated communities not located near a college campus or where transportation would be a financial and logistical challenge.
- ◆ When one of the goals for your program is achievement of workforce credentials, it is important to review all industry and state-mandated learning outcomes for CTE programs to assure requirements are met.
    - ECHSs focused on technical training must graduate students who can enter the workforce with the required skills and abilities needed for employment in high-demand, high-skilled and well-paying jobs without the need for additional training or certification.

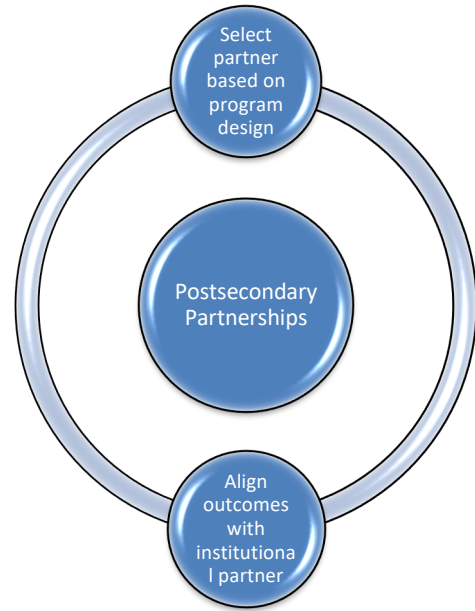
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## *Notes*

## Strong postsecondary partners

Clear communication, formalized memorandum of understanding, and lines of responsibility are important tools for implementation of a success ECHS.

- ◆ When you select your higher education partner, you may want to consider whether your program design is more aligned with a community college or university curriculum and pathway. For example, is your ECHS a springboard to a four-year degree, are you aiming at certifications and a two-year degree?
- ◆ Outcomes goals of ECHS students must be aligned with individual institutional partnerships to ensure clear lines of completion are developed.
  - You will need to address issues of transfer of credit, degree completion requirements, use of college faculty, ECHS teacher requirements, use of college partner resources (e.g., lab access, library collections, program guidance, graduate student tutors), and the establishment of program pathways for critical need careers.

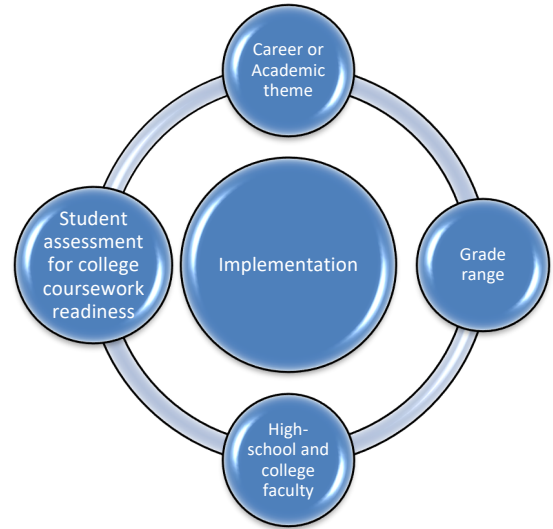



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## Notes

## Effective implementation

Identifying key issues of development will support an effective implementation plan, attainable and realistic outcome goals and benchmarks, and acceptance of the program in education, economy, and workforce sectors.



- ◆ You will need to decide if you will have an overriding theme focused on specific careers or academic subjects such as STEM disciplines, medical and health care, or career-themed academies.
- ◆ Determine what grades will make up the ECHS.
- ◆ Decide if you are going to use college faculty to teach the college courses, high-school teachers who met the adjunct criteria for the ECHS postsecondary partner, or both.
  - You will need to develop protocols between the ECHS and the college to discuss teaching assignments, progress reports, and other lines of communication to make the teaching process seamless.
- ◆ Decisions need to be made on how you will assess students to determine when they are ready for college-level work.

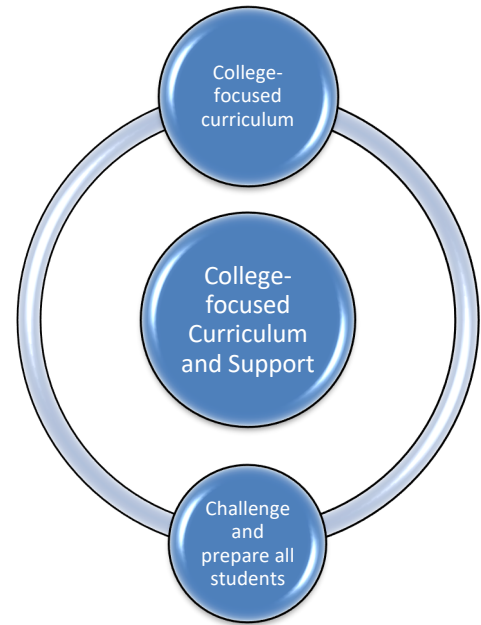
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## Notes

## **Rigorous and college-focused curriculum**

Effective ECHS programs depend rigorous academics that increase educational achievement of traditionally underserved, underperforming students.

- ◆ Achieving reported results requires development and implementation of a college-focused curriculum.
- ◆ Effective ECHS curriculum design must be designed and sequenced to prepare *all* students for success at a postsecondary level, with an appropriate level of challenge to keep students engaged but not discouraged. The curriculum design includes:
  - A rigorous review and vetting by postsecondary and industry leaders.
  - Establishment of instructor qualifications and continuing professional development requirements.



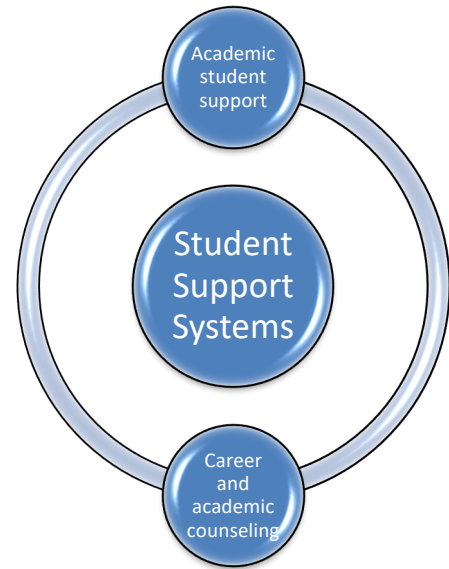

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## **Notes**

- Academic outcomes and performance reviews.

## **Student Support System**

ECHSs intentionally serve students with diverse levels of academic achievement and learning experiences and successes. By exposing ECHS students to a more complex learning system, with integrated high-school and college academics, an interwoven system of student support services are critical to help students in postsecondary attainment.



- ◆ The curriculum should include a system of student support through:
  - Teacher contact.
  - Tutoring.
  - Academic guidance and skill development.
  - Staged course sequencing.
  - Student support groups.
- ◆ Successful student support systems also include:
  - Career and academic counseling.
  - Academic development tracking and review.
  - Increased, sometimes gradual, exposure to postsecondary institutions and processes

The theme of student support runs through ECHS programs from the core principals to the tracking the individual elements of the student support and aligning them with student outcomes.

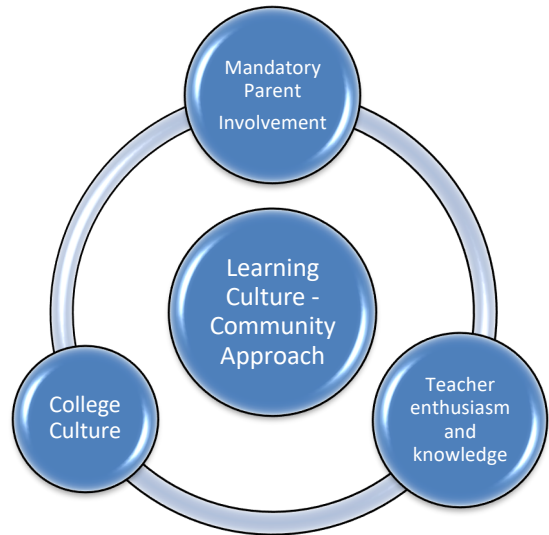
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## **Notes**



## Learning culture

More than just rethinking the high-school learning experience, an ECHS requires a perpetual culture of learning and support that embraces the vision of meeting the students where they are. Sometimes putting these two together can be problematic as high academic expectations for learning outcomes are coupled with an understanding of each student's academic needs, growth, and development.



- ◆ Consistent academic and social support is provided through a community approach in which parent involvement, teacher enthusiasm, and colleges are important.
  - Highly successful ECHS programs include mandatory parental attendance at informational workshops on college enrollment processes and funding, homework support systems, and student progress reviews. Parents and ECHS faculty should meet a minimum of twice an academic year and contact teachers any time they have a question or concern.
  - Teachers need to help develop a sense of excitement and contribute their knowledge of postsecondary education opportunities; reinforce postsecondary attainment expectations; and help develop those academic, personal, and social skills needed for postsecondary educational success.
  - A college culture can be established and reinforced through focused academics, acknowledgement of student successes, opportunities to complete credit-bearing college courses, college pride activities including college field trips, college acceptance celebrations, and interactions with a larger learning community.

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## Notes

## Student tracking system

Student needs are best supported by your system of student progress tracking and information sharing between the high school and college. This allows early identification and response to individual needs and challenges students may be facing. Three concerns must be addressed as you develop an institutional tracking system:



- ◆ The tracking system and information contained in the data system must be accurate.
- ◆ Each outcome for students must include benchmarks of performance and program successes using current education attainment data as a baseline.
- ◆ The language used to describe benchmarks that help direct approaches and allocation of resources must be clear. In some cases, this language will be new to the program and unfamiliar as ways to measure success.
  - Language creates a view of reality that shapes how we engage issues and determine success.
  - When systems track student outcomes and retention, this is a passive educational journey. However, when language tracks those same outcomes, it can imply the shared responsibility between the student and

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## Notes

the institution providing the structured opportunities for student academic success, social integration, and support.

- ◆ The shared responsibility is bi-directional. That is,
  - Students are active partners in their education, with a shared responsibility for engaging institutional support systems to achieve their educational goals.
  - Institutions are partners in the student's educational journey by providing guidance, learning opportunities that support student success, and structured support systems that provide targeted resources based on student needs.

