

Gaston County Schools and Gaston College Early College High School

Early College High School: Background and Overview

Gaston Early College High School (GECHS) is an *Innovative High School* located on the Gaston College campus in Dallas, N.C. The Early College High School is operated by Gaston County Schools and Gaston College through a joint partnership.

Early College first began in the fall of 2008 as the Bessemer City Early College High School and moved to the Gaston College campus in 2012. Students from across the county have the opportunity to apply to attend the Early College. The state funds the program and requires that it be housed on a community college campus unless the county has no community college – then the school system may house the program at a local high school.

The Early College allows high school students to take college courses at no additional cost and graduate from high school with a two-year college degree.

This exclusive, non-traditional high school offers Gaston County students a unique opportunity to receive a high school diploma while earning an Associate of Arts degree from the community college.

After graduation from the Early College, students may transfer to a four-year college/university (with two years of college already completed).

A ground-breaking and ingenious public high school, Early College combines the knowledge, hard work and resources of Gaston College and Gaston County Schools.

Early College High School Goals

The goals of the Gaston County Early College High School are:

- Provide exceptional educational opportunities for students who are not challenged by the traditional high school curriculum.
- Encourage first-generation college students to complete a college program.
- Foster a “college-going” culture among students.
- Provide a college experience for students who may not otherwise attend.
- Reduce the need for remedial courses for students entering college.

Early College High School: Fast Facts

- **Official Name:** Gaston Early College High School
- **Location:** Gaston College campus, Lena Sue Beam Building
- **Principal:** Sheila Wyont
- **Number of Students:** 250
- **Grade Span:** Grades 9-13
- **Program:** Offers combination of traditional high school and college courses
- **Degrees:** High School Diploma, Associate of Arts Degree
- **Number of Courses Per Day** – Four per day on a 90-minute block schedule and up to six (6) classes per semester
- **Elective Courses:** Focus is on courses for Associate of Arts Degree
- **Transportation:** Provided by GCS using the magnet school model
- **School Calendar:** School calendar is closely aligned to the college calendar
- **Extracurricular Opportunities:** Clubs, yearbook, service learning, student government

Early College High School Benefits

The benefits of the Early College High School program for Gaston County students and the school district include:

- Offers accelerated studies with more challenging curriculum.
- Features collaboration with post-secondary institutions that develops a seamless educational experience.
- Provides higher wage earning potential for students.
- Reduces dropout rate while increasing degree completion rates.
- Allows students to graduate from high school with an Associate of Arts degree.

Early College High School: Target Audience

- Student willing to attend a non-traditional high school that does not offer school athletics, band, or chorus.
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- First generation college students
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- Under-represented students in the college setting
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- Students with potential for success in non-traditional academic setting
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- Students open to a strong academic support system
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- Students who would benefit from accelerated course work (All high school courses are taught at Honors level and students receive Honors credit where applicable.)

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Early College High Selection Process

Selection for the Early College will be conducted through an application and lottery process. All rising ninth grade students will have an opportunity to apply to attend the Gaston County Early College High School.

- Select a cross-section of GCS students who reflect the population and diversity of Gaston County.
- Choose students through a lottery process using a fair and equitable procedure regardless of religion, political influence, or relationship with GCS or Gaston College.
- Use an application process and an outside agency to assist with student selection.