Destination: Graduation Program: 2009-10

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At-a-Glance

Destination: Graduation was a community funded program coordinated by The United Way of Metropolitan Dallas (UWMD) that was established to help mitigate dropping out of high school. The program started in 2005-06 at W.W. Samuell High School. In 2006-07, it expanded to two more high schools – J.F. Kimball and Thomas Jefferson. In 2009-10, the program operated in these three high schools and targeted students who were at a higher risk of dropping out. Destination: Graduation’s framework was a model for student retention based upon best practices by the National Dropout Prevention Center.

The aim of Destination: Graduation was to increase high school graduation rates through parental involvement, college preparation, and mentoring. These three strategies were customized for each school to meet the particular needs of that campus, equipping students with college readiness tools that could help them make a smooth transition from high school to college. Students and parents were selected to participate in the program by counselors or other school personnel, and could opt into one, two, or all three of these component strategies, which were implemented by community non-profit organizations.

The Career-Academics-Parents (CAP) Program was a middle school transition program that served sixth through eighth grade students at Edward H. Cary and Francisco Medrano Middle Schools, which feed into Thomas Jefferson High School. CAP was funded through a grant provided by AT&T. Students were selected to participate in the program by counselors or school administrators, with input from teachers where appropriate. The three basic service areas included academic enrichment, parental engagement, and career choice. The program aimed to provide parents with the resources needed to guide and support their students.

The CAP academic enrichment program was facilitated by Princeton Review, and provided in-school tutoring and other college and high school readiness activities.

Dallas Concilio recruited parents and provided daytime and evening classes in Spanish at Cary and Medrano as part of CAP’s parental engagement program. The program aimed to provide parents with the resources needed to guide and support their students.

CAP’s career choice program was implemented by The Boy Scouts of America. The curriculum focused on career exploration through field trips, speakers and projects.

Student Demographics

A total of 210 of the 1,954 students at Samuell participated in Destination: Graduation. At Kimball, 146 of 1,283 participated, and at Jefferson, 163 students of 1,284 participated. Overall, 536 Dallas ISD students took part in Destination: Graduation programs, representing 12 percent of the students in eligible schools.

The majority of Destination: Graduation students were Hispanic (69%). African American students made up 30 percent, and one percent of students in the program were white or of other ethnicity. Participants were split evenly between genders, with 51 percent of the students being female and 49 percent male. A total of 125 Destination: Graduation students were limited English proficient (23%). Special education...
students made up eight percent of the program. Most Destination: Graduation students were economically disadvantaged: 466 of the program’s 536 students, or 87 percent, belonged to this category.

**Attendance**

Attendance increased for students in Destination: Graduation relative to their non-participant classmates. The average percent attendance for non-participants was 91 percent. Destination: Graduation students’ attendance rate was 94 percent. The most marked increase in attendance was for students participating in the parental involvement component; this group showed a five percentage point higher attendance rate than non-participant students at each school.

**College Entrance Exams**

Students participating in the program took the *Preliminary SAT, SAT, and ACT* entrance exams at a higher rate than non-participants across all grade levels. Students in grades nine still fell behind overall district averages, but 10th, 11th and 12th graders exceeded them.

**Advanced Placement**

Destination: Graduation students enrolled in Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) and Advanced Placement (AP) classes at higher rates than non-participant students at their schools. However, both the Destination: Graduation students and non-participant students at Samuell, Kimball, and Jefferson enrolled at lower rates than the district average. This may illustrate an opportunity for growth in the program’s college preparatory strategy, because while interest in college entrance exams is growing among Destination: Graduation students, most are still not gaining exposure to college level curricula through Advanced Placement.

**Grade Point Average**

The average GPA for Destination: Graduation ninth graders and 10th graders was higher than for non-participants (3 points higher at ninth grade and 2 points higher at 10th.) By the 11th and 12th grades, the increase was less pronounced (1 point and 0.4 points, respectively) but still visible. As a district population, 11th and 12th graders had higher averages than students in ninth and 10th grade.

**TAKS**

A higher percentage of Destination: Graduation students met standards in every subject area at grades 10, 11, and 12, compared to non-participant students.

**Graduation**

The average percent graduated for Destination: Graduation seniors was 10 percentage points higher than for non-participants in the same schools. Table 1 presents graduation for both groups by school. The overall district average percent graduated (87.7%) was almost one percentage point lower than that of Destination: Graduation students (88.4%).

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<th>Samuell</th>
<th>Kimball</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D:G</td>
<td>Non-D:G</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>D:G</td>
<td>Non-D:G</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
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**Summary and Recommendations**

The 712 program participants were proportionally representative of the eligible students at the schools.

The relationship between program participation and student attendance was positive, especially in the parent involvement component. In addition, program participation was positively associated with higher rates of college entrance exam attempts, higher entrance exam scores, and higher rates of enrollment in college preparatory courses. The grade point averages (GPA) for students participating in Destination: Graduation were higher than for students at the same schools who did not participate. The goal of Destination: Graduation was to make a positive impact on the graduation rates of students at high schools in North Texas; the long term goal was that the graduation rate of Destination: Graduation students would be 20 percentage points higher than the graduation rate of non-Destination: Graduation students. In 2009-10, the average percent of Destination: Graduation students graduated was over 10 percentage points higher than that of non-participants.

Overall, the results of the Destination: Graduation program were quite positive. Some recommendations for the Destination: Graduation program were to consider expanding the emphasis of the college preparation component, to maintain thorough documentation to determine student participation and progress, and to consider expansion of the program.

Additional information may be obtained by consulting EA10-250-2, which can be found at [www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/](http://www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/).