

College Access Program: 2015-16

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EA16-521-2

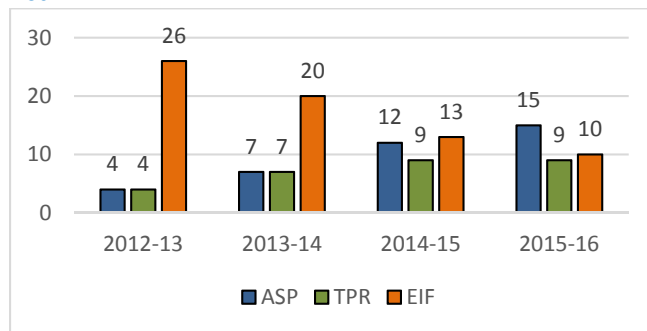
At-a-Glance

The College Access Program (CAP) was created to meet Dallas ISD needs for increased student college applications, scholarship applications, participation and performance on college entrance exams, and parental involvement in the college admissions and financial aid process.

There were three College Access program (CAP) vendors selected for the 2015-16 school year: Academic Success Program (ASP), Education is Freedom (EIF), and The Princeton Review (TPR). These vendors served grades 9-12 in Dallas ISD Title I high schools. Vendors provided college access services that supplemented the work that counselors were already doing. In either small-group or one-on-one settings, vendors provided assistance to students and parents in a variety of areas, such as Naviance (an online college and career readiness tool), completing college and financial aid applications, registering and preparing for college entrance exams (e.g., SAT, ACT, and the *Texas State Initiative Assessment*), and writing college and scholarship essays. CAP was designed to be a collaborative effort between campus counseling staff and CAP vendors.

During the 2015-16 school year, ASP served 4,690 students across 15 campuses, EIF served 6,432 students across 10 Dallas ISD campuses, and TPR served 2,116 students across nine campuses. Figure 1 shows the allocation of campuses by provider across four school years.

Figure 1: Number of Campuses Served by Vendor and Year

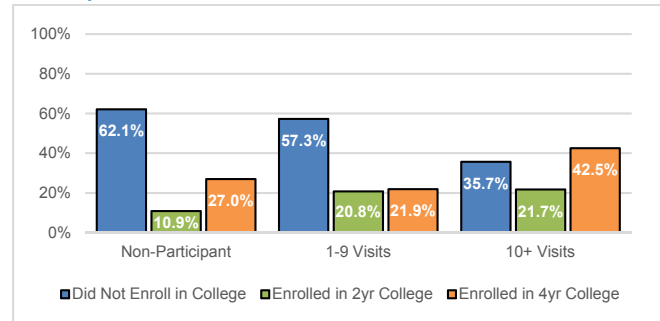


Program Participation and College Enrollment

Though the strength of the relationship between CAP participation and college enrollment was relatively weak, an analysis of National Student Clearinghouse data for 2013-14 and 2014-15 Dallas ISD graduates indicated that CAP made some contributions to students' college enrollment. CAP students were slightly more likely to enroll in college than

non-participants, and CAP students who received assistance 10 or more times were more likely to enroll in 4-year colleges than were students who received CAP services between one and nine times (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Type of Enrollment by Frequency of CAP Participation

