

North Carolina Cooperative Innovative High Schools Design and Implementation Guide with Promising Practices

The Cooperative Innovative High Schools (CIHS) Design and Implementation Guide is developed with input from CIHS leaders across North Carolina. The purpose of this Design and Implementation Guide is to support a design approach to the creation and continuous improvement of CIHS. This Design and Implementation Guide is a resource, aligned to legislation, to support CIHS faculty and staff, as well as school district and college partners as they collaborate to develop and sustain innovative structures, policies, and practices to ensure the continued success of CIHS students and schools.

This updated CIHS Design and Implementation Guide provides an overview of CIHS in NC, and of the foundational Design Elements that optimize successful outcomes for CIHS students. The Design and Implementation Guide also includes Promising Practices for each of the six CIHS Design Elements, shared by CIHS programs as examples of the Design Elements in action. Additionally, the Guide incorporates related research with annotations, providing further context for the CIHS Design Elements and Promising Practices.

OVERVIEW OF COOPERATIVE INNOVATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), in collaboration with the North Carolina Community Colleges System, the University of North Carolina System, and the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, established Cooperative Innovative High Schools (CIHS) in 2004 in response to legislation from the NC General Assembly. Originally called the Learn and Earn Initiative, updated with the Innovative Education Initiatives Act and most recently as part of the Career and College Promise Program, this legislation establishes guidelines for the creation and operation of CIHS in North Carolina.

The Appropriations Act of 2011 established the Career and College Promise (CCP) program. The purpose of CCP is to offer structured opportunities for qualified high school students to dually enroll in community college courses that provide pathways leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree, as well as providing entry-level job skills. The three structured pathways include: 1. Cooperative Innovative High School (CIHS) programs; 2. College Transfer (CT) Pathways leading to the completion of an associate degree or two years of transferable credit, and 3. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathways leading to a certificate, diploma, or industry recognized credential aligned with a high school career cluster. The full legislation governing CIHS is available on the [NCDPI CIHS webpage](#).

CIHS are innovative models determined locally based on regional needs, including early college high schools,

STEM-themed high schools, and career academies. Some schools offer both career and college programs of study. All CIHS partner with an institution of higher education (IHE) and most are located on the campus of their IHE partner. CIHS are small schools, serving no more than 100 students per grade. CIHS programs focus on students who would be the first in their families to graduate from college, students who are at risk of dropping out of high school, and students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction. CIHS programs provide innovative public school opportunities for students and families.

North Carolina is a national leader in expanding this innovative high school model, with 133 CIHS programs in Fall 2021. 117 CIHS partner with community colleges, 11 with UNC institutions, and five with independent colleges or universities. Most school districts in North Carolina offer one or more CIHS. Students in CIHS outperform state-wide averages in NC Math I, Biology, English II and NC Math III. CIHS students receive better grades, on average, than college age students in core academic college courses. A growing number of students are benefitting from new opportunities, leading to stronger outcomes, with higher rates of academic achievement, graduation and postsecondary enrollment and completion. Together, these high schools and their college partners are transforming teaching and learning for their students, while also promoting the growth of innovative practices in many schools and districts.

CIHS DESIGN ELEMENTS

The following CIHS Design Elements are structures and practices that are integral to the implementation and continued success of CIHS programs in North Carolina. Sustained implementation of the structures and practices arising from these Design Elements ensure CIHS effectively serve target populations and all students, developing the knowledge, skills and understandings, self-advocacy, and persistence needed to succeed in post-secondary education and careers. All CIHS staff commit to the ongoing work of school self-assessment, continuous improvement, and ongoing redesign to sustain and enhance the CIHS Design Elements.

Future Ready Graduates: Ensures all students graduate ready for college, careers, and life.

Collaborative Partnerships: Ensures the foundational partnership between one school district and the partner IHE and encourages community partnerships.

Innovative Instructional Practice: Ensures active learning and intentional development of students' academic readiness, persistence and self-advocacy, and attainment of secondary and post-secondary outcomes.

Personalized Student Supports: Ensures all students feel known and cared for and receive individualized support for academic success and social and emotional well-being.

Leadership and Professionalism: Ensures all staff are valued and developed as leaders in their respective roles and contribute to the ongoing success of all students and the CIHS.

Innovative Design and Operations: Ensures successful implementation of the other CIHS Design Elements described in this Guide and enhances other high school operations.

- All students on a College Transfer (CT) Pathway are supported to graduate with the minimum admission standards for the UNC System colleges and universities.
- All students on a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway are supported to graduate with a career certificate, diploma, or the associate of applied science (AAS) degree.
- Formative and summative assessment data is used to inform instruction, including student work samples, on-going classroom assessments, achievement tests, and college readiness assessments. Data from graduates and graduating seniors is used to inform school improvement.
- Every student receives intentional college and career advising and is supported to become an advocate for her or his own learning to achieve college and career aspirations.
- Every student demonstrates college and career-ready skills through authentic assessments, including presentations to diverse audiences, projects mapped to standards with local or global relevance, and formal academic writing.
- Every student engages in research, college and career exploration and, wherever possible, work-based learning opportunities. These work-based experiences include internships with business partners to explore career opportunities and to gain experience in career settings.
- Every student explores post-secondary pathways and careers, such as visiting multiple IHEs to explore college and university settings and engaging local and regional employment opportunities.
- Every student and family are supported in college and career planning, which includes college applications and admissions, financial aid, scholarship applications and employment opportunities aligned to credentials.

FUTURE READY GRADUATES

All CIHS staff members commit to ensuring every student graduates prepared and credentialed to succeed in post-secondary education and careers as an engaged and productive citizen. All staff collaborate to design and sustain a powerful school culture where the whole child is nurtured, developed, challenged, and supported to succeed in their chosen pathway of study.

- All students are supported to complete their chosen pathway and to graduate with an associate degree, two years of transferable credit, or a career-ready certificate or diploma.



PROMISING PRACTICES

Charlotte Teacher Early College

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

IHE Partner: University of North Carolina at Charlotte

- Provides work-based learning opportunities for future NC teachers by:
 - Partnering with a four-year college and its Lab School to develop a local pipeline for preparation of licensed teachers; and
 - Developing students' interest in and knowledge of the teaching profession through real world experiences.

Charlotte Teacher Early College is helping to grow the next generation of NC teachers. Each fall students visit classrooms across the Charlotte area as part of their UNC Charlotte Foundations in Education and Diversity in Schools course. Charlotte Teacher Early College and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools are developing a partnership with their new local lab school at UNC Charlotte, Niner University Elementary at Amay James. This school will host Charlotte Teacher Early College students on a regular basis to give each student real-world experience in a school environment.

