

**Formative Evaluation of ACES Program  
at Montgomery County Public Schools Year Two:  
Student and Parent Experiences**

**Office of Shared Accountability**

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## Executive Summary

The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is conducting a multiyear evaluation of the Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) program. The ACES program is a collaboration between MCPS, Montgomery College (MC), and the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) to create a seamless pathway from high school to college completion. The ACES program is for students in Grades 11 and 12 who meet one or more of the following risk factors: member of an underrepresented race/ethnicity group in higher education (such as Black or African American or Hispanic/Latino students); low income or single parent household; first generation college student; students receiving special education services; immigrant or child of immigrant parents; homeless students or those living in unstable conditions.

This is one of a series of reports provided for Year Two of the ACES program at MCPS. As in year 1, 10 high schools participated in the ACES program and it was implemented in Grades 11 and 12. This formative report is to provide feedback to relevant stakeholders for the program's improvement as well as its ongoing development. The following evaluation questions are examined in this report:

1. What are the characteristics of students in Year Two of the ACES program?
2. To what extent do parents participate in program activities and offerings?
3. How do students and parents perceive the ACES program?
4. For MCPS students in ACES and their parents, to what extent does the ACES program impact their knowledge of the college application and financial aid processes?

Subsequent reports will address all outcome evaluation questions in addition to the formative evaluation question "To what extent are program processes and activities implemented as proposed in the program design?" as provided in the study plan.

### Summary of Methodology

To answer the evaluation questions for this report, this study utilized several methods for data collection. Student level records and program records were used to determine the characteristics of students in the program. Surveys of students and parents were used to collect data on perceptions of the ACES program. A total of 542 ACES students (53% response rate) completed an online survey, and 200 parents (20% response rate) completed a mailed paper survey. There were respondents from all 10 ACES high schools represented in both the student and parent surveys. Descriptive statistics of findings are presented and comparisons are made between year 1 and year 2 student survey findings plus student and parent survey findings when appropriate. Significance tests were done to test differences between percentage points.

### Summary of Findings

*Question 1: Student characteristics.* A total of 1,019 students participated in the 2014–2015 ACES program. Approximately one-half of the participating students were in Grade 12 and one half in Grade 11. Enrollment in the program ranged from 78 students up to 122 students across the 10 participating schools. ACES students included more females than males, and 82% were African American or Hispanic/Latino. More than one-half of the students received Free and

Reduced Meals or were prior English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) service recipients; less than one in ten received special education or ESOL services. Just over one half of ACES students reported on their application that they would be the first generation in their family to go to college.

*Question 2: Parent participation.* Parent participation was moderate. Approximately one half of the parent respondents reported they had attended an ACES kick-off meeting. More than one third reported they attended a meeting or workshop on financial aid or on the college application process. More than one fourth reported they attended a meeting or workshop on scholarships or exploring colleges. About one fourth of the parents reported they had not attended any ACES meeting or workshop. Furthermore, the majority of parent survey respondents (two thirds) did not meet with the ACES coach this year.

*Question 3: Students' perceptions of ACES.* Student respondents reported very positive experiences with their coaches. For example, almost all student respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the coach provided helpful information and guidance, they had a good relationship with their coach, and the coach was available if needed. Similarly, the aspect students liked the most about the program was the ACES coach. This is a similar finding from last year's student survey. A significantly higher percent of Grade 12 students than Grade 11 students agreed that the coach helped them to develop a plan for college, their coach kept on top of what's happening with them that when they needed help (such as tutoring), and their coach referred them to someone who could help them.

Students gave very positive ratings about the ACES program. Almost all student respondents reported they would recommend the ACES program to others; and a vast majority reported that the program motivated them to go to college, the workshop topics were useful, and that they looked forward to ACES activities. Although most reported that workshop times were convenient, not all students agreed. This was also the most commonly reported challenge, which was also a similar finding in last year's student survey.

*Question 3 (second part): Parents' perceptions of ACES program.* Parents gave very positive ratings regarding their experience with ACES and almost all reported they would recommend the ACES program to other families. Parents commented that they liked that the program was informative about the college application process, and they liked receiving financial aid and scholarship information. A lower percentage of parents were satisfied with the amount of communication from the coach, and the most frequent suggestion among parents was for more communication and information, especially about scholarship and financial aid.