## ***7.3 Forms and Checklists***

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Forms, refer them to appendices. Which forms do you want to include?

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### ***Notes***

# PARTNERSHIPS

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***Notes***

## Section 8: Business and Community Partnerships

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### ***8.1 The Importance of Business and Community Partnerships***

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Across the country and in New Mexico, the workplace is changing. Manufacturing and mining are being largely replaced by service industries that themselves require varying levels of technical skills. This change dictates the importance of ECHSs, where planning and cooperation among education, the economy, and workforce stakeholders are the foundation for the model.

### ***8.2 Findings of the NM PED-commissioned Business and Community Survey***

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As noted in a previous section of this manual, in 2016 NM PED commissioned a study to document current needs of ECHS programs and the nature of the ECHS models in the state.

In 2016, the New Mexico Department of Public Instruction commissioned a study to document the current needs of ECHS programs and the nature of the ECHS models that had evolved in the state. Survey data were collected from three respondent groups in New Mexico: K-12 school districts, colleges and universities, and businesses and community organizations. An individual report was published in March 2017 on each perspective.

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### ***Notes***

A total of 32 business and community organizations participated in the survey. Of the 32 respondents, 19 conducted business solely in New Mexico while the other 13 conducted business regionally, nationally, and/or internationally. The majority of respondents were CEOs, CFOs or other senior administrators.

### **Current ECHS Relationships**

- ◆ 46% have an informal relationship with an ECHS.
- ◆ 42% work with an ECHS through a college or university partnership.
- ◆ 25% have formal partnership agreements with an ECHS.

### **Perceived purpose of the ECHS**

Overwhelming, business respondents believed the importance of ECHSs was the workforce credentials and workforce experience.

- ◆ 75% - enable students to earn workforce credentials or certificates.
- ◆ 72% - increase students' workforce employability by providing them with workforce experiences.

Other significant responses looked at the local economy, time to earn a college degree, and student populations.

- ◆ 63% - increase economic viability of the community.
- ◆ 34% - Compress the time it takes students to earn a postsecondary degree including associate's, bachelor's, and post-graduate.

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## ***Notes***

- ◆ 31% - engage disenfranchised students and drop-outs through college and career pathways.
- ◆ 25% - support students who are from groups traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary institutions.

### **Essential skills**

When asked about the key skills most critical for success in the workforce, the most frequent responses were personal skills.

- ◆ 75% - self-direction, taking responsibility
- ◆ 63% - communication
- ◆ 53% - fact-based reasoning and critical thinking
- ◆ 38% - time management
- ◆ 32% - teamwork

### **Business and organizational roles and benefits**

The types of roles and responsibilities business and community partners have with ECHS varied, from advisory to financial to direct services.

- ◆ 52% - Primarily serving on an advisory board (56%) and providing workforce experiences for students (52%).
- ◆ 28% - As a source of funding for some ECHSs, providing grant funds for special projects as well as ongoing funding for the ECHSs.
- ◆ Direct services to ECHSs.
  - 46% - class visits and presentations.
  - 42% - internships.
  - 38% - job shadowing.

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## ***Notes***

- 33% - work-based learning experiences.
- 33% - mentorships.

Other direct support included summer bridge opportunities for teachers and students, scholarships, and work-based learning experiences for teachers.

When asked about the most important benefits of partnering with ECHSs, business and community organizations stated:

- ◆ 41% - to help schools understand workforce needs.
- ◆ 38% - community contributions.

### **Challenges of partnerships**

Businesses and community partners also face challenges in their partnerships with ECHSs, several which were “unfixable” such as confidentiality/HIPPA issues with shadowing and onsite work experiences, and age requirements for a particular worksite.

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## ***Notes***



## ***8.3 A Few Examples of New Mexico ECHS Business and Community Partnerships***

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### **Arrowhead Park Early College High School, Las Cruces Public Schools.**

Arrowhead Park Medical Academy received a grant from the Kellogg Foundation for that planning process that led to that school. Additional partnerships are across industry where demand is highest.

### ***Central Consolidated School District, the Bond Wilson Technical Center:***

Scheduled to begin in SY 2018-2019, the Bond Wilson Technical Center, in the Navajo Nation, is a unique education/business partnership. Current and projected job demand reported from the program's industry partners—Raytheon, HP, Inc., Teach for America, Arizona Public Service, North American Coal/ Bisti Fuels, Navajo Agricultural Products Industry, Public Services of New Mexico, and Cultivating Coders—drive decisions on which career pathways to offer, making the program fully relevant in the classroom. Business partners are helping to develop curricular content and course projects to reflect real-life workplace skills.

### **Carlsbad Early College High School, Carlsbad Municipal Schools**

Through a partnership with the local workforce connections office, all junior and senior students take the Work-Keys assessments that lead to a career readiness credential. This has become a main data point for assessment of the program effectiveness. The major employer in the area is the Mosaic Potash Mine.

### **Early College Academy, Albuquerque Public Schools**

The Early College Academy provides medical career and occupational leadership to students through their faculty that includes seven nurses. Business partners include all major medical facilities in the region.

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## ***Notes***

**Peñasco Independent School District & Taos Academy**

The Peñasco Independent School District and Taos Academy both use a “student job opportunities” page to provide resources and access to students to help them find local opportunities.

**Roswell Early College High School, Carlsbad Municipal Schools**

School leaders have secured internships and apprenticeships with local businesses, particularly in the medical field, where demand is high and projected to continue to increase. These onsite workplace opportunities are available to juniors and seniors, providing broad opportunities for experiential learning while in high school.

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***Notes***

## Section 9: College and University Community Partnerships

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### ***9.1 The Importance of College and University Partnerships***

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The partnership between ECHSs and a two- or four-year postsecondary institution is the foundation for the ECHS model, with is designed to propel students toward high-school graduation while simultaneously earning college credit toward career certifications and two-year degrees.

While the models vary, the partnership between ECHSs and colleges remain firm. Typically students start the acceleration in grades 9 or 10 by completing a significant portion of their high-school course requirements for graduation. Then, in grades 11 and 12, students primarily take their courses through the program's postsecondary partner to earn an associate's degree, workforce credential, or credits toward a two- or four-year degree, awarded with their high-school diploma.

### ***9.2 Findings of the NM PED-commissioned College and University Survey***

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In 2016 NM PED commissioned a study to document current needs of ECHS programs and the nature of the ECHS models in the state. The survey included perspectives of the colleges and universities. These findings represent 26 respondents

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### ***Notes***

representing nine community colleges, colleges, and universities. Some of the general findings include the following:

- ◆ 100% worked with K-12 high schools to offer dual credits.
- ◆ 44% were not currently partnering with ECHSs, nor had plans underway.

### **Partnerships**

Of those colleges and universities that are in partnership, by far the community colleges were most often the ECHS partner:

- ◆ 92% - partnered with a community college, with many reporting partnerships with more than one college or university.
- ◆ 46% - partnered with a 4-year public higher education institution.

### **Workforce Credentials and Experiences**

The industry clusters/workforce sectors addressed by the respondent institutions represented a wide range of career pathways.

- ◆ 67% offered workforce credentials in three sectors--human services; law, public safety, corrections and security; and the STEM disciplines.
- ◆ The sectors least represented in credentialing were government and public administration, and health science.
- ◆ 89% offered workforce experiences in health science.
- ◆ 67% offered workforce experiences in arts, audiovisual technology, and

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## ***Notes***

communications.

### **Purpose**

From the college and university perspective, the top focuses of the ECHSs were to support students from groups traditionally underserved in postsecondary education, compress the time to completion, and increase economic viability in the community:

- ◆ 69% - support underrepresented students.
- ◆ 54% - compress time to complete a postsecondary degree.
- ◆ 38% - increase student employability through workplace experiences.
- ◆ 38% - enable students to earn workforce credentials or certificates.

### **Student Groups Targeted**

When asked to rank groups of high-school students in terms of which group would benefit most, the following percentages were tallied.

- ◆ 83% - 1<sup>st</sup> generation college students.
- ◆ 71% - underserved students.
- ◆ 63% - minority students.
- ◆ 46% - college-bound students.
- ◆ 38% - high-achieving students.

Note that minority students are represented in all five categories above.

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## ***Notes***

### **Student Skills for Success and Use of Technology**

When asked to list the top five student supports most critical for an ECHS to provide if students are to be successful in earning an associate's degree or college credits, the results suggested the need for a broad support system that included soft skills, mentoring, and career counseling:

- ◆
- ◆ 68% - Explicit teaching of self-direction in learning (e.g., growth mindsets, managing and ownership of one's own learning, and self-evaluation against standards or rubrics).
- ◆ 58% - Career counseling.
- ◆ 47% - Individual coaching and mentoring.
- ◆ 37% - Adult mentor assigned to each student.
- ◆ 32% - Explicit teaching of evidence-based reasoning skills.

Colleges and universities use technology to support, amplify, and extend early college services to ECHS students.

- ◆ 88% - At their institutions, students can access college course resources online and take the college courses online, with online feedback from college instructors online.
- ◆ 71% - Students can hand in their homework digitally.
- ◆ 47% - Students have access to career counseling online.

### **Support Services**

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## ***Notes***

Colleges and universities offer a wide range of collaborative and support services to ECHS with whom they partner as well as to non-ECHSs that offer dual credit programs. Some of these services are listed below:

- ◆ 47% - Periodic reporting of ECHS student progress to ECHS faculty.
- ◆ 42% - Collaborative sessions with ECHS faculty to support student success.
- ◆ 42% - Special transcripts offered to ECHS students.
- ◆ 37% - Coaching/mentoring beyond what is provided to regular college students.
- ◆ 26% - Special tutoring.

### **Fiscal and Operational Impact**

Respondents' perspectives on the fiscal impact of the ECHS on their institutions were mixed, with just 22% reporting a positive impact, 16% neutral, 37% reporting a negative impact, and 26% not sure or don't know.

Those indicating a positive response to the fiscal and operational impact of the ECHS indicated most often that ECHS students often transition into full-time students at our college/university after they graduate from high school. Another major response was that ECHS opened doors for the college/university to create strong relationships with local businesses.