Edgecombe Early College

Edgecombe County Public Schools

IHE Partner: Edgecombe Community College

- Provides clear guidelines and expectations to ensure that every graduating student completes the FAFSA by:
 - Requiring all graduating students and a parent or guardian to attend a FAFSA presentation by the College Foundation of North Carolina;
 - Monitoring FAFSA completion status of each graduating student using the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority FAFSA dashboard; and
 - Supporting each student and family during the FAFSA process.

Staff at Edgecombe Early College make sure each graduating student completes the FAFSA by November 15 every year. Each fall the counselor arranges a FAFSA presentation by the College Foundation of North Carolina, with required attendance by students and a parent or guardian. Early FAFSA completion ensures that students

applying for college have maximum access to federal, state, and school financial aid, which is an essential support for first-generation college-going students. The counselor monitors students' FAFSA status using the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority FAFSA dashboard, providing real-time support to ensure every student and family has the support needed for completion.

Lenoir Early College

Lenoir County Public Schools

IHE Partner: Lenoir Community College

- Prepares all Juniors for the ACT, leading to significant increases in scores and college readiness by:
 - Providing focused ACT preparation;
 - Facilitating online ACT courses and practice taking timed tests; and
 - Providing a weekly advising period for all students.

Teachers at Lenoir Early College are intentional about preparing students for the ACT. English and math teachers facilitate the ACT online courses for all Juniors. Students practice taking timed tests for each subject throughout a focused period of preparation, from October until the ACT is given in February. All students attend a weekly advising period, and this time for Juniors also supports ACT preparation. These strategies are credited for a significant increase in ACT scores, which is typically a college readiness measure for colleges and universities.

Sandhoke Early College

Hoke County Schools

IHE Partner: Sandhills Community College

- Sustains a college-going mindset and readiness for first-generation students by:
 - Defining "college" broadly to include career-ready credentials attained at Sandhills Community College;
 - Supporting academic readiness with local electives that further develop knowledge and skills in mathematics, English/language arts, and ACT Test preparation; and
 - Celebrating current and past student successes.
- Models college expectations in high school to support success in college by:

- Developing curricula to match college academic expectations; and
- Teaching soft skills and self-advocacy.

Staff at Sandhoke Early College work to sustain a college-going culture. Prospective students and families learn this CIHS is designed to help first-generation students be successful in a college setting, including career-ready and post-secondary options. They define “college” broadly, to include career-ready credentials attained at Sandhills Community College. All students learn important soft skills, like how to email appropriately to ask a college instructor for a meeting. High school teachers scaffold college expectations. Staff post college letters when students are accepted and lift up graduates who inspire by their examples. Students take two local electives, Essential Math and Advanced Inquiry, so they are well prepared for college coursework. An additional elective, Composition English, prepares students for the ACT. These courses are pass/fail so they do not impact a student’s GPA.

Southeast Area Technical High School

New Hanover County Schools

IHE Partner: Cape Fear Community College

- Provides a career-ready curriculum through focused Career Academies that introduces students to academic and technical subjects, with hands-on and project-based learning.
- Aligns high school experiences from each of the four focused Career Academies with local workforce development by partnering to host annual Community Showcases that provide hands-on learning opportunities and highlight career opportunities.

Through hands-on and project-based learning, students at Southeast Area Technical High School (SEA-Tech) engage academic and technical subjects, with high school options and dual enrollment with Cape Fear Community College. This blending allows students to be prepared to enter the workforce directly or to continue to other post-secondary opportunities. There are four focused Career Academies: Construction Trades, Health & Fitness, Culinary & Hospitality Management, and Public Safety. Each spring they host Community Showcases, where local businesses, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement organizations showcase tools of the trade and promote local career opportunities.

Each CIHS is established and sustained through a foundational partnership with one school district and one IHE. A highly effective partnership is essential to the success of CIHS students. School district and college partners work collaboratively to support student learning in this innovative learning environment. CIHS programs also develop meaningful partnerships with business, industry, and community partners, and collaborate with other schools in their districts to promote innovation and the success of all students.

- CIHS seek to optimize dual credit opportunities, while ensuring personalized pathways for all students to complete certificates, diplomas, degrees, or two years of transferable credit.
- CIHS staff ensure consistent, effective communication and collaboration with the IHE to optimize opportunities and success for all students. CIHS and IHE staff collaborate regularly to identify poor attendance or performance, with timely interventions and effective supports for students who need additional support.
- The school district and the IHE approve and implement a formal agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that articulates the roles, responsibilities, governing structures, and policies that ensure a true partnership and shared ownership of the CIHS.
- The school district and the IHE support the CIHS by reviewing the formal agreement or MOU annually and revising policies or procedures that act as barriers to innovation, student success, or sustainability of the CIHS.
- CIHS provide vital choices to students and families within the public school system. CIHS have the flexibility to pilot innovative structures and strategies and to share innovative practices with other schools in their districts.
- CIHS develop and sustain effective community partnerships to broaden learning opportunities and to support student success. Partnerships such as the following are encouraged:
 - Business Advisory Councils offer a wealth of community connections and opportunities, such as participation in project-based learning, input on student outcomes related to career-ready skills and workforce development needs,

internships for students, externships for teachers, job shadowing, guest speakers, etc.

- Feeder middle schools offer proactive communication and ongoing collaboration to ensure early identification of target populations and other students who would benefit most from the CIHS experience.
- Community and faith-based organizations offer great opportunities for recruitment, participation in project-based learning, service-based learning, etc.



PROMISING PRACTICES

Buncombe Early College

Buncombe County Schools

IHE Partner: Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College

- Sustains community partnerships by:
 - Collaborating on a multi-year, real world project to improve an undeveloped riverbank in Azalea Park; and
 - Establishing mentors for students from community experts.

- Integrates community-based learning with daily classroom instruction, engaging students to make persuasive, data-based arguments while promoting sustainable designs.
- Supports a graduate profile with community input to define the skills and dispositions all students should demonstrate upon graduation.

Buncombe Early College partners with a local organization, RiverLink, to improve an undeveloped riverbank area in Azalea Park in the City of Asheville. Community experts serve as mentors, as students study how to use sustainable design methods in public spaces to increase healthy interactions between humans and nature. Student teams work on a nature trail, a pollinator garden, waste management, signage, and more. Students test water temperature, pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, and nutrient load in the Swannanoa River, comparing results while listening to data interpretations by RiverLink staff. The project integrates math, science, and English classes. Students learn how to use statistical analysis to process data and how to make persuasive arguments in a scientific context. This project also supports Buncombe Early College's commitment to their Graduate Profile, which was developed with community input. The Graduate Profile defines the skills and dispositions all graduates should demonstrate.

