



## CORE PRINCIPLES

### The Early College Vision

Every young person needs a postsecondary credential to thrive in today's world. Yet, as a nation, we fail to provide too many young people with the educational preparation they need and that our society demands. We, the founding intermediary organizations of the Early College High School Initiative, believe that an early college school is one innovation that provides traditionally underrepresented youth with a path to and through college.

Early college schools provide rigorous, supportive learning environments that blend high school and the first two years of college. They incorporate effective instructional and structural practices common to many small schools, but their designs go further, addressing the unique mission of the Early College High School Initiative: to raise the high school graduation and postsecondary success rates of underserved youth.

All schools in the initiative strive to remove the financial, academic, and psychological hurdles that prevent too many students from entering and succeeding in college. Already, early college students are showing us that more is possible and that, with well-conceived school designs that include sustained supports, a college degree is an achievable goal for every young person.

### The Early College Core Principles

All early college schools adhere to five, interrelated Core Principles, which together constitute the fundamental beliefs of the initiative. Although all early college schools embrace these essential characteristics, they use a wide range of strategies for attaining them and for meeting the specific needs of their students, communities, and institutional partners.

The Core Principles that follow were developed collaboratively to provide a framework to guide others interested in planning and implementing early college schools. The document also offers strategies that are essential to attaining each principle.

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**Core Principle 1:** Early college schools are committed to serving students underrepresented in higher education.

- ❖ Early college schools recruit low-income students, racial and ethnic minorities, first-generation college goers, and English language learners.
- ❖ Early college schools recruit students at risk of dropping out of high school, not matriculating to college, and not completing a degree, (i.e., students with poor attendance, struggling learners, students who are overage and under-credited).
- ❖ Student admission is not based solely on prior academic performance.

**Core Principle 2:** Early college schools are created and sustained by a local education agency, a higher education institution, and the community, all of whom are jointly accountable for student success.

- ❖ A formal, written agreement provides for full access to college courses, facilities, and support services.
- ❖ Dedicated representatives from all partner organizations meet regularly to review data, provide guidance, and make key decisions regarding planning, implementation, and sustaining the early college school.
- ❖ Faculty, staff, and community partners develop deep collaborations and participate, according to their role, in data-driven activities that advance instructional practice, curriculum development, staff development, and student support in order to build a college-going culture.
- ❖ All partners are actively engaged in developing sustainable funding for the early college school.

**Core Principle 3:** Early college schools and their higher education partners and community jointly develop an integrated academic program so all students earn one to two years of transferable college credit leading to college completion.

- ❖ Secondary and higher education partners have aligned high school and college requirements and curricula, and they co-develop an academic plan that incorporates opportunities for dual credit.

- ❖ The academic plan ensures that students strive for two years and complete a minimum of one year of college credit in the core disciplines.
- ❖ There are strategies and structures in place that provide students with the opportunity to complete four-year degrees, (e.g., a graduation plan, transfer or articulation agreements).

**Core Principle 4:** Early college schools engage all students in a comprehensive support system that develops academic and social skills as well as the behaviors and conditions necessary for college completion.

- ❖ Early college schools develop and implement a proactive support plan that includes multiple academic and social supports to ensure students' progression through college, articulates how and where services are delivered, and clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of staff and partners in their implementation.
- ❖ Early college schools address barriers to students' learning and academic achievement inside and outside of school.

**Core Principle 5:** Early college schools and their higher education and community partners work with intermediaries to create conditions and advocate for supportive policies that advance the early college movement.

- ❖ Early college schools collect and share data with initiative partners to help demonstrate effectiveness at the local, state, and national levels.
  - ❖ Early college schools work with their intermediaries to develop communications plans that further the objectives of the movement.
  - ❖ Early college schools and their intermediaries work collectively to influence state and national policy, including legislation, regulations, and the allocation of funds.
  - ❖ Early colleges, with their partners, are involved in preparing teachers and leaders to effectively meet the unique mission of the early college movement.
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