Those indicating a negative impact explained some of the fiscal implications of ECHSs they considered in their response:

- ◆ ECHS students use our science laboratories and consumables at the college's expense.
- ◆ Lack of lab fees paid by the ECHS student impacts the college's budget.

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## ***Notes***

- ◆ We look toward long-term goals of getting the student to graduate with a certificate or degree to make the financial investment worth it.

When quantifying some of these responses:

- ◆ 86% - The ECHS student's tuition is supported by the college/university.
- ◆ 29% - Coordination with the high-school faculty takes away from our time.
- ◆ 29% - The college/university provides coaches to ensure ECHS student success.

### **Effectiveness of the Partnership**

By a wide margin, 84% of respondents described their partnership with an ECHS as highly effective/effective with mutually beneficial outcomes.

## ***9.3 Examples of New Mexico ECHS's Postsecondary Partnerships***

ECHSs have partnerships with one or more post-secondary institution. Programs of study recommended to students are typically done with a strong industry advisory relationship, making local businesses key partners as well.

### **Arrowhead Park Early College High School, Las Cruces Public Schools**

According to Arrowhead Park, there needs to be 100% support and collaboration with the partner community college, in their case the Doña Ana Community College. It is so important that the postsecondary partner wants to learn more about high schools and prepare students for college. It's two different worlds.

### **Middle College High School, Gallup-McKinley School District**

The Middle College High School operates in partnership with UNM-Gallup to provide a seamless educational continuum that benefits students as they move

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## ***Notes***



from high school to their post-secondary goals. Dr. Robert Hunter, CEO of the Middle College High School, emphasizes the need for strong partners:

*"Everything you're doing needs to be a strong partnership... When schools call me and say they want to open an early college high school, one of the first questions I ask them is who their higher education partner is. I've had them say, well, it's 30 miles away. And I say that I don't think that's going to work."*

### **University High School, Roswell Independent School District**

University High School partners with Eastern New Mexico- Roswell for its ECHS program and is located on the campus. Several research studies show that ECHSs which are actually located on the college campus have the opportunity to succeed and to use that environment to their advantage. It's important to get students on campus. However, when you have younger students on college campuses, the school spends time managing them.

### **Walatowa High Charter School, Jemez Valley Public Schools**

WHCS maintains strong partnerships with multiple post-secondary institutions to ensure the implementation of our college and career preparation program. Partnerships currently include the University of New Mexico, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Institute of American Indian Arts, Central New Mexico College, Eastern New Mexico University, New Mexico State University, UNM-Los Alamos, and Arizona University. Through the Gear UP NM program, Exemplary Program, and Federal Programs, WHCS has been able to bring parents and students together in preparation for post-secondary enrollment.

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## **Notes**

# ECHS PRINCIPAL PODCASTS

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***Notes***

## Section 10: New Mexico - the Podcasts

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In 2017-2018, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NM PED) sponsored a series of ECHS podcasts looking at best practices and important considerations in the implementation of ECHSs. These podcasts were hosted by Dr. Joseph Goins, CEO, NS4ed, LLC.

The purpose of these conversations was to look at innovative practices and the transformational work of current ECHSs in New Mexico, gain insights into the experiences the principals have had with ECHS implementation, and begin to develop best practices for the ECHS model in New Mexico.

The podcasts began with Dr. Elaine Perea, Director of the College and Career Readiness Bureau, NM PED, and followed with a nonprofit organization and principals from some of our successful ECHSs who have shared their stories and advice.

The following materials for each of the podcasts are summarized to highlight key points as they relate to building the ECHS model in New Mexico. *Questions or comments by Dr. Goins are included in italics where they serve to transition to new topic areas, or add or clarify content.*

**Dr. Elaine Perea, Director of the College and Career Readiness Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department**

*Why do you think ECHSs are an important model for New Mexico?*

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### Notes

Around two-thirds of all careers need at least some college. It's really important not only that students finish high school, but also that they are thoroughly engaged and excited about the next phase of their education. The ECHS model really builds that relationship for students because they see the transition between high school and college as something that's not only important for them, their future, and their career, but also something that's manageable and obtainable. That's what is so exciting when you see these young people. When you see students who are 15, 16, and 17 years old who are taking college classes and being successful in them, it really does change their life trajectory because they see college as something that they can do right away. These are some of the reasons New Mexico is so excited about ECHSs. .

In New Mexico our average graduation rate last year was just above 71%. So, we have an ongoing challenge with keeping students engaged and excited about high school. Students who are involved in CTE and who find something they are interested in and passionate about, take classes in those subject areas—e.g., three classes in agriculture, three classes in computer science, three classes in healthcare. When students do that, when you see this pattern where they are getting more engaged and digging deeper into subjects, that graduation rate, instead of being at 71%, is close to 90% for those students pursuing CTE while in high school.

The ECHS model uses CTE as a key part of the structure and how the student's educational trajectory is built. For example, we have an ECHS in New Mexico that has "health" in the name of the school because their students are primarily pursuing health education. When these students finish high school and have taken intensive healthcare classes, they are ready to continue on postsecondary education. They know what they're getting into, what their career pathway looks like, and they are excited to go on. That school has close to a 100% graduation rate. As you can see, CTE is a really critical part of the ECHS model for keeping students excited about what is going on in school.

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## ***Notes***

On a national level, the graduation rates for CTE and ECHSs are demonstrably higher than for students graduating from a traditional high school. If these CTE and ECHS students decide to continue in college, their performance levels are almost double that of students from traditional schools. It is a paradox because you wouldn't think of CTE as a college preparatory program.

*As the state starts to codify the definition of what it means to be an ECHS, what qualifications do you look for in schools wanting to transition?*

There are several key elements that really make an ECHS special. The identifying feature of "acceleration." Every student is seen to be capable of accelerated work. The recruitment process does not target the cream of the crop. In fact, the ECHS model is about equity. So, one proposed statute is to test for equity and make sure non-traditional students from families who haven't had access to college are represented in the student body to the same extent they are represented in the district as a whole so that the ECHS is not doing selective recruiting. Thus, the schools need to provide extra supports in order for all students to be successful in acceleration.

Typically students will take their first college class in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and it will be chosen carefully with your postsecondary partner. The high school will have a lot of scaffolding around the students so they have success in that first college experience. We make sure that by junior year students have attempted several dual credit classes. Students can earn one or more associate's degree while they are in high school, but it takes careful stewarding for the student so that they have repeated successes in the post-secondary environment.

ECHSs are smaller schools, not more than 400 students so teachers and school leaders can know each student's unique needs and successes. So, school size needs to be managed. And, college courses must be tuition free.

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## **Notes**

There has to be a strong industry advisory relationships; the business community is a key partner, just like the postsecondary partner. That gives students work-based learning opportunities and authentic assignments in their high school and college classes. It gives them opportunities to interface with business people through class presentations or shadowing opportunities, and demonstrate their growing mastery of soft skills. So that relationship is really a critical one.

Students have to be carefully coached so they follow the tight pathway to getting college credits, a certificate, or an associate's degree simultaneously with their high-school diploma. Every course has to be well considered and be part of a master plan for that student. Students choose a pathway and the academic advising is done to ensure that the students are taking the courses they need.

*What do you think an effective early college high school looks like? What is ECHS effectiveness?*

Just like any educational endeavor, the most basic element has to be the relationship between the educators and the learners. In ECHSs, we're asking young people to engage in sophisticated learning and to do that, they have to have a trusting relationship with the adults who are guiding them. While every principal will tell you how important their teachers are at traditional high schools, it is doubly as important in ECHSs. One thing that has emerged in many of New Mexico's successful ECHSs is an emphasis on teachers who have more experience. Recruiting teachers who hold a master's degree in a subject area allows the school to offer more early dual credit courses. For example, a teacher who has a master's degree in math can teach math at either the high-school or college level. By having a partnership with the postsecondary college, that teacher can be a full-time employee of the ECHS but teach a class for college credit. Not every teacher fits that model, but having some teachers like that on staff is an important component for bringing the whole ECHS experience together. That

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## **Notes**

being said, caring, competent teachers across the board are important. Where students hit bumps in the road, caring and trusted teachers can coach and nurture them back to be successful in this non-traditional model.

*We are saying to students you are going to perform like a high-school student, but on top of that we're going to bridge high school and college. These are dual roles, and the tension to manage and navigate students through those two worlds is something administrators and counselors need to think about. Can you answer to this?*

I would add one more piece to this: With the focus on equity and first-generation students, counseling must be delivered with *both* compassion and high expectations. Sometimes when people work with first-generation students, compassion can get in the way of high expectations. In the ECHS model, these two have to be intertwined and delivered together. Very effective schools understand the dynamic of both—the academic press and the culture of caring.

*What advice would you give somebody who's thinking about opening an ECHS?*

The first thing is to contact other schools in the state and start that dialogue. Other schools can tell you what you should have, what you should do, and who you should talk to. In New Mexico, you need a formal memorandum of understanding with your postsecondary partner. You also need to reach out to the community and businesses in the area. Of course, you need to work with your district. If you are thinking about doing a freestanding charter, you will need to form Board. . You need to have a memorandum of understanding with a workforce partner. So you need to reach out to those post-secondary players and to some industry and your community and be engaged in the dialogue with them. Of course, your district, or if you're thinking about doing a freestanding charter, you'll need to form a board. For all of this, you need to assemble a group of stakeholders and, whether it's a formal or an informal, have a committee of thought partners to weigh in on the discussions and think through issues with you.

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## **Notes**

The most effective facility requirement is to have the ECHS on the postsecondary partner campus. This changes the mindset of the high school students in really significant ways. That being said, we have several schools that are not using that model and that are doing something different. At the NM PED, we can connect you with school leaders who are doing something to similar to what you are considering.

The other thing that you must do is both a legal requirement in New Mexico and an important requirement from an ethical perspective. That is tribal consultation. If you are in a community where you have a Native American student population, you need to reach out to the tribal leaders in your community and engage in a conversation with them about what you're thinking about how to support the tribal students. Tribal leaders can be school leaders, very strong allies, and engaged in the ECHS model where the workforce is such an important part. Having the buy-in and the support of tribal leadership can be very important as well.