Mattamuskeet Early College

Hyde County Schools

IHE Partner: Beaufort Community College

- Expands career-ready pathways by:
 - Enhancing the partnership with Beaufort Community College to maximize student opportunities; and
 - Offering college courses at both the high school and the college.

Mattamuskeet Early College offers Certified Nurse Assistant certification through an expanded partnership with Beaufort Community College. The school nurse teaches one of the classes on the Mattamuskeet campus. The counselor and a teacher assistant from the local elementary school volunteer to transport the students after school hours to and from the community college, which is an hour away, using a district car. These students will graduate with a certificate and can begin work immediately after graduation from high school.

McDowell Academy for Innovation

McDowell County Schools

IHE Partner: McDowell Community College

- Ensures students graduate with real world experience and career-ready skills by providing authentic learning opportunities with industry partners.
- Develops career opportunities for graduates in local communities through connections made during work-based partnerships.

The McDowell Academy for Innovation provides authentic learning opportunities that extend beyond the high school campus, including service learning, job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships. Industry partners providing these opportunities include Mission Hospital, ERA Realty, ABB Manufacturing, the Animal Hospital, and the McDowell County EMS. Students learn real world skills and determine which college or career pathways they want to follow. These opportunities connect students with local businesses and help students find various employment opportunities in the local economy.

Person Early College

Person County Schools

IHE Partner: Piedmont Community College

- Partners with the Friday Institute's Project-Based Inquiry (PBI) Global Service Learning Collaborative to engage students in a multi-year, cross-curricular, inquiry-based project: Global Water for South Sudan by:
 - Immersing students in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals; and
 - Incorporating service learning, with a pledge walk to raise money to aid in the building of a well in South Sudan.

Person Early College partners with the Friday Institute's Project-Based Inquiry (PBI) Global Service Learning Collaborative to engage students in an inquiry-based project: Global Water for South Sudan. All 9th grade teachers contribute to a six-week project tied to weekly learning goals and work with the PBI Global Team to plan and facilitate these unique learning experiences. Students complete a service aspect with a pledge walk, simulating the walk for water for people in South Sudan, as described in the project book study: *The Long Walk to Water*, by Linda Sue Park. The pledge walk raises money to help build a well for closer water access in South Sudan.

Wake Early College of Health and Sciences

Wake County Schools

IHE Partner: Wake Technical Community College

- Partners with Wake Technical Community College and local health partner, WakeMed Health and Hospitals, to provide work-based learning opportunities for students.
- Builds students' professional resumes and digital portfolios through authentic learning experiences.

Activities beyond the classroom richly enhance the experience for students at the Wake Early College of Health and Sciences. In partnership with WakeMed Health and Hospitals, the Career Development Coordinator organizes work-based learning opportunities for students exploring health care careers, including job shadowing with doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals. Students include these experiences in their professional resumes and digital portfolios, and many graduate with career-ready credentials, often securing employment in health care careers after graduating from high school.





INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

All CIHS staff commit to ensuring every student is actively engaged, challenged, and supported, in all classes, every day, to succeed in rigorous coursework and graduate having completed the post-secondary outcomes described above. All staff members commit to deep inquiry and consistent collaboration to design, facilitate, assess, and redesign learning activities that ensure successful student outcomes.

- Daily instruction is characterized by student-centered, active learning, including collaborative group work, low stakes writing, student to student discourse, and intentional questioning.
- CIHS teachers embed rigor and relevance, with scaffolds and supports in every class as a daily practice, so all students can access rigorous coursework with success.
- Instruction is planned using big ideas or essential questions, mapped to standards and to college and career-ready student outcomes, to ensure all students master essential knowledge and skills and apply that learning to improve their lives, their communities, and their planet.
- Daily instruction features deep dialogue, with exploration and application of understanding.
- Teachers differentiate and personalize instruction, developing student voice and choice, and leverage strong relationships to promote persistence, self-reliance, and self-advocacy.

- Teachers collaborate to design project-based, inquiry-based, and community-based experiential learning, with cross-curricular learning opportunities for all students.
- Staff develop and maintain a resource bank of effective lessons, units of study, and authentic assessments.
- Staff collaborate to develop common rubrics and intentional, personalized feedback so that students understand criteria for success and how to improve.
- Teachers make informed decisions about whether, when, and how to use technology to optimize student learning.
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment ensure all students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- Students and staff use a design approach to connect academic content to complex global, national, and local issues, and to create authentic, relevant student work.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Ashe Early College

Ashe County Schools

IHE Partner: Wilkes Community College

- Collaborates with community partners to implement a multi-year project-based learning experience for students.

- Integrates project-based learning across content areas, allowing students to plan, design, and construct an outdoor learning environment.
- Fosters ownership of learning by giving students voice and choice in the design of their school.

Students at Ashe Early College are creating an outdoor classroom on Wilkes Community College, Ashe Campus, at the base of Mount Jefferson. Working with a Park Ranger, students learn the native plants and animals and the history of the mountain. In addition to the classroom, students are expanding a walking trail and building an all-access bridge across a creek. The local electric company supports building a shelter and securing electricity for a projection screen. The math teacher and students work with a retired Arts Council Director to create quilt squares using math angles and terms. A large, favorite quilt hangs in the outdoor space. Learning extends to Biology, Earth Science, English and history classes, enhancing critical thinking and problem solving, communication skills, creativity, and imagination.

