COLLEGE AND CAREER PATHWAYS

CAMPUS
Hidalgo Early College High School
Academically Acceptable 2007–08

DISTRICT
Hidalgo ISD

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The **goal** of Hidalgo Early College High School's (HECHS) program is to provide access to postsecondary and career opportunities for all students.

Key strategies include early college and career awareness efforts and the integration of a rigorous college-level academic curriculum with a well-developed Career and Technical Education (CTE) curriculum.

Outcomes include increases in the percentage of students completing advanced or dual enrollment courses and graduating under the Recommended High School Program (RHSP) or Distinguished Achievement Plans (DAP).

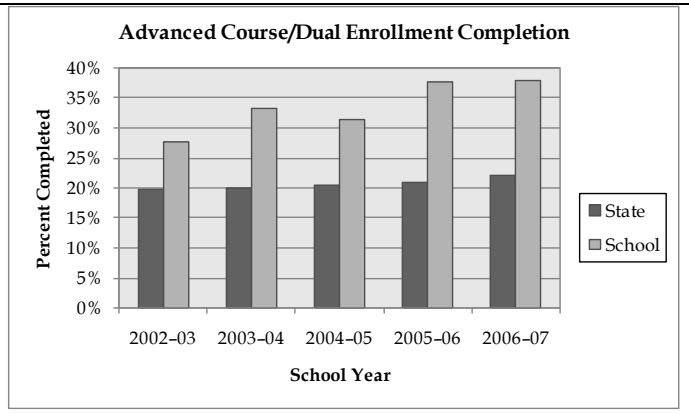
EFFECTIVENESS

Over the past five years, HECHS's advanced course/dual enrollment completion rates and percentage of RHSP/DAP graduates have increased. In 2002−03, 28% of HECHS students completed advanced or dual enrollment courses, compared to the state average of 20%. In 2006−07, the campus had an advanced course/dual enrollment completion rate of 38%, compared to the state average of 22%.

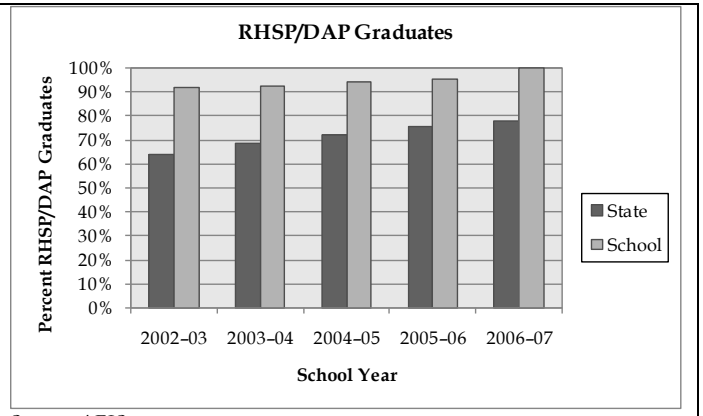
In 2002−03, 92% of HECHS graduates completed the RHSP or DAP graduation plans, compared to the state average of 64%. In 2006−07, 100% of HECHS graduates completed high school under these plans, compared to the state average of 78%.

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

Best Practices Feedback Survey



Source: AEIS



Source: AEIS

CONTEXT/IMPLEMENTATION

Demographics (2007–08)

Grade Levels Served	9–12	Campus Enrollment	893

Ethnic Distribution					
Hispanic	891	99.8%	**Economically Disadvantaged**	809	90.6%
			Limited English Proficient (LEP)	222	24.9%
			At-Risk	579	64.8%
			Mobility (2006–07)	161	16.6%

Source: AEIS

Background

- Since 1997−98, Hidalgo ISD (HISD) has had a graduation requirement of 27 credits, which is higher than state requirements. (The previous state requirement of 24 credits for the RHSP and DAP was increased to 26 credits for ninth graders entering high school in 2007−08.) Staff reported that there was also a districtwide emphasis on graduation with a DAP diploma.

- The district's CTE program, Career Pathways,[1] was established in 2003 with agreements with South Texas College (STC) and Texas State Technical College (TSTC) to provide student access to dual enrollment and/or locally articulated college courses[2] in core subject areas as well as technical certification programs.

- In 2005−06, the district entered into a partnership with the Texas High School Project (THSP) and the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) to establish an early college high school with funding from grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation administered through the Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT). The goal of the early college model is to allow students to earn both a high school diploma and up to two years of college credit tuition free while in high school. Rather than using the typical approach of creating a small early college high school campus serving a select group of students, the district transformed its entire comprehensive high school into an early college campus, offering college-level courses to all its students through two academies, the Academy of Science and Technology and the Academy of Human Services. After a year of planning, the early college was established in 2006−07.

