

Imagine graduating from high school with a diploma AND a two-year college degree

- BY STEVEN MAYER
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The Kern High School District's Career Technical Education Center on Old River Road will be the site for some Early College courses attended by area high school students.

- Alex Horvath / The Californian

It is now possible in coming years for a high school senior in Kern County to walk across the stage at her commencement ceremony, then later walk across another stage to pick up her associate degree from Bakersfield College.

In a powerful partnership that could provide a huge head start to hundreds of local graduating seniors, BC and the Kern High School District are giving a limited number of students per year the opportunity to earn two-year degrees by the time they graduate

from high school. It's all made possible through a collaboration known as the Early College program.

"This gives students a one-and-a-half to two-year start," said Kylie Campbell, director of the Early College and outreach programs at BC. "Some students may graduate at 19 and 20 years old with bachelor's degrees."

Carla Stallworth, KHSD director of educational services, said the partnership gives students the opportunity to experience college-level courses, even as they're working on their high school education. It lets them experience "the rigors of college" long before most students set foot in a college classroom or, these days, an online college learning environment.

Early College pathways are available in psychology, administration of justice, public health, industrial automation, and a new pathway called intro to health careers. The limited spots will be available to KHSD students for free. High school freshmen will be able to earn a degree if they complete the program, while 10th through 12th graders will complete units toward a degree or certificate.

Each year, 35 ninth-grade students will be accepted into each of the five pathways. Students from other grades will also be accepted to fill available seats in the program.

"We have been partnering with the high school district for some time," Campbell said. Indeed, this is just one of a number of initiatives designed to help local high school students get to college and help them succeed once they're there.

"This collaboration between BC and Kern High School District has been so important," Stallworth said. "When high school students are exposed to college, they are much more likely to go to college."

Classes will be held at two different locations, depending on which pathway is chosen: BC Southwest Campus and KHSD Career and Technical Education Center.

All courses are offered in the evening, after the high school day. Transportation is available from school sites to and from the Career and Technical Education Center, but transportation is not provided for classes at BC's Southwest Campus.

Each course will meet two to three times per week, Monday through Thursday. Most courses are UC and CSU transferable and will count toward various bachelor's degrees.

Applications are due by March 26. They will be reviewed by a committee and selected based on qualifications and fit for the program.

Parents and students are advised to attend a virtual information meeting via Zoom on March 1 or March 2. Both meetings start at 6 p.m. To register for the information meeting or to apply for a pathway, visit bakersfieldcollege.edu/earlycollege/khsd.

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