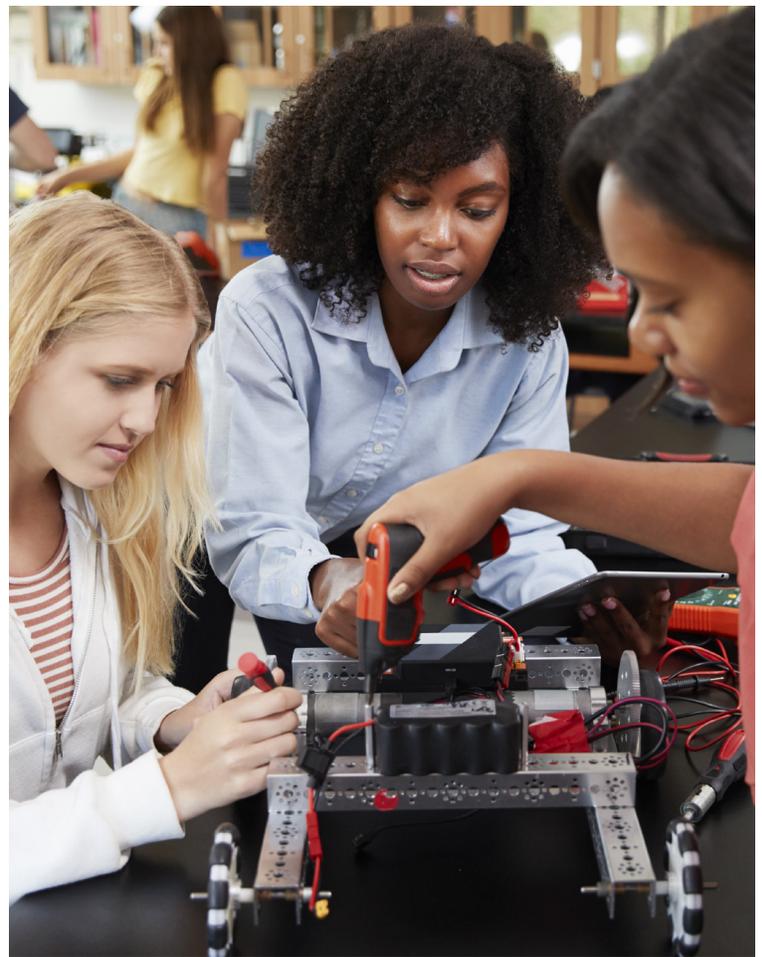
Bladen Early College

Bladen County Schools

IHE Partner: Bladen Community College

- Implements project-based learning to inform school design by tasking students to reimagine the physical layout of campus.
- Embeds the project throughout core curriculum classes to strengthen cross curricular connections.
- Develops authentic audiences for student work and community involvement.

Bladen Early College uses a Freshman Seminar to help students make the transition from middle school. An authentic project in this class, extending to all core classes, empowers students to reimagine the physical layout of their school. In math, students use formulas to calculate square footage and the various costs associated with their designs. In science, students study “green” solutions to the carbon footprint in their designs. Students in English classes prepare oral and visual reports. In social studies, students study the development of cities. Students visit the Hunt Library at North Carolina State University and various other schools to gather ideas and present their work to a group of judges from the community. Students are creating new spaces on the campus of Bladen Early College as their designs become reality.



Haywood Early College

Haywood County Schools

IHE Partner: Haywood Community College

- Collaborates with college staff to pair high school and college math and science courses.
- Insures support for college coursework from high school teachers.
- Creates science-based math labs to allow students an engaging, interest based, hands-on approach to learning mathematics.

Staff at Haywood Early College collaborate with college partners to pair high school and college math and science courses and labs. College Math 171 is paired through a high school Math Lab with high school NC Math III. College Biology 111 is paired with a high school Biology lab. These pairings reinforce learning and ensure high school teachers provide support for student success in college coursework. The high school NC Math II teacher also creates science-based math labs where students form research teams to facilitate the data collecting and lab work and use their data to create math equations.

Randolph Early College

Randolph County School System

IHE Partner: Randolph Community College

- Teaches math in a personalized way to support mastery by:
 - Blending innovative instructional practices; and
 - Designing ways for students to explore and discover math.

Randolph Early College personalizes math instruction, teaching as if it were a foreign language film. Teachers upload videos in Canvas introducing topics, explaining the math behind the problems while working through them. Teachers include subtitles in the videos, defining terms or adding additional information. Students complete blank notes as they watch independently to front-load content. Individualized videos are sent through email to answer questions and clarify misconceptions. Exploration activities help students “discover” the math through the online course. After discovery, students work to demonstrate mastery of each concept before progressing to the next. Student input shows they connect with this approach.

Rowan Early College

Rowan-Salisbury Schools

IHE Partner: Rowan-Cabarrus Community College

- Cultivates a supportive teacher community as a foundational component to increasing student engagement by:
 - Structuring group work to ensure collaborative learning;
 - Immersing students in low stakes writing to develop literacy skills; and
 - Scaffolding rigorous coursework so all students can be successful.

Teachers at Rowan ECHS support each other to implement student engagement strategies – ensuring students read, think, talk, and write in each class, every day. Strategies include structured group work, classroom talk, scaffolding rigor, and low stakes writing. Students develop the literacy, persistence, and self-agency they need to be successful in college work. These high engagement strategies also support students’ social and emotional needs. Staff engage professional development to ensure these strategies reach all students.

PERSONALIZED STUDENT SUPPORTS

All CIHS staff commit to ensuring that every student is known, respected, and cared for by the adults in the school. Every student is supported to develop their full potential through a variety of intentional ways. Staff leverage strong personal relationships with students to build their curiosity, persistence, and intrinsic motivation, as well as their support of each other, to succeed in rigorous coursework, innovative opportunities, and in college and careers.

- Every student has a personalized four or five-year plan that is reviewed and updated to ensure completion of an associate degree, career credentials or two years of transferable credit.
- CIHS provide effective orientation/transition events, parent nights, conferences, and other opportunities to promote active participation of students’ families and other community members.
- CIHS provide an advisory or seminar course or program with an established curriculum to develop college and career-ready skills and knowledge.
- CIHS provide structured and intentional academic and affective supports for every student, in and outside of class.
- Teacher advisors meet regularly with students to assess progress, identify needs, and provide personalized supports.
- CIHS ensure consistent, ongoing communication with students and families about student progress toward completion of personalized four or five-year plans. Staff ensure timely, collaborative interventions when students struggle.
- CIHS ensure intentional development of all students’ self-advocacy skills, especially in designing their personal pathways, navigating the college environment, and taking advantage of all available supports and opportunities.
- CIHS provide a wide range of opportunities for students to develop self-expression, leadership and social skills, including student-led clubs, intramural teams, service, and other extracurricular opportunities.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Challenger Early College

Catawba County Schools

IHE Partner: Catawba Valley Community College

- Provides a personal adult advocate for every student.
- Empowers student ownership of learning by:
 - Establishing student-led conferences at the end of each semester;
 - Supporting students to create digital portfolios with work samples from all classes; and
 - Structuring time for students to demonstrate academic growth.

Student-Led Conferences at Challenger Early College are a pillar of student engagement and are scheduled at the end of each semester as a culminating event. Each student works with a staff member who serves as a Personal Adult Advocate (PAA). Upon arrival in professional attire, students introduce their parent or guardian to the PAA, who joins the conference to support the student and interact with their guest. Students create a virtual portfolio and provide work samples from all high school and college classes, as well as reflections from clubs and extracurricular activities. Students are encouraged not to display their best grades, but rather assignments that demonstrate growth over time. Challenger Early College offers face to face and remote options for Student-Led Conferences to ensure access.

Gaston Early College

Gaston County Schools

IHE Partner: Gaston College

- Strengthens student supports using a design approach to student communication and family engagement by:
 - Keeping students and parents connected using the Remind App;
 - Creating How-To Guides to help families navigate Canvas and PowerSchool; and
 - Enhancing outreach with weekly newsletters and social media blasts.