*Question 4: Increased knowledge and assistance in college application process.* The vast majority of ACES student and parent respondents found the program helpful to the college application process, although parents' ratings were not as high as students.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, ACES met its goal of serving an underrepresented population. Students and their parents gave very positive ratings for all aspects of the program and experiences with coaches. There is evidence from the student survey that several aspects have improved from the first year: information on colleges, information on careers and majors, field trips, and connecting with other ACES students. Although overall findings were positive, there are some areas that have opportunities for improvement, which are highlighted in the recommendations below.

The following recommendations are to provide feedback for the program's improvement and ongoing development, and are based on the above findings.

- Provide more parent communication (e.g., meetings, emails, and newsletter updates per some parent suggestions). Ensure that financial information, such as how to complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and apply to scholarships, is included in parent communications. Consider making workshop and meeting information available for parents who are not able to attend (e.g., email, newsletter, website, etc.)
- Continue to seek ways for students to meet with their coaches throughout the year and provide opportunities for students to participate in workshops they weren't able to attend.
- Encourage more male students to apply to ACES. This year, females made up 62% and males 38% of the participants.
- In order to increase the number of students actively in the program, consider replacing students who are accepted to the program in the spring of their sophomore year and then exit the program over the summer due to moving out of the ACES school or MCPS.

## **Formative Evaluation of ACES Program at MCPS Year Two: Experiences of Students and Parents**

Natalie Wolanin

The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is conducting a multiyear evaluation of the Achieving Collegiate Excellence and Success (ACES) program. This is one of a series of reports provided for the second year of the ACES program at MCPS. This formative report uses a multimethod design to provide feedback to relevant stakeholders for the program's improvement as well as its ongoing development.

### **Background**

MCPS collaborated with Montgomery College (MC) and the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) to create the ACES program. The ACES program seeks to create a seamless pathway from high school to college completion. It focuses on identifying and supporting both students who are underrepresented in higher education and those who would be the first in their family to attend college.

The ACES program is for students in Grades 11 and 12 who meet one or more of the following risk factors: member of an underrepresented race/ethnicity group in higher education (such as Black or African American or Hispanic/Latino students); low income or single parent household; first generation college student; students receiving special education services<sup>1</sup>; immigrant or child of immigrant parents; homeless students or those living in unstable conditions.

A central element to the ACES program is a case management approach where coaches mentor, advocate, and support ACES students. They work with students on how to be successful in high school, complete college admission applications, negotiate the scholarship and financial aid process, and transition from high school to college, as well as provide weekly activities, group meetings, and college trips. Parents are also invited to attend select workshops, such as completing financial aid paperwork and applying for scholarships. The coaches, who are employed by MC, are based at each of the 10 participating high schools and work with the counseling departments in their school to manage the ACES program and share student information. These program activities are in addition to and align with the college and career supports provided by MCPS staff members. Students are expected to commit to their own academic success and participate in planned activities as well as meet with their ACES coaches on a regular basis.

In summary, the ACES program provides the following services to students in Grades 11 and 12 (MC, 2015):

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<sup>1</sup> Special education services provide specially designed instruction that involves modifications to the curriculum itself, to the way the curriculum is taught, or both, in order to meet the specific needs of the student. Students may also receive other special education-related services (e.g., speech and language therapy or occupational therapy) (MCPS, 2015).

- Individual relationship with an MC academic coach at the student’s high school
- Preparation for college entrance and placement exams
- College visits
- Individual assistance with admissions applications, financial aid forms, and scholarship planning
- Academic tutoring in partnership with George B. Thomas Saturday School and MC
- Career exploration and choosing a major
- College information sessions for parents
- Assistance with the transition to college, including documentation for accommodations (if needed), and enrollment processes
- Student development
- Summer enrichment programs at MC and at USG

The 10 high schools that participated in the 2014–2015 ACES program were Montgomery Blair, Clarksburg, Albert Einstein, Gaithersburg, John F. Kennedy, Northwood, Rockville, Seneca Valley, Watkins Mill, and Wheaton. It was expected that 60 students from Grades 11 and 12, per school, would participate in ACES for an approximate total of 1,200 students. All 10 schools also participated in 2013–2014, so the Grade 12 students were in their second year of the ACES program and there was a new cohort of Grade 11 students for the 2014–2015 school year.

After graduation from high school, if students choose to attend MC and USG, they will receive continued support from an ACES academic coach at these colleges. Because the goal of the ACES program is for students to complete a 4-year degree, students do not need to plan to attend MC and USG to be in the program at MCPS.

