

News Release

From the desk of Liz Silvers, Early College Liaison

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Early College High School CELEBRATION Week: May 3 – 9, 2010

May 3 – 9 is Early College High School Week. The week-long celebration raises the profile of these non-traditional high schools partnering with colleges to give students access to creating a future that would not otherwise be within reach. Early Colleges, aimed at students typically under-represented in college, enable students to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or two years of transferable college credit - tuition free - within four or five years.

North Carolina is leading the nation in these hybrid public schools, opening 70 schools since 2005, which account for a third of the 210 early colleges nationwide. This represents 10,500 students in North Carolina.

"North Carolina is a leader in educational innovation, and new approaches to high school are key to making sure every student graduates ready for college, a career or technical training," said Gov. Beverly Perdue.

Early college high schools blend high school and college to challenge and support students and to ensure that they succeed in tackling college-level work. Also, the schools lift what can be a significant financial barrier for many students and their families at a time when the average cost of one year of public college nationally exceeds \$6,000. The combined tuition savings last year for the nearly 7,000 students in early college high schools on North Carolina's community college campuses reached an estimated \$3.6 million.

The Mayland Early College High School, which serves students in Mitchell, Avery and Yancey County, is one of the few early college that serves more than one school district. With leadership from each county's superintendent and board of education, as well as cooperation from Mayland Community College, the Mayland Early College is led by Principal Angela Burleson.

Burleson was recently selected from Early College principals across North Carolina to gather in Raleigh to share emerging best practices used in their early colleges that are data-proven successful and have the potential to be replicated nationwide. The conference, *Best Practices: The Push Beyond*, was sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Education, New Schools Project, and Jobs for the Future.

Featured speaker at the conference was Donna Rodrigos, founding principal of the University Park Early College in Boston, Mass. She spoke about school-wide coherence

and remaining mission-tested. Frank DeStefano, the event facilitator, acknowledged North Carolina as leading the nation in innovative high school reform and praised the group for their efforts.

Principal Burleson was recently praised at the Yancey County Board of Education for her vision and leadership of the Mayland Early College.

“I feel so blessed to be given the opportunity to mold our next generation with support from our local boards of education as well as Mayland Community College,” said Burleson. “I work with an exceptional group of teachers and co-workers who go above and beyond expectations to create an environment for which the students in our program will benefit. The solid foundation, strengthened through their own responsibility and re-enforced by the Early College staff, gives students the necessary building blocks upon which to build their future!”