

Program Philosophy

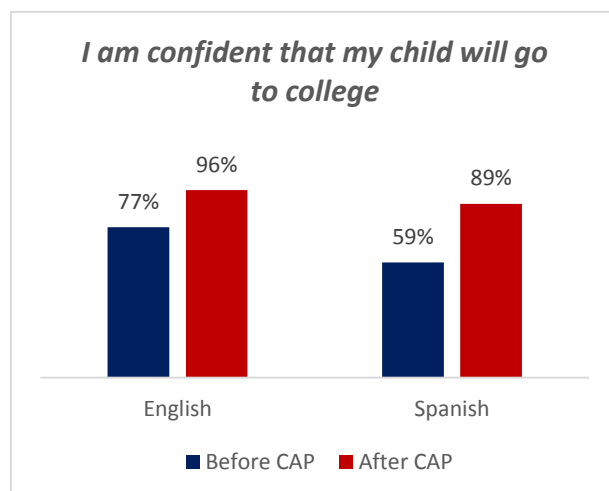
College Academy for Parents operates under the principal that a college education begins in the home. Parents are their children’s first educators and the program respects their experiences, culture and community. Even parents who have not obtained formal college knowledge by having attained a college 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 to strongly agree). Findings indicate the change in parent’s college knowledge BEFORE and AFTER the program were statistically significant. There were 79 (English 29 Spanish 50) total respondents to the survey (69% response rate).

Results

- All families regardless of preferred language, showed statistically significant gains in at least 23 out of 25 college knowledge variables.
- Parents who had previous participation in CAP showed statistically significant gains in 7 out of the 25 college knowledge variables. Those variables seemed to be consistent with parents’ questions and concerns about college (opportunity, financial gains, understanding of higher education systems).
- Spanish-speaking parents reported greater average gains than English-speaking parents in 18 of the 25 college knowledge variables.
- English speaking parents experienced particularly strong gains in confidence in knowing which classes their child needs to enroll to get into college.
- Parents in all language groups reported lacking confidence in their knowledge of college requirements and financial aid before the program and reported considerable gains.
- Within the state of Arizona, families are mostly acquainted with the UA, ASU, and NAU. Outside of the state of Arizona, both language groups identified University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and Harvard University.



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 bilingual workshops, campus visits and graduation ceremony encouraged early parental involvement in the college preparation process.
 - 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.
- College access programs should focus on lessening families concerns about financial aid and cost of attendance.
- Parents benefit from constant and meaningful interactions with K-12 and higher education staff and faculty.
- Families felt more confident planning for college after having participated in CAP.