

Camino 2006

Annual Report

Executive Summary

The Caminos Pre-College Access and Leadership Program is a summer academic institute designed to provide at-risk eighth grade students, from Miller and Goodnight Junior Highs, with the opportunity to enhance their academic capacity and earn high school credit in English, Algebra, and Technology. The students are stratified into three learning communities and receive instruction in two hour blocks supplemented with tutoring. In addition, students receive two hours of daily leadership instruction and participation in field trips and community service projects.

The academic results indicate that 43% of the students earned credit in Algebra, 78 % earned credit in English, while 100% earned credit in Technology. Of the 75 students that started the program 68 students (90.6%) completed program. All participants applied to the college on-line and inquired about financial aid and scholarships.

Caminos: Pre-College Access and Leadership Program

In the United States alone, over 25% of the potential high school graduates drop out every year before graduating, where in some major cities the rate is up to 40% (USDOE). Researchers also predict that by the year 2020, approximately 25% of all students, in the United States, will be living in conditions of poverty and approximately 50% of students will be of racial and/or ethnic minority backgrounds (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). Unfortunately, graduation outcomes for minority students are often worse than for non-minority students. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics (1999), reported that in 1998, 8% of White non-Hispanic students, 14% of African American students, and 30% of Hispanic students, dropped out of school.

Statistics such as these have created widespread concern about students who are at risk of either not graduating from school or of graduating without the necessary academic, social, and emotional skill to function as productive citizens and workers (Donmoyer & Kos, 1993).

Furthermore, there is great concern within the Hispanic community. The number of Hispanic students is rapidly increasing in U.S. schools. Data from the U.S Census (2000) indicates that the Hispanic population has increased by 57.9% since 1990 and is a significantly younger population. It is predicted that the Hispanic population, as a group, will be characterized by a constant process of socio-cultural change as new immigrants and their children, and multi-generational U.S born Hispanics and their children, continue adapting to life in the United States as well as the U.S. education system. The rapid growth rates and age of the Hispanic community alone, underscores the need to have a better understanding of their adjustment process within the U.S educational system.

The Caminos Pre-College Access Leadership program was developed in order to help bridge the gap between high school and higher education opportunities for ethnic minority youth, who are considered to be at-risk. Caminos, a six-week academic program, was specifically designed for at-risk students to understand academic challenges and experience the college environment. Furthermore, this program intended to expose at-risk students to university experiences, in order to inspire, give confidence, and better prepare students to enter high school and in turn, higher education.

A main objective of the program is to increase the number of at-risk middle school students in enrolling in college bound curriculum once in high school. A secondary goal was to foster a feeling of success in academic areas prior to entering high school and thus create a positive goal oriented start to high school. Furthermore, through tracking the students throughout their high school careers, it is predicted that 80% of the participants will enroll in college bound curriculum; 80% will take the PSAT in their junior year of high school; 80% will be engaged and complete a community based project; and 75% will enroll and attend a college or university after completing high school.

Characteristics

Identification of the at risk students for Caminos was determined by Texas Education Agency's coding system. Students were first identified by their home campuses at Miller and Goodnight Junior Highs and descriptive state codes were used to identify the reasons for at risk status. Six different state codes were used for the 2006 cohort. Six percent of the students (4) were Code 2 meaning they did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation

curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year and were not maintaining such an average in the current semester. Eleven percent of the students (8) were coded with a 3 which means the students were not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years. The majority or seventy three percent of the students (51) were coded 4 which is described as a student who did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student under TEC Subchapter B, Chapter 39 and who has not in the previous year or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110 percent. Three percent of students (2) were in code 8 described as currently on parole, probation, deferral prosecution, or other conditional release. Code 10 is defined as a student of limited English proficiency, as define by TEC sec. 29.052, of which six percent of the students (4) were identified. And finally, one percent of the students was coded as homeless (1), as defined NCLB, Title X, Part C, Section 725 (2).

Participants

In the third year of the program, 2006, seventy five students initially showed interest in attending and submitted applications. Sixty eight students (90.6%) completed the entire six week program. Three students were unable to continue the program after a week due to family responsibilities such as taking care of siblings and other family members. Two students chose not to continue the program shortly after submitting the application because families decided to allow them to stay at home. Two students had prior summer commitments with other activities that prevented them from continuing the program and consequently did not return.

