

## HORRY COUNTY SCHOOLS EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

### **Summary**

The goal of Horry County Early College High School is to make higher education more accessible, affordable, and attractive by bridging the divide between high school and college for underserved populations.

The HCS Early College High School is a public school program where students attend school on the campus of Horry Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) and may earn up to two years of college credit by the time they graduate high school. This public high school has grades 9 – 12, has capacity for up to 400 students, and is accredited by The SC Dept. of Education and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The Early College program is also an AVID National Certified School. The HCS Early College High School was established in 2006 by Horry County Schools, Horry Georgetown Technical College, and Horry County Business/Education Expectations (BE2), local business partners. This free program provides transportation, tuition, technology, and books. Through AVID, the Early College provides academic supports, enrollment in dual enrollment courses, academic coaches, and opportunities for service learning projects.

Criteria for eligibility include students who have the potential to succeed in college with academic support, average standardized test scores, and a 2.0 or higher GPA. Other factors include the desire and determination to attend college, the first generation to attend college, under-representation in postsecondary education, and/or financial need.

The HCS Early College mission statement is “to provide a small, personalized learning community that accelerates our diverse student population to become responsible citizens who are strong critical thinkers, collaborators, and communicators who can successfully meet and face the challenges of competing in an ever-changing global society.” HCS Early College believes that college readiness is attainable by drawing on a college environment to build students’ identity as future college students.

### **Demographics**

- *Target Settings:* Urban, rural
- *Target Groups Served:* Groups traditionally underrepresented in post-secondary education
- *Districts Served:* Horry County Schools

### **Research and Evaluation**

*What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative? Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works.*

According to a study by the Jobs for the Future (JFF), Early College Expansion, 90% of early college students receive a diploma vs. 78% of students nationally; 30% of early college students earn an Associate’s degree or other credential along with their diploma vs. very few students nationally; and 71% of early college graduates enroll in college the semester following graduation vs. 54% of low-income graduates nationally. This is more proof that Early Colleges have higher high school graduation rates with most students graduating high school with some college credits and a large majority continuing to college after high school. Other findings emphasize the increase in school attendance rates and grade-to-grade promotions. Data is collected through Student Information System (SIS). The SIS is a highly secure system that provides data to support the Early College High School Initiative. The SIS collects aggregated data and unidentifiable, student-level data for the period beginning at least two years prior to enrollment in the early college high school through graduation or departure from the school.

The HCS Early College has continued to exceed performance goals. In addition to state end-of-course scores exceeding state and district averages, on the state's high school exit exam, 100% of the students passed both portions on the first attempt. Graduating seniors earned an average of 51 hours of college credit. 85% percent of the 2014 graduating seniors earned at least 30 or more college hours. The 2014 graduating class had an average college GPA of 2.61. 41% graduated with a weighted GPA of 3.75 or higher. 63 out of 81 seniors received scholarship money totaling \$2.03 million dollars. Thirty-three students graduated with honors. One hundred percent of the students' parents sign an agreement of support for their students, participating in conferences and support team meetings, and social and support services are provided to families. One hundred percent of the students participate in the AVID program, and instructors work with every student to develop 9-14 college and career goals and monitor student progress.

Teachers have developed a comprehensive program of service learning, peer tutoring, shadowing, and college success skills, and all students participate in these. Students gave back to the community through service projects which included Project Citizen Social Action; Oyster Recycling Project, Mats for the Homeless, River/Beach Sweep, Special Olympics Spring Games, the Pulsera Project, County-wide Clean Ups; and, for the third year, the Veterans' History Project, preserving oral histories of our nation's veterans for the US Library of Congress and a Veteran's Day Breakfast. The SS department, along with BE2, acquired the Gilder Lerhman Traveling Exhibit. We also won 41 awards in all caterogries at the Regional National History Day. The Recycling Committee continued its campaign to encourage responsible citizenship in preserving our environment. ECHS won the SC Bar Association's 2014 Project Citizen State Showcase for the third year in a row. This year the Horry County Solid Waste Authority Recycling Student of the Year was an ECHS student. The AVID tutoring is an integral part of the success of our students. We are now beginning to see our alumni come back to be tutors as they are completing their Bachelor's degree at Coastal Carolina University.

Additionally, ECHS students far surpassed Early College students nationally, with 100% earning college credits, 85% earning more than one year of college credit, and 44% earning an associate's degree or two years of college credit in addition to earning their high school diplomas. Horry County Schools monitors the program success through annual performance goals to include student performance on state end-of-course tests, high school exit exam, MAP testing, the college placement testing COMPASS, and in college and high school courses. In addition, survey data from parents, students, and teachers are reviewed regarding school climate and school/community relationships. Student engagement in service is also measured. The school's performance is also presented in the SC Annual School Report Card.

Not only does the partnership between Horry County Schools and Horry Georgetown Technical College ensure that students earn college credits, but a community partnership, Horry County Business/Education Expectations (BE2) supported scholarships for additional education. During this past year, through the partnership with our technical college, 11 Early College graduates were awarded \$5,500 in scholarships, and through the Business Education/Expectations partnership scholarships were awarded to 14 Early College graduates to continue at a four year institution. Great things happen every day at ECHS. We are the Trailblazers! – "Being the best we can be."

## **Resources**

- *Annual Cost:* \$2.8 million
- *Funding Sources:* District and state allocations. HGTC provides our location and funds other on-site needs. HGTC also provides a Presidential Scholarship for tuition for one additional school year. Private funding is provided by BE2 for enrichment activities and scholarships to three state universities for graduates.
- *Staffing Needs:* Principal, AP, Guidance Counselor, 23 Teachers, Guidance Counselor, Instructional Coach, Nurse, 2 Secretaries, Bookkeeper, 3 Cafeteria Staff, and 2 Custodians.
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* The high school is located on the Conway campus of Horry Georgetown Technical College.
- *Partner Organizations:* Horry County Schools, Horry-Georgetown Technical College and Horry County Business/Education Expectations (BE2) Partnership

## **Contact Information**

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Kandi Fleming-Jones (right) hugs each student as about 80 are graduated from Horry County Early College High School on Tuesday, June 3, 2014, in the HTC Center at Coastal Carolina University. Fleming-Jones is the principal. Photo by Janet Blackmon Morgan / jblackmon@thesunnews.com