#### *Any final thoughts?*

The ECHS model is really an inspiration. I can't encourage you enough to visit other ECHSs in New Mexico and see what is happening at these sites. These ECHSs are at the top of the list of innovation. When you try to figure out "what about marching bands, what about football," there is someone else in the state that has already thought this through and figured out at least one solution. You should talk to them. It may not be your solution, but it will give you some input.

To have a model in the state that has a 95% to 100% graduation rate year after year is important and inspirational. When you realize ECHSs are taking whatever students apply and helping them finish high school and some college, you realize you are giving them a clear vision of their future and a path to a career that's going to provide family-sustaining wages in high-demand industries. I

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## ***Notes***



**Tracy Bryan, Executive Director, The Bridge of Southern New Mexico**

*The Bridge of Southern New Mexico is a community organization that has developed one of the first ECHSs in the state. Can you tell us something about the Bridge program and the unparalleled work you are doing in New Mexico?*

First of all, I believe the work with ECHSs is some of the most important work in education in the state. The “Bridge Southern New Mexico” is a business-lead, education-focused collaborative. It came to life in Doña Ana County, in 2007, when half our students were not finishing high school. The business community was looking at the impact this was creating in the workforce and on current job demand and future growth. And, these young people were making economically devastating decisions very early in their lives. As a result of these conditions, a host of leaders in education, business, economic development, and government came together to try to understand what was going on and what we could do about it.

The first intervention the group identified was the ECHS model, which was working in other states like North Carolina. In 2009, the collaboration was formalized into the nonprofit “Bridge of Southern New Mexico.” Twenty acres of land in the middle of the community at that time was a center for drugs and shootings. Bridges looked at what would need to be done to reinvigorate that 20 acres. What happened went the other way—the 20 acres transformed the community because a host of different people and different cultural groups who spoke different languages came together to create change.

*You really seemed to have succeeded in getting education, employment, and economic development working together. Can you describe the involvement of the business community and the other initial drivers you had as you developed this first ECHS?*

If you think about it, the business community is the recipient of education. What happened here is the business community became deeply concerned about an

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***Notes***

education issue, high school graduation rates, and really worked in a collaborative way that you don't see often to really engage with education and understand what was happening. The business group commissioned a study to understand the educational landscape better—what is missing, what is needed, what are the challenges, what is working.

Out of research, the ECHS model was identified as an intervention that could work. The result is the **Arrowhead Park ECHS**. As the first ECHS in the state, there were many decisions that went into the design and set a strong foundation for the rest of the ECHSs in the state. The Las Cruces Public Schools determined Arrowhead Park would be a new school, the dual credit courses would be provided by Dona Ana Community College, and the school itself would be actually located on the college's campus. So, while the business community was a very vocal advocate for the ECHS, it was the educational institutions that stepped up to own the ECHS program. That showcases the power of collaboration. Businesses got really excited about what would happen with the students. We were dealing very intentional interviews with students during that time. We thought students would graduate and go into the workforce.

But what happened next was driven by the students. Our 9<sup>th</sup> grade students realized they could pass a college-level class and could go on to and be successful in college. So, the ECHS became not just a path to the workforce, but transformed also to a faster, less costly pathway into college. Students who hadn't succeeded had the ability and opportunity to really prove themselves. Thus, the model shifted based on student feedback. With the student input, we saw the power of the model in which students were thinking about careers. All students were in a pathway that pointed to a certification and associate's degree that was aligned to a career. So there was power in getting two outcomes at once—the high-school diploma and a college degree. There was power in thinking about the career application of it and working toward that.

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## *Notes*

Another student-driven contribution to the new model was the “culture of completion” which students built. We asked the students what they would do if one of their classmates was thinking about dropping out. They said straight up that they wouldn’t let them do that. And they straight up said well we won't let them. So the culture promotes a culture of completion.

All these drivers contributed to the ECHS design. Other components of the design were drawn from components of the Project Lead the Way model for engineering CTE. Eventually the Bridge and the Daniels Fund seeded four ECHSs in the state in Albuquerque, Hobbs, and Carlsbad. We were really convinced when 100% of the students had a 95% to 100% graduation rate.

*Research shows that when purpose in learning increases, you see parallel increases in the motivation to learn, retention of knowledge, understanding of content, and high school and college completion. These ideas of purpose and choice stand out in ECHS models. Can you tell us about Arrowhead Park?*

Everything we thought would work, did work. Students who were high-performing accelerated their learning quickly. And, by providing them with the right set of supports such as ongoing tutoring, children from low-income families, children of color, and first generation college attenders were all succeeding. If you graduate 100% of your students, which we did, you have no gaps. So, the ECHS actually became the proof-point for every single thing that the Bridge advocates for educationally moving forward.

And then we learned all those things about the school culture, the importance of the teachers who were tutoring any student who needed help. The partnership with the college was also powerful.

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## **Notes**

When we visited the schools, what struck us is that the students identified themselves as college students, not high-school students taking college classes. Do you know what that does for the student identity, to know that about themselves?

*What about economic impact and the impact on a changing workplace?*

Earning an associate's degree as an 18 year old has an economic impact. On average in New Mexico, an associate's degree out-earns a high-school diploma by an estimated \$12,000. A career certification out-earns a high-school diploma by \$5,000. Some of our students get both. But what you've done is you've used education as an economic driver.

What we're seeing, important in our county with its high poverty rates, is many people with a high-school diploma out of jobs that have become more technical, e.g., a greater use of robots for streamlining tasks. In this environment, the ECHS model becomes an economic engine driving New Mexico forward. ECHSs become a driver for innovation in the workplace whether students stop at their associate's degree or continue on to earn a bachelor's degree or higher. Good jobs will be available to them.

What we are doing is equipping students with the right set of credentials. And, that is powerful. We help students understand education is not a destination, it is part of the journey. Thus, we help our students earn certificates in their focus career and associate's degrees, even if they are on their way to a four-year degree. This has many advantages. First, it will decrease their educational loan debt since they will be able to support themselves better during college. Second, it will add to their employability after they graduate. And, third, it will give them a better idea of the opportunities in the career they are pursuing, i.e., accurate labor market predictions. Letting students see the labor market data is part of the learning experience in ECHSs.

*How have you aligned your program with the economy?*

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## **Notes**

The Arrowhead Park Medical Academy is a place where education and the economy came together. In Las Cruces, a top-paying, fastest growing industry is healthcare, and our healthcare community has really struggled to have a qualified workforce. In 2012, we convened a group of hospital administrators and major healthcare providers. We asked them if we built a school that produces career-ready people for the healthcare industry, would you help us design it. The group was very positive and committed people to meeting for the next year with the district, Bridges, and other educators. The power of that conversation was such that they committed people to meeting for over a year with school, district, and college educators to determine the biggest workforce gaps. Issues of discussion included soft skills, accreditations, and degrees. Arrowhead Park Medical Academy received a grant from the Kellogg Foundation for that planning process that led to that school. The school physical structure looks like a healthcare facility, with exam rooms and human dummies. Students are getting the skills they need, and teachers have a better sense of what will make a student successful in that environment.

*Can you share about some of the work you've been able to do with the foundations?*

We've been very lucky with our philanthropic partners. As I already mentioned, the Kellogg Foundation provided the district with a planning grant to establish the school. The Daniels Fund was supportive of the business/education model and provided seed money to the Bridge to establish another four ECHSs. The role of philanthropy is to pilot, and the role of government is to sustain policy. So, if an ECHS is looking for philanthropic funding, ask what they will be piloting.

Investment is important at the government, philanthropic, and private funding levels as they bring together business, the community, and public education. Businesses are strong investors when they see the value to the economy and their workforce.

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## **Notes**

*What role does the Bridge play in continuing to support this kind of success in ECHSs?*

The Bridge is a firm believer in the ECHS model, and we care about replicating and expanding this model. Dual credit courses are very powerful in high-school education. With this, New Mexico is already seeing a rise in graduation rates. What the ECHS proves is that early access to college-level coursework aligned to a career pathway toward college credits, certifications, a degree is working. But, it needs to have strong funding.

We are asking higher education institutions to waive the tuition while, at the same time, we continue to see a reduced funding for education. This puts the onus on higher education to carry the program through financially and in effect have their paying students subsidize the ECHS students. The Bridge is working to produce return on investment data for the state and for families. Additionally, the Bridge is working with leaders on getting the funding in place, and supporting independent studies and outreach to government representatives. If we can get the funding right, we will see the outcomes continue to skyrocket for our students.

*What advice would you give somebody about starting an ECHS, or bring together a working group similar to what the Bridge has done?*

The value of the "Bridge" in the ECHS movement was to facilitate the table discussions with top leaders in education, economic development, business, and government where they could have candid conversations as peers and colleagues. We helped to bring consensus and an understanding to all involved. If all involved are committed to the solutions, we can continually enhance the program.

We need to understand the dynamics of the community, where the jobs and opportunities are, where economic development is trying to go, and how we can align our programs and our coursework to these areas. And, most important, we need to

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## **Notes**

engage business as a leading partner. This would give our young adults, 20 to 34 year olds, a reason to stay in New Mexico.

Things are changing. Last year, New Mexico graduated 2,500 more students than the previous year. New Mexico has an opportunity with the ECHS model. It is built on positive outcomes, the dots are all connected, and it will change the future of business in the state.

**Jennifer Amis, Principal, and Josh Silver, Dean of Students, Arrowhead Park Early College High School**

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*Can you give us some background on your ECHS in Las Cruces?*

Jennifer: We opened in 2010 in response to a community group's desire to address the dropout rate in our community, which in 2008 was about 56% of all students completing high school on time. The community group—at that time it was called "E to E, Education to Employment" and it's now emerged into the "Bridge of Southern New Mexico"— investigated the ECHS model as a best practice nationally for improving graduation rates at a minimum to 90%. We had four teachers, myself, a counselor, and 188 freshman students. This is our 8<sup>th</sup> year and we will have our fifth graduating class. We've graduated 95% and above for each of our graduating cohorts.

Josh: In 2014, we opened a second school, the Arrowhead Park Medical Academy. This is primarily a school within a school. We will have our first graduating class of the Medical Academy students and are on track to graduate 100% of the students.

