

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Byron McCauley  
(513) 929-1310  
[mccauleyb@kwfdn.org](mailto:mccauleyb@kwfdn.org)

## **Ohio Early College High Schools averaging graduation rates of more than 91 percent**

Most schools located in communities with dramatically increasing levels of poverty

CINCINNATI – (August 27, 2009) – All of Ohio’s Early College High Schools made Adequate Yearly Progress, four of five attained “Excellent” ratings and 91 percent of their students are graduating -- more than 6 percentage points above the state average -- despite being located in some of the state’s most economically distressed areas.

What’s more, students in all ECHS system schools, initiated by Cincinnati-based KnowledgeWorks more than six years ago, are collectively performing better than their state counterparts on the 10<sup>th</sup>-grade Ohio Graduation Test.

Those are among the highlights from the Ohio Department of Education’s 2008-2009 Report Card released Tuesday. The Report Card ranks schools and student performance based on state standards and mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. ECHS’ dual-enrollment model allows students to earn high school and college credits simultaneously. More than 2,200 students have been served by the program since its inception, many of them graduating from high school with associate degrees from the higher education partners.

Highlights from around the state include:

- Dayton Early College Academy, or DECA, attained an “Excellent” rating, the second-highest awarded by the state, graduating 100 percent of its students in 2008 with all students passing all portions of the Ohio Graduation Test, or OGT, this spring.
- The Akron Early College High School, which opened in 2007, moved two designations from “Continuous Improvement” to “Excellent,” meeting six of six state academic indicators. Nearly 97 percent of its students passed the reading test, and more than 95 percent passed the mathematics portions of the 10<sup>th</sup>-grade Ohio Graduation Test. Its attendance rate was 97 percent in 2008. Sixty percent of students at Akron ECHS are considered economically disadvantaged.
- The Toledo Early College High School also garnered an “Excellent” rating, meeting 11 of 11 state academic indicators. All of its students passed the reading, mathematics, writing and social studies portions of the 11<sup>th</sup>-grade OGT, and 97 percent passed the science portion of the test. Its attendance rate was 98 percent in 2008. More than 21 percent of students at Toledo ECHS are considered economically disadvantaged.
- Youngstown Early College High School earned an “Excellent” rating, with more than 95 percent of its students graduating. All Youngstown students passed the reading and

writing portions of the 11<sup>th</sup>-grade OGT, and more than 90 percent passed the math portion of the test. More than 82 percent of students at the school are considered economically disadvantaged.

- Columbus Africentric Early College High School earned a “Continuous Improvement” rating, with an 80 percent graduation rate. Ninety-six percent of students there passed the reading portion of the 11<sup>th</sup>-grade OGT, and 92 percent passed the writing portion. Eighty-seven percent of the students are considered economically disadvantaged.

Although there are nine ECHS System schools, only five of the ECHS are designed as stand-alone schools with separate state identification numbers, and thus receive individual report cards. Student data from the other four ECHS system sites are included in the report cards for the high school in their respective districts.

These results come at the same time that poverty rates have dramatically increased in most communities that host Early College High Schools. Today, three out of four students in Early College High Schools qualify for free or reduced meals at school, more than triple the number of students who qualified in 2003.

## **Origins of ECHS**

In 2002, KnowledgeWorks, working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ohio Department of Education and others, created the Ohio High School Transformation Initiative (OHSTI) and Early College High School reform models partly in response to the state’s poor graduation rate.

The state’s Early College High Schools have consistently reported more than 33 percent of students graduate from high school with both a high school diploma and two years of college credit or an associate degree.

Earlier this month, Chad Wick, President and CEO of KnowledgeWorks, urged Ohio to apply for federal Race to the Top funds and called for an Early College High School on every community college campus in the state. “I continue to be encouraged by the progress we have made with Ohio high school reform,” Wick said. “It is critical that we continue to aggressively expand our work in Ohio and produce the kinds of students who will become lifelong learners and grow up to be productive citizens.”

Ohio’s final budget in July did not include state support for the Early College High School system, a \$12 million impact on the system.

Joining Wick in calls for support of preserving the ECHS system were Sen. Jon Husted, R-Kettering, and Rep. Stephen Dyer, D-Green and more than 50 other key education stakeholders.

Harold D. Brown, Executive Director of EdWorks, said he is encouraged by the progress of schools in the Early College High School system. “While we have been successful, our work is not done. In fact, it has just begun. We must continue to stay the course and implement policies

that clearly work. We believe the success that we have had in Ohio can and will be replicated throughout the United States,” he said. In 2007, Knowledge Works formed EdWorks, a not-for-profit subsidiary which is working to scale Ohio’s successful education model, including Early College High Schools, in other states.

###

*KnowledgeWorks Foundation ([www.kwfdn.org](http://www.kwfdn.org)) strives to be the leader in developing and implementing innovative and effective approaches to high school education in Ohio and around the United States. Our work primarily focuses on redesigning urban high schools, developing STEM and Early College high schools, and supporting student-centered approaches to delivering real learning and results in our schools.*