

Three Elkhart Schools earn full Early College endorsement



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Three Elkhart Schools earn full Early College endorsement

Last week, all three Elkhart Early College Programs became fully endorsed by Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL), the accrediting body for Early College programs. Elkhart Central, Elkhart Memorial, and the Elkhart Area Career Center are the first schools in northern Indiana to become fully endorsed Early College programs, demonstrating the district's commitment to preparing students to be career/college and life ready. The Elkhart Area Career Center is the first and only Career Technical Education (CTE) school in the state of Indiana to receive Early College endorsement.

“For students to attend college, clear pathways must be in place to help them in their educational journey,” said Gail Draper, ECS Supervisor of Early College. “The same is true for the high schools working to graduate their students on to higher learning. Planning and preparation are paramount for Early College High School success and sustainability. That’s why CELL developed an endorsement process to facilitate implementation and acknowledge schools who meet all Early College High School benchmarks. Endorsed Early College High Schools exemplify the commitment, collaborations and connections necessary to equip students with the attitude and aptitude for college success.”

Located at the University of Indianapolis, CELL is the only sanctioned group by the Commission for Higher Education to designate and endorse Early College programs. Emily Burke, Director of Early College for CELL, says the process can be lengthy. “When we endorse, we have a lot of hurdles to jump,” said Burke. “There’s quite a bit of data and narrative information. We have eight guiding principles for schools.”

The eight guiding principles for CELL endorsement include:

1. Targeted student population
2. Curriculum and plan of study
3. College-going culture
4. Rigorous instruction
5. Supports for student success
6. Collaboration and partnerships
7. Leadership and staffing
8. Data collection, analysis, and use

“There are Early Colleges throughout the United States, but Indiana is one of the exemplars, and I’m proud to say that Elkhart Community Schools is an exemplar for our state,” said Burke. “When I visited here in January, I met quite a few of the faculty and I was just amazed at the creative, rigorous things they were doing in their classrooms and ensuring that their students really had a grasp on the expectations. That speaks volumes to the dedication of the faculty in Elkhart.” Elkhart now houses 3 of the state’s 19 fully endorsed programs.

For Draper, the greatest satisfaction comes in knowing the district is making an impact on student lives. A total of 454 students have participated in ECS’ Early College Program, and 93 students have participated at the Elkhart Area Career Center. “The best part of our program is the success our students have had in achieving their goals,” said Draper. “Our students are graduating high school with a plan for their future. Last year, we had approximately 30 Early College students complete their 30 credit certificate from Ivy Tech. These were students who may or may not have ever gone on to higher education on their own, but with the supports afforded them through the Early College program, they found success. It is their stories that are the most gratifying and make the work well worth it.”

This student-first focus is apparent to Burke through her work and observations at the schools. “I think above all, the schools are so student-centric,” said Burke. “The students are at the heart of everything the schools do, and it’s palpable when you walk into the building, and speak to students and faculty. I think it’s fantastic how much you’ve been doing to ensure your students have an opportunity to succeed once they are beyond these doors. We recognize the entire Elkhart community for the hard work and dedication you’re putting in for your students.”

Draper is currently working on identifying next year’s class of Early College students. She expects at least 114 ninth grade students to enroll in the program. The Elkhart Area Career Center projects an additional 245 juniors and 205 seniors to participate.

ABOUT ECS



Elkhart Community Schools is a district that

serves approximately 13,000 students, and is known for high-quality programs, exceptional teachers, superior learning environments, and strong parental and community support.

Whether you were born in the area or you are looking to call Elkhart County your new home, we welcome the opportunity for you and your family to become part of our growing school family.

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Off to State we go! Good Luck Morgan...Elkhart is cheering for you! pic.twitter.com/QzY2sQ4... 4 days ago

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