

STRATEGIES TO ACCELERATE COLLEGE READINESS

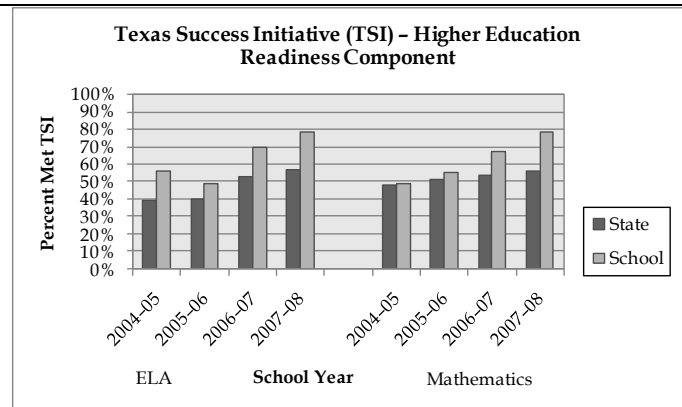
<p>CAMPUS Challenge Early College High School <i>Recognized 2007-08</i></p> <p>DISTRICT Houston ISD</p> <p><i>Texas High School Project Demonstration Site</i></p>	<p>PROGRAM SUMMARY</p> <p>The goal of Challenge Early College High School's (CECHS) program is to ensure students are prepared for college-level coursework.</p> <p>Key strategies include double blocking of foundational high school courses in reading/English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, scaffolded instructional strategies, and use of portfolios and student review and revision practices.</p> <p>Outcomes include increases in the percentage of students performing at college-ready levels on TAKS in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics as measured by the Higher Education Readiness Component of the Texas Success Initiative (TSI)¹ and increases in the percentage of students completing advanced or dual enrollment courses.</p> <hr/> <p>EFFECTIVENESS</p> <p>In 2004-05, the first year for which TSI data were reported in AEIS for CECHS, 56% of CECHS students scored high enough on exit-level TAKS in ELA to be exempt from taking a TSI college readiness test, compared to the state average of 39%. In mathematics, 49% of students were exempt, compared to the state average of 48%. In 2007-08, 78% of CECHS students were exempt in ELA, compared to the state average of 57%, and 78% were exempt in mathematics, compared to the state average of 56%.</p>
--	---

¹ Note: The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) - Higher Education Readiness Component is described as follows in the 2007-08 AEIS glossary: "The Texas Success Initiative (TSI) is a program designed to improve student success in college. It requires students to be assessed in reading, writing, and mathematics skills prior to enrolling in college, and to be advised based on the results of that assessment. Students may be exempted from taking a test for the Texas Success Initiative if they have a high enough score on their exit-level TAKS tests for mathematics and English language arts, as set by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The qualifying scores are scale scores of 2200 on their TAKS mathematics and English language arts with a written composition score of 3 or higher on the writing component. This indicator shows the percent of students who achieved this level of proficiency by subject (English language arts and mathematics). Results on the TSI - Higher Education Readiness Component were evaluated for GPA in the state accountability system."

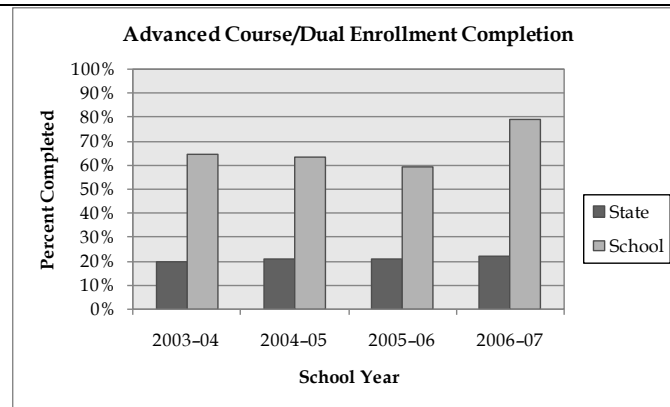
Please take one minute to answer the feedback survey (six questions).

[Best Practices Feedback Survey](#)

In 2003-04, the first year for which advanced course/dual enrollment completion data were reported in AEIS for CECHS, 65% of CECHS students completed advanced or dual enrollment courses, compared to the state average of 20%. In 2006-07, the most current year for which this data were available in AEIS, the campus had an advanced course/dual enrollment completion rate of 79%, compared to the state average of 22%.



Source: AEIS
 Note: The campus only served Grades 9-10 in its first year of operation in 2003-04, thus TSI data were not available for that year.



Source: AEIS

CONTEXT/IMPLEMENTATION

Demographics (2007-08)

Grade Levels Served		9-12		Campus Enrollment		404	
Ethnic Distribution				Economically Disadvantaged		205	50.7%
African American				85	21.0%	At-Risk	
Hispanic				210	52.0%	168	41.6%
White				89	22.0%	Mobility (2006-07)	
Asian/Pacific Islander				18	4.5%	28	7.3%

Source: AEIS

Background

- With a demonstration site grant from the Texas High School Project (THSP), Houston ISD (HISD) opened Challenge Early College High School in 2003-04 on a Houston Community College campus. CECHS served Grades 9-10 in its first year, adding a grade level a year thereafter.
- Admission is based on a lottery selection of applications. Staff reported that students come from any one of 50 HISD middle schools with widely varying educational backgrounds.
- The early college model is based on provision of an accelerated, college preparatory instructional program that allows students to finish the high school curriculum and take college-level courses tuition free. Students simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate’s degree or up to two years of credit toward a bachelor’s degree. Because of the diversity of students’ educational backgrounds, staff reported that the campus needed to find ways to give some incoming students extra time and coursework in their freshman year, particularly in reading/ELA and mathematics, to fill in academic deficits and establish a culture of rigor and student responsibility for learning. Students had to be ready to take college-level courses by their junior year.
- CECHS also offers a fifth-year program for seniors who are earning an associate’s degree or those students who need additional time to complete coursework for early college requirements for high school graduation.

