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Update on the *Learn and Earn* Early College High School Initiative

In September 2004, Governor Mike Easley launched the *Learn and Earn* Early College High School Initiative in response to workforce needs in North Carolina and to the state's persistent dropout rate. The initiative is administered jointly by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina New Schools Project. It is designed to improve high schools, to better prepare students for college and careers, to create a seamless curriculum between high school and college, and to provide work-based learning experiences to students. Located on the campuses of two- or four- year colleges and universities, *Learn and Earn* early college high schools provide an academically rigorous course of study with the goal of ensuring that all students graduate with a high school diploma and two years of university transfer credit or an associate's degree. *Learn and Earn* early college high schools are intended to make a priority of serving students who are typically under-represented in the college-going population, such as students who are first generation college-going, students from low-income families, those who are members of a minority group and those who have met with failure in conventional schools. In addition, each *Learn and Earn* early college high school is expected to implement and exhibit a rigorous and far-reaching set of conditions, known as Design Principles, that lead to student success as judged by all students graduating ready for college, careers and life. Those Design Principles are:

- **Ready for College:** Innovative high schools are characterized by the pervasive, transparent, and consistent understanding that the school exists for the purpose of preparing all students for college and work. They maintain a common set of high standards for every student to overcome harmful tracking and sorting.
- **Powerful Teaching and Learning:** Innovative high schools are characterized by the presence of commonly held standards for high quality instructional practice. Teachers in these schools design instruction that ensures the development of critical thinking, application and problem-solving skills often neglected in traditional settings.
- **Personalization:** Staff in innovative high schools understand that knowing students well is an essential condition of helping them achieve academically. These high schools ensure that adults leverage knowledge of students in order to improve student learning.
- **Redefined Professionalism:** The responsibility to the shared vision of the innovative high school is evident in the collaborative, creative, and leadership roles of all adult staff in the school. The staff of these schools takes responsibility for the success of every student, holds themselves accountable to their colleagues, and is reflective about their roles.

- **Purposeful Design:** Innovative high schools are designed to create the conditions that ensure the other four design principles: ready for college, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, and redefined professionalism. The organization of time, space, and the allocation of resources ensures that these best practices become common practice.

SL 2007-323 calls on the State Board of Education to report the results of an annual evaluation of the *Learn and Earn* Early College High School Initiative. The Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) in conjunction with the North Carolina New Schools Project (NCNSP) is monitoring and evaluating the progress of the schools in implementing the school model and in the schools' effect on student achievement. NCDPI and NCNSP is partnering with Jobs for the Future in establishing a comprehensive student-level database to collect and analyze data on the achievement of students who attend *Learn and Earn* early college high schools. NCDPI and NCNSP also are partners along with SERVE, Duke University, Abt Associates and the University of North Carolina-Greensboro in a federally funded comprehensive research study on the effects of the *Learn and Earn* early college high schools model on student achievement and other outcomes. While substantial data from these two evaluation efforts will not be available for another year or two, this report will provide an update on the initiative and the schools that were open in 2007-08, as well as student performance data for these schools.

***Learn and Earn* Early College High Schools**

Forty-two *Learn and Earn* early college high schools were open for students during the 2007-08 school year. The 42 schools are located across 38 school districts across the state. Forty-one of these schools are working in partnership with a community college or university that is providing facilities for the school and college-level courses for the students. Of those 41, four are partnered with a UNC system school and 37 are partnered with a community college. The additional school, the Polk County Virtual Early College High School, is partnered with a virtual college partner, the UNC-Greensboro iSchool, and is located on a comprehensive high school campus. Students at the school access virtual college courses through the UNC-G iSchool. For a complete list of the 42 sites that were open in 2007-08, please see Attachment A.

Nine of the 42 sites existed as middle college high schools prior to the *Learn and Earn* initiative and became a part of the initiative to convert from a middle college into an early college. Middle college high schools are also located on a university or community college campus. However, students do not typically attend the school from 9th grade until graduation, and they are only guaranteed to complete some college credit and not a full two years of university transfer credit or an associate's degree.

