

# **Proposal for an Early College Program for Henderson County Schools**

## **Rationale for Early College:**

Early college programs are an innovative way for high school students to earn both a high school diploma and a two-year associate's degree (or up to two years of college credit toward a bachelor's degree) in the time it takes to go to high school. It is a re-engineered view of the relationship between secondary and post-secondary schools and how we use time. In general, these programs make it possible for some young adults, who otherwise may have less opportunity to continue with higher education, to garner expanded opportunities. Although some early college programs were created initially for underprivileged students who were typically first-generation college goers, English language learners, or other underrepresented students in higher education, today's early college programs are appealing to students and families that are looking for a wise investment and savings of their education dollars and time. One study found that early college students could earn as much as 60 college credits before graduating from high school. This alone may save the family and student hundreds of dollars.

In combination with the new Kentucky Dual Credit Scholarship funds and agreements for reduced tuition rates for high school students, Kentucky students are poised to save large sums of money on college costs.

*“Early college students leave with a high school diploma and an associate’s degree in 4 years, while inspiring average, underachieving, and highly-prepared students to work hard and stretch themselves intellectually, all the while saving money and time by integrating high school and college level work, and providing young people with guidance and coaching from adults through the first two years of college.”*

– Early College High School Initiative: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

## **What you might find at an early college program:**

- **Hard work:** In an early college program, four years of high school are completed, while simultaneously earning college credit. Academic rigor and demands are high.
- **Diversity:** According to [The Early College High Schools Initiative](#), nearly 75 percent of students across the nation enrolled in early college high schools are African-American or Latino.
- **Hard-working students:** Early College options are not for the student who fears hard work, wants a traditional high school experience, or needs much direction. Early College students are expected to manage their time and earn good grades.
- **Lots of support:** Students receive tutoring, supervision, counseling, and guidance from a dedicated, combined high school and college staff. Early college participants will be better prepared for college than the college freshman who did not receive this transitional guidance.
- **A smoother transition from high school to college:** Many early college graduates ([42 percent, by one estimate](#)) continue on at their school's partnering institution for college, which makes for an easier high school to college transition.

### What supporters say:

- **Preparation for college:** The transition from high school to college is a challenge for many, especially those whose parents do not know how to negotiate college. The early college helps ease this transition by providing support and assistance within the context and setting of the collaborative, dedicated efforts of the high school staff and the college staff.
- **Creates a college-bound mentality:** Spending every day in a class of college rigor encourages students to believe they can accomplish college work and to continue in college once they graduate from early college and high school.
- **Good value:** Two years of college is expensive. So getting out of high school with two years of college credit means that a student can either graduate from college sooner or take more advanced classes in college. Either way, the student gets more out of the money spent on college. In addition, taking advantage of dual credit scholarships and current dual credit tuition agreement, graduating from high school with two years of college credit means a considerable savings of time and money for students.

## **Target Students:**

Our targeted population will be HCHS students who are not limited to, but likely to be, first generation college attenders and traditionally underrepresented college attenders. The targeted student will be one who has demonstrated high interest in post-secondary work, focused work ethic, seeks academic challenges and shows leadership ability. In addition, the student will have demonstrated regular school attendance and maintained a strong academic record. The focus will not solely be on gifted students, but rather on students who might face challenges in making the transition to college if they did not choose the Early College route. Recognizing that we have a population of students who are not interested in a career pathway and may not have the resources to marshal getting themselves into a four-year college program, Early College will assist such students with a “helping hand to get started in college before leaving high school.” However, Early College application will be available to any HCHS student. Criteria will be established for acceptance.

## **Vision:**

*The vision of HCHS Early College is to empower students to embrace higher education opportunities by overcoming all challenges and reducing any barriers.*

## **Mission:**

*The mission of HCHS Early College is to provide an advanced educational experience that equips students for success in college, career and life.*

## **Goal Statements:**

*Empower students to develop an academic course pathway that will lead to success in school and post-secondary life.*

*Advance and increase opportunities for students to earn college credit while in high school, thereby significantly increasing the support systems through agreements between the high school and college environments as they work together.*

*Provide a bridge of support for traditionally students who strongly desire to attend college.*