



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL
2020-2021**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC) and Athens ISD (AISD) located in Henderson County in Texas (herein called the partners) for the creation of the PINNACLE EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL(ECHS). This MOU was originally signed on April 9, 2008, and updated on August 1, 2020.

The purpose of this agreement is to outline the collaboration of the partners, as listed above, in the PINNACLE Early College High School (ECHS). The Early College High School will offer traditionally underserved students (high percentage of at-risk, economically disadvantaged students, and first time college-goers) an opportunity to complete high school and, on or before the fifth anniversary of the student's first day of high school, receive a high school diploma and either earn an associate degree, at least 60 semester credit hours toward a baccalaureate degree, and/or earn a workforce certificate at no cost. In addition, ECHS will provide advanced academic opportunities, service learning, and college and career counseling. The initial cohort group contained 25 students, and has increased to approximately 75 students. The program will serve no more than 100 students in each grade level 9-12. During their attendance at ECHS, these students will develop a commitment to learning, a capacity for critical thinking, an understanding of their future role as community leaders, and the academic and other skills necessary to achieve success in these and other areas. All of the students graduating from ECHS will enter post-secondary education and/or training with significant advanced standing.

I. TERM

The terms of this agreement shall represent an ongoing commitment between the two parties. This agreement will be evaluated annually, and changes may be made with the agreement of both parties.

II. GOVERNANCE

The partners have created a two-level governance structure that includes an Advisory Board and Collaborative Council at the ECHS campus.

The responsibilities of the Advisory Board include.

- a. developing and implementing academic and professional policy as related to the ECHS;
- b. developing and implementing budgets and financial policy as related to the ECHS;
- c. evaluating the performance of the ECHS principal;
- d. evaluating the performance of the ECHS liaison;
- e. supervising the annual evaluation of the program and the effectiveness of the collaboration;

- f. ensuring adherence to any state and federal regulation that affect the wellbeing of students enrolled in ECHS; and
- g. reviewing, annually, the MOU and suggesting revisions as necessary.

Members of the Advisory Board will include AISD representatives: superintendent of schools (or designee), assistant superintendent, high school principal, TVCC president (or designee), TVCC vice president of instruction, TVCC associate vice president of academic affairs, and the TVCC associate vice president of workforce education.

The Advisory Board will meet annually and as needed.

A Collaborative Council will be comprised of the AISD high school principal, TVCC vice president of instruction, director of dual credit, ECHS liaison, ECHS principal, an ECHS faculty member, ECHS counselor, and two ECHS parents (which attend one meeting each semester). This group, chaired by the ECHS principal, will discuss implementation issues and make recommendations for changes to policies, practices, and procedures to the ECHS administrator for consideration.

The Collaborative Council will meet bi-weekly and as needed.

III. ACCESS TO TVCC FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND RESOURCES FOR ECHS STUDENTS

TVCC has allocated space for the ECHS in the General Studies Center on the TVCC campus. The program has been housed on campus since August 2008. As the number of students increase, additional space will be provided to meet these needs. Non-contiguous classrooms will be utilized for specialized facilities (e.g. science labs, fine arts, physical education) and for college credit classes taught in departmental buildings. In the event that TVCC does not have adequate space and/or equipment to teach courses in high need areas (i.e. science), AISD will provide classrooms, labs, and college-level equipment for instruction in the high need area.

TVCC will provide access to all campus buildings, including the student center for meetings, socialization, and cultural events at TVCC.

IV. BUILDING A COLLEGE CULTURE

The AISD and TVCC will establish a learning community that blends high school and college, instilling a college-going culture among the participating students. ECHS students will be required to:

1. develop an Individualized Graduation Plan;
2. participate in high school credit classes, and dual credit classes;
3. develop and participate in a service learning project in the community;
4. participate in an advisory class which provides college campus orientation, academic counseling, college and career planning and additional student support counseling;
5. achieve established academic proficiencies;
6. adhere to student behavioral expectations;

7. use college library resources and computer labs.

