

**Early College High School at Delaware State University
Delaware Charter School Performance Fund 2015**

Overview of school

The mission of Early College High School at Delaware State University (ECHS) is to provide highly motivated students with a curriculum concentrating on science, technology, engineering, and math that is integrated with the relevant curriculum at Delaware State University such that all students graduate with one to two years of college credits, preparing them for completion of a four-year college program. The school provides a safe, caring, and nurturing environment that develops the academic and social skills and personal character traits necessary for successful college completion, with a special focus on first-generation college attendees.

The EDWorks Fast Track concept is being used as the learning platform for ECHS. Early college high schools are based on an innovative approach that takes into account the principle that academic rigor and access to higher education opportunities when combined with the dual benefit of saving time and money, is a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet serious intellectual challenges. Through blending high school and college in a challenging, yet supportive program, the early college model compresses the time that it takes for a student to complete high school and two years' worth of college coursework in a coherent course of study. ECHS combines the early college model with a focused approach that immerses students in an integrated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) learning experience.

A problem-based approach to teaching and learning is central to ECHS. High school teachers and university faculty introduce scientific concepts and processes, while students work collaboratively, applying multiple methods of inquiry and principles of the arts and engineering to solve problems in the three pathways of Agribusiness, Forensic Biology and Community Health. Students study and create models of complex systems and engage in analysis, prediction, debate and description of interactions among individuals, societies, and their environments.

How will Performance Fund Award be used?

ECHS is seeking \$250,000 in financial assistance through the Delaware Charter School Performance Fund to support:

Summer Bridge (\$140,000): An intensive summer bridge program is provided for all incoming 9th and 10th grade students and is designed to accelerate learning while building a school culture of success. The Summer Bridge Program is part of the EdWorks Early College High School Model. During the program, students will take college courses, earn college credit, and start to learn about the culture of the school. All incoming ninth graders will take a micro computing course to ensure they can take full advantage of the computer they will receive as part of their curriculum. All tenth graders will take Lifetime Fitness and Health which is a dual enrollment class that will give students their ½ health credit required for graduation. Students will take the Accuplacer assessment to determine baseline for their instruction as well as their readiness for taking college level courses by identifying academic strengths, interests and gaps. This individual comprehensive academic profile will inform and drive the individual student learning plans/maps. This time will also be used to establish a culture of learning, high expectations, and student empowerment/self-efficacy. Students will be explicitly taught how to navigate high school and college systems. Mandatory participation in this program for all freshmen and sophomore is part of a scaffolded, gradual-release model that enables students to build capacity

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and self-confidence over time with support from the high school staff. Funds will be used to pay for transportation to the five week program, stipends for college professors, stipends for high school physical education teachers, and salaries for other high school staff to cover the additional five weeks of the school year. Other materials that will be used by the students as they compete in design challenges will also be purchased.

College Textbooks (\$76,000) - Unlike traditional schools that can adopt a textbook that is used for many years, at ECHS, students must use the textbooks required by college professors. Because college professors change textbooks regularly, the cost to purchase textbooks is an annual expense. The Board of ECHS is committed to providing all students at the school with the appropriate classroom textbooks and materials to fully participate. College level textbooks can cost upwards of \$300, so this cost will be substantial.

Guidance Counselor (\$34,000) - While the ECHS will prepare students to confidently enter the college setting, the high school will serve as the home base for the ECHS students throughout the entire four-year experience allowing them to return to the high school for tutoring and advisement between college classes. The Guidance Counselor is a critical 11-month full-time position that focuses on providing guidance and direction to the students as they navigate the college campus and course offerings and also serves as a critical liaison between the University Admissions and Student Affairs staff. This role is also vital in tracking and documenting dual-credit courses in the School.

How will Performance Fund Award drive improved student performance?

In alignment with the EdWorks approach, the ECHS combines high school and college to form a coherent educational program in which students work toward a high school diploma and up to two years of college credits in four years of high school. EdWorks currently supports early college high schools that serve more than 14,000 students. The record of the students in their portfolio of schools is truly outstanding: 97 percent graduate from high school; 95 percent continue on to college, and 87 percent persist to a four year degree. 79% of students earn at least 1 year of college credit and 1 in 3 earn an associate degree or 2 years of college credit while in high school. Others earn a range of college credits, shortening their time to degree complete after high school. The budget items included in the ECHS Performance Fund request will help ensure success for the freshman and sophomore students for the 2015/16 school year and continue to build a positive reputation and track record for the school.