- The campus operates on an A/B/C block schedule. On A and B days, students take four courses per day. The C schedule day (Friday) is an alternating A or B schedule. Students are dismissed at 1:00 p.m. on Fridays for a campus staff meeting.
- The campus began implementing the double-blocking practice in reading/ELA in the second semester of the campus' first year (2003-04). Double blocking was implemented in mathematics in the second year of the campus' operation (2004-05).

Procedures

- The campus conducted several early diagnostic activities to assess the needs of incoming freshmen, identify individual students for academic support, and adapt the master schedule to address student needs for additional class time in foundational courses. These activities included the following:
 - A required writing sample and a pre-test in pre-algebra skills were included in the campus application.
 - Staff reviewed eighth-grade Stanford 10 results.
 - A one-week mandatory freshman camp was offered in August before the start of the school year during which teachers provided a review of basic foundational material, introduced high school-level reading/writing and pre-algebra content, and administered a range of diagnostic assessments.
- Based on the early diagnostics testing, campus teachers met as a team before the start of the school year to adjust the master schedule, including double blocking foundational courses in reading/ELA and mathematics. Some double-blocked classes were mandatory for all incoming freshman; other double-blocked classes were aligned with the particular needs of a group of incoming students. For example, all students who did not take an eighth-grade Algebra I class were typically assigned double-blocked Algebra I in ninth grade. One year, based on diagnostic testing during the freshman camp, the staff also scheduled a double-blocked ninth-grade geometry class for those students who had completed eighth-grade Algebra I but who needed extra support to strengthen their foundational mathematics skills.
- Staff emphasized that the purpose of the double blocking was not to do the same thing for a longer period of time, but, rather, to allow time to provide in-depth spiraled activities that explored what students already knew and what they needed to know. For instance, classes began with a 15-20 minute intensive warm-up designed to assess student pre-knowledge from which new lessons would build and to provide a preview or introduction of new concepts for the lesson. Teachers spent another 20 minutes going over activities and problems with students for self-grading and revision. All activities were designed to emphasize the foundational knowledge that students were going to have to continue to apply in the subject area.

- The double blocking also allowed time for cooperative writing workshop strategies in ELA and for intensive practice in mathematics. In mathematics classes, mirroring a trend in higher education, very limited calculator use was allowed.
- Students were required to keep all warm-up exercises, in-class activities, and homework in a spiral binder that teachers used as a portfolio of student work, constantly referring back to previously covered material through instructional use of the portfolio.
- Students self-graded and corrected work through in-class review of problems and assignments. While teachers administered regular tests and quizzes, teacher grading of assignments was conducted on a sporadic and random basis to focus less on grades and more on student responsibility for review, revision, and correction of their own work. For example, teachers would ask students to turn in a problem or assignment that they had already revised and corrected after in-class review of the material. This emphasis was designed to build student self-discipline and move students toward college-oriented behaviors and skill sets.
- Typically, double-blocked courses were offered during the freshman year, but the campus modified the master schedule to offer double-blocked courses for student groups as needed even through the junior year.
- Additional instructional support options for individual students in higher grades who still needed help completing the high school curriculum included afterschool tutoring offered during a daily scheduled homework lab.
- In addition, in 2006-07, the campus implemented a horizontal team structure with teams of subject-area teachers meeting once a month to look at data, design interventions for individual students, and arrange student and/or student-parent meetings to explain interventions and agree to articulated timelines or contracts for participation in interventions.
- Staff reported that the campus also planned to create a three-week summer curriculum in both reading/ELA and mathematics for incoming students identified through freshman camp as needing extra support before starting the double-blocked courses at the beginning of the school year. This program would require students to complete take-home work and meet with a teacher every other day.

Lessons Learned

- Staff reported that the double blocking in ninth grade helped students to shift from middle school-level thinking and an overemphasis on grades to more college-oriented thinking focused on understanding of content and self-guided pursuit of mastery.
- Staff also reported that the shared objective to get all students into college provided by the early college model was very powerful. Teachers were able to become immediately focused on this shared goal with students, providing academic direction and energy.

Campus-Reported Resources

- Reeves, D. B. *High performance in high poverty schools: 90/90/90 and beyond*. (2003). Denver, CO: Center for Performance Assessment.

CAMPUS/DISTRICT STAFF**Justin Fuentes, Principal****Gastonia "Terri" Goodman, Dean of Students****Dr. Dolly Ann Covington, Dean of Students, Mathematics Department Chair****Matthew Martinez, English Department Chair**

Challenge Early College High School

Houston ISD

5601 West Loop South

Houston, TX 77081

(713) 664-9712

Melinda Garrett, Interim Superintendent

Houston Independent School District

4400 West 18th Street

Houston, TX 77092

(713) 556-6005