Student Demographics

Collectively, the 42 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools open in 2007-08 served around 5,200 students, most of whom were 9th and 10th graders due to the age of the schools. Over the next three to four years, the schools will add an additional cohort of ninth graders until they reach their capacity of approximately 200-400 students each. Across the 42 schools, 41.3 percent of the student population was male and 58.7 percent was female. Slightly more than one-half (56.4 percent) of the student population was white, one-third (30.8 percent) was African-American, and 7.7 percent was Hispanic. Based on data available from 35 of the 42 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools, 69 percent of the students who were enrolled during the 2007-08 school year will be the first in their families to attend college (first generation college-going students – the target population for *Learn and Earn* early college high schools).¹ The number of students per grade level who were served in *Learn and Earn* early college high schools for the 2007-08 school year is presented in Table 1 below. Student demographic information on race and gender for the 42 schools combined is presented in the Table 2 below.

Table 1. Number of Students per Grade Level in *Learn and Earn* Early College High Schools, 2007-08

Grade Level	No. of Students
9th	2314
10th	1848
11th	696
12th	349
Total	5207

Source: 1st Month MLD data from NCDPI

¹ Data on first generation college-going students is from school-reported survey data. Each school establishes its own definition for first generation college-going (i.e. neither parent attended college, neither parent as a two- or four-year degree, etc.) based on its context with its higher education partner and district.

Table 2. Race and Gender of Students in *Learn and Earn* Early College High Schools, 2007-08

	Male	Female	Total
White	24.5%	31.9%	56.4%
Black	12.0%	18.9%	30.8%
Hispanic	2.8%	4.9%	7.7%
Other	2.0%	3.1%	5.1%
Total	41.3%	58.7%	100.0%

Source: NCDPI

ABC End-of-Course Test Results

In 2007-08, the 42 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools had performance composites (or the percent of students proficient on all End-of-Course tests) ranging from 41.5 percent to 96.0 percent, with more than one-half (52 percent) of the *Learn and Earn* early college high schools posting performance composites of 80 percent or greater (compared to 7 percent of the early college high schools' comparison high schools² and 13 percent for all high schools statewide). Four out of every five *Learn and Earn* early college high schools (86 percent) had performance composites that were greater than their comparison high school. Nearly two-thirds (60 percent) of *Learn and Earn* early college high schools in 2007-08 met the growth targets set for their school under state ABCs accountability measures (made expected growth), compared with 49 percent of the comparison high schools and 44 percent of all high schools statewide. Nearly one-third (29 percent) exceeded their growth targets (made high growth) compared to 22 percent of the comparison high schools and 16 percent of all high schools statewide.

Ninth Grade Promotion Rates

To graduate, a student must complete the required courses and be promoted from grade to grade. Research has shown that promotion from 9th grade is an especially strong indicator of a student's likelihood to graduate. During the 2006-07 school year (the most recent year for which promotion rates are currently available), the 33 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools that enrolled students that year reported 9th grade promotion

² NCNSP has strategically selected a traditional, comprehensive high school to serve as a comparison high school for each *Learn and Earn* early college high school. The comparison high school serves as a benchmark in order to more effectively judge the growth and progress of the early college high school in improving student achievement. Each comparison high school was selected based on its similarities to the early college high school on geographic location (either in the same school district or in a neighboring school district), its student demographics (primarily race, gender and the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch when available) and the school's prior student performance on End-of-Course tests.

rates ranging from 82 percent to 100 percent. Nearly nine of every 10 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools (88 percent) reported 9th grade promotion rates greater than 90 percent (compared with 30 percent of comparison schools), and nearly one-half (48 percent) of the schools promoted 100 percent of their 9th graders (no comparison schools accomplished this). Ninety-one percent of *Learn and Earn* early college high schools had 9th grade promotion rates that were greater than the rates for their comparison high schools. The 33 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools in 2006-07 had a combined 9th grade promotion rate of 96 percent, compared to a combined rate of 87 percent for the comparison high schools and 88 percent for all high schools statewide.

Dropout Rates

To graduate all students, schools must ensure that all students stay in school and do not dropout. During the 2006-07 school year (the most recent year for which dropout rates are currently available), the 33 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools that enrolled students that year reported school wide dropout rates ranging from 0 percent to 10.1 percent, with two-thirds of schools (64 percent) reporting **no dropouts** (no comparison schools reported no dropouts). Nearly nine out of every 10 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools (88 percent) reported dropout rates that were lower than the dropout rate for their comparison high school. The 33 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools had a combined school wide dropout rate in 2006-07 of 1.38 percent compared to a combined rate of 5.03 percent for their comparison high schools and 5.24 percent for all high schools statewide.

