



## EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL WEEK

### MAY 4-10, 2009

## EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL WEEK FAQ

### **What is Early College High School Week?**

*Early College High School Week* is a nationwide celebration bringing together students, administrators, parents, community leaders, and legislators to honor the commitment and success of the Early College High School Initiative. The Week lasts from Monday, May 4 through Sunday, May 10, 2009.

### **What are early college high schools?**

Early college high schools are small schools designed so that students can earn both a high school diploma and an Associate's degree or up to two years of credit toward a Bachelor's degree. Early college high schools have the potential to improve high school graduation rates and better prepare students for high-skill careers by engaging all students in a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum and compressing the number of years—and the cost—to earning a college degree.

### **Why do we need early college high schools?**

A postsecondary education is nearly essential for financial and personal freedom in today's economy. A four-year college graduate earns two-thirds more than a high school graduate does. An Associate's degree translates into earnings significantly higher than those earned by an individual with a high school diploma alone.

Early college high schools make college success a reality for student populations that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education, and therefore less able to compete for family-supporting jobs. These populations include minorities, low-income students, English language learners, and first-generation college goers.

### **Aren't high school students too young to do college work?**

Students from a wide range of backgrounds and with diverse prior accomplishments are demonstrating that the academic challenge provided by college-level courses can be an inspiration, not a barrier. The job of early college high school faculty and partners is to refine the instructional practices and wraparound support structures that move students from inspiration to true achievement.

Some of the most promising strategies currently in use in early college high schools include: adopting school-wide literacy practices, focusing on inquiry-based instruction across grade levels and content areas, and creating “shadow” or “lab” courses to complement college courses.

## **Who does the Early College High School Initiative serve?**

The Early College High School Initiative focuses on young people for whom the transition into postsecondary education is now problematic. Its priority is to serve low-income young people, first-generation college goers, English language learners, and students of color, all of whom are statistically underrepresented in higher education and for whom society often has low aspirations for academic achievement. The initiative will increase the number of these young people who attain an Associate’s degree or two years of college credit and the opportunity to attain a Bachelor’s degree.

- More than 42,000 students in 24 states are attending early college high schools.
- Two-thirds of students enrolled in early college high schools are African-American or Latino.
- 10 early college high schools target and serve Native students.
- 12 schools specifically serve students who previously dropped out or were unsuccessful in traditional high schools.
- The majority of students enrolled in early college high schools across the nation will be the first in their family to attend college.
- Nearly 60 percent of early college high school students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, providing a conservative estimate of the number of students who come from low-income families.

## **How many early college high schools are there now? How many will there be?**

As of the 2008-09 school year, the Early College High School Initiative has started more than 200 schools in 24 states. Through the initiative’s continued efforts, the 13 partner organizations will have opened about 250 small high schools by 2012, serving over 100,000 students annually.

## **Where are the early college high schools located?**

Go to <http://earlycolleges.org/schools.html> for a map displaying the location of early college high schools across the country.

## **What is the difference between early college high school and middle college?**

The Early College High School Initiative was preceded by the “middle college” model. Middle colleges are high schools for underserved young people. They are located on college campuses, and every student can earn college credit.

Early college high schools take the model a step further by providing a coordinated course of study in which students can earn up to 60 college credits while in high school. Middle colleges and early college high schools have similar design principles; the main difference is the amount of college course work expected—and, therefore, the degree of secondary/postsecondary integration.

### **What is the difference between early college high school and dual enrollment or Advanced Placement?**

All of these programs allow high school students to earn college credits, and better understand the demands of college. This raises students' chances of postsecondary success, and lowers their institutions' remediation and dropout rates.

