



**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs):
ACPS - NOVA Partnership: Early College High School Model
Department of Curriculum and Instruction**

1. What is an Early College (EC)?

Early College High Schools are an innovative way for high school students to earn both a high school degree and a two-year associate’s degree (or up to two years’ credit toward a bachelor’s degree) while also completing a high school diploma – saving the student both time and money. For our model, ACPS will partner with Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) to design a four-year model to include grades 9-12.

2. Where will the site of the Early College be located?

The EC school will be on the NOVA campus at the current Tyler building, located off of Beauregard Street. The facility is currently undergoing upgrades and a majority of the first floor will be appropriated for use by the EC. Students will attend classes all day at this “inclusive site” in the designated EC building or other NOVA buildings.

3. What is the Early College student profile?

The EC Program will include 9th-12th graders. Students must show an interest and commitment to the EC model, display average to above average academic achievement, and possess a strong sense of maturity. Rising 8th graders will hear more about EC during their 7th grade-year. Program acceptance will mirror the current ACPS demographics and ACPS highly encourages underrepresented minority students to apply.

4. What are the benefits to attending an Early College?

To begin with, students can complete an associate’s degree while also completing their high school diploma. EC students often pay little to no fees for college-level classes, and can accumulate up to a year or two years’ worth of coursework, providing a significant financial benefit for the family. Due to strong NOVA and in-state university agreements, matriculation to a four-year state college can be accomplished with ease.

5. What other requirements must students meet when applying to the Early College?

Students will be highly encouraged to participate in the Summer Bridge Program Part 1 between their 7th and 8th grade-year. It is required that students participate in the Summer Bridge Program Part 2 during the summer between their 8th and 9th grade-year. They must also successfully pass entrance exams required in the NOVA Dual Enrollment (DE) guidelines, which is an integral part of the Summer Bridge programming. The Summer Bridge Program will be designed to provide support for ensuring a successful transition. Students will be expected to commit to the entire four-year program.

6. What does the timeline look like for the Early College Program?

Academic and facilities planning will be finalized in Fall 2019. ACPS will conduct presentations for students, parents, and community members from Fall 2019 through Winter 2020. Summer Bridge Part 1 will be offered to interested rising 7th graders in the Summer of 2020. Additional information sessions will take place throughout 2020. Recruitment will occur December 2020 - January 2021. The staff will be hired and Summer Bridge Part 2 will take place in Summer 2021 for all students accepted.

7. What specific associate's degree pathways will be available to students?

Students will have two options for pathways: Social Science, A.S., or Information Technology, A.S. Both are highly transferable in the state of Virginia and highly popular in this area. The Social Sciences leave some career flexibility for students matriculating to a four-year college or university. These pathways are tightly mapped courses by semester, ensuring students have similar schedules. Students and families may consider other certificate options, such as Cyber Security, Network Plus, or Security Plus when they near completion of their associate's degree.

8. Are NOVA Dual Enrollment courses aligned with the division's curriculum?

Yes, NOVA Dual Enrollment courses and the ACPS curriculum are aligned.

9. When will students enroll in their first college-level Dual Enrollment course?

Students will take part in their first Dual Enrollment course during Year 1, or during their freshman year. EC students are slated to take two Dual Enrollment courses during their 9th grade-year: Student Development Orientation (SDV) and Dual Enrollment History.

10. What safety measures will be put in place for high school students on a college campus?

As with all ACPS schools, the EC program will have security on site to ensure safety, including a secure entry process into the school itself. The EC student learning space will be sectioned off from other building space. Year 1 and Year 2 students (freshmen and sophomores) will be escorted by EC teachers at all times when accessing NOVA campus buildings. Neither part- nor full-time NOVA students will participate in courses offered at the EC site. All students will be issued an ACPS I.D. and a NOVA I.D. to ensure they are permitted on campus and into specific facilities. Additionally, part of the support provided by counselors and mentoring teachers will include understanding the climate and culture of a college campus and how to responsibly navigate the social setting.

11. How will students be graded? How will a student's academic history be recorded?

Students will be graded using both the ACPS grading scale and NOVA college-level grading scale, depending on the type of class they are in enrolled in. They will obtain both a high school and college transcript.

12. What supports will be in place for students?

One of the main features of an EC program is the ample support for students. The EC program will have a dedicated counselor who will work alongside a NOVA counselor to address social-emotional needs and guidance on course selection. Students will be paired up with a teacher who will serve as their direct advocate and mentor. Additionally, all students will take an AVID elective course where they will learn academic, social, emotional, leadership, and college awareness knowledge and skills. College-age tutors will also push into the AVID classes to provide support. Students will have regular check-in meetings with the EC teaching team, and grades, progress, and social well-being will be monitored regularly. In cases where students may be struggling, the team will develop individual success plans in order to ensure students can thrive.

13. When will the Early College open?

The target opening date is August 2021.

14. Will the Early College calendar be aligned to the ACPS traditional calendar and school year?

Due to the nature of the college access opportunities presented, the EC program will operate on the NOVA schedule, which begins in August and ends in May. Students will be expected to attend college-level courses on the schedule that the college offers. In some cases, as students work through Years 3 and 4 (junior and senior year), students may experience a non-traditional high school day and be afforded classes in the evening, based on availability.

15. Can students participate in high school sports, intramurals, or other after school clubs?

Yes, they will still have opportunities to take part in after school clubs and sports in many cases. Exceptions will occur when and if the upperclassman schedule includes enrollment in an evening course that is required through the pathway. Students will also have opportunities to create their own EC after school clubs, committees, and groups that relate to their EC experience. Additionally, as NOVA students, EC students will be granted access to campus facilities and participation in NOVA sponsored clubs as well.

16. What are the financial obligations/cost to students/families enrolled in the Early College?

At this time, Dual Enrollment course fees and guidelines are changing at the Virginia Community College level. NOVA and ACPS are working together to ensure there is little to no cost to families for student participation in the EC model. Students will be provided the same resources afforded to T.C. Williams students such as laptops, books, and classroom learning materials. ACPS will be examining all costs associated with the EC program, including NOVA Dual Enrollment online book fees and required materials. ACPS will continue to provide equitable access to students who enroll in this inclusive model, as well as, other connected network programs.