Gaston Early College designs their approach to student communication and family engagement. All staff and students use the Remind app extensively, sharing class codes with parents and guardians. Gaston Early College has been recognized by Remind as having the highest level of engagement possible through the platform. Staff create numerous how-to guide videos to help parents navigate Canvas and PowerSchool. They push out several social media blasts each semester aimed at students, parents, and guardians. Teachers create weekly newsletters with hyperlinks and details of upcoming work, leaving no stone unturned in helping families stay informed and engaged.



Robeson Early College

Public Schools of Robeson County

IHE Partner: Robeson Community College

- Develops student leadership through extra-curricular opportunities.
- Fosters a mindset of civic responsibility and service.
- Promotes an interest in STEM through extra-curricular clubs.

Students at Robeson Early College are required to join at least two extra-curricular clubs as part of their overall student-development programming. Examples include Robotics club, math club, Christian club, Go Green club, Science Olympiad, Native American Student Association, Drama club, and the College Student Government Association. These clubs are active in the community: the Math and Christian clubs visit nursing homes near campus, learning local history while talking with residents. The Robotics club visits middle schools, talking with students to increase interest in STEM subjects and careers. The NASA club volunteers tutoring elementary students.

Rockingham Early College

Rockingham County Schools

IHE Partner: Rockingham Community College

- Conducts weekly Calibration Around Student Achievement staff meetings to ensure teachers review, reflect, and respond to ongoing student data by:
 - Analyzing data to improve student supports; and
 - Supporting college success through targeted high school interventions.
- Implements virtual office hours for students who need extra support.

Staff at Rockingham Early College meet each week in Calibration Around Student Achievement meetings to analyze student data and enhance student supports. Each student participates in a student-centered conference, which informs data collection. Seminar teachers require students to submit progress reports from college classes and connect struggling students with subject area teachers during virtual office hours. Early College teachers work with students to support successful completion of assignments in college courses.

Rutherford Early College

Rutherford County Schools

IHE Partner: Isothermal Community College

- Implements an enhanced model of Multi-Tiered System of Supports for CIHS students by:
 - Developing multiple strategies to better recognize when students struggle;
 - Employing distance learning advisors; and
 - Creating I SEE U Groups for Tier 1 Students.

Rutherford Early College enhances their Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to improve identification of students needing support. The distance learning advisor meets with all students weekly to check progress in high school and college coursework and submits weekly reports that are fed into the MTSS process. Staff meet bi-weekly to analyze data, plan intervention strategies, and maintain a data tracking system. Students most in need are assigned to an I SEE U group, limited to five students per teacher. These highly structured group sessions ensure students understand coursework, assignments, and due dates, and that they are engaging college support services. Teachers document what students and staff are responsible for and track progress over time. This enhanced system of student support has greatly reduced the number of students who fail a high school or college course.



Sampson Early College
Sampson County Schools

IHE Partner: Sampson Community College

- Supports the development of the whole child by:
 - Fostering a community of collaboration between all school staff;
 - Enhancing communications with students and families; and
 - Making home visits to ensure students' basic needs are met.

Sampson Early College staff collaborate to support the “whole child” of all students and each other. Together they support the social and emotional needs of all students, with special emphasis on students identified as at-risk. The counselor works closely with the social worker to provide support for those with excessive absences. Teachers, the counselor, college liaison, and administrators call parents or guardians regularly to make sure students are well, feel cared for, and are provided supports for completion of learning. They use the Remind App, and schedule home visits to stay in close contact with students and families.



LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONALISM

All staff commit to a shared responsibility for the success of every student and professionally lead in areas appropriate to their roles and expertise. Embedded and ongoing staff development sustains a supportive and professional school culture that promotes inquiry and the ongoing design work of innovative secondary education.

- Principals support all staff to implement innovative instructional practices. Principals are regularly present in classrooms to experience and participate in classroom culture and to monitor and support instructional practices.
- All teachers are leaders in their classrooms and co-leaders of a collaborative school culture that practices inquiry and a design approach to continuous improvement. Teacher input informs instructional decisions, as well as school improvement goals and measures.
- All staff celebrate the diversity of staff and student background, expertise, and experience.
- Common planning times for teachers support collaborative, innovative practices.
- CIHS support innovative instruction by implementing instructional rounds. Instructional rounds are non-evaluative teacher to teacher classroom visits and feedback, aligned to host teachers' student learning questions.
- All staff collaborate in an ongoing design process of continual school improvement, including analysis of data and student outcomes, shared decision making about priorities to develop and sustain innovative design and practice, and ongoing assessment of implementation.
- All staff collaborate to make informed decisions about professional development to support school improvement priorities.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Caldwell Early College

Caldwell County Schools

IHE Partner: Caldwell Community College

- Implements the Instructional Rounds Model of Professional Development by:
 - Structuring ongoing school-wide staff collaboration to engage all students;

- Embedding ongoing professional development; and
- Providing non-evaluative teacher to teacher feedback to improve instruction.

Caldwell Early College sustains Innovative Instructional Practice through school-wide instructional rounds. Each teacher hosts colleagues as observers in their classroom. All rounds consist of a pre-round, classroom observation, and a post-round reflection. During the pre-round, the host teacher shares the learning objectives and lesson plan and identifies specific feedback they would like to receive. Observers focus on student behaviors with guiding student learning questions, interact with students, and take notes on only those questions the host teacher shares. During the post-round, the host teacher reflects on the lesson, noting what went well. Observers provide feedback to help the teacher reflect further on their practice and encourage the teacher to consider positive ways to change, modify, or improve practice, in a non-evaluative and peer coaching manner. All staff participate in one of six Leadership Cadres aligned to the CIHS Design Elements. Instructional rounds are coordinated by the Leadership and Professionalism cadre.

Foothills CIHS Network

AgriScience Early College, Alexander Early College, Ashe Early College, Caldwell Early College, Challenger Early College, Cleveland Early College, Gaston Early College, Surry Early College, Wilkes Early College, and Yadkin Early College:

- Sustains a collaborative community of regional CIHS.
- Hosts study visits for shared learning and growth.
- Provides role-alike groups for principals, teachers, counselors, and college liaisons.

CIHS Principals in the Piedmont-Triad, Northwest and Southwest regions are committed to keeping the CIHS Design Elements at the forefront of their work. They formed a regional network to sustain innovation and to help onboard new leaders and staff. The Foothills CIHS Network includes 10 CIHS and provides a structure for ongoing collaborative practices, through face to face and virtual settings. Leaders in the Foothills CIHS Network organize study visits to each other's schools, inviting feedback from guests on specific school improvement goals. Teachers offer feedback to peers about student engagement strategies, which all these schools work to implement. Counselors and college liaisons meet to

support each other in their essential roles. These leaders support each other to ensure the full implementation of the CIHS Design Elements.