- Two THSP videos featuring HECHS students can be viewed at: http://www.thsp.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=274785&pageId=1086262#Video

Procedures

Early College Awareness

- Examples of early college awareness activities included college displays at elementary and middle school campuses, field trips to colleges and universities, campus visits from college recruiters, and career days.

- In 2006−07, with local funds, the district created a college-readiness facilitator position at HISD's only middle school. The facilitator's role included working with campus and district staff and students from elementary to high school to coordinate expanded early college awareness programming and activities districtwide. Beginning in summer 2009, the facilitator coordinated summer teacher working sessions to vertically align the curriculum from middle school through high school, with plans to extend alignment to the elementary grades.

- To increase rigor across the curriculum, the district sent middle and high school teachers to College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Program training and began implementation of a pre-AP program in Grades 6−8.

[1] *See TEA's CTE unit Web page for information on the sixteen federally defined Career Clusters at http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/achievetexas/index.html.*

[2] *Unlike dual enrollment courses, courses offered through local articulation agreements provide college credit only at the institutions with which the agreements were made.*

- A college success course focused on developing academic habits and skills (e.g., study habits, notetaking) was integrated into the eighth-grade curriculum, and all eighth-grade and high school teachers received training on the course strategies and expectations.

- During the summer between the eighth and ninth grades, all students were strongly encouraged to participate in the district's Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) Academy, a one-month prep course for the state's college entrance exam.[3] Tutoring and exam preparation were provided during the Academy in reading, writing, and mathematics by middle and high school teachers during half-day sessions, Monday−Thursday. Students took the THEA, and test results were used by campuses as early assessments of student needs in terms of college readiness. Staff reported that participation in the THEA Academy prepared students for taking PSAT, SAT, and other college entrance exams. Students were reassessed regularly on the THEA throughout high school to help determine course selection and scheduling.

Early College High School

- District staff met with the UTPA Vice Provost to identify college-level courses that were aligned with the high school curriculum and that would be appropriate for high school students at the lower grade levels. College courses included in the high school schedule for freshmen and sophomores were specifically chosen to give all students an opportunity to be successful in rigorous courses in non-core content areas. For example, in ninth grade, students could take a college-level art appreciation or music appreciation course for fine arts credit. A college-level kinesiology course in 10th grade was offered for health credit. These courses were taught on the HECHS campus by a high school teacher qualified to be an adjunct instructor and teach a college-level course. During the summer of the sophomore year, UTPA instructors came to the campus to offer a communications and computer information systems program for six hours of college credit. In addition to these college courses,[4] students in Grades 9 and 10 took regular high school and AP courses as well.

- During the junior and senior years, most students took primarily college courses. For students in 11th and 12th grade, some college-level courses were taught by qualified HECHS staff on the high school campus, some courses were taught by UTPA instructors on the HECHS campus, and, for some other courses, the district

[3] *The THEA was approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, under Senate Bill 286, Texas Education Code, Section 51.3062: Texas Success Initiative, for use by Texas institutions of higher education as an assessment instrument to evaluate incoming students.*

[4] *Students could take up to 12 college hours before having to pass the THEA*

bussed students to the UTPA campus where HECHS students attended classes with college students. In addition, students took college-level courses associated with a chosen career pathway through agreements with STC and TSTC at either the high school or postsecondary campus, depending on the course.

- An HECHS teacher in the appropriate subject area was assigned to attend all summer courses taught by college faculty to HECHS high school students. The HECHS teacher conducted the high school-level administrative tasks for the instructor (e.g., announcements, monitoring bathroom breaks) and provided mandatory tutoring and test preparation support aligned with the course. Students were scheduled for classes with the HECHS teacher on days when the college course was not meeting. Assigned teachers received a stipend.

- To increase the number of courses that could be taught by HECHS staff on campus, the district implemented a master's degree professional development incentive ($500 per first six semester hours and $100 per additional three hours) to encourage teachers to pursue advanced diplomas and qualify to teach college-level courses. A college course teaching stipend ($500 per college course) was also offered by the district to high school teachers with the credentials to teach these courses. Since the implementation of the incentive program, approximately 15 HECHS teachers had become qualified to teach college-level courses, including English, college algebra, pre-calculus, science, music and art, U.S. history, and government.

- With bond funding, the district designed a campus building renovation to more closely resemble a college campus.