## **Evaluation Questions**

The following evaluation questions are examined in this report:

1. What are the characteristics of students in Year Two of the ACES program?
2. How do students and parents perceive the ACES program?
3. To what extent do parents participate in program activities and offerings?
4. For MCPS students in ACES and their parents, to what extent does the ACES program impact their knowledge of the college application and financial aid processes?

Subsequent reports will address the formative evaluation question “To what extent are program processes and activities implemented as proposed in the program design?” as well as all outcome evaluation questions.

## **Methodology**

To answer the evaluation questions for this report, this study utilized several sources for data collection, including surveys of students in the ACES program, surveys of parents whose students were in the ACES program, and student level data files to determine the characteristics of students

in the program. Data was collected from ACES students and parents within the ten participating schools. The following paragraph identifies data sources and data collection methods that were used to address the evaluation questions.

## **Data Sources**

### ***MC Data Files***

Data files of students enrolled in the ACES program, managed by Montgomery College ACES program staff, were used in conjunction with MCPS student records to determine a final list of students enrolled in the ACES program. Some students who had enrolled in the program during the spring of the prior school year moved out of Montgomery County or transferred to another MCPS school without the ACES program and were therefore not counted in the final file.

Montgomery College data was also used to determine certain characteristics of ACES students, such as first generation status, which were collected during the ACES application process.

### ***MCPS Data Files***

MCPS student level records were used to determine the characteristics (i.e., demographics) of students in the ACES program.

### ***ACES Student Survey***

The purpose of the student survey was to collect information pertaining to the experiences of students who were in the ACES program at MCPS during the 2014–2015 school year. The surveys also were designed to capture challenges and benefits to students, and areas for improvement. The evaluators, in collaboration with ACES administrators, developed the survey instrument, and many questions were from the student survey used in Year One (Wolanin and Modarresi, 2015).

A link to an online student survey was sent to ACES coaches in April 2015. Coaches were asked to direct all participating students to complete the survey before the end of the school year. Several reminders were sent to coaches to increase the response rate. Out of 1,019 students in the second year of the ACES program, 542 students responded to the survey (a 53% response rate). A breakdown of the response rates by grade and school may be seen in Table 1. The schools' response rates ranged from 12% to 97%.

Table 1  
Student Survey: Number and Percentage of Respondents and  
Response Rates by Grade Level and School

		(N = 1,019)		
		N	n	%
Total		1,019	542	53.2
Grade level	Grade 11 <sup>a</sup>	564	316	56.0
	Grade 12	455	226	49.7
School	Blair	97	33	34.0
	Clarksburg	108	105	97.2
	Einstein	86	55	64.0
	Gaithersburg <sup>b</sup>	122	15	12.3
	Kennedy	80	48	60.0
	Northwood	117	80	68.4
	Rockville <sup>b</sup>	104	48	46.2
	Seneca Valley	111	48	43.2
	Watkins Mill <sup>b</sup>	116	65	56.0
	Wheaton	78	44	56.4
	Unknown <sup>c</sup>	--	1	--

<sup>a</sup>Includes 55 students who are in Grade 10, based on earned high school credit

<sup>b</sup>One student from each of these three schools transferred to a non-ACES MCPS school in spring 2015.

<sup>c</sup>One survey respondent did not indicate school name.

Of the 1,019 student participants, 564 (55%) were from Grade 11 and 455 (45%) were Grade 12 students. Respondents were given the choice of selecting Grade 11 or Grade 12 on the online survey. Some students participating in the ACES program are actually in Grade 10 based on their credit standing in MCPS records. Therefore, it is assumed that some of the student respondents from the survey are actually 10<sup>th</sup> graders and most likely chose Grade 11 for their survey response.

### ***ACES Parent Survey***

The purpose of the parent surveys was to collect information pertaining to the experiences of parents whose students were enrolled in the ACES program. The surveys were also designed to capture parents' perceptions of the ACES program, parents' participation in ACES activities, knowledge of the college application and financial aid processes, and overall experiences. The evaluators, in collaboration with ACES administrators, developed the survey instrument.