Innovation Early College

Pitt County Schools

IHE Partner: East Carolina University

- Designs and implements a unique school-wide Instructional Framework by:
 - Developing the framework through staff collaboration to ensure buy in and ownership;
 - Integrating human-centered design thinking across the curriculum; and
 - Requiring all students to participate in community service.

Staff at the Innovation Early College design their own Instructional Framework. All teachers implement core strategies, using project-based learning to ensure student engagement and authentic learning. Each project aligns to one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Using a human-centered design process, students learn empathy as a first step in developing a design. Each project requires students to understand the perspective of others and to pose solutions to real community challenges. Students track progress toward goal completion, with fellow students serving as accountability partners. Student voice and choice is emphasized, with student surveys for each class at the end of each semester. Students complete 100 hours of community service, often aligned to a class project.

Wayne School of Engineering

Wayne County Public Schools

IHE Partner: Wayne Community College

- Facilitates structured staff collaboration to focus on increasing student engagement, expanding rigor, and providing supports for improved learning outcomes by:
 - Developing a schedule that allows teachers to meet daily; and
 - Embedding ongoing professional development.

The Wayne School of Engineering brings all staff to school well before students arrive to create purposeful time each day for structured professional collaboration. The school day for teachers is from 9:15 am to 4:45 pm. Students are

at school from 10:30 am until 4:30 pm. Each morning of the week is designated for specific professional development. Monday mornings are for Lesson Tuning. Teachers share lesson plans with colleagues across the curriculum to gather feedback on student engagement strategies, rigor, scaffolding etc. Tuesday mornings are dedicated to departmental planning. Wednesday mornings find staff analyzing student data, supporting students who struggle, and developing enrichment opportunities. Thursday mornings are for professional development and school improvement. Friday mornings are a time for reflections and celebrations.

INNOVATIVE DESIGN AND OPERATIONS

CIHS are designed to partner with an IHE to blend secondary and post-secondary experiences in innovative ways. CIHS enable students to obtain a high school diploma and work towards an associate degree program, master a certificate or career-ready pathway, or earn up to two years of college credit within five years. CIHS leaders and staff commit to a design process of continuous improvement to ensure the ongoing successful implementation of the other CIHS Design Elements described in this Guide.

- CIHS target for recruitment and admission any or all of the identified target populations:
 - Students who would be the first in their families to graduate from college;
 - Student at risk of dropping out of high school; and
 - Students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction.
- CIHS recognize that students from populations traditionally underrepresented in higher education are often students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction, especially in an innovative school with a strong culture of personalized student supports.
- CIHS serve no more than 100 students per grade level. All are encouraged to serve as many students as possible up to 100 students per grade.
- CIHS are approved to operate by the State Board of Education and the applicable governing board of their IHE, and the NC General Assembly. Approved CIHS applications are renewed every five years.

- CIHS are designed to offer students opportunities beyond those available to traditional high school students through Career and College Promise, including expanded opportunities for dual enrollment and a college-bound campus and culture.
- Effective community outreach and communications with all stakeholders ensure successful recruitment of target population students.
- Student selection and admissions processes ensure target populations are served and do not create barriers to their enrollment.
- The school calendar and schedule are designed to ensure flexibility that optimize outcomes for all students and to maximize partnership opportunities with the IHE and other partners, including opportunities for work-based and community-based learning.
- School and college staff meet regularly to support the success of every student.
- Facilities, staffing, resources, and technology are sufficient to ensure the successful design and implementation of the CIHS model, aligned to the Design Elements described in this Guide.
- CIHS submit an annual report to NCDPI with details of student target populations, grade levels offered, programs of service, student enrollment, school effectiveness measures, and success stories.



PROMISING PRACTICES

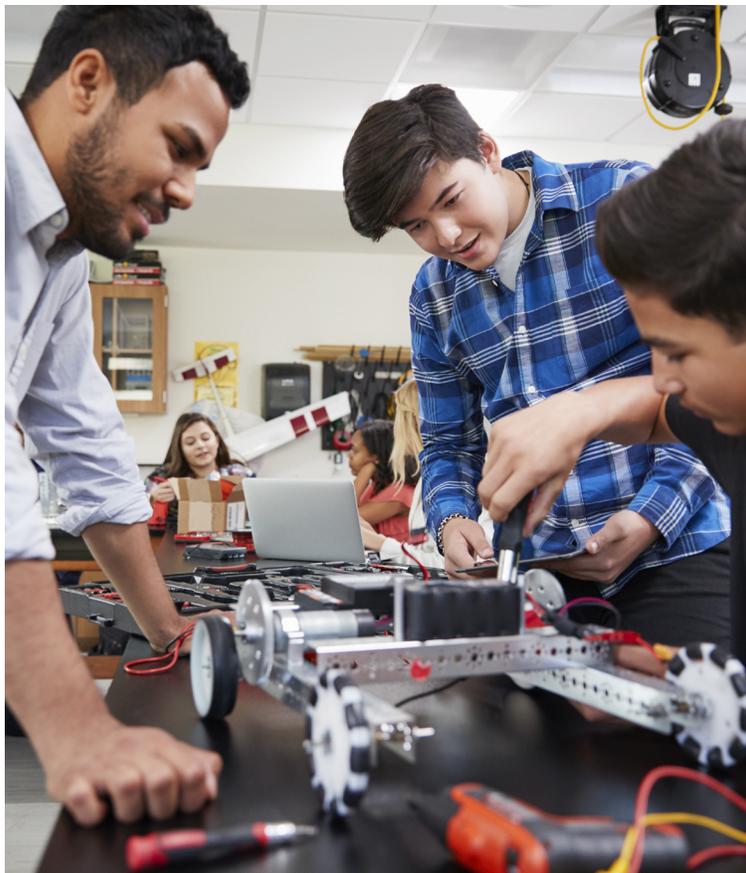
The Academy at Smith

Guilford County Schools

IHE Partner: Guilford Technical Community College

- Increases student and family engagement and access to information by:
 - Offering a Virtual Curriculum Fair;
 - Providing a blended course registration process for students and families;
 - Explaining course offerings through departmental videos; and
 - Sharing Career and Technical Education pathway opportunities.

The Academy at Smith hosts a Virtual Curriculum Fair to support enhanced student and family engagement. Each department creates a series of videos, with teachers explaining the courses, including career-ready pathway options, which students and families can access at their own pace. The principal and teachers show students how to use a padlet and send Virtual Curriculum Fair videos to all parents. The counselor keeps track of students going through the registration process, ensuring all engage with success.



