

PROJECT ADVANCE SUMMARY REPORT, 2006-2007

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) focuses on providing successful college and career preparation for all students. To reach this goal, students are expected to explore careers related to their personal interests and talents, to get an early start toward college by participating in rigorous coursework, and to demonstrate the skills and knowledge needed to enroll in epare for postsecondary

- provided opportunities for students to visit college and university campuses and speak with admissions counselors, current college students, and professors;
- supplied in-depth postsecondary preparation, financial aid, and scholarship information to high school students, parents, and teachers;
- assisted students with completing applications for college admissions testing, postsecondary admissions and enrollment, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and scholarships; and
- provided students with individualized advisement related to postsecondary enrollment.

As services were provided, Project ADVANCE staff tailored college preparation information to fit the needs of each student. Students who were identified as being the first generation in their families to attend college, as having an economic disadvantage, or as having limited English proficiency were targeted for services related to negotiating the college, financial aid, and scholarship application processes.

In 2006-2007, Project ADVANCE began operating in a period of transition. The 2007-2008 school year will be the last year of ADVANCE program funding supplied by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF). In this final year, program activities will continue as in years past and sustainability planning will be emphasized at each school and across the district. Thus, the purpose of this summary report is to provide information related to program and student outcomes during the 2006-2007 school year for making decisions about program sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Objectives

This program summary report is intended to provide information about program implementation outcomes. Stakeholders may use the report to measure progress toward meeting articulated goals and to support ongoing decision making for program improvement and sustainability.

Primary program success indicators were identified for program evaluation purposes in 2006-2007. They are as follows:

- Student and/or parent participation in college preparation events;
- Student and/or parent participation in financial aid events;
- Student participation in college admissions tests (SAT and/or ACT);
- Completed applications to all types of postsecondary institutions (2-year, 4-year, technical and trade schools);
- Student enrollment in postsecondary institutions; and
- Selected student responses on the district High School Exit Survey.

The following sections of the report will describe program outcomes for the 2006-2007 school year. The information is intended to provide program stakeholders with information about program implementation outcomes, to measure progress toward meeting articulated goals, and to support ongoing decision making for program improvement.

Data Collection

Staff in AISD's Department of Program Evaluation collected qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to clearly defined performance measures to assess the program's

progress toward its goals. District information systems provided student enrollment and demographic data, SAT and ACT test results, and information about transcripts sent. A program-specific database, the College Readiness Initiative System (CRIS), was used to collect information regarding project service offerings, and student and parent program participation. AISD's high school exit survey provided information related to students' college preparation needs, expectations about postsecondary education, and perceived educational outcomes. Project implementation requirements, quarterly report summaries, budget records, and meeting notes provided additional information pertaining to overall implementation status.

Data Analyses

Mixed methods were used to describe project implementation processes and to identify associated successes and challenges. Simple descriptive statistics were used to represent the characteristics of the 2007 graduates, to describe student and parent program participation, and to summarize outcomes from the tests and surveys. Content analysis techniques were used to identify important details and themes emerging from the qualitative data sources.

RESULTS

Program Participation

Throughout the 2006-2007 school year, Project ADVANCE staff hosted a total of 540 college preparation and financial aid events designed to increase student and parent

and recruiter visits. Additionally, ADVANCE staff conducted 627 classroom visits to communicate information related to preparing for college and applying for financial aid. At the campus level, the number of events held at a single school was variable and ranged between 21 and 88 opportunities for student and/or parent participation.

The numbers of participants also varied across campuses. Overall, 7,246 students participated in at least one college preparation and/or financial aid event. At the campus level, student participation was variable and ranged between 191 and 1,419 students participating in at least one event during the school year. Most program participants were classified as juniors and seniors; however, some programs were open to all those wanted to participate. Of these participants, 3% were Asian/ Pacific Islander, 14.6% were African American, 49.5% were Hispanic, and 32.5% were White. Almost 43% of the students participating were categorized as being economically disadvantaged and almost 8% were categorized as limited English proficient (LEP).

Project ADVANCE sought to engage all students in college preparation events during their junior and senior years of high school. To assess the degree to which services were provided for students, outcomes for high school graduates were examined. This examination of the program participation for students in the graduating Class of 2007 revealed that almost 97% of graduates had participated in at least one or more events hosted by Project ADVANCE while they were in high school.

In 2006-2007, many of the college preparation and financial events were targeted

for parents. Overall, 836 parents and/or guardians attended one or more events. The numbers of parents participating in events were low compared to the overall student enrollment and participation. Additionally, parent and/or guardian participation rates varied across schools. One school had 185 parents participate, while another school had less than 5 parents attend an event.

Each year, on the district's annual High School Exit Survey, many students report the lack of financial resources as a primary reason for not pursuing postsecondary enrollment. During the 2006-2007 school year, Project ADVANCE staff hosted 153 financial aid events designed to increase student and parent knowledge of financial aid and scholarship application processes. The number of events greatly increased during the 2006-2007 school year, as there were 49 financial aid events documented in the 2005-2006 school year. Overall, 4,192 students and/or parents participated in financial aid events. Again, the number of participants varied across high schools, ranging from totals of 48 to 727 students and/or parents attending at least one financial aid event.

Financial aid events were typically designed to address the needs of the high school senior who is preparing for college enrollment. However, students may participate in events throughout high school. An examination of the program participation for the graduating Class of 2007 revealed that 66% of the graduates had participated in one or more financial aid event while they were in high school. Thirty percent of the graduates

ACT and SAT Tests

In addition to the school counselors, Project ADVANCE staff often provided students with information related to SAT and ACT tests and assisted them in registering for those tests. In the 2006-2007 school year, fewer students took the SAT test with 2,379 AISD students completing the SAT exam, compared with the 2,476 students taking the test the year before. According to the College Board's Profile Report (2007) for the SAT, the AISD average Verbal score was 509, comparable with the national average score of a 503 and above the state average of 492. The average Math score for AISD was a 525, compared with a national average of 515 and a state average of 507. In Writing, AISD students had an average score of 491, while the state average score was 482 and the national average score was 494. The combined score average of AISD students was 1525, above both the national average of 1511 and the state average of 1481.

In 2006-2007, fewer students took the ACT test with 908 students completing the ACT exam compared with the 1,100 students in 2005-2006. The ACT High School Profile Report (2007) indicated that the average composite score in AISD was between the state and national averages at 20.9 compared to the state average of 20.5, and the national average of 21.2.

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Table 1: Number and Percentage of 12th Grade St

post-graduation plans “a great deal.”

However, the students indicated that their parents only occasionally attended school activities or meetings.

college preparation initiatives as their high schools engage in systemic change processes.

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., Ph.D.

DIVISION OF ACCOUNTABILITY