As mentioned earlier, a student's success in the 9th grade is crucial in terms of their eventual success in graduating from high school. Research has shown that 9th grade is the year when students are most likely to drop out of high school. For that reason, NCNSP and NCDPI also track dropout rates at the 9th grade in addition to schoolwide dropout rates for *Learn and Earn* early college high schools. During the 2006-07 school year (the most recent year for which 9th grade dropout rates are available), the 33 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools that enrolled students that year reported 9th grade dropout rates³ ranging from 0 percent to 4.76 percent, with nearly 8 in 10 schools (79 percent) reporting **no 9th grade dropouts** (no comparison schools reported no 9th grade dropouts). All but one of the 33 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools (97 percent) had 9th grade dropout rates that were lower than the 9th grade dropout rate for their comparison high school. The 33 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools had a combined 9th grade dropout rate of 0.52 percent, compared to a combined rate of 5.37 percent for their comparison high schools and 5.72 percent for all high schools statewide.

³ Ninth grade dropout rates were calculated using a formula similar to the NCDPI 9-12 grade dropout rate calculation formula. The 9th grade dropout rate was calculated by dividing the number of 9th grade dropouts by the average of the first month membership last day for the 9th grade classes for 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years plus the number of 9th grade dropouts.

Funding and Additional Support

The 42 *Learn and Earn* early college high schools that were open for students for the 2007-08 school year signed a five-year implementation agreement with NCDPI and NCNSP to receive grant funding from the state and technical assistance in the implementation of their early college high school. For details on the amount and uses of grant funding from the 2007-08 school year for each *Learn and Earn* early college high school, see Table 3 below.

Table 3. Approximate Allotments for *Learn and Earn* Early College High School Implementation Grant Funding, 2007-08

	Approx. Allotments 2007-08
School Change and Instructional Coaches	\$22,000
Teacher Professional Development	\$10,000
Principal Professional Development	\$6,000
1 Guidance Counselor and 1 Work-Based Learning Coordinator	\$140,000
1 College Liaison	\$68,000
Evaluation	\$3,500
Local Cash ¹	\$24,500
College Textbooks	\$35,000
Total:	\$309,000

¹ *Learn and Earn* ECHS that were in their first year of implementation receive an additional \$10,000 in local cash to help with additional first year implementation needs.

The implementation grant funding covers, among other things, the cost of a school change and instructional coach, professional development for teachers and principals, three instructional support positions, evaluation, local cash to cover additional expenses, including travel to professional development events and funding to purchase college textbooks for students.

School Change and Instructional Coaches: During an early college high school's first year, the school is assigned a professionally trained and highly experienced school change coach who serves as a facilitator for the planning and implementation of the school. Beginning in their second year and continuing through the fifth year of their implementation partnership, each *Learn and Earn* ECHS receives the services of a highly trained and experienced instructional coach who works directly with the faculty on-site to support sustained change in the instructional delivery model. Both types of coaches are identified and trained by NCNSP and NCDPI. Brokering organizations, such as the Leadership Group of the Carolinas and Bridgewood Educational Services, work with NCNSP and NCDPI to facilitate the coaching process.

Teacher and Principal Professional Development: Over the past year, NCNSP dramatically changed its program of service to teachers, principals and counselors in early college high schools. The new program of service, called Integrated System of School Support Services or IS4, combines the services of the instructional coach described above with the opportunity for schools to engage in peer review site visits and by adding the services of a leadership facilitator to support the work and development of principals.

- *Peer school reviews:* NCNSP broadened its professional development reach during the 2007-08 school year by creating local and regional networks of schools as a way to foster ongoing collaboration among faculty. The peer school reviews were organized to provide opportunities for focused reflection and discussion of NCNSP's design principles, based on observations of concrete classroom instruction as well as more general school functions and activities. The visits were the centerpiece of a series of regional symposia held in fall, winter and spring to build networks among teachers and schools and to strengthen practices key to effective learning: critical thinking, active questioning and problem solving. The classroom visits, based on a medical rounds model adopted by University Park Campus School in Worcester, Mass., were designed to help teachers learn from each other by making their practice public. Rounds allow visitors to rotate through the school, observe instruction, and look for key evidence of the design principles. The school visits ended with two separate post-round discussions when participants discussed what they observed in relation to selected design principles and guiding questions developed by the principal and teachers at the host school. The design of the peer school review maximizes learning for participants and minimizes the overall disruption to the school. The visits helped achieve two critical goals: Supporting schools as they grow towards full fidelity of the design principles and making classroom and schoolwide practice public to improve student achievement.
- *Leadership facilitators:* Principals in NCNSP schools were provided an additional level of support during the 2007-08 year from one of four leadership facilitators to help schools effectively introduce and execute the key school and instructional change embodied in the NCNSP Design Principles. All schools except those in their first year of implementation received the services of one of the leadership facilitators