Agriculture and Science Early College

Iredell-Statesville Schools

IHE Partner: Mitchell Community College

- Implements an exercise and recreation regimen to improve learning and memory, and help build positive teacher/student relationships by:
 - Creating a daily schedule that includes recreational time;
 - Providing exercise opportunities for all students; and
 - Facilitating opportunities for teachers and students to interact in a non-academic environment.

The Agriculture and Science Early College incorporates 25 minutes of recreation and exercise into the regular school day. Staff supervise this unstructured time outside. Students are strongly encouraged to walk for a few minutes, even if it is a little cool or damp. Many come prepared to go outside and play regardless of the weather. Activities include volleyball, passing a football, hitting tennis balls, and throwing frisbees. There is much research and anecdotal evidence that physical activity helps improve learning and memory. Staff report that this recreational time helps keep students from getting sleepy after lunch. This time is a great opportunity for students to make friends, and for staff to build supportive relationships with students.

Middle College High School

Durham Public Schools

IHE Partner: Durham Technical Community College

- Implements a school-wide collaborative effort to improve the social and emotional needs of students by:
 - Structuring time to intentionally address the needs of the whole student;
 - Nurturing students' feelings of safety and trust; and
 - Communicating school-wide behavioral expectations.

The Middle College at Durham Technical Community College hosts Wellness Wednesdays to address the social and emotional needs of students and to promote college and career readiness. The Wellness Team facilitates data analysis, monitoring student attendance and engagement. Staff administer a needs assessment and communicate

behavior expectations to all students and families. They create a schedule of Wellness Wednesday activities that include greeting every student by name, student to student interactions, practicing mindfulness, building a community of safety and trust, studying trauma and sensitivity, and engaging the Multi-Tiered System of Supports.

Pitt Early College

Pitt County Schools

IHE Partner: Pitt Community College

- Creates a Special Projects Fund to ensure students' and families' basic needs are met by:
 - Optimizing school resources from donated funds; and
 - Building community partnerships.
- Alleviates barriers to learning by:
 - Providing financial assistance to students' families;
 - Nurturing students' social and emotional well-being; and
 - Developing connections between school and home.

In order to better meet the whole child needs of their students, Pitt Early College maintains a Special Projects Fund that relies solely on donations from businesses and individuals. At the Principal's discretion, this money is used to pay electric bills when the lights get cut off, to pay rent or a mortgage, to buy mattresses or beds for students who do not have one, to pay a service company to make needed repairs, or to provide for other student needs. These efforts help lessen the physical and emotional stressors so students can focus on their education.

Wake STEM Early College

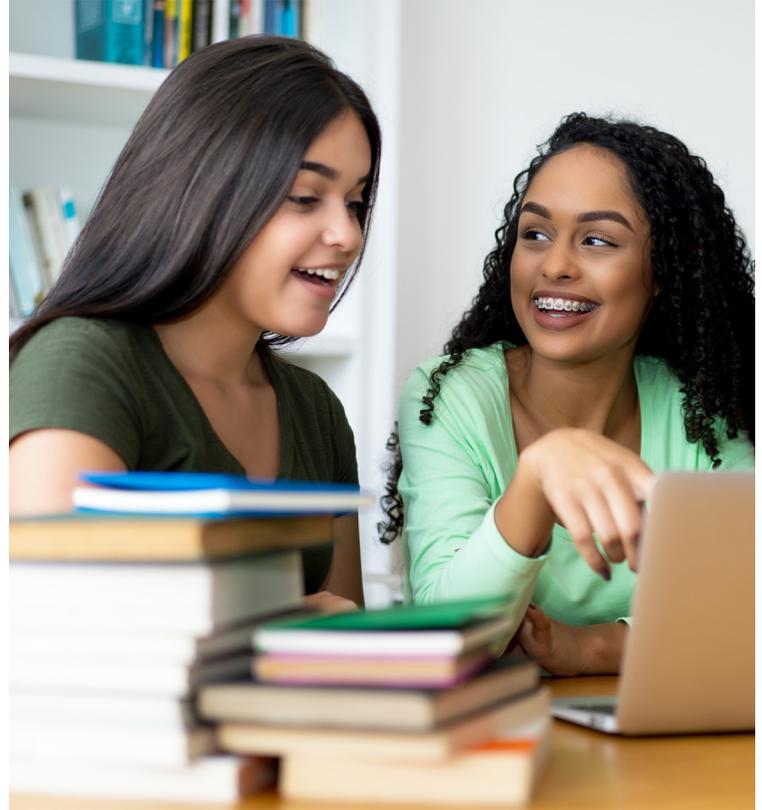
Wake County Schools

IHE Partner: North Carolina State University

- Invests in building personal connections between the principal and students.
- Promotes student ownership in the ongoing design, improvement, and operation of their school.

The principal at Wake STEM Early College gets to know his students in an innovative way: Talk to Me Tuesdays. Talk to Me Tuesdays is an open 45 minutes each Tuesday when students meet with the principal to share thoughts

and ideas, questions, and concerns, all focused on enhancing students' experiences at the early college. Students give feedback on school improvement initiatives that are underway, improving implementation in real time. Talk to Me Tuesdays led to the creation of a Principal's Advisory Committee, which gives students voice and choice in the ongoing design and operation of their school.



Related Research with Annotations

Allen, A., & Roberts, J. K. (2017). Evaluating implementation of the early college model through a theory of change. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 26(3), 250-257. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105678791702600306>

The researchers identified collaboration and strong communication with college partners and community organizations as a way to reduce barriers and promote student success within Ohio's Early College initiative. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of ongoing teacher professional development, the establishment of a college-going culture throughout the school, and the importance of buy-in from students, parents, and teachers.

Allen, T. O. (2016). Managing expectations and striving to succeed: A portrait of a Latino male student's experience in an early college high school. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*, 23(2), 93-105. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/montezuma/jarcc/2016/00000023/00000002/art00007>

This article explored the academic and social experiences of a Latino male student in an early college in Texas. With very limited scholarly work focusing on this demographic group, this study attempted to identify specific reasons for attrition of Latino males within the K-16 educational pipeline.



Ari, O., Fisher-Ari, T., Killacky, J., & Angel, R. (2017). "This is my family outside of my family": Care-based relating in a model early college high school. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 25(61), 61. <https://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/2726>

This study used a phenomenological qualitative research design, which is a sociological approach to understanding how individuals "make meaning" from their everyday lives and social interactions through shared experiences. Through this approach, a notable theme that emerged was the use of strong personal relationships and personalized support systems when students are faced with personal and academic challenges. The importance of these supports was noted by both students and teachers.