How will proposed plan advance the school's mission?

The successes that early college high schools have with students are dependent on the schools' intense focus on purposeful design and the implementation of key model elements. Early college high schools emphasize academic preparation, ongoing support, and success in higher education, offering a research-based alternative to traditional high school programs and promoting success for even the most struggling students. The proposed plan to fund the Summer Bridge Program, student text books and software as well as a portion of the guidance counselor salary will advance the mission of ECHS by providing the transition for students into a rigorous course of study and establishing a small-school environment and personalization where students are well known by their teachers and ready to start their school year with a sense of being supported in their academic achievement and social development.

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How will the school evaluate the success of the Performance Fund Award? What are the goals and metrics?

1. 100% of students enrolled in the 9th and 10th grade will participate in the Summer Bridge Program. This will ensure students are prepared for the rigorous expectations and course work they will encounter during their freshman and sophomore years.
2. At least 60 percent of all students will meet their growth targets in each tested subject and grade of the Smarter Balanced Assessment.
3. 9th grade students will earn a minimum of 6 college credits.
4. 10th grade students will earn a minimum of 9 college credits.

Detailed, fiscally sound budget accurately reflects the plan described in the narrative.

Budget Item	Amount
Summer Bridge: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher/professor stipends: \$80,000• Student transportation costs: \$40,000• Supplies and materials: \$20,000	\$140,000
College Textbooks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 400 textbooks @ \$100-\$300 each	\$76,000
Guidance Counselor	\$34,000
Total Budget	\$250,000

This funding support is needed because the school is still in start-up mode with only a portion of full enrollment. Once full enrollment is achieved after four years, ECHS will have sufficient funds to be self-sustaining.

How will the Performance Fund Award support plans for start-up or expansion

During the first year of operation Early College High School enrolled 125 ninth graders. These students had the opportunity to earn between 6 and 14 college credits, as well as 8 high school credits. In 2015-2016 the school will expand to 10th grade. New ninth graders were recruited to the school throughout the summer and fall to encourage students to apply during the choice period which opened in November and closed in January. At the end of the choice period the school recruited more than the allotted capacity at Grade 9 so a lottery was conducted to select who would be invited to the school for the second year of operation. As of June 5th, we currently have 113 10th grade students and 94 9th grade students enrolled.

The Performance Fund Award would be used to support the returning students and the new students as they prepare for the upcoming school year.

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Compelling evidence that the proposed use of funds will enable the school to meet proposed performance objectives and enable the school to improve academic performance for “high need” students?

One of the core principles of the ECHS is the commitment to serve students who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education, a group that overlaps significantly with the population of students deemed at risk. Early college high schools have traditionally been designed so that low-income youth, first-generation college-attendeers, English language learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education can earn a high school diploma and college credit simultaneously. The ECHS is intended to serve the unique needs of low income and first-generation college students and those from groups that are underrepresented in higher education, specifically in STEM disciplines. Based on our current data, at least 70 percent of incoming DSU students are first-generation college students. The majority (87 percent) has a tremendous financial need in relation to attending college, and the families of many are not able to provide any significant financial support to attain educational goals.

Delaware State University serves a similar demographic and anticipates that the ECHS will follow a similar trend of serving students from diverse and often high need communities. During the 2014/2015 school year, 59% of the ECHS students qualified for free and reduced lunches and 5.4% qualified for special education services. It is anticipated that the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch will be consistent during 2015/2016 and 8.5% will qualify for special education services.

Despite national data regarding similar student populations, the culture of success and support that is established at early college high schools has been successful in changing the odds for these students.

- On average, daily attendance rates for early college students in 2009 was 94%, and even higher for those students in the early college high schools located on college campuses.
- The average grade-to-grade promotion rate in early college schools is 85%.
- The average proficiency rate on state assessments in 2007-08 was 74% in English Language Arts and 67% in mathematics. Overall, early college schools scored 7 percentage points higher in both subject areas relative to high schools in their local districts.

100% of students to benefit from the proposed use of funds meet “high need” criteria.

Since the budget is for programs that impact the entire school, all ECHS students, including all “high need” students will benefit from a Performance Fund award. The Early College Model as designed and supported by EdWorks has proven results that will benefit all students enrolled, as noted by their success rates for students. Early College high school students are significantly more likely to enroll in college and earn a degree than their peers, according to the results of an updated study by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Some 23 percent of students received an associate degree within two years compared with 2 percent for those attending other high schools.