

Benchmark 2: Partnership Agreement



The Early College High School shall have a current, signed memorandum of understanding (MOU), interlocal agreement (ILA) for each school year that:

- Defines the partnership between the school district(s) and the institution(s) of higher education (IHE) and addresses topics including, but not limited to, the ECHS location; transferability and applicability of college credit between a 2-year and 4-year institution; the allocation of costs for tuition, fees, and textbooks; and student transportation;
- States that the school district or charter in which the student is enrolled shall pay for college tuition (for all dual credit courses, including retakes), fees (including TSI administration fees), and required textbooks to the extent those charges are not waived by the partner IHE;
- Defines an active partnership between the school district(s) and the IHE(s), which shall include joint decision-making procedures that allow for the planning and implementation of a coherent program across institutions; and
- Includes a data-sharing agreement that promotes collaborative interventions with processes for collecting, sharing, and reviewing program and student data to assess the progress of students served by the ECHS.

Design Elements

All ECHSs shall develop, sign, and execute an MOU, ILA, or similar agreement that includes the following components (at a minimum):

1. Components that enhance pathway development, including:

- A description of how the goals of the dual credit program align with to Texas Statewide Dual Credit Goals
- Courses of study, which enables a student to combine high school courses and college-level courses to complete the Texas Core Curriculum and earn either an associate degree or at least 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree
- Curriculum alignment for each degree plan with a course equivalency crosswalk equating high school courses with college courses and the number of credits that may be earned for each course completed through the dual credit program
- Assurances that ECHS students are treated as dual credit students until graduation from the ECHS program. As such, they may take dual credit courses during the fall, spring, and summer sessions to meet the goals of the ECHS program.
- Assurances to ensure the IHE transcripts college credit earned through dual credit in the same semester that credit is earned
- Advising services for students on the transferability and applicability to baccalaureate degree plans for all college credit offered and earned. College credits earned during high school should promote transfer success from an associate degree to a bachelor's degree and beyond in their chosen field.

2. Components that articulate joint practices regarding:

- Respective roles and responsibilities for the campus/LEA and IHE in providing for and ensuring the quality and instructional rigor of the dual credit program
- ECHS students' and staff's access to the IHE facilities, services and resources
- Academic supports and guidance that will be provided to students participating in the dual credit program
- Student enrollment and attendance
- Grading and grading periods, including academic probation
- Instructional calendar, including location of each course that will be offered
- Disability services available to students in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for college courses for dual credit
- Teacher qualification processes, instructor availability, and course offerings
- Administration of statewide assessments of academic skills (TEC, Subchapter B, Chapter 39)
- Joint professional development for ECHS faculty and college and counselors/advisors (including both district and IHE faculty/staff)
- Provisions for discontinuing ECHS operation and to ensure students previously enrolled will have the opportunity to complete their course of study

3. Components that determine how costs will be shared:

- Sources of funding for dual credit courses offered through the program
- Instructional materials to be used and textbook adoption
- Transportation costs and fees
- Eligibility of ECHS students for financial assistance from the higher education partner(s), specifically, waivers for tuition and fees

4. A data sharing agreement that includes provisions for student data provided by the college to the high school, and enables collaborative data sharing on a regular basis to promote student support interventions during the semester and that also includes:
- Teacher data such as qualifications
 - Student-level data such as credit hours taken and earned, GPA, student academic progress, college and career readiness metrics (e.g., SAT/ACT), and formative regularly updated or real-time data (e.g., course enrollment/dropout, TSIA scores, 6-/9-week or mid-term grades, attendance for students at the high school)
 - Opportunities for expanding access to student data, such as granting ECHS teachers of record and campus administrators full instructor access

Required Activities and Products

Activities:

- All products shall be published on the ECHS's website and made available to TEA upon request.
- All products shall be maintained in accordance with the local records retention policy.
- MOU/ILA must be reviewed annually with the goal of improving programmatic supports and services for students and alignment to the Texas Statewide Dual Credit Goals.
- Campuses must submit their final signed MOU/ILA to TEA when initially applying for early college designation or are Provisionally designated.
- ECHS Campuses that are Designated early college or Distinguished early college are not required to submit the MOU/ILA during the annual designation process (but must have it available upon TEA request).
- ECHS campuses that are unable to meet state designation standards for outcomes-based measures upon completion of the provisional period may be required to resubmit their MOU/ILA to TEA.

Products:

Final, signed, and executed MOU/ILA or similar agreement