Upon mutual agreement, TVCC will assist with registration one time per semester for all students who are qualified and wish to enroll in TVCC courses. ECHS students will be required to complete TVCC assessment or placement procedures prior to enrolling in college credit classes.

V. ADMINISTRATION OF STATEWIDE INSTRUMENTS UNDER SUBCHAPTER B, CHAPTER 39

The Advisory Board will be responsible for establishing performance standards for ECHS based on state standards and will ensure that those standards are met on an on-going basis.

The ECHS will administer “a statewide assessment program that is knowledge- and skills-based to ensure school accountability for student achievement”. (TEA Code Sec. 39.022).

VI. GRADING PERIODS AND POLICIES

ECHS will run a 9-week grading cycle where progress reports will be sent home to parents at 3-week intervals with a report card sent home at the end of each nine weeks.

TVCC will report a number grade and credit awarded for TVCC courses to ECHS. ECHS will follow the AISD Grading Policy for high school courses taught at ECHS. ECHS will follow AISD rank and GPA policy.

ECHS will follow the TVCC policies regarding make up work and/or late work for all college courses taken for dual credit by ECHS students.

TVCC grades will post in the same semester in which they are earned.

VII. COURSES OF STUDY AND CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

All ECHS students will complete the foundation plus endorsement with distinguished level of achievement plan required for high school graduation. TVCC will provide access to all ECHS students courses in the Core 42-hour curriculum as well as other course options which are major-specific or could serve as electives. For all college courses offered for dual credit, TVCC will provide current course descriptions and syllabi as requested by ECHS staff and/or students. ECHS will be responsible for ensuring alignment between Texas Education Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and college course objectives in order to grant dual credit.

An articulated four-year curriculum (grades 9 – 12) has been developed that meets or exceeds the TEKS to provide a seamless transition from grade level to grade level and allow students to transition from sheltered (high school students only) dual credit classes in grades 9 and 10 to full integration (with traditional college students) in TVCC classes by grade 11. The curriculum represents advanced level coursework. Within this framework, students will be able to earn a high school diploma within a four-year period and 60 credit hours towards an associate’s degree, technical certification, and/or progress from an associate’s degree to baccalaureate degree.

TVCC liaisons will be responsible for working with ECHS faculty to develop and refine a clear and coherent academic program across institutions.

| Grade | TVCC Courses | High School Courses |
|------------------------|--|--|
| 9th Grade | BCIS 1305 (3 SCH) | BIM I (1 Credit) |
| | EDUC 1300 (3 SCH) | College Transition (1 Credit) |
| 10 th Grade | DRAM 1310 (3 SCH) | Theater Arts I (1 Credit) |
| | SPCH 1315 (3 SCH) | Professional Communications (1/2 Credit) |
| 11th Grade | ENGL 1301 (3 SCH) & ENGL 1302 (3 SCH) | English III (1 Credit) |
| | HIST 1301 (3 SCH) & HIST 1302 (3 SCH) | Advanced Social Studies 1 (1/2 Credit) & Advanced Social Studies II (1/2 Credit) |
| | BIOL 1408 (4 SCH) & BIOL 1409 (4 SCH) | Advanced Science (1 Credit) |
| | MATH 1314 (3 SCH) | Advanced Math (1 Credit) |
| 12th Grade | ENGL 2322 (3 SCH) & ENGL 2323 (3 SCH) or HUMA 1301 (3 SCH) | English IV (1 Credit) |
| | ECON 2301 (3 SCH) | Economics (1/2 Credit) |
| | GOVT 2305 (3 SCH) & | U.S. Government (1/2 Credit) |
| | GOVT 2306 (3 SCH) | Special Topics in Social Studies (1/2 Credit) |
| | Electives (7 SCH) | Electives |

VIII. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

New and/or used textbooks, available OER materials, workbooks, and other text-related materials will be provided by AISD prior to the first day of each new semester. All classroom technology required for instruction of college courses will be provided by TVCC. Student materials (notebook, folders, pen/pencils,) will be provided by the AISD.