*What was the need from the community that allowed you to create your pathways?*

Jennifer: The business community conducted a needs survey in 2008, while we were identifying the high-school model we believed would make improvements. We

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really saw the need for STEM-specific pathway including health occupations. It was really the local businesses that helped identify our pathways.

Initially we started out as a STEM school with a particular interest in entrepreneurship. That directly related to the Dean of the College of Business and his interests. So, we opened five pathways for students in collaboration with our higher education partner, Dona Ana Community College. We wanted to capitalize on programs they had, and they had a really good structure of advisory committees for each of their pathways. They stayed in touch with the businesses and that is how we developed the pathways in STEM disciplines.

*Can you tell us about the ECHS enrollment process?*

Josh: I moved to the office and became the Dean of Students, I've been doing that ever since. Each year, we actively look for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to enroll as our 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort. That process begins in November. We have an application-based program, and we get the applications to the counselors at the middle schools. We help the counselors understand our mission is to work with students who have interests in particular career pathways. We also ask the counselors to identify students who meet some of the risk factors, such as first in family to attend college..

Our application has four parts: (1) basic demographics; (2) parent feedback; (3) a student letter; and (4) 8<sup>th</sup> grade faculty recommendations. Our deadline for applications is in February. From there, and with the help of our faculty, we schedule and conduct a family meeting. These generally take place in the middle school. We clarify for families what the next four years could look like. If there are more students than the number of open slots, we go to a lottery. We do not have a minimum GPA requirement, nor minimum testing requirements.

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## **Notes**



*How do you explain the acceleration to families and their role?*

Josh: We explain to families that it's not so much acceleration or speeding through high school to get to college. It's really looking at them both concurrently. We aren't necessarily trying to finish two years of high school in four years and then do college. Rather, we are intentional about combining this program of study so students have the best of both of both worlds while they are high-school students. In year three and four, the students are dual-credit students who need some of the same supports any other high-school student needs. I don't view it as acceleration as much as a different program of study.

We see our students and their families twice a year at each grade level. This helps families see the bigger picture of what's happening next and to understand the financial benefits, the savings on tuition. We also have families who recognize the benefit of the rigor of the program. Just the benefit of having exposure being in college classes and all that comes with that.

*What does a typical day for students at Arrowhead Park look like?*

Jennifer: We are a project engineering school so when our students start 9<sup>th</sup> grade, we're really dedicated to immersing them in which they can experience engineering or computer science. We have an accelerated block schedule in place, so our students go to four classes a day and finish those courses in the fall for four credits and four classes in the spring. In 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, we have mandatory summer participation, called JumpStart, where we have specific high school credits they take care of in the summers, such as the physical education.

In the summer we serve eight to 15 middle schools (including small charters and homeschooled students). The summer program gives students an opportunity to meet each other, and support team building and collaboration. We work strategically through our core classes in the summer to really teach students what it means to be a

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**Notes**

trailblazer, which is our school mascot. We use this time to build rapport among students that focuses on the climate of the school. Students all follow that same full-day schedule through 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

Most of their courses are taught by high-school teachers, many who are also qualified to teach the college coursework, which requires the master's degree in the content or a master's degree plus 18 credit hours in the content. Roughly 50% of a student's associate's degree coursework is through high-SO I would say that the Las Cruces public schools' teachers, we offer about 50 percent of that associate degree through high-school instructors. We strategically planned the students' release into the college faculty courses.

Josh: I work on the advisement and planning for the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. In 11<sup>th</sup> grade, students' schedules look like a college schedule. Students are on our campus, and their entire schedule is college coursework. The college courses are taught by a combination of high-school teachers and adjunct faculty coming into our school.

When the spring semester starts for students, it is typically the first semester they are off our campus and doing coursework at the college campuses. Safeguards kick in so we can continue to monitor their progress in class and just be supports for them.

The 12<sup>th</sup> grade is all college with the exception that this is when all students do their government and economics credits for high-school graduation. We have all our seniors on our campus for five days a week for that class. Their schedules are flexible—e.g., classes on certain days of the week, in the evening, or online. All courses are done in collaboration with the students' college advisors and the high school.

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## ***Notes***

On a day-to-day basis, the majority of my work is working with students on the advisement. We need to schedule their time and project out what their goals are after graduation. We have many of the roles of a traditional guidance counselor at a high school, nested in the college world.

*What is your definition of success for your students and how do you measure it?*

Jennifer: Success emerges by the end of 10th grade, where we have an individual plan for each student. In 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, they do not get a lot of choice in electives. This is a benefit of the program, i.e., having the pathways in place and teaching and teaching them from the beginning that they are getting ready to meet their goals. The end marker for everyone starting is the associate's degree and industry certifications.

For us, 85% of each graduating cohort completes an associate's degree in addition to an industry certification. Of the other 15%, some have 30 college credit hours and are finishing high school. We double down on the value of the high-school diploma to ensure success for each student.

Josh: We ask among ourselves what it takes to change the community, how do you impact families long-term, and how do students who have never had post-secondary experiences (or their families) impact their lives. We go around town and see our students working at different places, or attending a four-year university or graduate school, using their workplace certifications, or hearing from parents that their children are financially secure. All these things are very valuable indicators of the work we do and the impact it is having. Measures of success might also be the number of siblings coming to the school because the parents have seen the value of the work.

*Can you describe some of the challenges a student might bring to an ECHS and what you do?*

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Jennifer: With the ECHS model, supports are built in to make sure students get advisement and mentorship so that unlike students going directly to college from a traditional high school, we are there when a student trips and we can correct that. Without those supports, you can lose students. These students are still 17 years old more or less. The measures of success are there because we just don't throw students into college. They have career counseling and general counseling. They have structure.

Josh: One of the biggest challenges is that the students are still kids. They are 16 or 17 years old and sometimes in classes with adult students. They don't always have the confidence, communication skills, or academic or life skills to know how to navigate situations. That is where the high school supports come into play. And, we built in the seminar time to address those fluid challenges they see. These issues may be everything from parking on campus or how to get textbooks.

*What is the Seminar and do you address business needs?*

In Seminars I and II, which we have for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students respectively, that's where we've built in the soft skills that businesses seek, and that is where we get positive feedback from employers in the community. Then, in the 11th and twelfth grade seminar, these are more customized for moving students from college to the workplace. That curriculum is always changing based on student needs. It's really exciting

*How do you recruit your staff?*

Josh: For staff, we initially started out looking for the multi-talented person, people with industry experience or the New Mexico 800 license or endorsement in CTE in addition to an academic area. This is how we hired staff as we have grown. We're at 600 students, which I think is probably the largest early college in our state.

Jennifer: We have an amazing staff. The teachers will tell you this is the most difficult place they've ever worked in terms of expectations they have for themselves

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## **Notes**

and each other. All our conversations are very student-focused. Teachers really know what the expectations of college and career readiness are. It's wonderful to see the different experiences across the curriculum that really say we are serious about what a high-school diploma needs to look like to be valuable to our students. The students know that and have a lot of respect for the staff. You could talk to any student here and they will tell you that what makes this place work are the wonderful, supportive, and caring teachers.

*What are some of the things you wish somebody would have told you when you started your ECHS?*

Josh: There has to be 100% support and collaboration with your postsecondary partner. The partner has to be willing to learn about high school, which is such a different world from college. And, the support of the entire community made a difference for us over the developing years.

Jennifer: I don't think the full blown early college model is the answer for everyone. There are communities that have really strong dual credit programs that has been very beneficial. I think you can really grow a dual credit program in a positive way also. So like you said, not having a postsecondary partner nearby just adds complexity to the entire program development. So, through strong dual credit programs you can also really benefit your community. Effective CTE programs which are responsive to the workforce and business needs are also good models. I think you're going to see programs that mimic and model this responsiveness effectively. It doesn't have to be a full-fledged ECHS. I could just be a credentialing program focused on STEM careers.

*I recently saw a report that there were going to be 500,000 cybersecurity jobs available in the next five years.*

Jennifer: That goes back to the relationship and partnership with your higher education institutions. That partnership is essential.

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## **Notes**

*Perkins is reauthorized this year. I can see some of those changes at a national level because I've read some of the blueprint language, which is very specific in asking schools to use labor market data to start to interpret what studies they should be offering. This is a little bit of a shift. This is asking educators to focus in on labor market data and to understand those needs collectively as a community. So it's really asking educators, the workforce, and higher education to come together.*

### **Eric Spencer, Principal, Carlsbad Early College High School**

*How does the Carlsbad ECHS flow?*

Carlsbad ECHS is housed in a separate building on the campus of New Mexico State University. Now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year of operation, the school has a full 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade program, with 240 students and 10.5 full-time faculty.

In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, ECHS students take their first college-level course, College Success 101. To give students an orientation as to what college life might look like, this course is provided in a building on campus that is separate from the ECHS location.

Also in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, students engage in a sequence of courses on a modified block schedule—one period of mathematics and one of freshman-level English/Language arts every day. Two science courses are offered—Integrated Science three days a week, and the Southern Regional Education Board's "Innovations in Science and Technology" two days a week. 9<sup>th</sup> grade students can take an elective course at the traditional high school if they wish, and transportation is provided.

In 10<sup>th</sup> grade, students continue with math and move to a 10<sup>th</sup> grade-level English/ Language Arts. They can choose to take may be taking a social studies classes such as New Mexico History and/or Financial Literacy, two or three days a week. We have found that even though we are on four periods a day, many of our students are

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taking five to six courses during fall and/or spring semesters to further accelerate their learning.

Navigating through each semester and taking grade-level English/Language Arts, students could complete their four years of English/Language Arts high-school credits necessary for graduation by the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Then, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>- grade English and math would be dual credit status with the university. Similar acceleration toward dual credit coursework in math can be followed.

In 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, all students are required to take a Seminar class in fall and spring of both the junior and senior year. The course includes soft skills training that businesses say are lacking in the workforce. As part of this course, students also participate in a structured work-based learning opportunity, managed and monitored through the Seminar.

Thus, starting slowly in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade with one dual credit course (College Success 101) and moving forward, each semester students might be taking two to three dual credit courses. By 11<sup>th</sup> grade, they are pretty much taking a full load of university courses along their academic or career pathway toward their associate's degree, two years of credit that articulate toward a bachelor's degree, or transfer credits into a technical school.