The student participants consisted of 35% male and 65% female students. Ethnic representation was 83% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian, 3% Black and 10% Other. The birthplace of 7% of the students was listed as Mexico. Family size ranged from two to nine members residing in the same household, 10% with 3 members, 69% with 2-4 members, 19% with 5-6 members and 2% with 7 or more. For all three program years starting in 2004 through 2006 participants were recruited through two San Marcos junior highs. School counselors and teachers recommended students for the program based on meeting the at-risk criteria and the fact that they were enrolled in Pre-Algebra.

Regarding the 2006 participant's parents' educational attainment level, father's level of education ranged from 15% having no high school education, 18% had some high school education, 16% had a high school diploma or GED, 10% had attended some college but did not graduate, and 8% had a bachelor's degree. 33% of the sample did not respond to this question. Mother's level of education ranged from 12% having no high school education, 16% had some high school education, 33% had a high school diploma or GED, 11% had attended some college but did not graduate, and 10% had a bachelors degree. 18% of the sample did not respond to this question.

Program

In collaboration with Texas State University at San Marcos, the Caminos Pre-College Leadership Program was designed for at-risk students to have the possibility to strengthen their academic skills, have the opportunity to earn high school credit in three academic classes and experience the college environment. The three week stay in college dorms was intended to demystify the university experience, inspire, encourage and better prepare students for higher education. In 2006 the students experienced the college

environment at Texas State University, living in campus dorms and taking classes at the university. The Caminos program covered all expenses of room and board, books, math calculators, transportation, and accident insurance. Seven full-time resident advisors were available to assist the students in their course work, adjusting to college life and their overall surroundings. The resident advisors also served as teacher assistants in and out of the classroom and accompanied the students at all times.

The program also covered expenses for recreational events and weekend field trips to educational locations in the central Texas area. Weekend trips included visits to an high tech company, museums, a presidential library, and a state park. These trips augmented the students overall educational experience by exposing them to career opportunities, culture and connections to their content area subject matter. Writing responses were assigned upon return to both practice the writing process and to connect the experiences to learning. Additionally, students participated in a service project at Aquarena Springs where they learned about the natural river environment while helping to clean the river surroundings. Students gained the experience of improving their immediate environment as well as contributing positively in a productive manner.

Small learning communities were established in order to maximize student teacher interaction and increase individual attention to student learning needs. During the 2006 program the students were equally divided into three learning communities establishing an 24:1 ratio.

The Algebra curriculum consisted of daily two-hour sessions consisting of one hour of class instruction and one hour of problem solving. The course covered operation and qualitative reasoning, patterns, relationships, algebraic thinking, geometry and

measurement. In addition, the course also covered symbolic reasoning, function concepts, relationship between equations and functions, tools for algebraic thinking and the underlying mathematical process. During the 2006 program, the teacher incorporated the use of a TI Navigator system which allowed the students to connect individual calculators to a hub that transmits responses between the teacher and the student and project the results on an overhead projector to be viewed by the class. Homework assignments were also sent and received with this device. This innovative technology proved to be an effective tool at engaging the students and providing immediate feedback from the teacher.

The English curriculum included daily two hour instruction in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) to improve student performance on the exit level TAKS test. During the six week course the students were given direct instruction on the writing process including planning, drafting and completion of written compositions through the organization of logical arguments. The curriculum included readings from selected stories, dramas, novels and poetry. Additionally, in 2006 the teacher incorporated the Spring Board curriculum to help improve vocabulary, affect more appropriate response answers and help prepare them for the triplet type TAKS released test.

The Technology course, offered during the last three years, focused on technology standards which included information acquisition, problem solving and communication through the use of various programs. Through the study of technology applications, related terms, concepts and data entry, the students engaged in learning how to make informed decisions about technology and creating products through practical application of software programs such as Microsoft Office.

The leadership component was designed to uniquely reflect the new paradigms of leadership that honor and reflect culture and values. The curriculum assumed a “community” and “transformative” approach to leadership. Specifically, this paradigm explores the leadership development that expands on the concept of engaged and transformative leadership. The approach and curriculum focused on personal leadership development expressed through community service. Students performed two community service projects during the program, in the high school and at the San Marcos River at Aquarena Springs. This leadership program teaches students discipline and behavioral parameters to succeed.

Results

In its third year the program results reflected a 100% passing rate for all students in Technology (Chart 1). As for the English course, 78% (N=53) of all students passed the course with 86% of them female and 75% of them male. Consultation with the English teacher revealed that writing skills foundation were a significant weakness for the 2006 cohort. As a result, several interventions were used to close the gap including intensive tutorial time with individualized instruction and several assignments involving multiple attempts at writing revisions. Time on task while in residence on the college campus helped increase performance and provide the structure and discipline for the students to focus more on their performance. In Algebra, 43% (N=29) of the students passed to earn credit for the course. (Chart 1) Of those passing, 41% were female (Chart 2) and 46% were male (Chart 3). The practice with math calculators increases their time on task with immediate feedback.

