

2018-19 Evaluation of the College Entrance Exam Preparation Program

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At-a-Glance

One of the goals of Dallas Independent School District (ISD) leadership is to increase college enrollment among students who graduate from high school. The College Entrance Exam Preparation (CEEP) program, also known as the Superintendent's Scholar SAT and ACT Test Preparation (Prep) Program provided students with test taking strategies to promote greater success on the SAT and ACT college entrance exams. In-person prep sessions were held from summer 2018 through the end of the 2018-19 school year by certified Princeton Review instructors.

Additionally, the program included a professional development component to increase district and campus instructional capacity to conduct test prep sessions. In 2018-19 CEEP was supported by \$324,081 from Title I funding, which increased by \$23,714 from 2017-18 (Lorenz 2018). CEEP was coordinated by a post-secondary success coordinator within Dallas ISD's Postsecondary Partnerships and Programs department. Due to the delayed hiring process of the CEEP coordinator, program responsibilities were handled by other staff from the Postsecondary Partnerships and Programs department until October 29, 2018.

Purpose and Methods of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to describe the work conducted by the CEEP program during the 2018-19 school year and to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative based on program participation and student outcome.

The evaluation was based on a review of district funding documents, attendance information provided by CEEP, SAT and ACT files, and survey results. CEEP participation information was received on May 24, 2019. District student enrollment, demographic, and academic information was obtained from the Dallas ISD 2018-19 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) file dated October 26, 2018. CEEP participation information was validated with PEIMS and merged with SAT and ACT data files dated May 22, 2019, to determine the number and percentage of students who participated in either test and met *Texas Success Initiative (TSI)* benchmarks.

Passing rates for SAT were calculated using *TSI* benchmarks for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (ERW, 480) and mathematics (530); for ACT, the *TSI* ACT college readiness benchmark (23) was used.

What were the program components of the College Entrance Exam Preparation (CEEP) program?

Student Preparatory Sessions

CEEP offered 37 preparatory SAT and ACT Boot Camps or tutoring sessions from Summer 2018 through May 2019. During these sessions, students were taught test taking strategies. SAT test taking strategies were provided for mathematics, reading and writing, and test taking strategies for ACT included English, mathematics, reading, science, and writing.

During Summer 2018, five Boot Camps were held. Each Boot Camp lasted four days for a total of ten hours of preparation. SAT Boot Camps were offered at Conrad (June 11-14) and Bryan Adams (June 18-21) high schools, while Summer 2018 ACT Boot Camps were held at Bryan Adams (June 11-14), Conrad (June 18-21) and White (June 18-21) high schools.

During the 2018-19 school year, 27 SAT and ACT Boot Camps were held on Saturdays for a total of four hours each. Boot Camps were offered at Townview, Spruce, Madison, Jefferson, Kimball and Molina high schools. SAT Boot Camps were held on February 23, March 2, and May 18, 2019. ACT Boot Camps were held on September 15 and September 22, 2018.

To increase the availability of ACT tutoring, the CEEP coordinator was trained by Princeton Review on February 19-21, 2019 to conduct ACT tutoring sessions. Per the request of the South Oak Cliff (SOC) High School athletic director, the CEEP coordinator held five tutoring sessions for athletes in April 2019. Male student athletes met three times, but female student athletes only met twice due to scheduling conflicts. Participation information for one of the two meetings for female athletes was provided. Meetings lasted, on average, one hour.

Teacher Professional Development

Two professional development (PD) sessions were scheduled for the 2018-19 school year to certify Dallas ISD teachers to teach Princeton Review SAT or ACT courses. Sessions were originally planned for September 2018 but had to be postponed to June 2019 due to personnel issues and student testing schedules. SAT PD training was held on June 10-12, 2019 at Hulcy Middle School, while ACT PD training was held at Princeton Review's Plano training office on

June 17-19, 2019. Each training provided a total of 24 hours of instruction on test taking strategies. PD outcomes will be presented in the 2019-20 evaluation report.

