

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College, Career and Military Ready (CCMR) Comprehensive Counseling Program is a districtwide initiative overseen by the Counseling Services Department (CSD) of the Dallas Independent School District (ISD). Through CCMR, the CSD provided training; resources; and other guidance to Dallas ISD counselors who in turn identify at-risk behaviors; provide interventions to students in need; and foster college, career, and military readiness. The CSD supports these elements of comprehensive school counseling through a holistic approach to relationship building, behavior management, and personal growth. The 2020-21 budget for CCMR counseling was \$773,954, which was comparable to the 2019-20 budget of \$772,044.¹

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation describes the characteristics of CCMR counseling, as well as the CSD's progress toward achieving CCMR-related goals for the 2020-21 academic year (as articulated in the Title IV program workscope). CCMR goals for 2020-21 focused on providing districtwide support and training in three broad areas: reducing disproportionality in out-of-class consequences (disciplinary referrals, off-campus placements, suspensions, and expulsions); promoting college, career, and military readiness; and increasing graduation rates for students out of cohort (e.g., held back one year), at-risk of not graduating, or who had already dropped out. Context data consisted of information about the components of the CCMR counseling program, program implementation, and program concerns related to COVID-19. These data were obtained from CSD staff members. Process data included information related to CCMR professional development (PD) sessions, and how CCMR helped counselors address disproportionality in out-of-class consequences, support CCMR readiness, and increase annual high school graduation rates. Finally, outcome data included results from analyses of rates of student CCMR readiness, student performance on the *Texas Success Initiative (TSI) assessment*, and annual high school graduation rates. With the exception of graduation data, which were obtained from district files, all other data were provided by CSD staff members.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the components of the CCMR counseling program?

Texas House Bill 18 (May 6, 2019) required all campus counselors to implement a comprehensive school counseling program. This requirement was supported by the CSD, whose director and 10 staff members provided resources, guidance, and PD to all 419 school counselors in the Dallas ISD. The CSD implemented CCMR with support from a Program Planning Committee, and through collaboration with district offices such as the Racial Equity Office, the Office of Student Discipline, the Family and Community Engagement Office, and others.

Through CCMR, campus counselors received guidance on district policies and procedures concerning out-of-class consequences [disciplinary referrals, disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) placements, suspensions, and expulsions], as well as additional support upon request. CCMR also assisted with campus audits to ensure the accuracy of Individual Graduation Committee (IGC) records, and with the tracking, monitoring, and reporting of data such as student endorsements, CCMR plans, graduation certifications, and other records. Additional CCMR activities included the facilitation of key meetings such as monthly Local Graduation Committee meetings, as well as transitional meetings when students returned from alternative educational placements to their home campuses.²

Finally, CCMR activities included the design and implementation of virtual PD sessions for district counselors around a variety of topics, as well as monitoring how PD strategies were implemented on individual campuses. The PD sessions provided (see Table 1) are discussed in the relevant sections below.

¹ 2019-20 and 2020-21 budget information provided by CSD staff members on 03/30/21. Special Revenue Funds Management reported a 2020-21 budget of \$773,899 on 02/28/21.

² Information in this paragraph was obtained from CSD documents, e-mails from CSD staff members, and interviews with the director (12/17/20 and 03/03/21).

Table 1: 2020-21 CCMR PD Sessions Implemented by the CSD

Title of Professional Development Session	Counselor Level	Total Sessions	Total Attendees
Reducing Disproportionality			
Opening Meeting	ES	1	192
Summer School	ES	1	30
AIMS	AIM Staff	2	108
Grief/Trauma-informed Care	All levels	2	414
CCMR Tracking			
Sessions for New Counselors	MS/HS	7	121
HS Lead Counselors	HS	7	189
IGC Training	IGC Staff	4	150
Opening Meeting	MS	1	105
Opening Meeting	HS	1	115
Summer School and Graduation	HS	1	109
Endorsements/PGPs	MS	1	109
PEIMS Support	All levels	1	*
Other			
Summer School	MS	1	104
Choice Sheets	MS	2	92
HS Lead Counselors	HS	3	107
Own the Turf	All levels	1	408
Working with LGBTQ Youth 1 & 2	All levels	7	266*
Grief/Trauma-informed Care	All levels	2	434
Sessions for New Counselors	All levels	8	255
Total		54	3,308

Source: CSD internal documents, 06/25/21.

