Early College High Schools (ECHS) enable students who are least likely to attend college to simultaneously enroll in both high school and college.

**KEY FACTS**

- ECHS students enroll in a blended curriculum of high school and college courses.
- Students can earn 60 college credit hours at no cost to them.
- In school year 2014–15, school districts operated 106 ECHSs, an increase from the 65 ECHSs in school year 2013–14.

**BUDGETARY IMPACT**

During the 2012–13 and 2014–15 biennia, the Legislature funded ECHSs through Texas Education Agency (TEA) riders, with $6.0 million in All Funds appropriated for both ECHS and Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) initiatives each biennium.

In the 2016–17 biennium, the Legislature funded ECHSs through a TEA rider of $6.0 million in All Funds and funded T-STEM initiatives using a separate TEA rider.

**STATUTORY REFERENCES**

The Texas Education Code, Section 29.908
degree or a doctoral degree with 18 graduate hours in the discipline that is being taught. For workforce education courses, SACS requires a bachelor’s degree in the discipline or an associate’s degree with demonstrated competencies in the discipline.

FINANCING EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS AND SECONDARY SCHOOL–PUBLIC COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS
The Eighty-second Legislature, Regular Session, 2011, funded ECHSs through a TEA rider, which appropriated $6.0 million in All Funds for ECHS and Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) initiatives. During the 2012–13 biennium, funding expended specifically for ECHSs included $1,551,516 in technical assistance and $21,865 in grants to schools. TEA spent the remaining $4.4 million on items that simultaneously benefited ECHS/T-STEM initiatives or were specifically for T-STEM initiatives. Technical assistance included coaches who provided guidance, professional development, curriculum support, and training for ECHSs. In the 2012–13 biennium, TEA awarded grants to mentor schools that provide support to new ECHSs. The Eighty-third Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, funded ECHSs through a TEA rider that appropriated $6.0 million in All Funds for ECHS and T-STEM initiatives in the 2014–15 biennium. Of the $6.0 million appropriated, TEA expended $3.0 million for ECHS and $3.0 million for T-STEM initiatives. The Eighty-fourth Legislature, 2015, funded ECHSs through the General Appropriations Act, 2016–17 Biennium, TEA, Rider 52, which appropriated $6.0 million All Funds to ECHSs, with T-STEM funded through a separate rider.

DUAL-CREDIT PROGRAMS
ECHSs differ from other dual-credit programs. Through school year 2014–15, according to the Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Section 4.161, and the Texas Education Code, Section 29.908, a student attending an ECHS was able enroll in college courses in grade nine, whereas dual-credit students had to wait until grade 11 to enroll in college courses. However, House Bill 2812, Eighty-fourth Legislature, 2015, effective for school year 2015–16, authorizes students to enroll in dual-credit courses starting in grade nine. Unlike other dual-credit programs, ECHSs are required to provide support to students, although no statutory definition of support has been made.

SUCCESS OF EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS
A 2014 American Institutes for Research (AIR) report found that early college students were significantly more likely to enroll in college and earn a college degree than comparison students. During the study, 81.0 percent of early college students enrolled in college, compared with 72.0 percent of comparison students. In addition, 25.0 percent of early college students earned a college degree (typically an associate’s degree), compared with only 5.0 percent of comparison students. Although Texas ECHSs were not included in the study, these results show the positive effects of similar programs.

USEFUL REFERENCES
Texas Education Agency: www.tea.state.tx.us
Educate Texas: www.edtx.org
Texas Early College High Schools: www.txechs.com

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