Overall results for 2006 reflect that 100% of the students earned one high school credit, 47% (N=32) earned two credits and 37% (N=25) were able to successfully earn all three high school credits (Chart 4).

Implications for Practice, Theory and Future Program Development

Throughout the 6-week program several unique characteristics were noted, through observation, which would most likely improve the success of such intervention programs. As the literature suggests, students greatly need to be nurtured, supported, and mentored by teachers and staff. Caminos participants were no different they sought out mentorship, direction, and support from their teachers and staff, which overall seemed to motivate students to stay on task.

Moreover, it was noted that most of the students were very technologically literate and enjoyed interactive work. As the literature suggests, having different innovative structures, and experiential learning experiences can improve the success of such type of intervention program. Within the Caminos program, the media technology component was one way of having different innovative and experiential learning experiences, which students greatly enjoyed. The leadership team building experiences also created discipline, focus and time on task. All of their nurturing experiences are designed to strengthen their focus and convince the students that they can achieve if they work hard.

All students were instructed on the college application process and completed an application to Tyler Junior College since no application fee was required. They also completed a Texas common application that is used to send to institutions around the state. Students researched and presented findings on several college campuses for more information on financial aid, course offerings, location and student life. The three most

popular universities were UT, Texas A&M and Texas State. Harvard and Yale were also researched as well as two culinary schools located in Austin.

