

# NEXT GENERATION EARLY COLLEGES:

*A Framework for Continuous Growth and Improvement*





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The Early College Network is a peer learning community of practice focused on improving outcomes for current and future students. Since its inception in 2017, the network has worked to define a shared identity and establish a roadmap that exemplifies what early colleges need to become in the future to continue to meet the changing needs of our students and community.

Developed by principals in the network, the Next Generation Early College Framework includes five guiding *Design Principles* that describe the qualities of a Next Generation Early College:

- I. Demonstrates a **commitment** to creating an environment that supports the **social and emotional learning** of all students through a personalized approach;
- II. Exhibits teaching for learning through **innovative instructional practice** that builds **student self-efficacy** through active collaboration;
- III. Leverages the connections among school, home, the community and workplace to **expand authentic learning opportunities** and partnerships;
- IV. Ensures that students are prepared for **post-secondary education and careers** in a rapidly changing global economy; and
- V. Embodies a **growth mindset** for professionals that pushes boundaries through **shared responsibility, reflective practice and inquiry**.

Each of the five *Design Principles* has three *Attributes* that describe the unique characteristics of early colleges that separate them from traditional high schools. Going one step further, each *Attribute* contains two to three *Elements* that further express distinctive components and exemplars.

Organized as an implementation continuum, the framework contains four levels of implementation from “Early” to “Model.” Although descriptors are referenced for the “Early,” “Developing,” and “Prepared” stages, each early college will develop the descriptor for their “Model” stage based on local context and goals as they use the tool in a self-assessment process. The continuum models a personalized growth mindset that supports school improvement. Therefore, as conditions and goals evolve, the definition of “Model” remains responsive.

This shared resource was developed as a self-assessment tool, rather than an evaluation instrument. The Next Generation Early College Framework supports a school’s development, encourages the identification of strengths and areas of focus in the future, and provides a common language for continuous growth and improvement. We hope this tool will be useful to your school and encourage its use to support your school’s development and its next iteration as you strive to best support your students to and through early college.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela H. Quick". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Angela H. Quick, EdD  
Director, Center for Education Services  
RTI International

**Thank you to the community of Early College Network principals and staff for their leadership  
in developing the Next Generation Early College Framework.  
The 2018-2019 Early College Network includes the following schools:**

Bertie Early College High School  
Brunswick Early College High School  
Cabarrus Kannapolis Early College  
Cabarrus Tech Early College  
Camden Early College High School  
Chatham School of Science and Engineering  
Craven Early College High School  
Cross Creek Early College  
Cumberland International Early College High School  
Cumberland Polytechnic High School  
Davidson Early College  
Davie Early College High School  
Early College EAST High School  
Franklin County Early College High School  
Gaston Early College High School  
Granville Early College  
Henderson County Early College High School  
Isaac Bear Early College High School  
J. P. Knapp Early College High School  
J.D. Clement Early College High School  
Mattamuskeet Early College High School  
McDowell Early College  
Middle College High School at Durham Technical Community College  
Montgomery County Early College  
New Tech High School  
Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience  
Onslow Early College High School  
Person Early College for Innovation and Leadership  
Roanoke Rapids Early College High School  
Rockingham Early College High School  
Rowan County Early College  
Rutherford Early College High  
Scotland Early College High School  
Southeast Area Technical High School  
Surry Early College High School  
Union County Early College  
Vance County Early College High School  
Wake Early College of Health and Sciences  
Washington County Early College High School  
Wayne Early Middle College High School  
Wilmington Early College High School  
Wilson Academy of Applied Technology  
Yadkin Valley Regional Career Academy

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**A Next Generation Early College demonstrates a commitment to creating an environment that supports the social and emotional learning of all students through a personalized approach.**

(1) Social Emotional Learning: Social and emotional health fostered across the school community

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL *
1.1 SEL ACTIVITIES	Some students are engaged in SEL-focused activities throughout the school year.	All students have the opportunity to engage in SEL-focused activities throughout the year.	All students engage in purposeful SEL-focused activities that are evident in their daily actions and school culture.	
1.2 PARENT/GUARDIAN RESOURCES	Parents/Guardians have access to resources and activities that support SEL.	Parents/Guardians are supported by school staff in understanding and engaging in SEL activities at home.	Parents/Guardians partner with school staff to provide purposeful SEL support for students.	
1.3 PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION	Professional development opportunities are provided to staff focused on SEL.	SEL professional development for staff is supported through collaboration opportunities in follow up sessions.	A staff developed SEL Engagement Plan is implemented and evident in staff and student behaviors throughout the school.	

