

October 26, 2016

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: 2017-2018 Early College High School Designation

The purpose of this letter is to inform school districts and open-enrollment charter schools of an upcoming opportunity related to Early College High School (ECHS) designation. Information and timelines are provided below.

ECHS Designation

Early College High Schools are innovative high schools that allow students least likely to attend college an opportunity to earn a high school diploma and up to 60 college credit hours. Under the authority of [Texas Education Code \(TEC\) §29.908\(b\)](#) and [Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) §102.1091](#), the TEA has developed a designation process for ECHS. The designation process ensures that districts and colleges operating ECHS campuses maintain the integrity of the model, which was researched and designed to target and serve students who would not otherwise consider attending college.

In accordance with TAC §102.1091, the ECHS designation process is required for all existing and proposed ECHS campuses. Schools that receive the ECHS designation will receive the following benefits, contingent on legislative appropriations:

1) Recognition as an Approved ECHS Campus

Schools designated by TEA as state-approved ECHS campuses will receive various forms of media recognition including, but not limited to, identification on TEA's website as a state-approved ECHS campus and recognition in press releases.

2) Eligibility for State Programs

Designated ECHS campuses may take advantage of activities and programs designed by the Texas Legislature, the TEA, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) that target Early College High Schools. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a) Optional Flexible School Day: a program created by the Texas Legislature to provide ECHS campuses (and other specified schools) with a flexible method of attendance accounting. This program is designed to enable school districts or charters to receive funding for serving students outside of the regular school day.
- b) ECHS Convenings: Special events hosted by the TEA and the THECB for ECHS administrators and principals to provide input on policies and procedures that impact ECHS.

3) Membership in the ECHS Network

The TEA periodically provides opportunities for principals, teachers, and students at designated ECHS campuses throughout the ECHS network to share best practices through conferences and technical assistance sessions.

4) Access to Professional Development and Technical Assistance

Designated ECHS campuses will have access to high-quality professional development and technical assistance.

5) Recognition for Fidelity to the ECHS Model

Through the designation process, the TEA and the THECB formally approve and recognize those ECHS campuses that are designed and operated according to the ECHS Blueprint.

ECHS Designation Application

The application for ECHS designation is now available. Please note the following requirements for completing the designation application.

New ECHS Designation and Designation for ECHS Campuses in Operation Fewer than Three Years

- Districts seeking designation for a new ECHS or for an ECHS that has been in operation for *fewer than three years* must complete the full ECHS designation application. Currently designated ECHS campuses that were designated beginning in the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years must complete the full application. Information for ECHS campuses in operation three or more years has been communicated to the ECHS contact via email.
- The full application for ECHS designation is available online at <http://thetrc.org/ECHS>. From the Application screen, you will be directed to the Full Designation Application based on your County District Campus Number and the designation year on file for your campus. Campuses applying for designation as a new ECHS in the upcoming school year that have not yet been assigned a CDCN may enter "1111111111."
- Applications must be submitted to the TEA through the online application **on or before December 16, 2016**, in order to serve as a designated ECHS campus during the 2017-2018 school year. The TEA will notify each applicant of its approval status to operate a designated ECHS campus in Spring 2017.

Application Technical Assistance

- The ECHS designation application for 2017-2018 is an online, web-based application. Please note that the application does not support the Firefox web browser.

- A technical assistance webinar will be held during the application window to provide information regarding the full ECHS designation application. Participation in the technical assistance webinar is not required; however, attendance is strongly encouraged for new applicants or for administrators who are new to the ECHS application process. The webinar will provide potential applicants information about how to access and navigate the online, web-based application system.
- All questions regarding the completion of the designation application should be submitted in writing to ECHS@tea.texas.gov. Answers will be provided during the webinar (which will be recorded) and in an FAQ document.
- The ECHS Technical Assistance webinar will be held Thursday, November 10, 2016, at 1:30 p.m. (Central Time). Register at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8663148150973246980>

| ECHS DESIGNATION TIMELINE | | |
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| Tuesday, October 26, 2016 | Online ECHS designation application available at http://thetrc.org/ECHS . | |
| Thursday, November 10, 2016 1:30-3:00pm | Technical Assistance Webinar | Register at https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8663148150973246980 |
| Friday, December 16, 2016 | APPLICATION DUE | Applications must be <u>received at TEA no later than 5:00 p.m. on December 16, 2016</u> , in order to be eligible for designation as an Early College High School for the 2017-2018 school year. |
| Spring 2017 | Notification of designation for new ECHSs | Districts or charters submitting applications on behalf of a campus seeking new designation or designation for a campus in operation for less than three years will be notified of either selection or non-selection as a designated ECHS. |