



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 **Sunday, March 20** through **Saturday, March 26, 2011**.

What are early college high schools?

Early college high schools are small schools designed so that students can earn 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 and college 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 essential for financial and personal freedom in today's economy. 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?

No. 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.

The idea of early college is to prove that students can not only do college-level work, but do it early and earn substantial transferable college credits, just like suburban and private school kids with access to Advanced Placement and dual enrollment programs.

Who does the Early College High School Initiative serve?

The *Early College High School Initiative* focuses on young people that have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education. The Initiative's priority is to serve low-income young people, first-generation college goers, English language learners, and students of color.

- More than 50,000 students across 28 states are attending early college high schools.
- Nearly two-thirds of students enrolled in early college high schools are African-American or Latino.
- 12 early college high schools target and serve Native students.
- 32 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?

As of the 2010-11 school year, the *Early College High School Initiative* includes 231 early college schools across 28 states and the District of Columbia.

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 nationwide.

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

The "middle college" model preceded the *Early College High School Initiative*. Middle colleges are high schools for underserved young people, located on college campuses; every middle college 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 schools and dual enrollment or Advanced Placement programs?

All of these programs allow high school students to earn college credits, and better understand the demands of college.

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 schools:

- Fully integrate students' high school and college experiences, both intellectually and socially;
- Enable students to earn up to two years of college credit toward a degree while in high school, not just a few college credits;
- Blend 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;
- Grant 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 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 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 14 partners: Jobs for the Future (National Coordinator); the Center for Native Education, City University of New York, Communities Foundation of Texas (Texas High School Project), 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., 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 14 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.

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?

Visit www.earlycolleges.org or contact Jeff Landis at jlandis@jff.org or 617.728.4446.