Note: All sessions were virtual. *Two Working with Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth sessions and the PEIMS Support session had no attendance data. ES = elementary school. MS = middle school. HS = high school. AIM = Acceleration Instruction in Middle School. IGC = Individual Graduation Committee. PGP = Personal Graduation Plan. PEIMS = Public Education Information Management System.

How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect CCMR?

Because the shift to at-home learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic took place prior to the beginning of the 2020-21 academic year, most CCMR-related activities during the year were implemented as planned using virtual methods.

However, the pandemic potentially exacerbated problems that CCMR counseling was designed to address including losing contact with students; concerns related to health, safety, and trauma; concerns related to student coping and self-awareness; and the ability to examine the effect of CCMR support on out-of-class consequences. The loss of contact with students due to the pandemic potentially impacted the scholarship tax, financial aid, and the ability to determine whether students were on track to graduate. To

address these concerns, counselors participated in Operation Comeback, an effort to reconnect with families and students with low engagement and reengage them with school. In addition to overarching health and safety concerns due to the pandemic, there were concerns about trauma due to the potential death of staff members and students, and ongoing uncertainty. There were additional concerns that students needed help with coping and self-awareness, as these could potentially impact student achievement and recidivism. New PD sessions targeted towards grief were held to give counselors resources to provide help for these concerns. Finally, remote learning affected the ability to examine whether CCMR support impacted the suspension rate of students going to DAEP and the rate of recidivism because so few students were suspended.³

How did CCMR help counselors address disproportionality in out-of-class consequences?

According to the definition provided in federal regulations,⁴ in 2020-21 Dallas ISD reflected significant disproportionality in out-of-class consequences, with African American students representing high percentages of discretionary off-campus placements, out-of-school suspensions, and disciplinary referrals. Through CCMR counseling, the CSD attempted to address this disproportionality in 2020-21 through PD, guidance, and additional support for campus counselors on the topics of de-escalation techniques, classroom management, and restorative practices. For example, in 2020-21, six of the PD sessions noted in Table 1 addressed strategies for reducing disproportionality. These sessions consisted of one Opening Meeting session attended by 192 elementary school counselors, one Summer School session attended by 30 elementary school counselors, two Acceleration Instruction in Middle School sessions attended by 108 middle school counselors, and two Trauma-informed Care sessions attended by 414 counselors at all levels. The evaluator reviewed anonymous, post-session surveys administered by the CSD and found that at least 83 percent of the 161 counselors who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed that these sessions were well-planned and organized (89%, $n = 143$), led by a knowledgeable facilitator (93%, $n = 149$), deepened their understanding (83%, $n = 134$), and fit their needs (84%, $n = 136$).

Regarding disproportionality in out-of-class consequences, the program workscope identified four specific goals: 1) provide all secondary campuses with a recidivism rate of 99 percent or higher with three PD sessions about restorative practices, the disciplinary process, classroom management, and positive relationship building; 2) observe a 50 to 60 percent reduction in out-of-class consequences for African American students in 75 percent of campuses with significant disproportionality; 3) ensure that all African

³ Information in this paragraph was obtained from an interview with CSD staff members and the director (03/03/21).

⁴ 34 CFR 300.647. See <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/programs-and-services/significant-disproportionality>.

American students sent to DAEP more than once meet with a counselor and receive a safety plan within three days of returning to their home campuses; and 4) observe a 10 percent reduction in Level II student discipline referrals resulting in off-campus placements for African American students.

As many students learned remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which artificially reduced rates of out-of-class consequences, referrals to DAEP, and discipline referrals, these disproportionality-related goals could not be evaluated.

How did the Counseling Services Department help counselors support college, career, and military readiness?

