

INNOVATOR

News about high school innovation

May 3, 2010

Welcome to INNOVATOR, a bimonthly report on high school change in North Carolina from the North Carolina New Schools Project. INNOVATOR informs practitioners, policy makers, and friends of public education about high school innovation in North Carolina as well as success stories and research from across the nation.

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ECHS Week highlights innovation's success nationwide

As the inaugural classes at North Carolina's first early college high schools prepare to graduate in the coming weeks, the success of this innovative approach will be recognized across the nation during [Early College High School Week 2010](#), May 3-9.

The weeklong celebration raises the profile of the break-the-mold schools that open college access to students who might otherwise stop short of college or even high school graduation. The schools, aimed at students typically under-represented in college, enable students to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or two years of transferable college credit - tuition free - within four or five years.

No state has made a larger investment than North Carolina in these hybrid public schools, most of which are located on community college and university campuses. The first 13 early college high schools in the state opened their doors in 2005. This number has since grown to 70 schools, which account for a third of the 210 early colleges nationwide. North Carolina's 10,500 students represent about one of every five enrolled this year in early college across the country.

"North Carolina is a leader in educational innovation, and new approaches to high school are key to making sure every student graduates ready for college, a career or technical training," said Gov. Beverly Perdue.

The state's early college high schools are run as partnerships between local school districts and institutions or higher education with support from the N.C. Department of Public Instruction

and the North Carolina New Schools Project, a non-profit organization. The schools are demonstrating strong results, with few dropouts, high student achievement and passing rates on college courses that often exceed those of college-age students.

"The early college numbers tell the story about innovation and student success," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson.

Early college high schools blend high school and college to challenge and support students and to ensure that they succeed in tackling college-level work. Also, the schools lift what can be a significant financial barrier for many students and their families at a time when the average cost of one year of public college nationally exceeds \$6,000. The combined tuition savings last year for the nearly 7,000 students in early college high schools on North Carolina's community college campuses reached an estimated \$3.6 million.

"These schools are making a significant difference for students across North Carolina," said Tony Habit, president of the North Carolina New Schools Project. "They share the same high expectation that every student graduates and every student graduates well-prepared for college and for work."

For Christopher Hubbard, who will graduate later this month from GTCC Early/Middle College in Guilford County, five years of early college gave him a clear sense of direction and a strong career objective as a graphic artist.

"If I came out of a four-year school, I probably would have been still trying to figure out what to do," Hubbard said. "Truthfully, I probably wouldn't have gone to college."

Now, Christopher will be receiving an associate's degree in advertising and graphic design, and he plans to pursue a four-year degree at Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma or an arts school in Manhattan. He is one of 19 students graduating from the Guilford school with an associate's degree.

"Early college high schools play an important role in economic development in our state as they are preparing our future workforce for success in both higher education and jobs in the global economy," said State Board of Education Chairman Bill Harrison.

To help sharpen that focus on regional economic needs, the legislature last year created the Joining Our Business and Schools (JOBS) Commission, led by Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton, who as a state senator authored the 2003 Innovative Education Act that allowed for the creation of early colleges in North Carolina.

"I'm excited about this opportunity to strengthen our high school curricula and make education more relevant for students," said Dalton. "They'll be getting a leg up on 21st Century jobs, and our employers will benefit from a better-prepared workforce."

An ongoing study of early college high schools in North Carolina is finding that students in the schools are more likely to be making progress to college than similar students attending other high schools.

The study's first-year analysis found that by the end of 9th grade, 83 percent of early college students had successfully completed Algebra I, compared to 67 percent of students attending other schools. To be on track for college, students need to have completed English I and Algebra I by the end of 9th grade.

Other measures show promising outcomes for students:

- Early college high schools in North Carolina had a combined dropout rate of 0.7 percent in 2008-09, compared to a statewide dropout rate of 4.27 percent.

- The dropout rate for 9th graders in the early college high schools in 2008-09 was 0.2 percent, compared to 4.78 percent for all high schools statewide.
- Based on aggregate performance-composite scores on state End-of-Course exams in 2009, 86 percent of the early college high schools outperformed comparison high schools in their school districts.
- Almost half the early college high schools in 2008-09 had a performance composite of 80 percent or better, compared to less than a fifth of other high schools in the state.
- Seventy-five percent of all college courses taken by early college high school students in 2008-09 on community college campuses received a grade of C or better, compared to 70 percent of courses taken by other college students.

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Pender ECHS senior wins Morehead-Cain, ticket to Harvard

Diego Camposeco's resume dazzles: class president, Superintendent's Choice for Governor's School, president of the his county's Young Democrats and one of five students about to graduate in four years from Pender Early College High School with both a high school diploma and an associate's degree.

Now this 17-year-old student has two more elite honors to add to his list: acceptance to Harvard and only the third student from Pender County Schools to be awarded the Morehead-Cain Scholarship to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"I was excited to find out about the Morehead -- it's like it was meant for me," said Diego. "But Harvard is really cool. I wasn't expecting that one. I don't know anyone from where I'm from who goes to Harvard." Although he hasn't committed to either school yet, Diego says he's leaning toward UNC-Chapel Hill and a degree in international relations.