*\*Model descriptor should reflect local context and priorities with an emphasis on systemic and sustainable practices.*

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(2) Personalization as the “heart beat” of the school

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
2.1 FAMILY ATMOSPHERE	Students are engaged in grade level activities that foster connections and build community.	Staff and students participate in informal and formal activities to support existing and develop new connections both in and out of the school.	Students assume responsibility for creating and supporting relationships across grade levels and student interests and beyond the school walls.	
2.2 STUDENT-STAFF COLLABORATION	Students and staff occasionally collaborate on activities both in the classroom and throughout the school.	Staff plans activities with student input on a regular basis.	Staff and students demonstrate a continuous improvement cycle with inputs and reviews to improve elements of the school.	
2.3 EXTRA- AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES	Students have access to activities outside the classroom.	A regular calendar of activities is designed and implemented for students.	Students generate and lead extra- and co-curricular activities that reflect the diverse interests of students and demonstrate ownership of processes and outcomes.	

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**A Next Generation Early College demonstrates a commitment to creating an environment that supports the social and emotional learning of all students through a personalized approach.**

(3) Formal advisory structure at all levels

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
3.1 SEL THEMES	Students have access to a formal advisory program that provides age-appropriate themes to support SEL.	Through a formal advisory program, students have opportunities to engage in personalized activities designed to support SEL.	Students and staff engage in seminars based on grade level relevance with a focus on comprehensive student development.	
3.2 PEER MENTORING	Opportunities exist for peers to mentor each other.	Staff provides informal and formal structures and supports for developing peer mentors.	A formal system of peer mentoring and mediation exists for all students throughout classes and school activities.	
3.3 COLLEGE AND CAREER PREP	Advisory programs support both college and career preparation.	College-going skills are developed in students as a preparation for career advancement.	Student and staff actions consistently demonstrate the importance of college, career and life connections.	

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## A Next Generation Early College demonstrates teaching for learning through innovative instructional practice that builds student self-efficacy through active collaboration

(4) Intentional planning to scaffold student collaboration, voice and choice

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
4.1 DATA DRIVEN	Staff has access to teacher and school data to design instruction and guide school improvement planning.	Staff uses data in a purposeful manner to guide instruction and school improvement planning.	Staff uses data in an ongoing basis, utilize common assessments and collaborate in data-supported discourse for classroom and school-level improvements.	
4.2 ALIGNED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	Staff has reached consensus on aligned instructional strategies and daily expectations for demonstration.	Staff occasionally employs aligned instructional strategies across the school.	Students and staff are engaged in the use of aligned instructional strategies every day.	
4.3 INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE CYCLE	Staff individually practices some elements of the instructional practice cycle: model, teach, practice and assess.	Staff has reached consensus and regularly practice all elements of the instructional cycle.	Staff observes and provide feedback through lesson tuning and peer reviews to support the instructional practice cycle.	

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**A Next Generation Early College demonstrates teaching for learning through innovative instructional practice that builds student self-efficacy through active collaboration.**

(5) Individualized student support

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
5.1 SEMINAR EXPERIENCE	Students participate in grade appropriate face-to-face seminars that are designed for academic needs.	Consistent individual academic supports are offered through seminar experiences.	Students' collective and individual academic needs are supported through seminar experiences.	
5.2 4-5 YEAR PLANNING	Students and staff develop a four/five year plan.	Staff, students and parents regularly collaborate to assess progress and revise the four/five year plan.	Students assume ownership of the planning and execution of the four/five year plan.	
5.3 INDIVIDUAL STUDENT FOCUS	Staff demonstrates a focus on individual student growth in academics, affective supports and SEL.	Structures are in place to support staff in their support of individual students (ie. Office hours, Smart Lunch)	A system of supports for students and staff are evident and demonstrated throughout the school setting.	

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**A Next Generation Early College demonstrates teaching for learning through innovative instructional practice that builds student self-efficacy through active collaboration.**

(6) Reflective practice to encourage staff collaboration and professionalism to make practice public

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
6.1 ROUNDS AND PEER SCHOOL REVIEWS	Staff engages in reflective activities including instructional rounds in the school to improve individual practices.	Staff engages in reflective activities such as peer school reviews with other schools to improve schoolwide practices.	A collaborative network of peers across schools consistently engage in a cycle of development, practice and review for continuous improvement.	
6.2 USE OF PROTOCOLS	Protocols are occasionally used by staff.	A resource bank of protocols is available and regularly used by staff in classrooms.	The use of protocols by staff and students demonstrates an intention of student/staff collaboration and student voice/choice.	
6.3 FOCUS ON RESULTS	Staff collects and uses data to make informative decisions about instruction in a continuous improvement cycle.	Data is collected, distributed and analyzed for individual students, staff and school community.	Students and staff identify, collect, monitor and analyze data on an ongoing basis through PLCs, individual student supports, and schoolwide discourse.	

