

2018-19 Evaluation of the College Access Program

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At-a-Glance

The College Access Program (CAP) was created in 2010 by the Dallas Independent School District (ISD) to increase student college and scholarship applications, participation and performance on college entrance exams, and parental involvement in the college admissions and financial aid process. The program is managed by a college access coordinator within the Dallas ISD Postsecondary Partnerships and Programs department¹.

For the 2018-19 school year, Academic Success Program (ASP), Education is Freedom (EIF), and Southern Methodist University (SMU) were selected as CAP vendors to provide college access services to high schools receiving Title I funds in the Dallas ISD. The program was supported by \$2,325,000 of Title I funds and served 14,428 students at 36 high schools. This funding amount was comparable to the past three school years. Guidelines associated with Title I funding required that CAP vendors supplement, but not replace, counselor job responsibilities to assist in reaching program goals. Campus leadership selected a CAP vendor, and the vendor assigned a CAP advisor to the campus, to provide supplemental assistance to students and parents. CAP vendors worked collaboratively with Dallas ISD counselors to meet the following goals:

- 95 percent of seniors utilizing career and college exploration tools including SchoolLinks
- 50 percent of seniors attending at least one college fair
- 95 percent of seniors completing at least one college application
- 70 percent of seniors completing at least one financial aid application
- 95 percent of seniors registering for and taking the SAT or ACT, and/or *Texas State Initiative Assessment (TSIA)*
- 50 percent of students in grades 10 and 11 attending either SAT or ACT preparation sessions, or linking their College Board and Khan Academy accounts to access official SAT practice and sample tests
- 50 percent of seniors opting to participate in the Summer Melt texting program²
- CAP vendors meeting with counselors at a minimum twice per six-week period

Purpose and Methods of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the effectiveness of the program based on outlined program goals and objectives. CAP vendors provided data files to the evaluator between July 15, 2019 and July 29, 2019. Files included the number of times each student visited a CAP vendor, reasons for each visit, and type of workshops that vendors provided during the school year. Files were merged with district demographic data from May 28, 2019. In addition, the evaluator downloaded SchoolLinks (August 1, 2019) and FAFSA³ (July 18, 2019) data for each campus, and retrieved district ACT, SAT, and TSIA data files on June 16, 2019, July 17, 2019, and July 29, 2019 respectively. CAP program staff members provided data regarding the Khan Academy accounts on July 9, 2019 and Summer Melt Texting program on July 15, 2019. Lastly, ApplyTexas college application files were downloaded on July 22, 2019. CAP vendors used a survey designed by the evaluator to collect feedback from seniors from May 5, 2019 through May 29, 2019. Descriptive data analyses were performed on program participation and student outcome data.

CAP Participation Data

During the 2018-19 school year, 14,428 students in grades nine through twelve participated in the CAP program. The majority of students were Hispanic (71%) followed by African American (23%). Fifty-three percent of students were female, 78 percent were economically disadvantaged, and 50 percent were classified as at risk. Participant demographics mirror the overall district. CAP program participation increased by 1,550 students from 2017-18 to 2018-19, which is slightly above the 2016-17 attendance ($n = 14,145$).

ASP served 4,007 students (28%) at 13 Dallas ISD campuses, EIF served 9,243 students (64%) at 21 campuses, and SMU served 1,178 students (8%) at two campuses. Overall, CAP vendors served 37 percent of all high school students and 89 percent of all seniors. On average, students were served 4.7 times by CAP vendors over the course of the 2018-19 school year. While the percentage of students served increased from 33 percent in 2017-18 to 37 percent in 2018-19,

¹ Due to a delay in the hiring process of the CAP coordinator, program responsibilities were handled by other staff from the Postsecondary Partnership and Programs department until December 3, 2019.

² Summer Melt Texting program provides Dallas ISD graduates resources and tips on steps to take to enroll in college.

³ FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

the average number of visits with a CAP vendor decreased from 5.5 to 4.7 times.

Meeting Program Goals

CAP vendors successfully helped counselors meet or almost meet four of the eight CAP goals. Ninety-five percent of 2018-19 seniors completed at least one college application, 69 percent of seniors completed a FAFSA or TASFA application, 93 percent of seniors took the SAT, ACT or TSIA, and 86 percent participated in the Summer Melt texting program. On the other hand, CAP vendors and counselors fell short of meeting the goals related to SchoolLinks (14%) and linking their College Board and Khan Academy accounts (30%). Data for two goals were not available (college fair participation) or could not be independently verified (meeting with counselors). Due to changes to data reporting and data validation issues, results should be viewed with caution and not be compared with previous school years.

Twenty-five percent of 2018-19 seniors completed the student survey. Seniors that responded to the survey had an overall positive outlook towards CAP; 78 percent agreed that services CAP provided were very useful and 95 percent noted that providers were knowledgeable and adequately answered their questions. Overall, 85 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Dallas ISD and their school prepared them to enter the workforce or continue with their education.

College Enrollment of CAP Participants

Analysis of National Student Clearinghouse data for 2017-18 graduates showed that more CAP participants (51%) than non-participants (46%) enrolled in colleges within one year of high school graduation⁴. CAP participants (25%) were more likely to enroll in two-year colleges than non-participants (11%), and 2017-18 seniors who did not participate in CAP (35%) were more likely to enroll in four-year colleges than CAP participants (26%). These results were similar for 2016-17 seniors (Lorenz, 2018).

Ninety-six percent of 2016-17 CAP participants and 97 percent of non-participants who enrolled in college within one year of graduating high school remained enrolled in college in 2018-19.

Recommendations

- **Explicate program goals and reporting requirements to CAP vendors.** In 2018-19, analyses of some program goals were negatively

impacted because vendor(s) did not adhere to reporting requirements. A unified reporting system will provide decision makers with comparable data and allow for a more meaningful evaluation of the CAP program.

- **Identify ways to increase senior participation in career and college exploration tasks.** In 2018-19, only two out of the 36 campuses (6%) met the CAP goal of 95 percent participation. The percentage of seniors who completed the career and college exploration tasks has dropped districtwide from 49 percent in 2016-17 (Barton, 2017) to 43 percent in 2017-18 (Lorenz, 2018) to 14 percent in 2018-19. Although the rollout of the new career and college portal (SchoolLinks) was directly impacted by the hiring delay of the CAP coordinator in 2018-19, the percentage decline in this activity over several years indicated that CAP program staff should further investigate the situation.
- **Identify ways to increase participation in SAT or ACT test preparation among students in grades 10 and 11.** In 2018-19, analyses indicated that only two percent of Dallas ISD sophomores and juniors participated in the College Entrance Exam Preparation Program and only 30 percent connected their College Board and Khan Academy accounts. Since this percentage is lower than the 50 percent program goal, program staff should coordinate with CAP vendors and counselors to raise awareness of these programs and resources among the target audience and encourage their use.

References

- Barton, M. (August 2017). 2016-17 Evaluation of the College Access Program. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.
- Lorenz, A. (August 2018). 2017-18 Evaluation of the College Access Program. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

An electronic version of this report as well as the full 2018-19 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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⁴ 2017-18 CAP and non-participants differed by at least 10 percentage points across categories of ethnicity and socio-economic status. As a result, comparisons between the

CAP and non-CAP participants should be viewed with caution.