The Closing the Gaps program was a pilot project of the Post-Secondary Success Initiative of the Dallas Independent School District. House Bill 1, Article 3, Rider 67, High School Completion and Success was passed in 2003 and authorized post-secondary success programs such as Closing the Gaps. A Texas Education Agency (TEA) grant funded the program, which began August 15, 2005, and extended until August 31, 2006. The program’s purpose was to provide high-quality post-secondary advisory services so as to increase the number of DISD graduates who pursue post-secondary education. The $1,711,456 in grant funds purchased services and consulting specialists from The Princeton Review (TPR), which provided classroom instruction and other services to DISD students, parents, and educators.

Closing the Gaps Participants
The Closing the Gaps program was implemented in five high schools: Seagoville, South Oak Cliff, Sunset, W. T. White, and Woodrow Wilson. Selected program components were available in five feeder middle schools: J. L. Long, Thomas C. Marsh, Raul Quintanilla Sr., Seagoville, and Boude Storey. Overall, 831 personnel were employed in the Closing the Gaps schools, including 755 teachers, 34 counselors, and 42 administrators. The Closing the Gaps schools served 13,272 students, including 4,796 middle school students (Grades 6th-8th) and 8,576 high school students (Grades 9th-12th). Closing the Gaps students tended to be Hispanic (63.8%) and economically disadvantaged (65.3%).

Structure of Closing the Gaps Program
The Closing the Gaps program was comprised of eight components, all of which were implemented by The Princeton Review (TPR): Higher Education Advisors, Guidance Portal, Counselor Trainer of Trainers (TOT) program, professional development for administrators and teachers, Road Map to College Seminars for students and parents, SmartStart PSAT Course, SAT or ACT Live Course, and SAT or ACT Online Course. The five Closing the Gaps high schools had all eight components, whereas the five middle schools had the first five components.

Implementation of Closing the Gaps
A total of 686 students took the SmartStart Class designed to prepare 10th graders for the PSAT, 445 students in fall 2005 and 241 in spring 2006. The fall 2005 SmartStart students were surveyed to assess their level of satisfaction with the course. Of those surveyed, the majority of students reported feeling more confident in taking the PSAT and believed their PSAT score would increase. Additionally, most students felt that the course was a good use of their time and would recommend to their friends.

The SAT/ACT Live classes were offered to students in the five participating high schools during spring 2006. Across all schools, 459 students were enrolled in the class and took at least one SAT or ACT practice assessment.

Students, personnel and parents of Closing the Gaps schools completed pre- and post-questionnaires as a means of assessing the extent to which the Closing the Gaps program was effectively implemented. Selected findings from these surveys are presented below:

- Personnel’s perception of students’ understanding of college admissions process, college scholarships opportunities, financial aid applications, and academic requirements for college entrance increased by the end of the Closing the Gaps program. Surveyed parents’ level of understanding of these four areas was higher than that of students on both pre- and post-questionnaires.

- Students rated their attitude toward school, self-confidence, and attention and behavior at home as good, with negligible change between the pre- and post-questionnaire. Parents’ ratings of their children were higher in all three areas than the students’ ratings of themselves.

- The overwhelming majority of parent respondents want their child(ren) to attend college or university. Students, however, were...
more likely to express an interest in pursuing post-secondary education on the pre-questionnaire than on the post-questionnaire. Given the intent of Closing the Gaps program was to increase students’ interest in attending college, this finding is disconcerting.

- A majority of the student respondents on the pre- and post-questionnaires agreed to feeling comfortable talking with school staff members, having access to career and college information, and being adequately prepared for college by their middle or high school. Parents’ level of agreement was slightly higher than students in all three areas. The lowest area of agreement for both parents and students, however, was with respondents’ perception of accessibility of career and college information.

- High school personnel changed in their perceptions of students’ ability to enhance college prospects, having a higher opinion of students’ ability at the end of the Closing the Gaps program.

**Closing the Gaps Outcomes**

At the time of this report, outcome data on annual dropout rates, four-year secondary completion rates, and post-education education pursuits of 2006 DISD graduates were not yet available. Therefore, this report presents baseline figures to which 2006 DISD graduates may be compared once data are received.

The annual dropout rate for the district was slightly higher than the state average annual dropout rate from the 2001-2002 to the 2003-2004 school year (Figure 1). Average annual dropout rates of the Closing the Gaps high schools were higher for all school years in consideration than districtwide.

Overall, DISD had lower graduation and GED rates and higher percentages of continuers and dropouts than statewide across graduating classes between 2001 and 2004 (Figure 2). In comparison to the district, the Closing the Gaps high schools had smaller average percentages of graduates between 2001 and 2004 but a slightly higher average percentage of dropouts from 2003 to 2004.

![Figure 1. Annual dropout rates for state, district, and Closing the Gaps (CTG) schools.](image1)

![Figure 2. Longitudinal Secondary Completion Rates for state, district, and Closing the Gaps (CTG) schools.](image2)

![Figure 3. Initial Post-Secondary Enrollment Rates for High School Graduating Classes of 2001-2005.](image3)