What sets early college high school apart from dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, and other pre-college programs is the reach and coherence of the blended academic program and a relentless focus on underrepresented students. Only early college high school:

- Fully integrates students' high school and college experiences, both intellectually and socially;
- Enables students to earn up to two years of college credit toward a degree while in high school, not just a few college credits;
- Blends high school and college-level work into a single academic program that meets the requirements for both a high school diploma and, potentially, an Associate's degree;
- Grants college credits through the postsecondary partner institution and enables students to accumulate the credits toward a degree from that institution, or to transfer them to another college.

### **What is the role of the postsecondary partners?**

Each school in the Early College High School Initiative is a partnership between a school district and a postsecondary partner. The postsecondary partners include community and technical colleges, four-year colleges, and universities (both private and public). The postsecondary partners are key players in the design and day-to-day operation of early college high schools, which treat the high schools years and the first two years of college as a single, coherent course of study.

An early college high school requires sustained involvement from both the secondary and postsecondary partners. Administrators and faculty from the postsecondary institution participate in the life of the early college high school both formally and informally. Their involvement includes participation in: school planning processes and governing boards; curriculum committees; syllabus planning activities; co-delivery of courses with high school faculty; provision of tutors; mentors and student teachers; and the creation of "scaffolded" learning experiences such as "bridge" courses to ease the transition to college-level work and mini-seminars for younger students.

## **Who funds the Early College High School Initiative?**

Start-up funding for the schools and partner organizations in the Early College High School Initiative comes from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and Lumina Foundation for Education. To date, private funding for the Early College High School Initiative totals more than \$130 million. While catalytic, these start-up grants are small in comparison to the operating budgets of schools, which are funded primarily by states and local districts.

## **Who are the partner organizations of the initiative?**

There are 13 partners: the Center for Native Education, City University of New York, Foundation for California Community Colleges, Georgia Department of Education/University System of Georgia, KnowledgeWorks Foundation, Middle College National Consortium, National Council of La Raza, North Carolina New Schools Project, Portland Community College's Gateway to College, SECME, Inc., Communities Foundation of Texas (Texas High School Project), Utah Partnership Foundation, and Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

## **What is the role of the intermediary partners and/or school developers?**

An intermediary organization acts as a grant manager, and it selects and supports school sites, especially during the planning and start-up phases. Current early college high school partners run the gamut from organizations experienced in creating or redesigning schools, to national constituency-based organizations, to community foundations, to higher education institutions and organizations.

Increasingly, foundations look to "intermediary organizations" as partners in order to jumpstart new ventures, conduct feasibility studies, create due-diligence processes, engage outside experts, and provide professional development for the schools and communities they serve.

The 13 partners work directly with selected early college high schools, school districts, and postsecondary institutions. They provide start-up and ongoing technical support, guidance, and professional development for their networks of schools.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation initially selected a diverse group of intermediary organizations to develop early college high schools, part of the foundation's strategy to test a variety of partnership models that would demonstrate the power of the early college concept. Thus, each of the partners has a unique focus for its work.

The Center for Native Education, for example, is collaborating with tribal communities, schools, and colleges in Washington and other states to establish early college high schools for Native-American youth. The National Council of La Raza is creating early college high schools in partnership with community-based organizations that serve Latino communities. The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation is establishing or redesigning early college high schools that emphasize the liberal arts. A number of partners take a citywide or statewide focus, as is the case in New York City and California, Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Utah.

## **What is JFF's role in the initiative?**

Jobs for the Future, a research, action, and policy organization that promotes innovation in education and workforce development, is the lead coordinator and policy advocate for the Early College High School Initiative. JFF plays an integral role in the implementation and coordination of the initiative by collaborating with the partners and funders to create a guiding vision, mission, and overall strategy for the initiative across the nation. Among other things, JFF gathers and shares data about the early college high school movement, provides opportunities for networking across partners and regions, and educates national, local, and state audiences about early college high schools.

## **How can I learn more?**

The Web site <http://www.earlycolleges.org> is the basic source for information about the Early College High School Initiative. If you have questions, email [earlycolleges@jff.org](mailto:earlycolleges@jff.org) or call 617.728.4446.