Barnett, E. A. (2018). Differentiated dual enrollment and other collegiate experiences: Lessons from the STEM Early College Expansion Partnership. <https://www.iff.org/resources/differentiated-dual-enrollment-and-other-collegiate-experiences/>

This guide applies lessons learned from the early college high school model to traditional high schools to broadly increase access to dual enrollment. This resource introduces a matrix framework that demonstrates a different way to think about differentiation within schools, considering a student's prior academic record (most advanced academically, mid-range, or least advanced students) and the context in which students' interests are focused (either to a general education or career-focused context).

Barnett, E., Bucceri, K., Hindo, C., & Kim, J. E. (2013). Ten key decisions in creating early colleges: Design options based on research. <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8BR8RKG>

This guide explores ten key design decisions when creating and evaluating the success of an early college. These questions are founded in the five core principles of the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI) originally funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Berger, A., Adelman, N., & Cole, S. (2010). The early college high school initiative: An overview of five evaluation years. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 85(3), 333-347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2010.491697>

This article reviewed the history of the Early College High School Initiative and the five nationally recognized core principles, summarizing key findings from annual evaluation reports of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and SRI International (SRI).

Bettinger, E., Long, B., Oreopoulos, P., & Sanbonmatsu, L. (2012). The role of application assistance and information in college decisions: Results from the H&R Block FAFSA experiment. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(3), 1205-1242. <https://oreopoulos.faculty.economics.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/bettinger-et-al-the-role-of-application-assistance-and-information-in-college-decisions-qje-2012.pdf>

This study found significant, positive impacts on the timeliness of FAFSA application submission, increases in the award of need-based grants, and an increased

likelihood of college attendance and persistence when students were provided structured, personalized assistance throughout the FAFSA aid process.

Bryan, J. (2005). Fostering educational resilience and achievement in urban schools through school-family-community partnerships. *Professional School Counseling*, 8(3), 219-227. <http://graingered.pbworks.com/f/Resilience-+School+%26+Family+Partnerships.pdf>

This article is not focused on early college high school students but highlights the need for partnerships and relationship building in an urban setting. It specifically emphasizes the importance of community organizations when students are overcoming systemic barriers to academic success. The article also notes the importance of continued professional development for teachers and creating a family-centered environment.

Edmunds, J. A., Arshavsky, N., Lewis, K., Thrift, B., Unlu, F., & Furey, J. (2017). Preparing students for college: Lessons learned from the early college. *NASSP Bulletin*, 101(2), 117-141. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1145050.pdf>

This article is part of a large-scale, longitudinal study funded by three consecutive grants from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) on the impacts of 19 early colleges in North Carolina utilizing a lottery-based experimental design. This article investigated the:

1. Impact on college readiness;
2. Perceptions of readiness; and
3. Supports for college readiness.

The study demonstrates the importance of enhanced academic preparation for college, with specific focus on academic behaviors and attitudes, utilizing a variety of strategies from seminars, to AVID classes, to tutoring sessions. The study highlights the importance of purposeful instruction within early colleges, especially for students who come from homes with limited postsecondary education experience.

Edmunds, J. A., Unlu, F., Furey, J., Glennie, E., & Arshavsky, N. (2020). What happens when you combine high school and college? The impact of the early college model on postsecondary performance and completion. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 42(2), 257-278. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373720912249>

This research also builds on the above mentioned large-scale, longitudinal study in North Carolina via a quantitative analysis of attainment of postsecondary credentials, postsecondary performance, and quantified impacts between underrepresented minority groups and students who would be the first in their families to graduate from college. When researchers looked at the “treated” cohort of students 6 years after the end of their Grade 12 year, they found that early college students were 11.3% more likely to attain a postsecondary credential than their peers. While impacts on all subgroups were significantly positive, these impacts were greater for non- underrepresented minority and non-first-generation college-goers.



Edmunds, J. A. (2016). Early college puts youth on a college track. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 97(5), 38-42. https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/J_Edmunds_Early_2016.pdf

This policy brief tells the story of “Jamal,” an African-American male student, who encountered many obstacles prior to enrolling in an early college in North Carolina. This story demonstrates the impact that the early college environment has on student engagement when coupled with personalized student support and innovative design and operations.

Mollet, A. L., Stier, M. J., Linley, J. L., & Locke, L. A. (2020). “I didn’t become a professor to teach high school”: Examining college educators’ perceptions of culture in early college high schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 53(1-2), 229-243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1755387>

This exploratory study investigated the discrepancies between the values and beliefs embedded within the early college high school model and the professional identity of higher education professionals. Utilizing the cultural prism of early college high schools, the study reports findings based on the discrepancies between the perceptions of:

1. Adopting either the K-12 or higher education cultural norms or blending the two;
2. Values embedded within the purpose and goals of higher education with regards to course rigor; and
3. Beliefs and assumptions with respect to pedagogy for early college students.



Ongaga, K. O. (2010). Students' learning experiences in an early college high school. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 85(3), 375-388. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0161956X.2010.491708>

This study examined students' learning experiences and the interaction between relationships and rigor within an early college environment. Ongaga reports three broad themes that emerged from the data:

1. Family influence;
2. Caring relationships (teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and student-parent relationships); and
3. Challenges within early colleges (rigor and creating an early college culture).

Rangel, V. S., & Coulson, H. L. (2017). Educational Resilience: How students navigate the challenges of attending an early college high school. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320911080_Educational_Resilience_How_students_navigate_the_challenges_of_attending_an_early_college_high_school

This paper reviews the history of an Early College High School Initiative and then presents three key themes that emerged during semi-structured focus groups:

1. The benefits of attending early college high schools, including relationships and college preparation;
2. The challenges of attending early college high schools, from adapting to a competitive culture, to the rigorous academic environment, to the impact on students' lifestyles; and
3. The factors that influence successful completion, from seeking support from teachers and peers, to self-determination and motivation, to the importance of learning time management and mastering coping mechanisms.

Warr, M., & West, R. E. (2020). Bridging academic disciplines with interdisciplinary project-based learning: challenges and opportunities. *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning*, 14(1) <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1257972>

This article examines the implementation of an interdisciplinary project-based learning design studio course within a college setting. While not specifically focused on early college high school students, the study highlights the benefits of the project-based inquiry approach to learning. Most notably, researchers reported that students highlighted the flexibility of courses: "...students designed their own learning experience and independently managed their work. Students were motivated by the nature of the problem to be solved, not by course grades (p.8)."

Zinth, J., & Barnett, E. A. (2018). Rethinking dual enrollment to reach more students. <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/90860/RethinkingDualEnrollmentStudents.pdf?sequence=1>

This policy brief details approaches to broaden dual enrollment access to engage more students, highlighting alternate eligibility criteria to identify and recruit middle-achieving students, such as regular high school