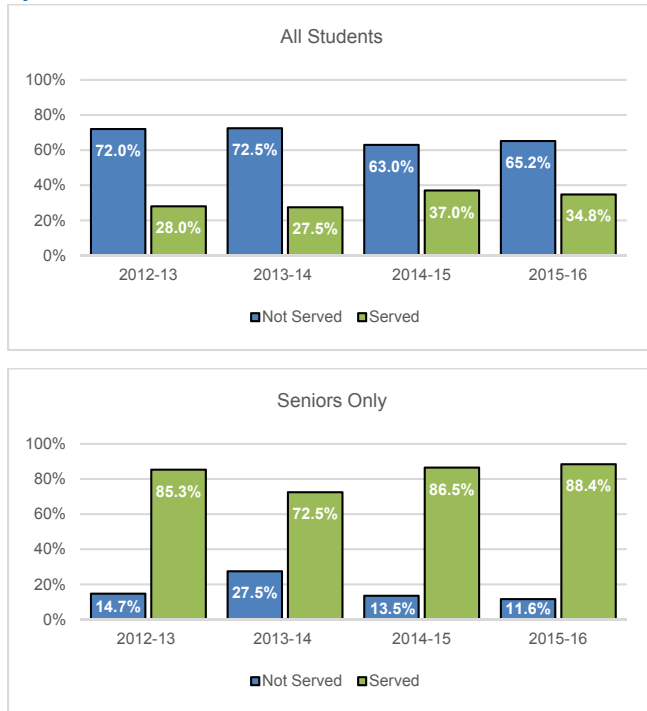


CAP students who were served 10 or more times were most likely working on college or scholarship essays, or were seeking assistance in preparing for their entry into college (i.e., housing assistance). Students who did not participate in CAP could have been receiving college application assistance from other sources such as parents, counselors, or teachers.

Service Provision over Time

When reviewing CAP student data over the 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 school years, the results of the program have remained stable over time. While the number of campuses served by each vendor has fluctuated each year, vendors have continued to focus primarily on providing information and assistance to students about applying to college and for financial aid. TPR has also provided test preparation services to its campuses. The number of students served has increased over time with more juniors being served during the first three years of the program. The percentage of juniors served by each vendor slightly decreased or remained constant during the 2015-16 school year compared to the 2014-15 school year. The larger number of juniors served potentially indicated that vendors were providing college access information in advance of the students' senior year so that they would be more prepared to make college-related decisions in their senior year. In 2015-16, CAP vendors served about 34 percent of the entire student body and about 88 percent of the senior class. (Figure 3). The majority of students received services from a CAP vendor one time throughout the school year, but there continued to be students seeking out services more than 10 times over the course of the year.

Figure 3: Percentage of All Students and Seniors Served by CAP Vendors.



Vendors also conducted small group workshops for parents and students. These workshops focused primarily on college and financial aid information and applications and college fairs, college visits, and visits from college representatives. The workshops were mainly presented to the senior class.

Meeting Program Goals

College Access vendors were to work collaboratively with Dallas ISD counselors in order to meet the following goals:

- 98 percent of seniors will complete Naviance StrengthsExplorer® Assessment.
- 80 percent of seniors will complete at least one college application.
- 50 percent of seniors will opt-in for Summer Melt texting program.
- 45 percent of senior class will complete a financial aid application: Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA), or scholarship.
- 90 percent of seniors will register and take the SAT or ACT.
- 80 percent of the senior class will receive college and scholarship essay assistance (in conjunction with other school/curricular support activities).
- 50 percent of seniors will attend at least one college fair.
- At least six Postsecondary Counselor Training meetings (vendors included) will be held during the 2015-16 school year.

College Access program vendors were successfully supplementing the work of counselors in a collaborative effort to meet district goals. While only three schools had at least 98 percent of seniors complete the Naviance StrengthsExplorer, all schools had at least 90 percent of seniors complete at least one college application through ApplyTexas, and 30 out of 34 schools had a FAFSA completion rate of 45 percent or higher. In addition, at least 90 percent of seniors at 26 out of 34 (77%) campuses took either the SAT or ACT. However, CAP vendors lagged behind on the college and scholarship essay assistance goal. Assisting students with essays was a time consuming task, and the goal of assisting 80 percent of seniors was difficult to achieve. While none of the schools served by EIF or TPR met the goal assisting 80 percent of seniors, 13 of 15 schools served by ASP did meet the goal. Because this data was self-report, it is possible that ASP documented more work with students on essays than did the other vendors.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the results of the evaluation:

1. College Access program staff and Counseling Services staff have worked to improve their communication and collaboration with regards to implementing CAP. These efforts have resulted in clearer expectations and increased service. The results of this report indicate that program staff should continue these positive efforts.
2. College Access program and Counseling Services staff members should identify how current procedures for the Naviance StrengthsExplorer can be improved to increase the percentage of seniors completing the test.
3. College Access program, Counseling Services, and vendor staff members should review best practices with regard to college and scholarship essay assistance to increase the percentage of students served.
4. College Access program staff members should reevaluate the current program goals to ensure that all goals have measurable indicators of success and that the necessary data is available to evaluate progress towards goals (e.g., participating in the Summer Melt texting program, completing financial aid applications, and college fair participation).

For more information, see EA16-521-2, which can be found at <http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888>.