



Early Assessment Program

Common-Sense College Prep

As public educators here in Riverside County, our long-range goal is to make sure every student graduates from high school well-prepared for their future. It's always gratifying when we find improved ways to help us be more efficient in that effort, and this spring schools are employing a good one. Through the state's Early Assessment Program (EAP), high school juniors are getting the chance to examine their own academic strengths and weaknesses. The results will help them fine-tune their senior-year studies in preparation for college—a growing part of the future.

With the EAP, juniors are informed that they can add 15 extra questions to their springtime battery of state standardized tests, and complete a single essay question as well. These add-ons are expressly designed to sample college readiness in English and math. All students who opt in, and "bubble in" their permission to release their scores to the California State University and community colleges, will receive their EAP scores over the summer. If their scores are in a "College Ready" range, they are exempted from taking CSU or community college placement tests in these fundamental subjects. If, on the other hand, their EAP scores seem low, students have plenty of time to take another math class in summer school or, say, sign up for "Expository Reading and Writing" for senior-year English.

Spurred by the initiative of the California State University system, we have now had this EAP solution in place for more than five years. The process is beginning to take root. Student participation is growing: Last spring, 84 percent of eligible juniors participated in EAP English and 77 percent in EAP math. This year, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, along with the CSU and community college leaders, has urged all juniors to take part.

The Riverside County Office of Education has a key role in creating this solution: We have certified more than 150 Inland high school teachers in English and math strategies designed to provide this senior-year boost. That's a good start, and more teachers are participating all the time.

The EAP program is one of the best kinds of education innovation. It gives students a readily recognizable chance to improve their academic standing while they still have plenty of time to make the most of it.

Our county's educators are focused on making a real difference in the lives of today's students, helping them to graduate well-prepared for college and the workplace. The EAP is a solid, common-sense tool that's helping us do that job.

Regards,



Kenneth M. Young
Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

FAFSA competition

College Drive in the Desert

The Coachella Valley Economic Partnership tackled a great project this winter. The results are now in, and they show that CVEP's Education Oversight Committee has done a real public service for the desert's public schools.

Between January and mid-March, this group of desert-based business and education leaders sponsored a FAFSA competition. The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) can seem dauntingly long, but it's the critical first step all students must take in applying for college scholarship money. The goal of CVEP was to encourage more desert students to tackle the application process, giving more of them a boost toward college application and admission.



As incentive, CVEP raised enough money to offer a \$3,000 award to the high school in each desert district which registered the highest completion rate of FAFSA applications.

The winners were Indio High (Desert Sands USD), Desert Mirage High (Coachella Valley USD), Cathedral City High (Palm Springs USD); and, qualifying for a \$1,000 award, the alternative education La Familia High of Coachella Valley.

Other numbers were the really important part of this event, however. Indio High had a 65 percent FAFSA completion rate. Desert Mirage High scored 57 percent, Cathedral City High 47 percent, and La Familia, 32 percent. And the competition from other schools in each district was close.

There will be tangible results from this drive. More desert students will end up in college because of it. And it's just the kind of success that should empower CVEP to keep working on these practical, strategic lines that will benefit all our desert communities.

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