



# EL PASO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Transmountain Early College High School*



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Transmountain Early College High School (TMECHS) is located in El Paso, Texas, one of the largest urban border cities along the Texas-Mexico border. El Paso, as well as the cities of Las Cruces, New Mexico and Juarez, Mexico converge along the Rio Grande River and the Franklin Mountain range, creating a region known as Paso Del Norte, often called the Borderplex. El Paso is proudly the home of Fort Bliss, one of the largest military complexes of the United States Army. The Borderplex encompasses an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse community, with a Hispanic population exceeding 82%. Historically, the Borderplex community had been challenged by high rates of unemployment and poverty as well as low rates of post-secondary education and job-ready, skilled individuals. The TMECHS student population is largely consistent with the demographics represented within El Paso, however, the school's target population consists of low socio-economic status, first generation college goers, under-served populations and at-risk students. TMECHS is a Title I school and a school of choice in an open-enrollment district, which seeks to positively impact the community by addressing these challenges.

TMECHS was established in 2008 as the third early college high school in El Paso County. The campus instituted a curricular focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). TMECHS positions students ahead of the curve in an increasingly complicated world by developing their critical thinking, communication, collaboration, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. In the time since the 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools award, TMECHS has refined the overarching focus for its curriculum, evolving it into a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) program. Additionally, TMECHS has increased by 23% the number of students graduating from El Paso Community College (EPCC) within 4 years of high school. Ninety percent of TMECHS students graduate with an Associates of Science from EPCC, with an additional 5% graduating with the Associates of Arts degree. One hundred percent of students graduate with a Texas high school diploma, endorsements in Multidisciplinary Studies and STEM, and up to 60 college-credit hours. All expenses for TMECHS students are shared by the El Paso Independent School District (EPISD) and EPCC.

TMECHS is a stand-alone early college high school located on EPCC's Transmountain campus. The close proximity to the EPCC campus provides students with ease of access to the college's courses, instructors, and services. The positioning of TMECHS on an EPCC campus facilitates a unique, collaborative effort between EPISD and a local institution of higher education (IHE). TMECHS students may earn 60 college credits between the on-campus Dual Credit (DC) courses and the EPCC college course offerings. TMECHS educators strategically design campus-based courses to be more challenging while maintaining curricular alignment with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

TMECHS prides itself on being an academically oriented, safe school with high expectations for all students. These expectations extend beyond the academics, by embedding social/emotional learning activities within all classrooms. TMECHS teachers are trained on specific strategies addressing students' social skills and emotional wellbeing via professional learning workshops. All students are encouraged to embrace life-long learning and to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary for success in higher education, military enlistment and 21st century jobs.

TMECHS leadership maintains a philosophy of shared decision-making through distributed responsibilities and high expectations for all. Collaboration, community, voice and individuality are celebrated. All TMECHS stakeholders work together to create and maintain a positive climate and a rigorous, engaging academic culture. Students' association with this award-winning school encourages a greater sense of self-efficacy and pride, which translates to increased motivation in completing the full college degree. In 2020, TMECHS earned its second National Blue Ribbon Schools award by the U.S. Department of Education.