"Early College helped me stand out and make connections with people from all walks of life," said Diego. "There's so much leadership potential and the freedom to take charge of your own education in terms of the classes you can take." He described Pender Early College High School as "the Harvard of our town."

Pender Early College science teacher Lee Points has worked with Diego for three years as his advisor and teacher for earth science and biology. He says Diego has a keen understanding of his own talents and how to make smart decisions.

"Diego has an impressive clarity of purpose and is driven toward that goal without a lot of distractions," Points said, adding that Diego has benefited from the small, flexible early college environment. Although Diego is graduating in four years, Pender Early College is a five-year school, partnering with Cape Fear Community College, where students simultaneously earn high school and college credits.

"In a bigger, traditional school, the rigidity of the program or course offerings could have prevented him from pursuing the depth and breadth of knowledge that he could access here," Points said. "The atmosphere of this school and the willingness of faculty to open doors for him really make a difference. Being part of a smaller school where faculty and staff really know their students makes those opportunities possible for students like Diego."

Diego's parents are originally from Mexico. His mother, who completed middle school, works at the local fruit stand; his father, who completed high school, owns his own HVA/C business. The older brother to two younger sisters, Diego will be the first in his family to attend college.

The Morehead-Cain Scholarship, valued at \$80,000 over four years, includes full tuition and other expenses, a laptop computer, a fully-funded four-year Summer Enrichment Program and

Discovery Fund grants for educational opportunities. Fewer than four percent of this year's Morehead-Cain applicants will receive the award. Diego also received financial aid from Harvard for approximately \$48,000 of the \$50,000 annual costs.

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Innovative high school students named NC Teaching Fellows

Thirteen seniors graduating from 10 of North Carolina's innovative high schools have been chosen North Carolina Teaching Fellows, a prestigious scholarship program that covers much of a student's college costs in exchange for a four-year teaching commitment in the state's public schools. In addition, one student from another NCNSP school has been named as an alternate for the program.

Each year, 500 high school seniors are selected for the program, which provides \$6,500 per year in scholarship support. The average profile of a Teaching Fellow includes an SAT score over 1100, a high school GPA of 4.0 or more on a weighted scale, and a rank in the top 10 percent of his or her high school graduating class.

The students from schools that are partners with the North Carolina New Schools Project winning the scholarship are:

Camden County Schools

Michael Forrest Costa - CamTech High School

Catawba County Schools

Joshua Douglas Martin - Catawba Valley Early College

Cumberland County Schools

Tiera Y. Bunyan - Howard Health & Life Sciences High School

Granville County Schools

Holly Ann Lawler - South Granville High School of Business and Global Communications

Iredell-Statesville Schools

Brandon LaMont Morrison - Collaborative College for Technology

Charles Ray Naas, Jr. - Collaborative College for Technology

Northampton County Schools

Hilliary Alexis Johnson - Northampton West/STEM High School

Robeson County Schools

Hope Johnson - Robeson Early College High School

Randolph County Schools

Megan Dorothy Cates - Randolph Early College High School

Ariel Monique Weeks - Randolph Early College High School

Wake County Schools

Victoria Monique Jones - Wake Early College of Health and Sciences

Brooke Ashley King - Rec - Wake Early College of Health and Sciences

Carrie Susanne Barbour (alternate) - East Wake High School of Arts, Education and Global Studies

Wayne County Schools

Corbin Tobias Beary - Wayne Early/Middle College High School

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Teachers from NCNSP schools selected as Kenan Fellows

Teachers from three innovative high schools in the state won recognition recently when they were named among the latest class of the Kenan Fellows Program for Curriculum and Leadership Development at N.C. State University. The three teachers were among 19 in all selected as part of the Kenan Fellows class of 2012.

The competitive, two-year fellowship gives teachers the opportunity to interact with other outstanding teachers, policy and business leaders and research scientists, and offers professional development aimed at building strong instructional leadership skills. Teacher-fellows remain in their classroom and develop curriculum projects in conjunction with research mentors from campuses of the University of North Carolina or in private industry.

The three teachers from NCNSP partner schools selected as Kenan Fellows are Michael Belcher, from Hillside New Tech High School; Pam Hedgepeth, from Scotland High School of Health Sciences, and Keenan Locklear, from Robeson Early College High School.

Five teachers from innovative high schools are halfway through their Kenan Fellowships as part of the class of 2011. They are Dave Nourse, Rodney Schmitz and Staci Whitton, all from Lee Early College High School and Fredrica Nash and Angela Taylor, both from Hillside New Tech.

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INNOVATOR is produced by the North Carolina New Schools Project, an initiative of the Office of the Governor and the Education Cabinet with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other businesses and foundations. For story suggestions or to opt out of receiving this e-mail report, please send an e-mail to innovator@newschoolsproject.org or call Todd Silberman at (919) 277-3760.

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