A paper survey was mailed to parents along with a prepaid return envelope to return the survey to the Office of Shared Accountability. For those parents whose MCPS records indicated Spanish was the primary language spoken at home, an additional Spanish version of the survey was mailed in the same envelope. Three weeks after the initial mailing, a second mailing went to parents with a "reminder" tagline on the envelope. Each survey had a unique code to identify any duplicate surveys received from the same respondent. A total of 1,011 surveys were mailed and 200 were received (a 20% response rate); response rates among parents from each school ranged from 15% to 25% (Table 2).

Table 2  
Parent Survey: Number and Percentage of Respondents and  
Response Rates by Grade Level and School

		<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%
Total		1,011	200	19.8
Grade level	Grade 11 <sup>a</sup>	559	109	19.5
	Grade 12	452	90	19.9
School	Blair	97	24	24.7
	Clarksburg	108	21	19.4
	Einstein	86	17	19.8
	Gaithersburg	120	23	19.2
	Kennedy	79	12	15.2
	Northwood	115	21	18.3
	Rockville	103	21	20.4
	Seneca Valley	111	23	20.7
	Watkins Mill	115	23	20.0
	Wheaton	77	13	16.9

<sup>a</sup>Some parents may have students who are in Grade 10 based on their earned high school credit.

## Data Analysis

### *Quantitative Data*

Descriptive analyses were conducted to summarize ACES students' demographic characteristics. Additionally, quantitative information was compiled from closed-ended survey responses; analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics. A significance test of proportions was used to compare ratings between student and parent respondents, and of students in their first year vs. second year of the program.

### *Qualitative Data*

Information gathered through open-ended survey questions was analyzed through content analysis. Researchers looked for themes in the data, and where appropriate, category frequencies were reported. In addition, some examples of responses to open-ended survey questions were presented in the findings.

## Strengths and Limitations

A strength of this formative report is that multiple data collection strategies were used. A triangulation technique was used by collecting both student and parent perspectives through surveys. Survey questions were developed in collaboration with ACES administrators to ensure the questions were relevant to the respondents and related to the evaluation.

Limitations of this study are that the student survey yielded only a 55% response rate and the parent survey a 20% response rate. Additionally, the reader should keep in mind that the first generation status, a key characteristic of enrollment in the program, is self-reported by the students

on the application to the ACES program. Also, the definition to determine first-generation college status changed from year 1 to year 2. For students in the second year of the ACES program (i.e. 12<sup>th</sup> graders), the question in the application asked, “Are you the first in your family to attend college in the United States?” For students in their first year of the program (i.e., 11<sup>th</sup> graders), the application question asked “Do you have at least one parent/legal guardian who graduated from college in the U.S.?”, which was more specific about parents and graduating from college versus attending. As a result, there is a possibility of measurement error in students’ responses to this question.

## Findings

Results are organized by evaluation question.

### Evaluation Question 1: What are the characteristics of students in Year Two of the ACES program?

*ACES students by grade level.* A total of 1,019 students participated in the 2014–2015 ACES program (Table 3). Just under one half (45%) of the participating students were in Grade 12, and one half (50%) of them were in Grade 11. Although the program was designed for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 5% ( $n = 55$ ) of the total students were in Grade 10 according to end-of-year school records, which are based on earned high school credit standings.

Table 3  
ACES Students in 2014–2015 by School and Grade Level

School	Total	Grade 12		Grade 11		Grade 10	
	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Total	1,019	455	44.6	509	50.0	55	5.4
Blair	97	38	39.2	55	56.7	4	4.1
Clarksburg	108	45	41.7	51	47.2	12	11.1
Einstein	86	35	40.7	48	55.8	3	3.5
Gaithersburg	122	63	51.6	51	41.8	8	6.6
Kennedy	80	31	38.8	46	57.5	3	3.8
Northwood	117	58	49.6	53	45.3	6	5.1
Rockville	104	46	44.2	52	50.0	6	5.8
Seneca Valley	111	53	47.7	53	47.7	5	4.5
Watkins Mill	116	58	50.0	53	45.7	5	4.3
Wheaton	78	28	35.9	47	60.3	3	3.8

*Note.* Student grade level is based on earned high school credit.

*ACES students by school.* Each participating school had a goal of enrolling 120 students into the ACES program (60 from Grade 11 and 60 from Grade 12). Enrollment in the program during the 2014–15 school year by the ten participating schools ranged from 78–122 students. Wheaton High School had another college support program that was in operation prior to the addition of the ACES program. According to ACES program staff, because students may only be enrolled in one program, the total ACES students at Wheaton was impacted. Clarification

regarding the requirement that students' enroll in one of the two programs, was provided mid-year. A breakdown by school and grade level may be seen in Table 3.