The ECHS shall use a tiered method when purchasing college textbooks. The ECHS will purchase from the bookstore as a first choice. Textbook rentals will be from TVCC bookstore when feasible

with the delivery time of the books. As a last resort, the ECHS may seek outside rentals of textbooks.

IX. INSTRUCTIONAL CALENDAR

An instructional calendar has been collaboratively created to combine the AISD and TVCC calendars. In the event, TVCC is in session when the AISD is not, ECHS students will attend college classes. In the event, TVCC is not in session, but AISD is in session, ECHS students will attend AISD classes. ECHS will follow the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and AISD guidelines regarding the academic calendar year. Should TEA offer other options for Early College High Schools, these options will be considered.

ECHS officials will provide notice of at least two weeks for changes to instructional time including, but not limited to school assemblies, pep-rallies, special events, Benchmark Testing, and standardized testing. In regards to University Interscholastic League (UIL) advancement, sport competition advancement, or other extenuating circumstances, ECHS officials will notify the director of dual credit as early as possible.

X. ELIGIBILITY OF ECHS STUDENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

TVCC will scholarship the tuition and fees for all ECHS students enrolled in all college-credit courses with TVCC grant funds from the Ginger Murchison Foundation.

AISD will provide textbooks.

XI. OTHER FINANCIAL ISSUES

AISD will fund the ECHS principal, counselor, support staff and the ECHS liaison. TVCC, along with AISD, will house the ECHS staff. Out of operational budgets, AISD will support the ECHS' day-to-day operational costs, including administrative and staff salaries, transportation, facility maintenance and operations, and other school-related expenditures.

XII. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY, ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

Admission to ECHS will be limited to students served by the AISD. Recruitment efforts will focus on identifying highly capable students that may or may not be experiencing academic success. Recruitment efforts will also focus on at-risk students (as defined by TEA), historically underserved student populations, and first-generation college students. Students will be required to complete an application for admission. The application will serve to inform prospective students and their parents of the ECHS goals, curriculum, and support services.

All ECHS students will be required to complete and pass (obtain a respective acceptable score) placement exams required by TVCC such as Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Assessment, American College Test (ACT), Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), PLAN and/or State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in order to be eligible

to enroll in college courses offered for dual credit the same as any dual credit high school student enrolled in the AISD. ECHS students must meet all the prerequisites for college courses offered for dual credit through TVCC. ECHS students will follow the AISD attendance policy as stated in Education Code 25.085, 25.086.

XIII. PROVISIONS FOR DISCONTINUING

AISD and TVCC do not plan to close the PINNACLE Early College High School Program. However, in the event circumstances force the closure of the ECHS, the AISD and TVCC shall follow the terms stated in this MOU as they pertain to tuition at TVCC for junior and senior level students only. Students at the freshman and sophomore level shall return to the AISD High School campus to complete their high school graduation requirements.

XIV. STUDENT SUPPORT

Extraordinary steps will be taken by the partners to assist those students who may not be performing satisfactorily to succeed. Teacher mentors/advisors will meet individually with students to oversee their academic progress, monitor grading and matriculation decisions, and advise students on making positive post-graduation plans. Students will also peer-tutor each other and have access to ECHS tutors. TVCC is responsible for ensuring timely and efficient access to such services as academic advising and counseling, learning materials (e.g., library resources), and other services for which the student may be eligible. To ensure academic success, AISD and TVCC will provide counseling and academic support services, as needed.

AISD will assign a specific counselor to its ECHS. The individual will provide academic and counseling support to the ECHS learning community's students and their parents and work with the AISD student service personnel assigned to the ECHS in the areas of test preparation, remediation, and the development of an integrated support system for ECHS students across the two institutions.

ECHS students are required to adhere to AISD and TVCC regulations regarding facilities and equipment usage and TVCC and school districts' codes of conduct. Failure to do so will subject the student to appropriate action taken by AISD and TVCC, including suspension and dismissal.

Students with disabilities who are presently taking a TVCC college course are eligible to receive disability appropriate accommodations. Accommodations for dual credit students will be provided per the TVCC procedure for students. Disability appropriate accommodations will be determined by the TVCC disabilities coordinator in conjunction with ECHS input.