*Can you tell us about recruitment, marketing, outreach?*

In January of each year, we hold an assembly at the Carlsbad Intermediate School for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to introduce them to the ECHS model, what they would be committing to, examples their schedules and courses, and how the ECHS differs from the traditional high school. We emphasize that the ECHS is a free public school in the district, and that students have the opportunity to graduate high school with a diploma, an associate's degree, or two years of transferrable credit to a university. Current ECHS

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students attend the presentation to answer questions from their rising peers about their experiences at the ECHS.

The same evening, we hold a community forum on a hosted App to reach out to other potential students who are not part of the intermediate school system—e.g., from charter schools, home schools, private schools.

All students and families are given a list of dates when school counselors will be available to discuss the application process. —to get information about the ECHS model as well. We provide dates that counselors will be available, and schedule two- to three-hour meetings through February to make sure that there's an opportunity for students and parents to dive a little deeper and ask about the ECHS.

*How do you help parents understand the cost savings?*

In our marketing and the evening presentation, we emphasize for parents the cost savings for students going on to college. We show them the data for the class of 2018, our first graduating class. On average, students who take 65 credit hours in the ECHS save \$3,000 in college tuition at the New Mexico State University in Carlsbad. That doesn't include estimated costs for textbooks, which save another \$3,000, for a total savings of \$6,000. If parents send their students to the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, paying for tuition, fees, books, and room and board for the first years, the total comes to \$40,000. So, we just granted students a \$40,000 scholarship. There is significant cost savings to participation in the ECHS program.

*Has the admissions process been challenging?*

In all presentations, we are clear that ECHSs serve a representative student population---by race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status—and that admission is not just based on grades, which would limit the school to just the highest-performing students.

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## **Notes**



Supporting this is our data, which show for the class of 2021: (1) 60% of parents of those admitted had a high-school diploma or less; and (2) just 11% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students scored proficient on the PARCC assessments when they were admitted. The support systems we have for low-achieving students make a tremendous difference. *Every* 9<sup>th</sup> grade student is required to have an hour of tutoring per day. That is built into the schedule. Through the tutoring, the College Board springboard curriculum, and the Khan Academy, we have already moved those 89% of students not proficient to 95% proficient by the time they took the PARCC assessment in Algebra I the next year.

*What are some of the successes you've seen from students who have gone through the program?*

The native student population at the University (non-ECHS students) has a 79% success rate on academic achievement according to grades entered in the system. Our ECHS students are achieving an 89% to 91% success rate, outperforming traditional college students.

While we see our students are college ready, we wanted to assure for our business partners that we were graduating them career ready as well. First, working with the local Workforce Connections office, all 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students took the Work Keys assessments. A total of 95 of our 112 students took all three assessments required for a career readiness credential. Of those, all but six students qualified. This is an accomplishment the student can carry with them as validation of their skills.

*What are the support services that help navigate students down the right path?*

Students attend a one-week program in July before they begin at the ECHS to become familiar with the faculty. Counselors also meet with the parents. Students complete a career interest inventory, and we begin mapping out what the sequence of

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## **Notes**

courses will be at the early college, and what degree or certificate program the student might be leaning toward. The school social worker and career guidance counselor meets with the family and student at least twice during the academic year to review goals and determine which college credit pathway (e.g., associate of arts, associate of science) best serves a student's career interests.

*How is the school structure a factor in learning?*

Whether it's local policy or administrative regulation, state statutes governing education, or minutes of the day the students have to be in school. these policy bumps are faced all of the time and need to be mitigated. Students may not be able to be moved forward in a subject if they don't have the skill set—e.g., they may have to repeat a requirement such as 10<sup>th</sup> grade English before they can move to 11<sup>th</sup> grade English. How do we do this? And other students may be ready for university coursework and have to meet the university's class schedule, which might not be congruent to the ECHS bell schedule. We need to be flexible in order to move the ECHS schedule to a university schedule, and this can be challenging. ECHSs are non-traditional. If you try to set your ECHS up as a traditional school, it won't work.

*Can you describe in depth the Seminar course.*

This meets on a continuous basis on the university schedule. Students' grades (e.g., math lab, biology lab) get turned in to the instructor who creates a "visa" student assistance ticket for any student with a grade of C or less. A faculty member picks up the visas and makes appointments with the students to determine any mitigating factors and how to boost grades. That is one aspect of the seminar.

The other aspect of Seminars to ensure students are learning the soft skills they need in the workplace. Every Seminar class is set up with a class president, vice president, historian, parliamentarian, and secretary. They conduct meetings, learning how to time manage, and learn to study for the SATs in junior year. Students also

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complete begin workplace experiences in their career pathways. They prepare their resume, meet with a manager, and perhaps move on to another application if necessary. Students are not always accepted when they apply. One example is the student who wanted to be a veterinarian. However, all the veterinarians in town turned her down, because she was too young. She interned instead with a local dog groomer, where she learned about the personality of dogs, how to handle them. The forest service secured their own grant funds to create internship opportunities for our students. These work experiences are invaluable for reaffirming a student's career interest or leading them into a different pathway—all tuition free.

*For people thinking of starting an ECHS, what are the important things they need to know as they design their program?*

First and foremost, is banging up against policy in the implementation of a non-traditional model. The struggle seems exacerbated when the ECHS is housed within a traditional school setting rather located on a post-secondary campus. I have other educators and principals who ask me how I got from 11% proficiency to 95% proficiency in a year? This increase was due to dedicated faculty and creating the culture of learning. Being on a campus sets a different tone for expectations. Kids typically will aspire to that normative culture. There was a culture shift for the higher education faculty as well, who found our students aligned well to the university structure. The key is to be mindful and resilient as we implement our ECHS model.

We must make sure the support system is there to help students to assure persistence. Students, particularly 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, have to have an ongoing continuous check point of support that they can come back too. They have to know ECHS is their home. We need to be mindful that it's that constant communication and contact that go a long way.

**Anne Salzman, Masters Program, Sante Fe**

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***Notes***

*Can you describe your school?*

The Master's Program started in the fall of 2010m founded as an ECHS to give students freedom and opportunities. The school is on the campus of the Santa Fe Community College (SFCC). The hardest thing is designing the schedule. We individualize every schedule for every student based on their scores on the Accuplacer, which gives levels in math, reading and writing that SFCC uses. We have to determine whether their subject courses are at the high-school or college level (e.g., math, English, Science). So, we created a schedule that could work pretty well with the college and integrate high school and college classes. We have students who are going to apply to the best colleges in the country who've taken calculus three and engineering courses for example. We also have students who are on the other end of the spectrum, who receive a lot of support that they had not been able to get in the larger high schools.

*How do you recruit the students?*

We began with 22% FRL to more than 50% currently, and from primarily a White student body to more than 70% minority. Many of the students who come to us are children of immigrants and they don't see themselves as college students until they get here. Here, they realize they fit in. We provide a lot of back-up support.

As an independent public charter school, the only way students can get in by lottery. We recruit through our website and word-of-mouth among immigrant families. Our school started at 10<sup>th</sup> grade; students had to have completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade to apply.

Applicants receive a random number, and we start calling them. Several have changed their mind. We take the class of 10th graders and then if we have spaces to fill at junior year, we will take some juniors. We do not accept seniors.

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**Notes**

*So when students come to the Masters Program, is their goal an associate's degree or industry certificate?*

With some of the students, the goal is to help them understand how important their education is. They are not well connected to the reality that the more education you have, the more opportunities you will have, the better you'll be paid, and the more you'll be able to do what you're passionate about. Other kids come in and are ready to go. We have this huge range.

We are pretty much doing a 100% individualized, personalized learning path for every student. They are all the same classes, but each student is quite different. On a typical day, students show up to their first class at 8 a.m. Classes meet four times a week for an hour, or two times a week for one hour, 20 minutes. All of our sophomore classes, all of our math, and all of our science (except for one or two college-level classes) our teachers teach. But the students will actually get college credit because they're based on the curriculum that the college uses. Those classes meet four times a week to assure students' build their skills. Each schedule is different.

Those who are in our college classes generally meet twice a week so they can also fulfill workplace experiences. The exception is Friday, when the entire student body meets at 8:30. The community building is a huge part of what makes the school work. It is a fishbowl, with a center circle. If you are sitting in the center, you can talk about whatever the topic is. It might be a quote, it might be a video that we've seen, it might be a problem we need to wrestle with as a school. And then if somebody else wants to speak, they walk up, tap the speaker, and take the center seat. It's incredible to watch, The students are fascinated to listen to each other, and faculty joins in on the discussions as well.

Usually, we choose the topic, but if a student comes to us and wants to talk about something, we will. Generally we have a pretty good sense of what that some of

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## **Notes**

the issues may be. One time, we had a student stealing from the bookstore upstairs. We addressed that in the Friday meeting, without identifying the student. It was a great discussion and one student stood up and said if anyone needs money, please come to me rather than stealing. It's really about how we support each other. We never had any incidents since then.

We also have service projects on Friday following the meeting for the rest of the day. This may include working with someone from fish and wildlife, creating habitats for animals, working at the humane society, taking care of horses that are used for disabled persons, Habitat for Humanity, and more. Our students are out in the community doing various kinds of things, and that's an important part of the school.

*Students are doing amazing things, but it might not translate to a straight A student. There are whole college systems that are saying the ACT or SAT is one of just many factors for admissions.... How do staff work together to make sure students are on track?*

When we came to work on the college campus, we found that we were all going to be working in one room, and the teachers would go out to classrooms nearby. Unlike traditional high schools, the rooms don't belong to us beyond 4 p.m. when they are used by the college. Although the one room was close quarters, its impact was beneficial in that it created the physical setting for a team of people to work together. We have a bigger office now, but still one office. It just builds community. I was speaking to a teacher from the local high school who said she went to school, taught the kids, prepped, or graded papers and saw more kids. At the end of the day, she left. She never spoke to another adult. In this light, I think our staff work as a team partly because of the shared space. Unlike in traditional high schools, where English teachers and math teachers generally do not collaborate, in our ECHS, the focus is on the student and all that student's teachers collaborate to ensure success.