Rescheduling of PD sessions to summer 2019 allowed the coordinator to utilize SAT and ACT Preparatory (PREP) Kits, originally ordered for PD participants during the 2018-19 school year. They were distributed in late January and early February 2019 to teachers previously trained by Princeton Review to be used in classrooms or campus programs. Seven teachers received 400 SAT kits and eleven teachers received 737 ACT kits. The count includes three teachers who received both SAT and ACT prep kits. The evaluator surveyed participating teachers to gather feedback via SurveyMonkey in May 2019. Eight of the 15 teachers (53%) responded to the survey. Teachers indicated that they were either somewhat comfortable (62.5%) or very comfortable (37.5%) using Princeton Review SAT or ACT training materials. Seven of the eight teachers (88%) indicated that they used the study kits during the 2018-19 school year. In a question with mark all that apply response options, teachers indicated that small group tutoring (71%) was the most utilized form of teaching, followed by individual tutoring (43%) and utilization of study kits in the regular class time (43%). Teachers estimated that they used the study kits 225 times, supporting 354 students. However, no individual student identifying information was collected. Therefore, no further analyses could be conducted.

Other Services

The CEEP program coordinator was responsible for organizing School-Day SAT testing on March 6, 2019. This included coordinating with College Board and training test coordinators. In addition, the coordinator oversaw the implementation of SchoolLinks, a college and career readiness platform, and the Jindal Young Scholars program. The latter provided qualifying Dallas ISD students interested in studying Business an opportunity for a full scholarship to the University of Texas at Dallas. To qualify, students had to meet specific criteria for grade point average (GPA) and SAT or ACT scores.

What were the Boot Camp and student characteristics?

Analyses of registration and participation information for the 2018 Summer and 2018-19 Boot Camps showed that 46 percent of students who registered (N=1,037) attended bootcamp or tutoring sessions. For SAT, the attendance rate was 48 percent, while for ACT, the attendance rate was 45 percent of those that registered.

Summer and 2018-19 Boot Camp sessions had a capacity of 35 students per session. During the Summer 2018 sessions, Boot Camps reached, on average, 83 percent of attendance capacity. 2018-19 Boot

Camps reached, on average, 33 percent of attendance capacity. ACT tutoring sessions by the CEEP coordinator were not included in the 2018-19 Boot Camp capacity analysis as they did not have a student participation limit.

Overall, 431 unique students participated in the CEEP program. Of these, 258 participated in SAT and 208 in ACT Boot Camps. Thirty-five students participated in both SAT and ACT Boot Camps and one student participated in Summer 2018 and 2018-19 SAT Boot Camp, for a total of 467 (Table 1). Boot Camp participation increased from 2017-18 when 229 students attended SAT and 129 students attended ACT Boot Camps (Lorenz 2018).

Table 1: 2018-19 CEEP Program Participation

Title	Sessions <i>n</i>	Participants <i>n</i>
Preparatory SAT and ACT sessions		
Summer 2018 SAT BC	2	58
Summer 2018 ACT BC	3	87
2018-19 SAT BC	16	201 ¹
2018-19 ACT BC	11	100 ²
2018-19 ACT Tutoring	5	21
Total	37	467³

Source: College Entrance Exam Preparation (CEEP) program files dated May 24, 2019 and June 5, 2019.

Note: BC=Boot Camp. ¹Six students participated in two sessions.

²Five students participated in two sessions. ³Total includes 36 duplicate counts of students who participated in multiple College Entrance Exam Preparation (CEEP) sessions.

Participants were fifty-eight percent Hispanic, sixty percent female, and sixty-two percent economically disadvantaged. Seventeen percent were classified as at risk. Most participants were enrolled in grade eleven (54%), the grade during which the School-Day SAT test is taken, followed by grade 12 (22%), grade 10 (20%), and grade nine (4%).