XV. TRANSPORTATION

AISD will provide transportation between AHS and TVCC for ECHS students to attend classes, tutorials, college visits, and cultural enrichment activities.

XVI. STUDENT SAFETY

An AISD administrator, counselor, or designee will be present on the TVCC campus during the hours in which ECHS students are in class on the TVCC campus during their freshman and sophomore year. The ECHS liaison and ECHS counselor office will be located in close proximity to assigned TVCC classrooms in use by ECHS students. TVCC campus police will be made aware of the high school students' presence on the campus. Other key TVCC personnel (administrative assistants, librarian, counselors, janitorial staff, and TVCC staff) will be made aware of the program and its location on the campus.

XVII. STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

ECHS students shall adhere to the following:

- a. AISD student code of conduct (outlined on the AISD website)
- b. TVCC student code of conduct (outlined in the current TVCC catalog)

ECHS students on a TVCC campus who participate in bad behavior, criminal acts, or other violations of the TVCC student code of conduct will be disciplined in accordance with the TVCC Student Code of Conduct Judicial Process and the District notified of such. (2020-2021 TVCC Catalog).

The TVCC Police Department is the primary police authority for TVCC. All ECHS students while on any TVCC campus shall be eligible for and receive all police services provided by the TVCC Police Department.

Responses to law enforcement, safety, or emergency related incidents shall be based upon the guidelines, and operational procedures of TVCC, along with local, state, and federal laws.

TVCC may, at its discretion, release primary law enforcement jurisdiction to the appropriate District on a case-by-case basis.

AISD agrees to notify the TVCC police department of any incident or situations involving ECHS students that may affect the public safety of the TVCC community.

Campus carry laws will be obeyed as the law was written during the 84 (R) Texas legislative session (SB 11).

The district will use trained dogs to alert school officials to the presence of prohibited or illegal items, including drugs and alcohol. At any time, trained dogs may be used around lockers and the areas around vehicles parked on school property. Searches of classrooms, common areas, or student belongings may also be conducted by trained dogs when students are not present. An item in a classroom, a locker, or a vehicle to which a trained dog alerts may be searched by school officials. The district will provide at least fifteen minutes notice to TVCC administrators when trained dogs will be present on the TVCC campus in the ECHS classrooms.

ECHS parents will report grievances to the ECHS principal and/or ECHS liaison, at which time the ECHS liaison will communicate any grievances to the director of dual credit. Upon confirmation from the ECHS liaison, students will be expected to follow the grievance process outlined in the 2020-2021 TVCC catalog for any academic or disciplinary appeal.

XVIII. MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Media and public relations regarding ECHS students will be managed according to the District and TVCC protocols.

PROVISIONS FOR COLLECTING AND SHARING STUDENT DATA

When considering the dissemination of student data, FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) guidelines will be followed by all AISD and TVCC staff. Parent initiated questions and concerns regarding dual credit coursework and student performance will be handled through ECHS staff. Parents of ECHS students will be discouraged from directly contacting the dual credit instructors from TVCC. If a parent contacts TVCC administration directly, the parent will be asked to contact the ECHS staff.

An annual report and other reports, as required, will be prepared and submitted to the administration of TEA on the progress of the ECHS under its purview. The report will be provided to participating partners and TVCC administration on an annual basis. The AISD will track ECHS student performance and completion rates in comparison to non-ECHS students.

Evaluation of the program and of the effectiveness of the collaboration will take place each academic year. The results of the evaluation will be reported at the end of each academic year. This evaluation will satisfy all federal and state guidelines for the evaluation of K-12 schools, in addition to any other evaluative guidelines established for the program.

XIX. FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION

Selection, Supervision, and Evaluation of Faculty Teaching College-Level Curricula:

TVCC controls all aspects of its educational programs. Each educational program for which college credit is awarded must be approved by the college administration. Using the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Principles of

Accreditation requirements, TVCC will approve and/or provide qualified faculty who demonstrate at least the minimum academic and/or experiential credentials to deliver college-level course content with high quality and effectiveness.

