



**JOBS FOR THE FUTURE**

**NEWS RELEASE  
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**FORMER NORTH CAROLINA GOV. MIKE EASLEY TO SERVE AS NATIONAL  
SPOKESPERSON FOR EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL WEEK**

**May 4-10 Celebrates Success of 200+ Schools in National Program**

BOSTON, MA (April 28, 2009) — Former North Carolina Gov. Mike Easley, who made support of early college high schools a hallmark of his time in office, will serve as national spokesperson for the initiative as it celebrates “Early College High School Week” May 4-10.

Easley’s efforts, with support from the General Assembly, led to a \$15 million investment in early college high schools in North Carolina. Currently there are 60 such schools, known within the state as *Learn and Earn* high schools, with a dozen more slated to start this fall—representing 30 percent of the 200 early colleges, the most of any state.

With startup support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other funders, early college high schools offer college courses to high school students underrepresented in higher education—low-income, minority, English language learners, and first-generation college students—so they gain the skills they need to succeed in college and careers. Nationwide, 40% of the most recent class of graduates of early colleges open for four or more years earned more than a year of college credit while in high school—tuition free.

“In today’s economy, a college education is a must for every student,” says Easley. “That’s why I’m proud to share my enthusiasm for our early college high schools across the country and to tell parents, teachers, students, policymakers, and others about the success we are seeing in North Carolina—successes that mirror the national initiative.”

Evidence of North Carolina’s early college successes include:

- *Learn and Earn* early college high schools had a combined dropout rate of less than 1% in 2007-08, compared to a statewide dropout rate of 4.97%. For 9<sup>th</sup> graders, the dropout rate in 2007-08 was 0.35 percent, compared to 5.5 percent for all high schools statewide.
- 86% of *Learn and Earn* early college high schools outperformed comparison high schools in their school districts based on aggregate scores on the ABCs, North Carolina’s statewide assessment program.
- 40 of 42 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools in 2007-08 had attendance rates that exceeded that of their comparison schools. All but three of the 42 schools had attendance rates above 95 percent, compared to 11 of the 42 comparison schools.

“Early college high schools in North Carolina and across the country show us that challenge—not remediation—is an approach to education that works,” said Marlene B. Seltzer, CEO of Jobs for the Future, which leads the Early College High School Initiative nationally. “The opportunity to earn *free* college credit is something every student and parent would invite, especially during these hard economic times.

“Governor Easley is a national leader in high school reform. He understands the social and economic imperative of graduating more students ready for college and a successful career. We appreciate his willingness to let us take advantage of his talents to impress upon the nation how early college high schools can make a real difference in the lives of young people.”

### **ECHS Partner Organizations**

Early college schools are a partnership between school districts and colleges. Jobs for the Future leads a national coalition of partner organizations that provides startup and ongoing technical support, guidance, and professional development for their networks of schools. These partners include:

- Center for Native Education
- City University of New York
- Communities Foundation of Texas
- Foundation for California Community Colleges
- Gateway to College National Network
- Georgia Board of Regents
- KnowledgeWorks Foundation
- Middle College National Consortium
- National Council of La Raza
- North Carolina New Schools Project
- SECME, Inc.
- Utah Partnership for Education
- Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation

For more information about the Early College High School Initiative, visit [www.earlycolleges.org](http://www.earlycolleges.org).

### **About Jobs for the Future**

Through research, analysis, action, and advocacy, Jobs for the Future develops promising education and labor market models, expands successful models in communities across the country, and shapes the policy environment that enables American families and companies to compete in a global economy. Jobs for the Future is the lead coordinator and policy advocate for the Early College High School Initiative.

### **About the Early College High School Initiative**

Since 2002, the partner organizations of the Early College High School Initiative have started or redesigned more than 200 schools in 24 states and the District of Columbia. The schools are designed so that low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education can simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an Associate’s degree—tuition free.

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