Did at least 90 percent of students in the prep sessions register and take the ACT / SAT?

Testing information was not available for the May 18, 2019 SAT Boot Camp participants or for those participating in the April ACT tutoring sessions at SOC high school. Of the remaining 224 SAT Boot Camp participants, 85 percent (*n*=191) took the SAT test. Of the remaining 187 ACT participants, 70 percent (*n*=131) took the ACT test (Table 2).

Summer 2018 participants took the SAT test, on average, within 190 days of Boot Camp sessions, while 2018-19 participants took the SAT test within 7 days. Overall, 85 percent of SAT test prep participants waited for the SAT School-Day test administration on March 6, 2019.

Summer 2018 ACT Boot Camp participants¹ took the ACT test, on average, within 122 days of Boot Camp sessions, while 2018-19 participants took the ACT test within 22 days. Eighty-eight percent of ACT test prep participants waited for the ACT School-Day test administration in October 2018.

Table 2: 2018-19 Student Participation in SAT and ACT tests

Recipients	Prep Session Participants	Took Test	
		n	%
SAT Test ¹	224	191	85
ACT Test ²	187	131	70
Overall	411	322	78

Source: College Entrance Exam Preparation (CEEP) program files dated May 24, 2019 and June 5, 2019. SAT and ACT file dated May 22, 2019.

Note: ¹SAT test data were not available for participants of the May 18, 2019 SAT Boot Camp session. ²ACT test data were not available for participants of ACT tutoring sessions at South Oak Cliff high school during April 2019.

What impact did participation in the CEEP program have on meeting the TSI college readiness benchmark on the SAT and ACT examinations?

The evaluator used frequency analyses to assess the percentage of students who met SAT or ACT TSI benchmarks, chi-squared analyses to test for group differences in passing rates and analyses of covariate or *t*-tests (statistical significance) to compare overall scores. Only students who participated in a Boot Camp of a test once were included in the analyses.

Analyses showed that overall 49 percent (*n*=90) of boot camp participants met or exceeded the SAT TSI benchmark for Mathematics and 71 percent (*n*=130) met or exceeded the benchmark for ERW. Twenty-eight percent (*n*=35) met or exceeded the ACT TSI college readiness benchmark. White students had the highest percentage rate of meeting or exceeding benchmarks across all tests, followed by Asian and Hispanic students. The percentages of students who met or exceeded TSI college readiness benchmarks for SAT ERW and Mathematics and ACT are presented in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

¹ Evaluator used the first of the testing month to calculate time as the Dallas ISD ACT file did not include the day on which a student took the test.

Table 3: 2018-19 Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding SAT College Readiness Benchmarks by Student Group (N=184)

Level	Tested N	Met Benchmark			
		ERW ¹		Math ¹	
		n	%	n	%
Group					
2018 Summer	39	26	67	19	49
Boot Camps	145	104	72	71	49
Sex					
Female	115	82	72	53	46
Male	69	48	70	37	54
Race / Ethnicity					
Asian	6	5	84	4	67
Afr. American	34	20	59	8	24
Hispanic	126	90	71	63	50
White	18	15	83	15	83
Economically Disadvantaged Status					
Yes	120	80	67	53	44
No	64	50	79	37	58
At Risk Status					
Yes	36	9	25	5	14
No	148	121	82	85	57

Source: College Entrance Exam Preparation program files dated May 24, 2019 and June 5, 2019. SAT file dated May 22, 2019.

Note: Passing rates for SAT were calculated using Texas Success Initiative (TSI) benchmarks for Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (ERW, 480) and mathematics (Math, 530). Afr. American=African American.