To be qualified and/or approved to serve as an instructor for TVCC, minimum educational and experiential criteria are required commensurate with the type of course being taught and level of program(s) in which the course is included.

- a. Instructors of academic transfer courses offered for dual credit must provide official transcripts reflecting a master's degree with at least 18 graduate hours successfully earned in the teaching discipline. Degrees and graduate credit hours held by faculty members, whether full-time or part-time, must have been earned at a U. S. regionally accredited institution. [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Principles of Accreditation, 6.2.a (Faculty Qualifications)]
- b. Instructors of career and technical education courses offered for dual credit must provide official transcripts reflecting either a minimum of a bachelor's degree in the teaching discipline, or associate's degree with demonstrated competencies (three years work experience) in the teaching discipline. Minimum educational/experiential requirements for career and technical education courses are determined by the TVCC program/award level in which the course is taught. Degrees and graduate credit hours held by faculty members, whether full-time or part-time, must have been earned at a U. S. regionally accredited institution. [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Principles of Accreditation, 6.2.a (Faculty Qualifications)]

Credentials are reviewed by the appropriate division chair, associate vice president of academic affairs, associate vice president of workforce education and the vice president of instruction. Where possible, TVCC faculty who teach college-level courses for the ECHS will be selected based upon their previous experience and success in teaching freshman courses, developmental and accelerated courses, and dual credit courses. Exceptions to this may occur in sophomore classes or other discipline-specific courses that have not traditionally reached out to these populations (for example, a sophomore-level science course).

The responsibility for the supervision and evaluation of faculty teaching college-level courses resides with the respective division chairperson that oversees the discipline area in which the course is being taught. The supervision and evaluation of faculty teaching college-level courses will be no different for TVCC faculty who teach courses that contain ECHS students than it is for faculty who teach courses that do not contain ECHS students.

Documentation of faculty qualifications and the evaluation of faculty teaching academic transfer and/or workforce education courses will be maintained in the office of the vice president of

instruction and the TVCC human resources office. TVCC faculty will be employed and compensated by TVCC.

To teach in ECHS, instructors must meet State certification requirements in their subject area to teach in the State of Texas and be designated as highly qualified.

AISD teachers in ECHS who meet the requirements necessary to teach courses for TVCC may apply to be an adjunct faculty for TVCC during their period of employment at ECHS and will enjoy the benefits thereof. In the event that TVCC is unable to provide adequate staffing for the student load in high demand fields (i.e. science), AISD will recruit and hire college-qualified faculty who meet the requirements to teach both high school and college-level courses. If AISD is not able to recruit an instructor who is able to teach the college-level high need courses, the AISD will provide alternative means for students obtaining college credit in the high need area, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses or other options that offer credit by examination.

Faculty of the ECHS will be evaluated annually by the ECHS principal who will recommend continued employment to AISD and TVCC with feedback from the Advisory Board. AISD faculty will be employed and compensated by AISD.

The ECHS principal will have decision-making authority in matters of budgeting, staffing, scheduling, student assessment, ECHS curriculum, and ECHS professional development in congruence with District policy and ECHS procedures.

XX. OUTREACH TO THE TARGET POPULATION AND ADMISSION

In order to secure the most appropriate students for this program, recruitment will begin with the AISD Middle School students. Assemblies and parent awareness programs will be held. To secure the broadest applicant pool possible, each of the partners will begin narrowing the ECHS recruitment process of qualified eighth grade students at AISD middle school in the spring of each year. A recruitment team comprised of the ECHS principal, counselor, and ECHS liaison will spearhead this effort. This process will include the following:

- a. the establishment of a recruitment webpage that will provide recruitment and admission information on the TVCC Dual Credit webpage;
- b. the distribution of recruitment/admission packets to all 7-8th grade students;
- c. meetings with all 7-12th grade counselors, as applicable, to discuss the ECHS and answer questions;
- d. student/parent meetings that will be held on the middle school or high school campuses that explain the opportunities and commitment required of ECHS students; and
- e. all recruitment and admission information presented in a bilingual mode.