*Demographics.* As shown in Table 4, ACES students included more females than males (62% vs. 38%) and are primarily Black or African American (44%) or Hispanic/Latino (38%). More than one-half of the students received Free and Reduced Meals (56%) or were prior ESOL (54%) service recipients; 8% received special education services and 6% received ESOL services during the 2014–2015 school year. Sixty percent of ACES students reported that they would be first generation to go to college. A higher percentage of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students indicated they were first generation on their ACES application than 12<sup>th</sup> graders (68% vs. 51%). One possible explanation for this difference is the difference between how the question was asked in each of the two years' applications (see strengths and limitations section for more information). Another possible explanation is that more students in the second year of the program may realize that this characteristic could increase their chances of getting in the program.

Table 4  
Demographic Characteristics of 2014–2015 ACES Students

Characteristics	Total N = 1,019		Grade 11 N = 564 <sup>a</sup>		Grade 12 N = 455	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	628	61.6	357	63.3	271	59.6
Male	391	38.4	207	36.7	184	40.4
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>						
American Indian <sup>b</sup>		≤1.0	0	0.0		≤1.0
Asian	94	9.2	51	9.0	43	9.5
Black or African American	448	44.0	251	44.5	197	43.3
Hispanic/Latino	385	37.8	213	37.8	172	37.8
White	59	5.8	29	5.1	30	6.6
Two or More Races	31	3.0	20	3.5	11	2.4
<b>Services received as of September, 2014</b>						
Current FARMS	573	56.2	323	57.3	250	54.9
Current Special Education	80	7.9	48	8.5	32	7.0
Current ESOL	62	6.1	49	8.7	13	2.9
Prior ESOL	547	53.7	281	49.8	266	58.5
<b>Other</b>						
First generation to go to college <sup>c</sup>	615	60.4	385	68.3	230	50.5

Note. Five of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students are in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of ACES.

<sup>a</sup>Includes 55 students in Grade 10 based on earned high school credit

<sup>b</sup>Results are not shown for groups with fewer than 10 students

<sup>c</sup>Student self-reported data on ACES application



## Evaluation Question 2: How do students and parents perceive the ACES program?

Findings are based on surveys; characteristics of students responding to the survey, such as demographics, grade level and school, are shown in the methodology section above. Other student characteristics, such as college plans and reasons for applying to the program, are shown below. Characteristics of parent survey respondents are shown in Table 2 of the methodology section.

### Student Experiences

Of the 542 student survey respondents, more than one half (58%) were Grade 11 students and 42% were Grade 12 students. Students from all ten ACES schools participated in the survey.

*Grade 12 student respondents' college plans.* More than one third (37%) of the Grade 12 student respondents reported that they are planning to attend MC and then transfer to a 4-year college, and another 36% reported they are planning to attend a 4-year college (Table 5).

Table 5  
Student Survey: Grade 12 Respondents' College Plans

	N = 218	
	n	%
I plan to attend Montgomery College and transfer to a 4-year college or university.	80	36.7
I plan to attend a 4-year college or university.	79	36.2
I plan to attend Montgomery College.	45	20.6
I plan to attend a 2-year or community college that is not Montgomery College.	5	2.3
I do not plan to go to college right now.	1	0.5
Undecided	8	3.7

*Ways in which first year ACES students learned about the ACES program.* One half (50%) of the student respondents who were in their first year of ACES reported that they learned about the program when they were contacted by the ACES coach (Table 6). Just under one third reported they learned about it during a class (30%), and about one fourth learned about it from another student (24%).

Table 6  
Student Survey for First Year ACES Students:  
Ways That Students First Learned about the ACES Program

	N = 280	
	n	%
Contacted by the ACES coach	139	49.6
During a class	84	30.0
From another student	67	23.9
Contacted by a school counselor	60	21.4
Contacted by a teacher	46	16.4
Contacted by the college and career information coordinator	33	11.8
During an assembly	27	9.6
A flier or bulletin	25	8.9
My parent or guardian	17	6.1
Contacted by an administrator	14	5.0
Other	5	1.8
Connect Ed (a recorded voice message to your phone)	1	0.4

Note. More than one response could be chosen.

