

KHSD and BC partner up to offer early college courses for high school students

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BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (KERO) — Imagine being able to work toward a college degree when you first start high school. That's what early college in the Kern High School District does, in partnership with Bakersfield College.

KHSD and BC have a program for high school students to [complete an associate's degree](#) before they even turn 18. It's free, books are provided and transportation is available.

“The confidence to know that if I take a college course, college is for me,” said Carla Stallworth, director of educational services with KHSD. “Most ninth-graders are probably not thinking and then really applying the idea of going to college, but this creates the opportunity for all of them.”

For KHSD and BC, it was important to create opportunity and equity for students in college prep.

Dual enrollment has existed between the two institutions since 2015. they went a step further, launching an associate degree completion program online in fall 2020. Now they're accepting applications for their next round.

“They're learning these college-prep skills that a lot of us didn't have the opportunity to learn before we had to figure it out,” said Kylie Campbell, Bakersfield College's program director of outreach in early college.

Stallworth and Campbell say that the nature of the program can close the gap between secondary and higher education, as other programs of its kind have led students to complete their bachelor's degree two years after high school.

“It's going to make a tremendous impact on our baccalaureate attainment rate, something in the county, which is where we see the need now,” Campbell said. “BC and the Kern High School District are really committed to bridging that gap and increasing those rates.”

Campbell says the courses are tailored to the grade level with ninth-graders beginning with student development courses for college and career opportunities and public speaking.

Among ninth-grade cohorts last semester, there was an 82% retention rate. Among all 335 Fall 2020 students, there was a 91% rate of earning a C or higher in their courses.

Five pathways are available for the 175 to 250 students accepted into the program: for the summer

- Industrial automation

- Administration of justice
- Psychology
- Public health
- Introduction into health careers

Applications are due March 26 and a virtual information meeting for parents and students will be held via zoom on either March 1 or March 2 at 6:00 p.m.