Chart 1

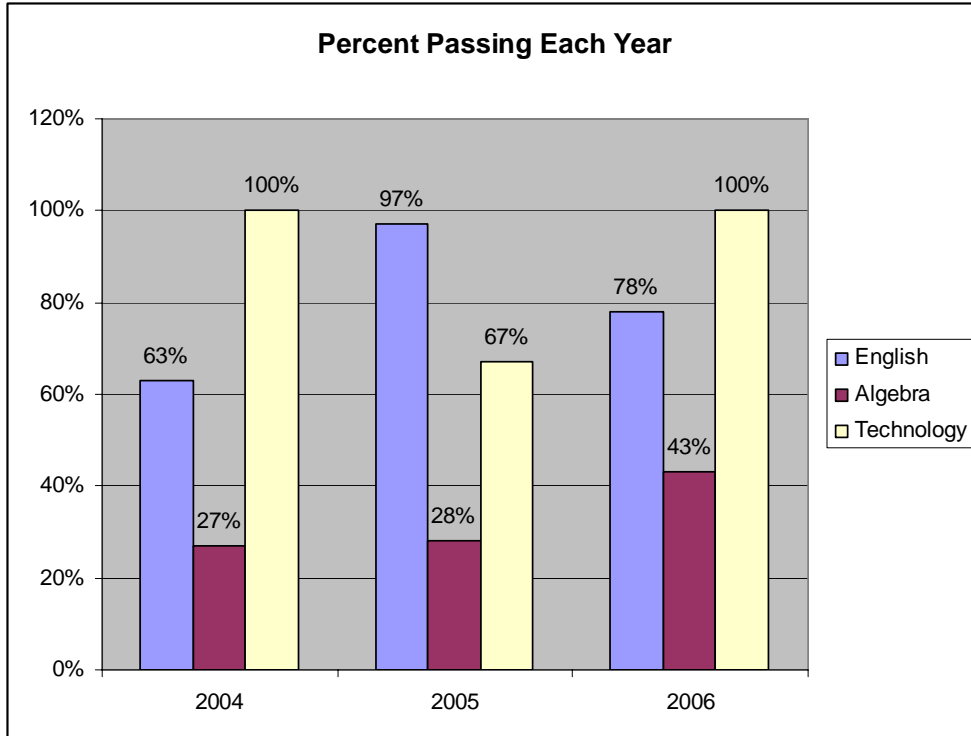


Chart 2

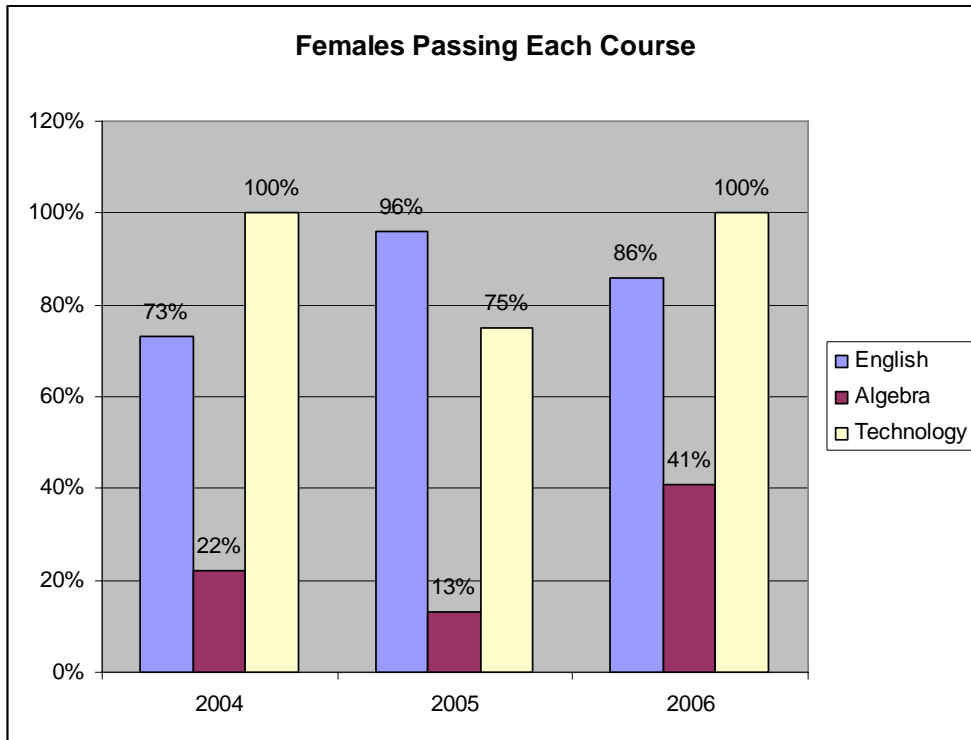


Chart 3

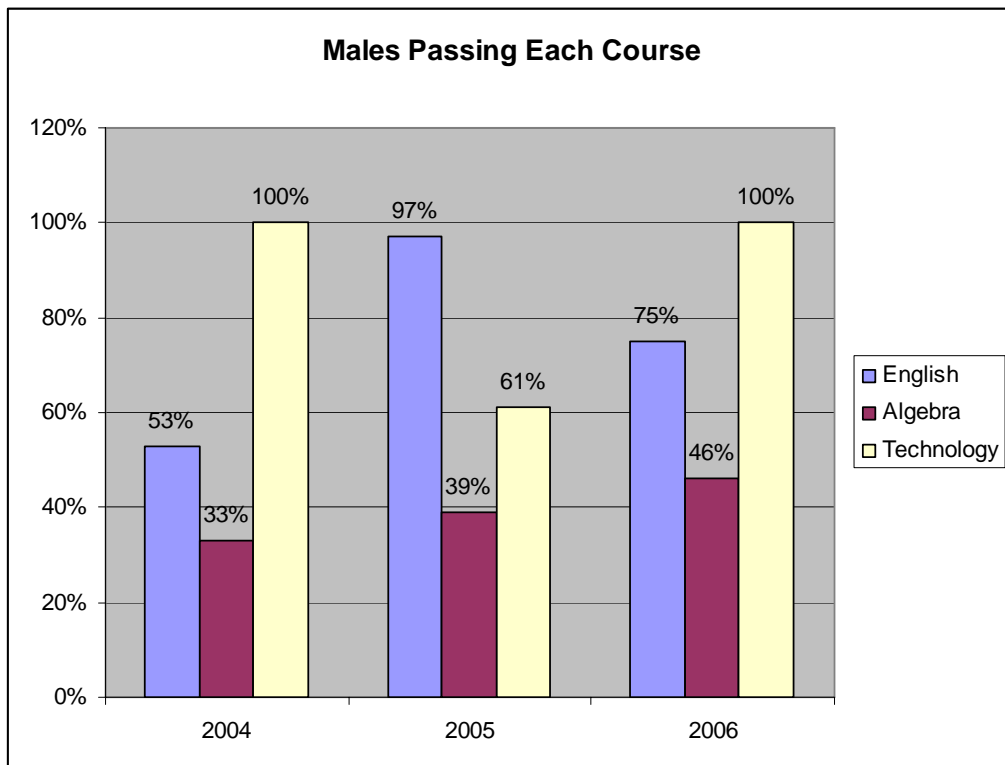


Chart 4