According to recent Texas Academic Performance Reports, 42 and 44 percent of Dallas ISD graduates were not college, career or military ready in 2018-19 and 2019-20, respectively.⁵ Through CCMR counseling, the CSD supported student readiness in 2020-21 by means of PD for counselors and other forms of targeted support. For example, 23 of the PD sessions noted in Table 1 addressed strategies for promoting and tracking progress toward CCMR. Examples of these PD sessions include seven High School Lead Counselor sessions attended by 189 high school counselors, four IGC Training sessions attended by 150 IGC staff members, and two Opening Meeting sessions attended by 220 middle and high school counselors. According to anonymous, post-session surveys administered by the CSD, at least 90 percent of 188 counselors who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed that these sessions were well-planned and organized (95%, $n = 178$), led by a knowledgeable facilitator (95%, $n = 178$), deepened their understanding (90%, $n = 170$), and fit their needs (92%, $n = 173$). The CSD also provided PD and related support for coding in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) based on the assumption that readiness data from prior years may have been inaccurate owing to coding errors.⁶

Regarding the promotion of college, career, and military readiness, the program workscope identified five specific goals that are listed in Table 2. Three of these five goals were met, whereas two goals were not met (see Table 2).

Table 2: 2020-21 Title IV CCMR Workscope Goals

2020-21 Goal	Met	%
60% of students will be college, career and military ready	Y	61
100% of HS counselors will develop a 4-year CCMR plan by November 20, 2020	N	99
85% of HS counselors will receive three CCMR PDs	Y	90
100% of senior record audits will be completed	Y	100
30% of students will meet <i>TSI</i> criteria (ELA/Reading and Mathematics)	N	28

Source: CSD internal documents, 11/01/21.

Note: % refers to actual percentages of students/counselors, or record audits observed. HS = high school. ELA = English/Language Arts. Y = yes. N = no.

What supports were provided by the CSD to assist counselors with increasing high school graduation rates?

The 2019-20 high school graduation rate in Dallas ISD was 85 percent overall, with much lower percentages among certain demographic groups. Through CCMR counseling, the CSD provided PD and other forms of targeted support to counselors in 2020-21 with the intention of increasing annual graduation rates among all students.

The CSD also attempted to support annual high school graduation rates through promotion of the IGC process and facilitation of monthly Local Graduation Committee meetings. These activities necessitated community-wide publicization of the IGC option; evaluation of student records; communication with students, parents, staff members, and administrators; and tracking the progress of graduation certifications. Table 3 illustrates the impact of IGCs. Over time, the percentage of students graduating using IGCs has increased.

Table 3: 2017-18 to 2020-21 Individual Graduation Committee Graduation Rates

Year	Total Graduates	IGC Graduates	IGC Graduates
	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%
2017-18	7,155	530	7.4
2018-19	7,419	666	9.0
2019-20	8,325	850	10.2
2020-21	7,598	810	10.7
Total	30,497	2,856	9.4

Source: CSD internal documents, 08/10/21. PEIMS demographic file, 10/30/20 (2020-21), 10/28/19 (2019-20), 10/26/18 (2018-19), and 10/30/17 (2017-18). District graduation file, 08/18/21 (2020-21), 06/17/20 (2019-20), 06/25/19 (2018-19), 06/11/18 (2017-18).

Regarding high school graduation, the program workscope identified three specific goals: 1) observe a five percentage-point increase in annual high school graduation

⁵ <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/texas-academic-performance-reports>

⁶ Information in this paragraph was obtained from CSD documents, e-mails from CSD staff members, and an interview with the director (06/25/21).

rates; 2) train 75 percent of all IGC members; and 3) complete audits of all high schools with IGC graduates.

The first goal was not met; the 2020-21 graduation rate (86%)⁷ increased one percentage point compared to 2019-20 (85%). The second goal was met; 98 percent of IGC members received training in 2020-21. Finally, the third goal was met.⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to help counselors address disproportionality in out-of-class consequences. Although the disproportionality-related program workscope goals could not be evaluated in 2020-21 due to COVID-19, CSD should continue to use CCMR counseling to provide support and resources to counselors to reduce disproportionality as students return to in-person learning.

Continue efforts towards increasing annual high school graduation rates. Both the overall annual high school graduation rate (86%) and IGC graduation rate (11%) slightly increased in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20 (85% and 10%, respectively). Two of the three program workscope goals related to graduation were met. However, the program workscope goal of observing a five percent increase in the graduation rate was not met. The CSD and IGCs should continue to support staff members to increase graduation rates.

Increase the percentage of students who meet TSI criteria. As part of promoting students' CCMR readiness, it will be important for CSD to increase the percentage of students (28%) who meet TSI criteria in English Language Arts/Reading and Mathematics.

EA21-639-4

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⁷ District graduation file, 08/18/2021.

⁸ Information provided by program director on 08/10/21.