



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

Taking the High School Track to College

VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY August 20, 2013

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Early College High School (ECHS) is a unique approach to obtaining a higher education. Based on the principle that academic rigor, combined with the opportunity to save time and money, ECHS is a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet serious intellectual challenges. These programs blend high school and college in a rigorous yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first two years of college.

Since 2002, the partner organizations of the Early College High School Initiative have started or redesigned 240+ schools serving more than 75,000 students in 28 states and the District of Columbia. The schools are designed so that low-income youth, first-generation college goers, English language learners, students of color, and other young people underrepresented in higher education can simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an Associate's degree or up to two years of credit toward a Bachelor's degree—tuition free.

There are 34 ECHSs in New York. Some of the programs started with the aid of short-term funding awards from non-profit organizations (i.e., Gates Foundation), some are supported in part with contributions of private donations (i.e, Bard College), and others are sponsored by the City University of New York (CUNY).

New York State has contributed some financial support for ECHS programs, but there is no dedicated funding stream in place to sustain and expand this important education initiative. In response to this need, **Senator Montgomery is sponsoring legislation (S.4008) that would make ECHSs eligible for funding through the State's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).** This bill, which passed the Senate on June 12, 2013, is anticipated to result in overall cost-savings to TAP as well as to the State given that an ECHS program accelerates students' completion of their college degree at the high school level, thereby lessening their need for financial aid in colleg. Moreover, while a student may likely receive a maximum TAP award of \$5,000 at the college level, an ECHS may only require \$645 per student to provide college instruction at the high school level.

The bill is also sponsored by Senator John Flanagan, who is the chairperson of the Senate Committee on Education.

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*About CUNY's Early College Program*

*The Early College Initiative at CUNY is an outgrowth of the university system's longstanding commitment to improving the academic achievement of the city's public high school students and ensuring that graduating students are ready to do college-level work. Early college schools at CUNY serve students in grades 6 through 12 and are located in close proximity to the partner college campus. At the core of the middle school curriculum is an intense focus on the development of reading, writing, and math skills. During high school, students complete New York State Regents requirements for a high school diploma and begin taking college courses. School staff and administrators collaborate with college faculty and administrators to guide students toward consistently thinking about, and planning for, a college education throughout the middle and high school years.*