

Program Philosophy

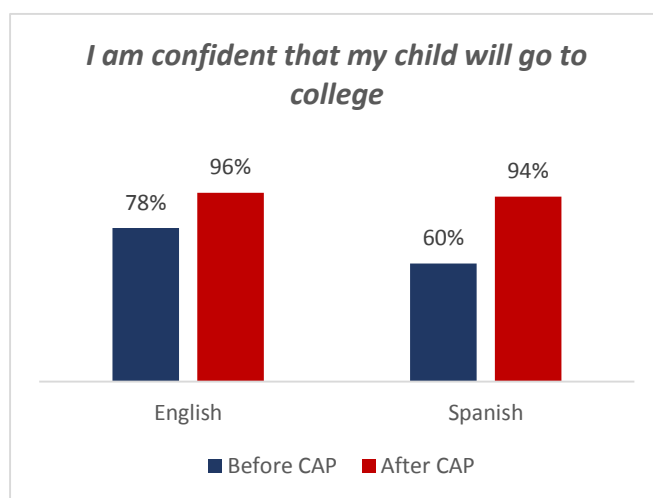
College Academy for Parents operates under the principal that a college education begins in the home. Parents are their children’s first educators and the program respects their experiences, culture and community. Even parents who have not obtained formal college knowledge by having attained a college degree, still have valuable insight to share with their students as they prepare them to be the first in the family to go to college. By working “con respeto”, College Academy for Parents has found that each spring approximately 100 families from a moderate sized school district will commit to attend 12 weekly 2-hour workshops and 2 weekend campus visits. This report speaks to the documented assessment of this philosophy.

Methodology

The survey employed a retrospective post-test procedure for gathering parents’ self-reported levels in four main areas of skill development critical for college preparation: content knowledge & basic skills, core academic, non-cognitive or behavioral skills, and college knowledge (Conley, 2008, Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). The 27 item questionnaire included college knowledge variables, core academic courses, academic aspirations for their children, attitudes towards their child’s school and college staff members, skills related to their child’s education, parent role definition, and role in child’s education. Parents were asked to reflect on their knowledge both before and after CAP and indicate their level of agreement on a 5 point Likert scale (strongly disagree-strongly agree). Findings indicate the changes in parent’s college knowledge BEFORE and AFTER the program were statistically significant.

Results

- Families, regardless of preferred language, showed statistically significant gains in 25 college knowledge variables.
- Spanish-speaking parents reported greater average gains than English-speaking parents in 19 of the 25 college knowledge variables.
- English speaking parents experienced particularly strong gains in confidence in establishing a college plan.
- Parents in all language groups reported lacking confidence in their knowledge of college requirements and financial aid before the program and reported considerable gains in such knowledge.
- Barriers to college consisted of cost of attendance, financial aid, and family’s legal status.



Implications

- Our findings are consistent with Conley (2007), Fann, Jarsky, McDonough (2009), Plunkett and Gomez (2003), Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca (2009), Durand (2011).
 - The series of workshops, campus visits and graduation ceremony encouraged early parental involvement in the process of college preparation.
 - Culturally relevant information is necessary to address the needs of the community.
 - Parental involvement has both academic and attitudinal benefits for children. Fostering a welcoming environment is crucial for consistent parent participation.

Conclusion

- CAP is a vehicle for communicating to children and parents the importance of early college preparation.
- Families indicated financial aid, student’s legal status and cost of attendance as the biggest barriers in planning for college.
- Parents benefit from constant and meaningful interactions with K-12 and higher education staff and faculty.
- Results indicated that CAP families felt more confident planning for post-secondary education after having participated in the program.