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**A Next Generation Early College leverages the connections among school, home, the community and workplace to expand authentic learning opportunities and partnerships.**

(7) Effective school-community partnerships with the IHE and area businesses for all students

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
7.1 PRODUCTIVE PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT	Staff develops a plan that involves stakeholders from the IHE, business/industry and community groups.	Staff and stakeholders engage in productive planning and review data to determine effectiveness in designing opportunities for students in the community.	All students participate in authentic learning opportunities through partnerships with IHE, business/industry, and community groups.	
7.2 STUDENT INTERNSHIPS	Staff develops a plan to increase student internship opportunities.	All stakeholders engage in planning student internship opportunities and some students participate.	All stakeholders engage in ongoing work to identify and develop student internship opportunities aligned to student interest and community needs and most students participate.	
7.3 COMMUNITY WORKPLACE NEEDS	Staff and stakeholders identify community workplace needs.	Community workforce needs are supported by student and teacher community learning opportunities.	Staff and students participate in opportunities to advance student and teacher learning in STEM and other community-based fields that build a pipeline to community employers.	

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**A Next Generation Early College leverages the connections among school, home, the community and workplace to expand authentic learning opportunities and partnerships.**

(8) Community service focus to promote and sustain authentic learning opportunities for all students

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
8.1 COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT	Staff collaborates with community leaders to identify student service opportunities.	Staff and students plan community-based volunteer opportunities on an annual basis.	Staff and students engage in community service opportunities on a quarterly basis and demonstrate connections to school.	
8.2 SCHOOL ADVOCACY	Students and staff serve as advocates for the early college in their community through outreach efforts.	Students and staff engage with community leaders and groups to advocate for the early college.	Strategies to engage and serve as advocates for the early college are developed, monitored and implemented throughout the school year.	
8.3 RECRUITMENT	Staff examines opportunities to expand learning opportunities with IHE and area business/industry.	Staff engages all stakeholders establishing relationships with IHE and area business/industry.	Ongoing efforts are maintained to build existing relationships and secure new ones with IHE and area business/industry.	

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**A Next Generation Early College leverages the connections among school, home, the community and workplace to expand authentic learning opportunities and partnerships.**

(9) Experiential learning opportunities to give students practical experiences in their field of study

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
9.1 CAREER EXPLORATION	Students are exposed to a variety of career opportunities through guest speakers and informal experiences at school.	Students and staff identify opportunities for students to engage in career exploration in their field of study.	Students are supported by staff to regularly engage in learning opportunities with experts in their field of study through job shadowing and internships.	
9.2 FIELD TRIPS	Students have the opportunity to visit area business/industry and organizations.	Staff and students identify and secure opportunities to visit area business/industry and other workforce organizations.	All students engage onsite/virtually with experts in their field of study in business/industry on an ongoing basis.	

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### IV

**A Next Generation Early College ensures that students are prepared for post-secondary education and careers in a rapidly changing global economy.**

(10) Ongoing communication and collaborative professional development between high school and IHE faculty

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
10.1 COLLABORATIVE PLCs	PLCs meet on a regular basis and most high school staff participate.	All high school staff participates in PLCs that include IHE staff in professional development and collaboration.	All staff participates in PLCs and actively seek other formal and informal opportunities to engage including ongoing development with IHE administration.	
10.2 ECHS – IHE ADVISORY BOARD	A joint advisory board is established between early college and IHE representatives to meet occasionally to discuss common topics.	The joint early college-IHE advisory board establishes common goals and meets on a regular basis.	The joint early college-IHE advisory board collaborates formally and informally to discuss common topics, areas of concern and strategies to support all students.	
10.3 COMMUNICATION	A communication process between the early college and IHE is developed.	Communication occasionally occurs between the early college and IHE, particularly in areas of concern.	Ongoing communication exists between the early college and IHE with a focus on common topics (ie. concerns, attendance, grades, vertical content area meetings)	

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### IV

**A Next Generation Early College ensures that students are prepared for post-secondary education and careers in a rapidly changing global economy.**

(11) Alignment of high school and IHE scheduling and curricula to career pathways