during monthly school visits throughout the year. The new support positions, filled by seasoned principals under contract to NCNSP, were added to ensure school-based follow up to regional and statewide development programs focused on critical instructional approaches such as project-based learning and Critical Friends Groups. The facilitators also provided valuable support to inexperienced principals with untested leadership skills. It is critical for principals to understand, recognize and be able to discuss with teachers how to change instruction to ensure student success.

Instructional Support Positions: *Learn and Earn* ECHS implementation grants also provide each school with funding for one additional guidance counselor, one work-based, learning-experiences coordinator and one college liaison. The learning-experiences coordinator helps facilitate partnerships with community organizations and local businesses and to develop internships and job shadowing opportunities for ECHS students. The college liaison position helps connect the university or community college and the ECHS, and facilitates student placement in college courses and the identification of additional college resources to support the early college high school.

Sites Opening for the 2008-09 School Year

During the 2007-08 school year, 19 *Learn and Earn* ECHS sites were in the planning stage. Fourteen of those sites will open for students for the 2008-09. For a complete list of the 14 new *Learn and Earn* schools, please see Attachment B. Seven of the 14 new schools are partnered with community colleges, one is partnered with a UNC System school, one is partnered with a four-year private college and five virtual ECHS are partnered with the UNC-Greensboro iSchool.

Each planning site received a small planning grant from NCDPI and NCNSP (approximately \$40,000) which was used during the year to fund the services of a school change coach, various planning activities and additional associated costs. The planning activities included:

- *Planning support:* In July and December, NCNSP facilitated two planning support meetings for district and higher education partners from *Learn and Earn* ECHS planning teams. During the two meetings, the planning teams had the opportunity to meet and begin working with their school change coach, received their planning manual and planning tools, discussed the characteristics and skills of high school freshman and college freshman, discussed what intentional supports need to be put in place to help students be prepared by the time they are college freshmen and discussed the characteristics of a successful early college high school principal.
- *Study visits:* In October, November and January, NCNSP facilitated study visits to several model schools around the country for two members from each *Learn and Earn* ECHS planning team. Planning teams visited the International School at LaGuardia in New York, Middle College at LaGuardia in New York,

Youngstown State Early College High School in Ohio, Middle College High School at Southwest Community College in Memphis and LeMoyne-Owen Middle College in Memphis. Each planning team could send one LEA planning team member and one university or community college planning team member. Each visit included an initial briefing session, where NCNSP and NCDPI staff provided background information on the schools and led the participants in discussions about questions they hoped to answer. NCNSP staff also led participants in a discussion focused on an article about student support and reviewed the *Learn and Earn* ECHS design principles. After the visits, NCNSP and NCDPI staff led participants in a debriefing session when participants discussed what they observed, its significance, and what they intended to do with the information they gathered. Participants developed presentations on what they learned to share with their other planning team members. Each participant also received a packet before the trip that included background information on the schools they visited, tools to help them gather information from the visits, the article for discussion, and additional articles on high school redesign and the Design Principles.

- *2008 NCNSP Summer Institute:* Teams of teachers, principals and counselors from the 14 new *Learn and Earn* ECHS also participated in the 2008 NCNSP Summer Institute, which was focused on helping schools set clear objectives, measures and supports for students.

Evaluation Efforts

NCNSP and NCDPI have built a partnership with Jobs for the Future (JFF), the intermediary for the national Early College High School Initiative, to include North Carolina's ECHS in the Early College High School Initiative Student Information System. The Student Information System (SIS) collects and analyzes student-level data from the schools on such areas as demographics, attendance, course-taking and course-completion patterns, test scores, GPA, disciplinary actions, and number of college courses taken. The Student Information System will allow NCNSP, NCDPI and our ECHS to better track and evaluate the progress of students. Data from the database will be available next year.