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## **Notes**

*What are your class sizes?*

The average class size is 19, with several smaller than that. The school total is 210 students so every student can be known. This should be the norm in education. We need to make classes smaller so teachers can really focus on students.

*If students are not connected, if they are lost, and they don't know their teachers well enough to talk to them about a problem, the students are just "tourists."*

We do see students, sometimes more frequently than we want, who by the end of four years are not ready to graduate. We hold on to these students and tell them to come back next year. They can graduate in December or May. That is really important for students who struggle, not to feel they have to drop out.

We have a competency-based model without time requirements for their postsecondary institutions. If it takes you an extra month to finish a semester course, that's fine. When I look at the number of students who are retaking math for example I think if we would break down those content areas, we'd see a different story. The student may not have failed at Algebra, just one section of it.

*What is your definition of success for your students and for the school?*

For the students it is trying to get them to the place by the time they're seniors where they are self-directed and have the inner push to be the best they can be. We talk a lot with them about qualities of who you are, your character, how it's one thing to be smart, but it's also important to show up on time, to ask questions when you don't know something, to know how to work with a team, and to be trustworthy. We talk a lot about these attributes with our students.

As a principal, I certainly pay attention to state ratings of student growth based on career and college readiness. We pay attention to attendance, tardiness, and applications to college. These are signs of success.

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*What are some of the things you would tell other principals who are thinking about starting an ECHS?*

I would tell principals to visit a lot of programs in New Mexico as every one of them is different. Also, decide what is going to fit your particular college partner. The best schools I talk to in Albuquerque put all these high-school courses in the morning and students take the college courses and work experiences in the afternoon. We provide a school day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., but either model can work.

*You are correct. I've visited the NM ECHSs and they are very specific to their community culture and the business needs within the community. Anything you want to add?*

Just that I absolutely love my job. The time it takes to build the community and really putting emphasis on the social emotional learning side of things pays off in ways that are just unimaginable. Every parent and student have my personal cell phone number. The success has drawn from all the efforts of the staff and the time they put into the school. We sit and talk to the students, we encourage them to come hang out in the office with us, we even keep food in there for them. Even though the students are going in different directions, it has been important to create the sense of community.

*It's paradoxical that in order to get a student to be more accountable, you've got to give them more autonomy. By giving them the cell phone list, you've given them the autonomy to call you if they need.*

With teenagers, the other piece of that is just as important as the autonomy. It's being seen for who they are, being listened to, being cared for, feeling like there's somebody that will notice them if they are not doing well. We actually use the word "love," which is what the world needs. That is part of what we are about, expressing kindness. This kindness is the norm of a great school. Students feel like they belong.

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## **Notes**



**Dr. Robert Hunter, CEO. Middle College High School**

*Can you tell us what it was to be one of the groundbreaking first ECHSs in New Mexico, and what let the district to start an ECHS, which was a unique concept back then.*

The Middle College HS began in 2002. The ECHS model is welcoming to someone with my background—one foot in the secondary and one foot in the postsecondary setting. The model also provides opportunities to implement what works best without the inertia and barriers which too often hamstring traditional public schools.

*Can you describe your school for us?*

Currently, the Middle College HS has 100 students in grades 10 through with four instructors, all credentialed to teach at both the high-school and college levels. Many of our students are completing their first two years of college with our partner, the University of New Mexico – Gallup. The only associate's degree available for the students is the Associate of Arts degree. That is not always the right fit for all students because some of them want to go into the health sciences or engineering. Because of this, we don't always push that two-year degree. The advisors at our four-year university partners tell us the students should have taken some chemistry and higher math.

A typical day for a student varies because classes start as early as 8:00 a.m. or as late as 11:00 a.m. At times the courses go into the evening. Students are completing an average of 15 college credits now. Some of the credits they take may be just high-school courses to meet graduation requires.

Students must have two hours of dedicated tutoring time each day to maintain good grades and help them establish good study habits. Sometimes, we have graduates come back for the student orientations, and the graduates always tell the new students that the tutoring is how they learned to be successful. Not all of our students are

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## ***Notes***

pursuing their first two years of college; some students take primarily high-school classes. Either way, the students are getting more individualized attention.

*Research shows that this type of mentoring at an early age really matters to students. And, one of the things the NM PED is looking at as it continues to define an ECHS is a requirement for students to earn a certain number of college credits in their program.*

For us, it's going to vary. For us to be responsive to the student needs, we need to give students what they need. Students may not be ready for college Algebra or freshman Composition, but they may be able to take some social science credits, or humanities and fine arts, or even physical education courses at the college. In this way, they are leaving the school with something, particularly when compared with their assessments when they entered the Middle School HS.

When students are admitted to the Middle School HS, we determine what courses they're eligible for based on the Accuplacer test and their transcripts. We also have conversations with them about what they want to do upon graduation. What makes the Middle School work is the education they receive is relevant. They have more choice, and they are getting a head start in college. We've also seen that unlike some of students who go to college and do not complete a four-year degree, our students to persist and complete the degree.

*What is the make-up of your student body?*

We have a large waiting list. The student body is evenly split by gender, and it very diverse. The biggest percentage of our student body is Native American, which reflects our community. Following that in distant second is Hispanic. We follow the New Mexico administrative code, meaning enrollment is open. We cannot give enrollment preference to anybody, and that can be a challenge. As a result, we have an interesting mix of students. One college professor remarked that he could always tell who are students are because they are the two or three top students in his class and at the

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same time the two or three lowest scoring students. We don't have much middle ground. I think that's because we attract those students who want to accelerate their education and those who want to get out of a traditional school setting and all those associated challenges such as school cliques and bullying.

*What benefits of the ECHS grab the attention of the student and parents?*

We have these conversations at orientation because this is a different school. It is more like a college setting with high school embedded into it. There is a huge cost savings to families, and gives opportunities to students for whom college would be unaffordable.

The obvious answer is that the students are getting a head start in college. The next thing to focus on is that the students are getting more refined knowledge of what they want to do in their post-secondary lives. We have one graduate who is at Northern Arizona University and another who just was selected for an internship with the US Foreign Service. She noted she wouldn't have even been eligible at her age had she not had college credits under her belt.

So, we do focus a lot with our students on career exploration, college searches, majors, and financial aid. When I first came here, I sat down with our 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade students and asked what they thought of their ACT tests. I found they hadn't taken it. That has changed. We also looked at the communication piece and how to get them to examine their different majors. How do we get them together when a recruiter is coming to visit. We are creating a required seminar course in the master schedule, where all students are in one place. Parents have noted this as one of the strengths of our school; i.e., how much time and energy we put into postsecondary planning.

*What are some of the demands you face that may be related to work?*

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I think one of the big ones is establishing some good time management skills. Trying to balance a job or a sports schedule with the demand of taking college courses can be a challenge. And, we do have students with jobs, who are helping out their families. But, we are upfront about how their priority needs to be on the college courses and the courses they are taking for high school as well. We gather information each year on students' extracurricular activities and work commitments. This way, if it becomes an issue, we can talk about it.

As I mentioned, all of the faculty are accredited to teach high school and college courses. So, when we set up dual credit, one of the things that we've done is we've offered our own staff to teach two sections of some things as well. Sometimes for these classes, most of the students aren't even Middle College HS students, but are in the class to receive a necessary credit for their high-school diploma and also three credits for their college humanities course. By offering our host institution additional sections, it's a good way to transition students from high school to college. For these courses, it's the same college courses but approached through the lens of a high school instructor.

*What advice would you give people wanting to start an ECHS—the challenges the might have?*

The first thing is to establish a strong relationship with the college that you're working with by attending their faculty assembly meetings or departmental curriculum meetings. When you bring students on board, you want to make sure you have room in the schedule for personal attention to the student advising process. We handle that now in the ECHS and then refer them to college advisors for some courses.

One of the most difficult things to surmount is that the students are all over the place with respect to weekly schedules. You need to schedule structured time with them. It has been a lifesaver for us introducing the weekly seminar class co-taught by our instructors. It gets all our sophomore, junior, and senior students in one place at

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## **Notes**

one time to explore the college and career interests, and inform them about important announcements such as deadlines for the ACT.

When you initially begin your ECHSs, your college professors on the campus may be wary of the high schoolers coming to their classes. They think to themselves the students may be only 15 years old and they didn't get into the field to teach high school. This takes time to build that relationship with them. When they see how well the students are doing, they encourage you giving them more. On the flip side of that, you need to make sure each student is prepared. All it takes sometimes is one or two students that create a disruption and it reflects on your program. If this happens, you really have to be willing to have conversations with parents, bring them in and talk. They need to understand the program has worked hard to establish this partnership and their children need to know they are in a college class and cannot sit in the corner socializing with friends during class. We suggest friends don't sit together in class, and we let the professor know we've talked to them about this. You have to be on top of things like this, and can't put the program on autopilot. That feedback loop and everything you're doing needs to be a strong partnership.

Parents may get frustrated because they cannot check on their children's grades with the professors, like they do in traditional schools. If parents get upset that students' grades are not being reported quickly, they need to understand that while I am the CEO of the school, I do not have supervisory authority over college professors. So, this does require a great deal more finesse.

To address this, every Friday afternoon, we have some form of in-house professional development. I've been working with staff on examining depth of knowledge in the tasks that they ask of the students. This may also be time spent discussing ways to support co-teaching. The ECHS is more of a family type of focus and commitment, so it is a nice alternative to your traditional high school setting. In a

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## ***Notes***

traditional school setting, teachers don't get these opportunities often. Here, they hand in their syllabi, they have more planning and prep time, and they have the seminar class. They can ask the questions of what is coming up next week, and what should we be focusing on with the students now. This does allow for those conversations to happen in ways that can be very responsive to students' needs.

**Dr. Porter Cuttrell, Principal. Roswell Early College High School**

*Can you give us some of your background and how you just completed your doctorate degree on this educational area.*

I received a grant from the NM PED to begin development of the Roswell ECHS, and worked closely with our partner, Eastern New Mexico University – Roswell. At that time, I was doing research on the effect of the ECHS model and the college and career readiness of students in the state of New Mexico and on their college and career readiness. Development of the Roswell ECHS was a step-by-step process we began four years ago.