TVCC and the AISD will develop college admission requirements to allow students to begin college credit coursework during the freshman year. Other than age differences, established admissions criteria for ECHS students will be the same as for all TVCC students.

XXI. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

In addition to common planning time during the day, the partners will provide time for the ECHS teachers and TVCC instructors to collaboratively create and implement a rigorous academic program. TVCC will also convene discipline-specific groups (teachers and leaders) from the district and TVCC biannually to focus on strategies that support success for all ECHS students, e.g., strategies for creating an ECHS culture, instructional practices, academic support structures, mentoring and advising programs, and policies. The ECHS will support participation of its teachers and leaders, and TVCC will support participation of its instructors and leaders in these endeavors. Each year, a subset of all partners (teachers, administrations, and TVCC personnel) will analyze student assessment data and conduct a needs assessment and plan professional development activities.

All of the partners will share in the responsibility of assisting parents in learning how to prepare their children for college. This will be done through work with the high school teachers, high school counselors, TVCC counselors, and TVCC administrators and instructors.

TVCC student services personnel will assist in the development of workshops to aid the high school counseling staff members in gaining knowledge about college admission, financial aid, and support services to assist ECHS students in succeeding at TVCC and other four-year colleges. In addition, TVCC will assist parents in learning how to prepare their children for college through academic and financial aid workshops.

XXII. SUSTAINABILITY

AISD has committed to the ECHS the use of local funds for instructional, administrative, and professional development. In turn, TVCC has agreed to provide administrative, instructional, and support services.

AISD has monetary support from the Ginger Murchison Foundation and a commitment from this organization to continue support through annual monetary contributions to help sustain the ECHS program. For the 2008-2009 school year, the Murchison Foundation contributed \$30,000 toward the program and provided each student with a new laptop. The foundation has committed up to \$120,000 annually in monetary support for the program based on needs for the future.

XXIII. FISCAL AGENT

AISD will act as the fiscal agent for the purposes of the Memorandum of Understanding. Under this arrangement, AISD will be the recipient of ECHS grant funds and will be acting as the intermediary for the ECHS.

XXIV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTNERS

- **Regulatory requirements**

All members of ECHS faculty and administration, as well as any other party connected to the program, must comply with regulations regarding the report of any and all alleged child abuse, school-related crimes, and sexual molestation.

The Advisory Board is charged with ensuring adherence to all applicable regulatory matters, whether local, state, or federal, which affect the wellbeing of students enrolled in ECHS.

- **Compliance with laws**

All signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding will be responsible for complying with applicable Federal, state and local laws, rules, mandatory policies, and guidelines

- **Insurance and indemnification**

To the extent permitted by law, parties to the Memorandum of Understanding agree to mutually indemnify, defend and hold each other harmless from any and all claims and losses accruing or resulting from any and all contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, laborers, and any other person, firm, or corporation furnishing or supplying work, services, materials, or supplies in connection with the performance of any subcontract let under this agreement, and from any and all claims and losses accruing or resulting to any person, firm, or corporation who may be injured or damaged by the acts of omissions of the other party in the performance of subcontract.

XXV. MODIFICATION OF THE AGREEMENT

This Memorandum of Understanding may be modified and amended only by mutual agreement of the parties in writing, and any such modification or amendments shall be attached and become a part of this collaboration as if set forth herein.

XXVI. TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT

TVCC and the AISD reserve the right to terminate this MOU upon service of written notice to the other party 90 days prior to the date of termination. In this event, the date of termination will be the day after the end of the semester during which the 90-day period expires.

Should TVCC or the AISD terminate its participation in the ECHS that entity will agree to return any unspent funds and provide a complete accounting for all expenditures to the date of termination.

XXVII. BUDGET

The budget has been prepared by the AISD.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the partners hereto have executed this Memorandum of Understanding as of the year and day indicated:

Janie Sims
Superintendent

Date 6/15/20

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the partners hereto have executed this Memorandum of Understanding as of the year and day indicated:

Dr. Jerry King
Dr. Jerry King, President

Date 6/16/20