SERVE, the Southeast Region Federal Education Laboratory, in partnership with Duke University, the North Carolina New Schools Project, UNC-Greensboro, Abt Associates and other organizations, has received funding from the U.S. Department of Education to conduct a rigorous, experimental research study of the *Learn and Earn* Early College High School Initiative. The research project will study the impact of the early college model on important student outcomes and will seek to determine the model's effectiveness with different student populations. The project will also study the implementation of the components of the ECHS by examining the association of those components with student outcomes. This study will provide useful information to NCNSP, NCDPI and our early colleges on how to improve our practice.

Attachment A. *Learn and Earn* Early College High Schools, 2007-08

School	District	Year Opened	Type of College Partner
Anson County Early College High School	Anson County Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College
Brunswick County Early College High School	Brunswick County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Buncombe County Early / Middle College	Buncombe County Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College
Caldwell Early College	Caldwell County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Catawba Valley Early College High School	Catawba County Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College
Tri-County Early College High School	Cherokee County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Sampson County Early College High School	Clinton City/Sampson	2005-06	2-year Community College
Southeastern Early College High School	Columbus County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Craven Early College High School	Craven County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Cross Creek Early College High School	Cumberland County Schools	2005-06	4-year Public University
Davidson Early College High School	Davidson County Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College

Davie County Early College High School	Davie County Schools	2007-08	2-year Community College
Josephine Dobbs Clement Early College High School	Durham Public Schools	2005-06	4-year Public University
Edgecombe County Early College High School	Edgecombe County Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College
Greene County Early College High School	Greene County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
The Early / Middle College at GTCC	Guilford County Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College
GTCC Early/Middle College of Entertainment Technology	Guilford County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
NC A&T University Early/Middle College High School	Guilford County Schools	2006-07	4-year Public University
GTCC Early / Middle College Greensboro	Guilford County Schools	2007-08	2-year Community College
Haywood Early College High School	Haywood County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
SandHoke Early College High School	Hoke County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Collaborative College for Technology and Leadership	Iredell-Statesville Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College

Lee County Early College High School	Lee County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Lenoir County Early College High School	Lenoir County Schools	2007-08	2-year Community College
Macon County Early College High School	Macon County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
McDowell Early College	McDowell County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Nash-Rocky Mount Early / Middle College High School	Nash-Rocky Mount Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College
Isaac Bear Early College High School	New Hanover County Schools	2006-07	4-year Public University
Wilmington Early College High School	New Hanover County Schools	2007-08	2-year Community College
Pender Early College High School	Pender County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Polk Virtual Early College High School	Polk County Schools	2007-08	Virtual College Partner
Randolph Early College High School	Randolph County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Richmond County Early College High School	Richmond County Schools	2007-08	2-year Community College
Robeson County Early College High School	Robeson County Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College

Rutherford Early College High School	Rutherford County Schools	2005-06	2-year Community College
Scotland Richmond Early College High School	Scotland County Schools	2007-08	2-year Community College
Stanly Early College High School	Stanly County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Surry Early College High School of Design	Surry County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Union County Early College	Union County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Wake Early College of Health Sciences	Wake County Schools	2006-07	2-year Community College
Wayne Early / Middle College High School	Wayne County Schools	2007-08	2-year Community College
Yadkin County Early College High School	Yadkin County Schools	2007-08	2-year Community College

Attachment B. *Learn and Earn* Early College High Schools Opening in 2008-09

School	District	Year Opened	Type of College Partner
Beaufort County Early College High School	Beaufort County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
Bertie County Early College High School	Bertie County Schools	2008-09	4-year Private University / 4-year Public University
Cleveland Early College High School	Cleveland County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
JP Knapp Early College High School	Currituck County Schools	2008-09	Virtual College Partner
Early / Middle College at Bennett College for Women	Guilford County Schools	2008-09	4-year Private University
Hertford County Early College	Hertford County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
Hyde County Early College High School	Hyde County Schools	2008-09	Virtual College Partner
Iredell-Statesville Visual and Performing Arts Early College High School	Iredell-Statesville Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
Blue Ridge Virtual Early College	Jackson County Schools	2008-09	Virtual College Partner
Jackson County Early College	Jackson County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
Johnston County Early College Academy	Johnston County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College

Madison County Early College High School	Madison County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
Rockingham Early College High School	Rockingham County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
Rowan County Early College	Rowan-Salisbury Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
Columbia iSchool	Tyrell County Schools	2008-09	Virtual College Partner
Vance County Early College High School	Vance County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
Warren Early College High School	Warren County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College
Early College of Forsyth	Winston-Salem / Forsyth County Schools	2008-09	2-year Community College