*Can you describe your school?*

The district had been meeting with business leaders and other community stakeholders to develop an ECHS model and agreed upon an alternative high-school approach that could be paired with the other alternative high school in Roswell. The research showed that ECHSs located on the college campus have the opportunity to succeed and to use that environment to their advantage.

The president of the university had a great vision for an outstanding ECHS and how it would work as a partner with this institution. We created an MOU and found some places on the campus where we could house the ECHS, with room to grow as the student population expanded. We began with the freshman year and added one year

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each year. Currently we have 200 students, and the first graduation class of 18 students this year.

We looked at what jobs were in the Roswell area. There are several airplane companies—e.g., Dean Baldwin Painting, one of the biggest North American airplane painters; Aircell, which does refurbishing of airplanes. These offer all kinds of different jobs from welders to people who fix motors and engines to engineering. We also have Leprino Foods, one of the largest cheese manufacturers around, who have jobs from HVAC to chemists. So, looking at these we had quite a few pathways to offer students, and quite a few options for students to receive associate's degrees, and certificate programs. We haven't created a finite niche. We have students graduating who were in an automotive pathway, applied mathematics, computer graphics, and others. This is a real personalized approach for our students.

*Do you offer any internships or apprenticeships as the students are going through the program?*

We have located internships and apprenticeships with our local businesses. The medical field is very big and most of our juniors are in those work experiences this year. If the students complete their associate's degree and high-school diploma, even though they're 18 years old, they can start immediately in different businesses. Three of our students are working in automotive apprenticeships, and several students in veterinary apprenticeships. This has been a big positive for us. Part of the reason they're able to do that is because they don't have a traditional junior or senior year. They have the opportunity to schedule their classes where they can get out in the community at specific times and still attend class.

*What is your recruitment process? When are you recruiting students?*

There is no typical student—just the person who has career pathways. During my research of ECHSs, we were excited to see that district demographics of the ECHSs

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## **Notes**

matched very closely with the demographics of the school district. So, our ECHS does model the district and look at first-generation college students. We give them an option to be in this environment. We tell them they don't have to be a straight A student. We have students who are interested in something, and we are getting them involved. I don't think this is for everyone, I believe this is a good option for American public education.

We have an advertisement barrage that we put out both on print and broadcast media in the area. We show students and parents some of the things we do there. We also have a speaking circuit: We speak to all the junior high students. We also speak around the community and with different business organizations, giving them an opportunity to ask questions and come to the school to visit. We begin the advertising in February and have an application process in the spring. Really though, our students are our best advertisement. And, we have good marketing materials that convey the costs and benefits for the parents and students.

We have a number of clubs and student organizations. We competed in Skills USA; HOSA, "Health Occupation Science Association;" and we compete in Educators Rising. We have a group that is in Key Club. We began a Robotics and Engineering STEM pathway which has been reported on in the newspaper, giving us more exposure. Some of our students' friends see these activities and come out to visit. These are good opportunities for recruitment.

*What is a typical day for students?*

To graduate New Mexico high schools, students are required to complete 17 core credits (English, math, history) and 11 electives. All of the electives in our ECHS are college dual credit courses. In our ECHS, students are in high school for the first four semesters. We are on a Block 4 schedule, which is four 90-minute classes a day, with lunch in between. Then we offer college classes at 3:00 p.m. We generally give them

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one college class per semester. We met with the University to determine what are some of the most common dual credit classes across the board for any of the different pathways where they might get degrees they want. So right off the bat, the kids come in their very first semester they're taking 9<sup>th</sup> grade English, Algebra 1 or Geometry, a general science, and New Mexico history. In the afternoon they take a basic computer skills course (CIT 101) for dual credit. The next semester, even though it is the second semester, they are technically in their freshman year and they will begin their sophomore core classes such as English 10, Geometry or Algebra II, biology, and world history. They then take the next computer class from the college (CIT 151).

Some of our high-school teachers are adjunct faculty at the college so all the ECHS science and higher math courses are dual credit classes. That's a positive to you since you're doing the same thing anyway so you might as well get college credit. And, you have a teacher who understands what high-school students need. All those classes students take that are taught by these teachers will be added in to their junior and senior year. So, when they are a high-school sophomore, they are taking junior core classes their first semester and senior core classes their second semester. This is when we add in the communication classes, Communications 101 and Principles of Success (UNIV 101).

On the elective side, this is where we really personality it for students rather than just take random electives we've selected for everyone. This is where we begin to create the students' pathways based on their interests. And, these are all dual credit, with costs supplemented by the university and school district. The district picks up the price of the books. The only thing students are responsible for are actual lab fees. The university picks up the tuition costs. Last semester, we took about 1,100 college credit hours, at roughly \$88 to \$90 per credit hour. This is a huge savings.

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*What are the outcomes you've seen from some of your students, and do most of them achieve them?*

It's important to know our students are taking those college classes and even though they're offered dual credit, the postsecondary instructors do not lower their standards. We don't even identify our students to their teachers so they are treated and taught the same as everyone else. Expectations are the same. The thing we have seen is our students really can do it. Right now, we are on track for 100% graduation, with 100% earning their associate's degree. That's a big win for our program.

We have more and more people interested in the program, but we do have to keep class size at 50 to 75 students per our district guidelines. We will probably have to move to a lottery to keep numbers down.

Just getting the word out to the community, getting with your postsecondary partner, and letting everybody know that, no matter how old you are, our students can take and succeed in college classes. Passion and perseverance over time is really what is going to create a positive event for the students and result in positive outcomes.

*What has been the response of the business community to the program?*

Our community is really excited. Our school district has been great to help us promote the ECHS to our community members and to our different businesses in the area. We are creating a Business Advisory Board as well. When we first started with our 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort, we had the younger students. Now we have some of the older students and they have real skills and are interning. They are not 13 or 14 anymore—they are 18 and 19 years old. We've worked our way to prominence in our business community.

Now, people are saying, this school has 14 certificates that are nationally recognized in a wide range of industries. These students could start work tomorrow or

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## **Notes**

continue with the education. Everybody is starting to step up and really realize that the ECHS is valuable for our community.

*Can you talk about your partnership with your postsecondary partner and how important this is in making the model work?*

We have a fantastic postsecondary partner in Eastern New Mexico University. The president and vice president at the university are visionary and helped guide me in a positive direction. When you have younger students on college campuses with older people, there are opportunities for much to go wrong. So, we spend time trying to manage the younger students. We do watch them and check on them to make sure they are at the classes. We have a double-check area, and the university has an early warning system in which instructors can enter any student who hasn't attended or is way behind in work. We are copied on those entries so we can do follow-up. For last semester, we had an 82% pass rate in all of the college classes (1,100 college credit hours total).

*Do you have a counselor or someone on your staff who works with the students if they fall behind?*

We have a part-time counselor, who goes back and forth between our two high schools. And, we have college advisors. There is one person in charge of dual credits, and four other counselors. Our counselor and I check the early warning system and work with students. We use a Saturday school option and after-school tutoring both with the college and high school. Students can go to college counselor or the college tutoring service as well if we need.

*What do you wish somebody would have told you when you started your ECHS? Now you have the chance to tell others. What advice to you want to give them?*

First, we spent a lot of time trying to come up with some type of rubric or a way to look at their past performance. You know, they always say past performance is the

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## **Notes**

best predictor of future success. We spent a lot of time trying to worry about what kid really could be successful and, what test score would equal that. As students started to come to us, they really don't have any of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade PARCC scores we can look at for them. So, really all we have is 7<sup>th</sup> grade scores and grades. We spent a lot of time putting together a rubric. Then, we discovered that the students we thought were marginal got into a career pathway they really enjoyed, and they really got something done. And some of the ones we thought would be no problem might not have worked out. We spent a lot of time with the personal interviews trying to get a feel for who really wants to go there, the students or the parents? We also spent a lot of time in the community letting people know about the supports in place. We spent two years before we realized it was not about their test scores.

After we make those connections with businesses, we bring speakers in to talk to our students. The students can make a connection to somebody who's actually doing something very similar to what they want to do. Now they have somebody they can email or Skype or talk to, creating one more person in their life. This presents a chance for students that is positive and creates energy. I wish I would have had that when I grew up, knowing what jobs were out there. We probably don't even know half the jobs that will be out there. But our students are going to have certain skills to be able to be even be in the ballgame.

*I visited a school in another state and it was an EMT program, where students earned an EMT certificate. I asked the principal what the students do upon graduation. The principal told me 80% of the students go on to medical school. It falls into what we were talking about that once you engage the student and what interests them, they see they have the ability and then the passion takes over. I guarantee if you interview those kids when they started the EMT program, they thought they were going to stop at being an EMT. But something happened along the journey that got them excited about learning again.*

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## **Notes**

ECHSs were places that really promoted their pathways and helped students understand what the next steps are. We printed up brochures, put up posters showing the progression of learning. So students understood that everything was important and aligned to what is available in your area and the state.

It was good to hear from students that a lot of them weren't sure whether they wanted to be in the program. The ECHSs give students an opportunity to bond together and work their way through high school and college and perhaps after that into the business world. I don't know if the comprehensive high schools miss that.

I think career pathways can be brought up in the junior high, and maybe even in late elementary school. People Right, and a lot of times we do what the people around us do. I'm probably a product of that. My parents were in the military so there you go. But nowadays, you know, things are changing so much. It's great to be able to get them out there and then to let them know, let everybody know that, you know, was all it takes is a little bit of effort and a little bit of direction. If you put a direction in a positive way, you got a chance. So it's, I think as we get the word out and we'd get, you know, everybody, I think career pathways can be brought up even down in the junior highs and maybe even too late elementary school. People need to start thinking about what is the connection between education and my future so they aren't asking why they are doing this. We need to make this connection as educators and schools, I think relevance and rigor need to increase. That is one way we can really help out American public education.

We are limited in schools. We only have so many teachers, and fewer people are going into education. But when we, as communities, get together and use all of our resources, education gets on the right track. That is how things can grow and we can really evolve the opportunities for everyone.

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# Appendices

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# Appendix ? : References

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