

## What are Early College High Schools?

Early college high schools (ECHS) are based on the premise that challenge, not remediation, will improve outcomes for students who are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary institutions. ECHSs are small schools designed so that students can earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree or up to two years of credit toward a bachelor's degree. ECHSs aim to improve high school graduation rates and better prepare students for high-skill careers by engaging them in a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum and compressing the number of years required to complete a college degree.

As of school year 2007–08, the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI), funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, had started approximately 160 schools in twenty-four states. Through the initiative's continued efforts, thirteen partner organizations will ultimately open about 250 small high schools, serving over 100,000 students annually. For more information on the ECHSI, please visit [www.earlycolleges.org](http://www.earlycolleges.org).

## Legislation that Supports Early College High Schools

### **Fast Track to College (H.R. 1578 and S. 627)**

The Fast Track to College bill authorizes the Secretary of Education to award matching six-year grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) that partner with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to establish or support dual-enrollment programs, such as early college high schools, that allow high school students to simultaneously earn credit toward a high school diploma and a postsecondary degree or certificate. The bill gives grant priority to LEAs serving low-income students and to LEAs within states that provide assistance to dual-enrollment programs.

The bill also authorizes the secretary to award six-year grants to states to plan and implement statewide strategies to make dual-enrollment programs more accessible to students who are underrepresented in postsecondary education and to provide technical assistance to local dual-enrollment programs. Finally, the bill directs the secretary to contract for an independent evaluation of the programs funded under the bill, to provide technical assistance to LEAs and their partners, and to disseminate information concerning best practices in dual-enrollment programs.<sup>1</sup>

### **Graduation Promise Act (Introduced in 110<sup>th</sup> Congress as S. 1185 and H.R. 2928)**

The Graduation Promise Act (GPA) would authorize \$2.5 billion in new funding to turn around low-performing high schools. The GPA would provide money to districts and states to implement effective, research-based reforms tailored to a low-performing school's specific needs. Early college high schools are one model that can be used for schools that need whole-school reform.

Title I of the GPA would authorize a \$2.4 billion High School Improvement and Dropout Reduction Fund to support the development of statewide systems of differentiated high school improvement in every state. Title II would authorize \$60 million in competitive grants for the development, implementation, and replication of effective secondary school models for struggling students and dropouts. Title III would authorize \$40 million in competitive grants to states to remove barriers and create innovative incentives to improve student outcomes for every young person in the state.

### **GRADUATES Act (Introduced in 110<sup>th</sup> Congress as S. 1920 and H.R. 3763)**

The GRADUATES Act would create a \$500 million Secondary School Innovation Fund to support partnerships to create models of innovation—including early college high schools and dual-enrollment opportunities—in secondary schools to increase student achievement and prepare students for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Such partnerships would consist of state education agencies or local education agencies working alongside institutes of higher education, community-based organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and/or school development organizations to create innovative models of reform in the nation's secondary schools.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov)

<sup>2</sup> "Key Pieces of High School Legislation Introduced in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress" <http://www.all4ed.org/files/Legislation.pdf>