Career Pathways

- HISD implemented districtwide career readiness programming beginning with career exploration initiatives at the middle school level to help students gain a greater understanding of career pathways at HECHS. A Career Investigations class taught by a certified technology teacher was included in all middle school students' schedules. In the class, students conducted an interest inventory, explored career options, and engaged in career planning through an online program developed by Pitsco Education, which also provided hands-on, work-related activities for students in eight different job pathways (for details, see http://www.pitsco.com/default.aspx).

- Toward the end of eighth grade, middle school counselors made a presentation on the high school Career Pathways program during the Career Investigations class, describing the five career pathways offered at HECHS. These pathways were:
  - Health Science Technology;

	○ Business and Marketing; ○ Human Development, Management, and Service; ○ Industrial and Engineering Technology; and ○ Personal and Protective Services. • The high school counselors then visited the middle school to assist students in choosing a career pathway and designing a high school schedule. (High school counselors were then assigned students by career pathway rather than by alphabetical order.) • Upon entering high school, ninth-grade students who had chosen the Health Science Technology pathway began taking the first course in the CTE sequence for their chosen field. In the other pathways, students took a one-semester class called "Career Connections" in order to: ○ further define their career interests; ○ engage in development of a career profile that included an assessment of workforce demand, a projected salary analysis, and a specific required training and academic coursework plan; and ○ practice professional jobseeking strategies (developing a resume, completing applications, interviewing). In addition, students did virtual (and real) job shadowing in their chosen fields. In the other half of the ninth-grade year, students in the four pathways other than Health Science Technology participated in a teen leadership class, which was based on a purchased curriculum developed by The Flippen Group (for details, see http://www.flippengroup.com/education/teenldrs.html. • Typical CTE coursework in each of the five pathways included introductory and foundational courses, intermediate and advanced methodology or technical specializations, and, when possible, on-the-job practicum or culminating certification courses. The Health Science Technology pathway provided four full years of CTE coursework with primary programming focused on health career professions, including a certified nursing assistants program. The other four pathways provided introductory coursework taught by HECHS teachers followed by off-campus coursework through programs offering specialized technical certification at STC or TSTC. • Many of the advanced courses in the CTE pathway sequences, including certification courses, were offered through partnerships with local colleges, STC and TSTC. The district also had local articulation agreements with STC for several courses taught by qualified high school staff. The district offered articulated courses in introductory accounting, marketing, and health sciences, which were taught by high school teachers meeting STC requirements for instructors.

- Counselors made regular classroom presentations to students as a group providing career counseling and CTE pre-registration support.

- To support collaboration and integration of core area content courses and the Career Pathways program, core content area and CTE teachers and counselors participated in a unique internship program in the region to align K−12 education with skills and knowledge required for the regional workforce. The Academic Leadership Alliance (ALA) is a partnership with the McAllen Economic Development Corporation, TechPrep of the Rio Grande Valley, STC, Region I Education Service Center, and local areas businesses (for details, see http://www.esc1.net/12931098114549483/site/default.asp). The Alliance sponsors a three-week summer internship program, the ALA Summer Educator Internship, for groups of teachers and staff who work in area industries to develop lessons and align curriculum with needed workforce skills and knowledge.

- Groups of 16−20 HISD teachers and staff participated in the internship program each year. At the conclusion of the internship, participants met for a week to share information about industry needs, brainstorm about how and where workforce knowledge and skills could be integrated into the curriculum, and develop lesson plans around their internship experiences. Participants were required to make presentations about the internship during in-service days to share with the larger faculty. Participants were also required to present the lesson plans to other teachers in departmental meetings and discuss strategies for addressing needs within the content area. Finally, participants were required to present and refine their lesson plans in their classrooms before they could receive the full stipend for participation. Program participation was funded by the district and regional businesses participating in the Alliance.

Funding

- In addition to the grants and program funding described above, the district used THSP expansion grants to extend college and career programs into the lower grade levels and has used High School Allotment funds to support tuition and textbook costs, computer maintenance, and salary for STC instructors teaching courses at the high school campus.

Lessons Learned

- Staff reported that the purpose of their efforts was to provide relevant and substantial links to postsecondary options for all students, without making a distinction between four-year universities and two-year technical college programs.

	• Staff also reported that by engaging in early awareness and planning around possible careers, completing career-aligned coursework through the CTE program, and engaging in other early professional preparation activities, student perception of the relevance of learning and academic study was enhanced. • The practice of assigning a high school teacher to attend, facilitate, and support college-level courses, staff said, was a great opportunity for staff development that helped the teacher to align high school instruction with college-level expectations. The practice also helped to build rapport between high school and college staff participating in the program.

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