Early College Designs:
Expanding a Strategy for Achieving College for All

An Informational Webinar for Educators and Policymakers
January 12, 2011
WEBINAR PRESENTERS

• **Joel Vargas**, Vice President, High School Through College, JFF

• **Ed Blaha**, Superintendent, Hidalgo Independent School District

• **Alma Garcia**, Program Officer, Texas High School Project

• **Nancy Hoffman**, Vice President and Senior Advisor, JFF
WHY EARLY COLLEGE DESIGNS?

- **For Students**: Free college courses with support motivates students to accelerate: completed college coursework is a strong signal of college readiness; already college students by high school graduation

- **For Schools, Districts, and Postsecondary Institutions**: Alignment of high school college- and career-ready standards with college courses; students enter college without need for remediation

- **For States**: Return on the investment in lower cost to degree completion, more college graduates

Our Aim: Move from small early college schools to district early college designs. All students supported to achieve at least 12 college credits by the end of high school (including college math and composition).
TODAY’S OBJECTIVES

• Share latest research on early college designs

• Present Hidalgo ISD, an exemplar of an early college district

• Highlight how one state intermediary—the Texas High School Project—is driving and scaling its “College for All” work

• Share the key state policies to facilitate the growth of early college designs
The Impetus for Early College Expansion Efforts

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<th>SCALE</th>
<th>RESEARCH</th>
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<td>• First early colleges opened in 2002</td>
<td>• Gold-standard experimental and quasi-experimental research confirms proof of concept</td>
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<td>• Today more than 200 schools serving 50,000 students in 24 states in the ECHSI</td>
<td>• SIS longitudinal data shows multiple positive student outcomes (i.e., college courses completed, college years completed, college matriculation)</td>
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<td>• Additional states building early college designs (i.e., NY, MA)</td>
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Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Research Findings

- Early college students are enrolling and progressing in key college preparatory classes at a **higher rate** compared to control group students.
- The ECHS design is **closing the achievement gap** for students of color.
- Early college students **outperform their peers** in comparison schools.

SIS Findings

- On average, early college graduates earn more than **20 college credits**.
- **39 percent** of graduates at early college schools open for four or more years earned more than one year of transferable college credits while in early college.
- **25 percent** of graduates at early college schools open for four or more years earned two years of college credit or an Associate’s degree.
- **86 percent** of early college graduates in 2009 went on to some form of postsecondary education in the fall of that year.
What makes Hidalgo ISD an Early College District?

• College credits for all students
• College-going culture
• Academic alignment and rigor
• Career and technical pathways
• Comprehensive student supports
• Supportive policies
THE HIDALGO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rural district encompassing 36 square miles.

Spanish is the home language for over 85% of residents.

Southern boundary parallels the Rio Grande River.

Includes 4 elementary schools, 1 middle school, 1 high school, and 1 alternative high school.

Total Enrollment: 3,519 students

Student Demographics (2008-09):
- 99.5% Hispanic, 0.2% African American, 0.2% White, 0.1% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 89% Economically Disadvantaged
- 72% At Risk
- 56% Limited English Proficient

Sources: Hidalgo Independent School District and Texas Education Agency [TEA], “2008-09 Academic Excellence Indicator System,” 2008-09 District Profile for Hidalgo ISD.
HIDALGO ISD: RESULTS

- More than **95 percent** of the Class of 2010 earned college credit during high school.

- In total, the students in the Class of 2010 earned a combined **3,743 college credit hours**.

- **Two-thirds** of the students earned at least a semester of credit.
Percent of Graduates Completing the Texas State Board of Education Recommended High School Program (RHSP) or Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP), 2004-2008

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>93.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>95.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>98.1</td>
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- Hidalgo ECHS
- Region 1
- State-Overall
- State-Hispanics
- State-Low Income
College Becomes a Visible Presence
• College banners line the walls of the schools
• Students wear college t-shirts on select days

Parent Engagement
• District shares with parents best ways to support students academically
• Districts help parents advocate for their children’s college and career goals

Aligned College and Career Courses
• More rigorous middle school curriculum aligned to early college program
• Freshman take course on “University Success.” By junior or senior year, students take college courses on campus.
• MS students take career exploration courses, HS students select a career pathway.

“Many people fear college. They think it’s going to be a completely different level and that you’re not going to be able to do it. We learned that we can do it.”

- Robert, 2010 HISD Graduate, 59 college credits by graduation
• Developed a range of postsecondary options to enable a broad student population to earn college credits.

• Gained support of college administrators who could champion the cause and leverage the necessary resources

• Created aligned coursework and comprehensive supports for students

• Encouraged professors to incorporate high-engagement strategies into their instruction

• Incentivized Hidalgo teachers to pursue adjunct status at the local universities to reduce costs
The district emphasizes a personal, hands-on approach with students and families and provides a wide range of counseling options and academic interventions.

### Individualized Counseling and Educational Planning

- The counselor’s role has expanded to include career and educational planning. Each counselor specializes in specific career pathways.

### Comprehensive Academic Tutoring and Accelerated Learning

- Student and teacher schedules allow for flexibility for tutoring and other accelerated learning opportunities.
- Teachers provide tutoring every afternoon and on Saturdays.
DISTRICT-WIDE SCALE-UP OF COLLEGE-READY DESIGNS

All Students:

College Ready,

College Connected
Focused on urban areas (Houston, Dallas/Fort Worth, San Antonio, Austin) and the Texas-Mexico border

Expanded reach to include more mid-size cities and rural locations with TEA partnership

Success has prompted districts to independently replicate school models with their own funding

Through 2008-09 school year
Source: Texas Education Agency 2006-07 academic year
• Utilize **ECHS as learning labs schools**
• Continue to use/monitor the **ECHS designation process** so districts can adhere to the fidelity to a proven model
• Use the ECHS to train **pre-service teachers** in innovative instruction
• Implement **district-wide reform** of rigorous instruction through district-wide ECHS expansion to feeder **middle schools**
• Use the **lessons learned** and **best practices** of ECHS to **expand and scale** innovative teaching/learning
• **Policy awareness** and **education** to bring about change and **lift barriers** to postsecondary access
1. Early college designs are prime college- and career-readiness levers in the statewide college-readiness strategy.

2. A public-private partnership or SEA office of college and career readiness manages the startup and expansion of early college designs.

3. College credit substitutes for high school credit, allowing students to accelerate in the specific subjects in which they demonstrate readiness.

4. Course quality meets college standards; school readies students for college coursework by 11th grade.

5. Funding provided by flex in use of ADA and FTE; no cost to students, no financial harm to secondary and postsecondary partners.

6. The state has an early college goal; measures, monitors, and reports on the program’s impact.
FOR MORE INFORMATION on early college designs, contact:

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Figure 1. Dual Enrollment Funding Streams

- K-12 & PSE Funding
  - ADA
  - FTE
  - Charter Funding
  - Textbook Funds

- Supplemental Dual Enrollment Funding
  - Statutory programs, legislative appropriations, agency programs
  - Start-up funds for comprehensive models: e.g., early college schools

- Other College/Career Ready Programs
  - GearUp
  - Perkins and Tech Prep
  - Alternative Education and Dropout Prevention
  - Advanced Placement
  - Other discretionary programs

- Financial Aid
  - State-funded college scholarships and means-tested financial aid
  - Tuition waivers or discounts
Resources

• College Success for All (http://bit.ly/dAtkwu)