Table 4: 2018-19 Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Student Group (N=126)

Level	Tested	Met Benchmark	
	N	n	%
Group			
2018 Summer	45	15	33
Boot Camps	81	20	25
Sex			
Female	85	24	28
Male	41	11	27
Race / Ethnicity			
Asian	*	*	*
Afr. American	34	4	12
Hispanic	67	14	21
White	17	13	77
Other	*	*	*
Economically Disadvantaged Status			
Yes	73	12	16
No	53	23	43
At Risk Status			
Yes	23	2	9
No	103	33	32

Source: College Entrance Exam Preparation program files dated May 24, 2019 and June 5, 2019. ACT file dated May 22, 2019.

Note: Passing rates for ACT were calculated using the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) composite benchmark for ACT (23). Afr. American = African American. *Five or fewer students were tested.

Boot Camp Participants Versus Non-Participants

The evaluator used propensity score matching to identify students (i.e. control group) who took the SAT test but did not participate in the CEEP program. Students were matched on prior PSAT scores, school attended, ethnicity, gender, grade level, socioeconomic and at-risk status. The evaluator used chi-squared analyses to test for group differences in passing rates and *t*-tests (statistical significance) to compare mean scores. Analyses of SAT scores indicated Boot Camp participants had higher mean ERW (528.56 versus 521.92) and mean Mathematics (532.13 versus 521.66) scores. However, results were not statistically significant (ERW, $t(322)=.65$, $p=.514$; Mathematics, $t(336)=1.03$, $p=.304$). Moreover, participation in a boot camp did not have an impact on meeting ERW benchmark [$\chi^2(1, N=334)=.51$, $p=.473$] or Mathematics benchmark [$\chi^2(1, N=338)=.19$, $p=.663$].

There was no PSAT equivalent to the ACT, and therefore no covariate analysis was possible to further examine the impact of the ACT study session on meeting the ACT TSI benchmark.

Four-Day Versus One-Day Boot Camps

Although the mean scores for four-day Boot Camp participants were higher than those participating in one-day sessions on the SAT ERW (541.84 versus 527.81) and SAT Mathematics test (550.53 versus 528.76), after adjusting for prior academic achievement (PSAT score), the mean scores were not statistically significant for either ERW [$F(1,172)=.014$, $p=.907$] or Mathematics [$F(1,172)=.053$, $p=.818$]. The differences in mean scores for the ACT (21.11 four-day Boot Camp versus 19.69 one-day session) were not statistically significant [$t(124)=1.5$, $p=.141$]. Furthermore, the percentage of participants who met or exceeded TSI college readiness benchmarks was not statistically significantly higher for four-day boot camp participants as compared with one-day session participants (SAT ERW $\chi^2(1, N=184)=.38$, $p=.538$; SAT Mathematics $\chi^2(1, N=184)=.001$, $p=.978$; ACT $\chi^2(1, N=126)=1.1$, $p=.299$).

Recommendations

Despite the shortened implementation year, CEEP personnel managed to implement test prep sessions and organize School-Day SAT testing. The following recommendations are intended to build on these efforts.

- **Continue building program awareness among campus leadership and teachers.** Program staff should devise a strategy to further advertise the CEEP program to campus leadership and teachers. This could be done via the weekly administrative information packets (WAIPS).

- **Increase the Boot Camp attendance rate.** Analyses of attendance data indicated that, on average, 83 percent of the available seats were filled in Summer 2018 Boot Camps and 33 percent of seats were filled in 2018-19 Boot Camps. The coordinator should devise a strategy to increase student attendance. This could be done by sending out follow up messages via email or a messaging app (e.g., Remind) between the registration date and the start date of the Boot Camp(s), providing incentives for students to attend, and registering more students than the number of seats available.
- **Consider sending out follow-up messages to CEEP participants to increase test participation.** Data indicated that 78 percent of test prep participants took the relevant ACT or SAT test. Since this percentage is lower than the 90 percent program goal, program staff should consider sending out follow up messages to increase test participation and providing further tips or resources.

References

Lorenz, A (2018). 2017-18 College and Career Readiness: School-Day SAT Testing. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

Lorenz, A (2018). 2017-18 College and Career Readiness: School-Day ACT Testing. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

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