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
11.1 BUSINESS ADVISORY BOARD	A Business Advisory Board is formed and includes representatives from area business, industry and workforce organizations.	A Business Advisory Board meets semi-annually to consider alignments of the early college and IHE to career pathways.	A Business Advisory Board representing a broad range of stakeholders meets quarterly to review and propose aligned career pathways articulating to university degree or career entry.	
11.2 CURRICULA EXTENSION DEGREES	The early college and IHE meet to discuss an arrangement to encourage programs to promote career explorations for curricula extension degrees.	The early college and IHE evaluate existing career pathways, assess current and projected needs, and identify future pathways.	A collaboration between the early college and IHE exhibits a continuous improvement cycle for career preparation and college readiness through quarterly meetings and ongoing communication.	

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### IV

**A Next Generation Early College ensures that students are prepared for post-secondary education and careers in a rapidly changing global economy.**

(12) Purposeful planning to develop future-focused student skills (soft skills, metacognitive skills, etc)

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
12.1 CURRICULUM ADVISORY BOARD	Early college and IHE staff have an understanding and support for future-focused student skills.	A Curriculum Advisory Board composed of early college and IHE representatives has identified and defined future-focused soft student skills.	Teacher and schoolwide plans incorporate support strategies to develop, monitor and assess future-focused student skills.	
12.2 GRIT DEMONSTRATION	Student understanding and identification of “Grit” (Patience, Motivation, Resilience, and Perseverance) behaviors are supported and developed.	Students routinely have opportunities to practice, self-reflect and demonstrate individual “Grit”.	Students collectively demonstrate “Grit” and encourage peers to create a college-and career-going culture that is pervasive within and outside the school.	

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**A Next Generation Early College embodies a growth mindset for professionals that pushes boundaries through shared responsibility, reflective practice and inquiry.**

(13) School culture embodies collegial atmosphere of networking

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
13.1 PUBLIC PRACTICE	Staff maintains an open classroom environment evidenced by student ease with visitors and collaborators.	Staff participates in rounds, peer school reviews and parent/guardian engagement.	Staff actively seeks opportunities for high school and IHE peer engagement in classrooms and receive feedback on focus questions.	
13.2 COMMON REFLECTIVE PRACTICE	Staff collaborates with high school peers in their district through peer reviews and best practice sharing.	Staff leads district professional development and demonstrate strategies for collaboration and reflective practice.	Staff and local IHE instructors collaborate on projects and sharing best practices.	
13.3 NETWORK OPPORTUNITIES	Staff collaborates and network with regional peers.	Staff collaborates and networks with EC Network peers through face-to-face and virtual site visits and EC Network events and presentations at state level conferences.	Staff and students collaborate and network with state and national peers including face-to-face/virtual site visits, conference presentations and other opportunities to share best practices.	

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**A Next Generation Early College embodies a growth mindset for professionals that pushes boundaries through shared responsibility, reflective practice and inquiry.**

(14) Shared leadership that is responsive to data

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
14.1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Data is collected and analyzed to determine individual and schoolwide professional development needs.	Staff and students collaborate to review data to identify and develop professional development opportunities.	Staff assumes ownership for securing individual professional development growth and contribute to schoolwide professional development.	
14.2 DECISION-MAKING PROCESS	The principal leads the decision-making process and includes staff at most levels.	The principal and leadership team consider data and make instructional decisions that impact the school.	A clear decision-making model is utilized to promote school community voice and collective will to ensure collaboration in making decisions.	

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(15) Common instructional practices across all learning environments

KEY ELEMENT	EARLY	DEVELOPING	PREPARED	MODEL
15.1 WALKTHROUGH PROCESS	Staff has developed a walkthrough instrument that collects data on common instructional practices and other identified areas.	The early college utilizes a walkthrough process to collect data and provide ongoing assessment for learning.	Administrators and staff use the walkthrough process to collect and analyze data, identify strengths and areas for growth, and build collegial expertise.	
15.2 SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY	Accomplished staff provides training and ongoing professional development support for new staff.	Staff collaborates to provide professional development and ongoing support to monitor each other's progress and assist each other toward a collective goal.	Staff collectively assumes ownership for onboarding and initial training of new staff and sustained professional growth in instruction.	
15.3 TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION	Staff routinely uses technology to support instruction.	The use of technology as a tool is supported through individual and schoolwide professional development with ongoing monitoring, assessment, and retooling.	Technology is infused and serves as an effective tool to support all aspects of the instructional program and student and staff development.	

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