*Reasons for applying to the ACES program.* All student respondents were asked to select their reasons for applying to the ACES program. As shown in Table 7, almost three fourths reported they wanted support with preparing for college (76%), they wanted assistance applying to college (75%), and they wanted assistance with applying for scholarships (73%). Less than one third selected that they want to continue having a coach after high school (32%) and their counselor or parent told them to apply (24%).

Table 7  
Student Survey: Reasons for Applying to the ACES Program

	N = 542	
	n	%
I wanted support with preparing for college (such as: SAT/ACT, ACCUPLACER, study skills, course selection, etc.).	412	76.0
I wanted assistance with applying to college.	404	74.5
I wanted assistance with applying for scholarships.	397	73.2
I wanted to explore options for attending college.	385	71.0
I wanted assistance with applying for financial aid.	367	67.7
I liked the opportunities that the ACES program offers to students.	356	65.7
I wanted one-on-one/individual guidance.	296	54.6
I wanted to continue to have a coach guide me after high school.	174	32.1
My counselor/parent told me to apply.	130	24.0
Other (overcome hardship to focus in school, find out if eligible for anything).	11	2.0

Note. More than one response could be chosen.

*Applying to the ACES program.* Almost all first year ACES respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the ACES application was easy for them (98%) with 61% strongly agreeing.

*Experience with ACES coaches.* Survey respondents reported on their experiences with their ACES coach. Almost all respondents reported very positive experiences, with more than 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing with almost all of the aspects (Table 8). The first three items in

Table 12 concerned support and the coach’s role as a mentor. Seven of 10 (70%) student respondents strongly agreed that the coach provided helpful information and guidance. Six of 10 (60%) strongly agreed that they had a good relationship with their coach, and just over one half (52%) strongly agreed that their coach worked with them to develop a college plan. A significantly higher percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders than 11<sup>th</sup> graders strongly agreed or agreed that the coach helped them to develop a plan for college (93% vs. 84%), as shown in Appendix A, Table A-1. It would be reasonable to assume that creating a college plan would occur more often among students in their senior year.

Table 8  
Student Survey: Experience with ACES Coaches

Survey Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
1) The ACES coach provided me with helpful information and guidance. ( <i>N</i> = 524)	369	70.4	145	27.7	9	1.7	1	0.2
2) I have a good relationship with my coach. ( <i>N</i> = 521)	312	59.9	182	34.9	22	4.2	5	1.0
3) My coach worked with me to develop a plan for college. ( <i>N</i> = 524)	272	51.9	187	35.7	51	9.7	14	2.7
4) The ACES coach was available to meet if I needed any assistance or information. ( <i>N</i> = 509)	311	61.1	184	36.1	12	2.4	2	0.4
5) My coach keeps on top of what’s happening with me. ( <i>N</i> = 526)	282	53.6	197	37.5	35	6.7	12	2.3
6) My coach understands the things that could make it difficult for me to attend college. ( <i>N</i> = 495)	260	52.5	214	43.2	15	3.0	6	1.2
7) When things happen that might affect me going to college, my coach has suggestions for what to do. ( <i>N</i> = 477)	247	51.8	213	44.7	14	2.9	3	0.6
8) When I need help (like tutoring that my coach can’t give), he/she refers me to someone who can help me. ( <i>N</i> = 469)	241	51.4	198	42.2	21	4.5	9	1.9
9) My coach helps remove or reduce any barriers between me and attending college. ( <i>N</i> = 475)	235	49.5	222	46.7	14	2.9	4	0.8

*Note.* Students who did not respond or checked “not applicable” are not included.

Questions 4–9 in Table 8 concerned the coach’s role as a case manager who tracks each student’s progress, recommends referrals, and helps students to overcome barriers. Once again, almost all respondents reported very positive experiences; more than 90% agreed or strongly agreed with all of the aspects. Six of 10 (60%) respondents strongly agreed that their coach was available to meet if they needed any assistance or information, and more than one half (54%) strongly agreed that their coach keeps on top of what’s happening with them. Approximately one half strongly agreed with the rest of the statements: understanding difficulties (53%), offering suggestions (52%), referrals such as tutors (51%) and overcoming barriers to attending college (50%). Most ratings were very similar between Grade 12 and Grade 11 students; however, a significantly higher percentage of 12<sup>th</sup> graders than 11<sup>th</sup> graders strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my coach keeps on top of what’s happening with me” (96% vs. 87%).

Additional analysis (shown in Appendix A, Table A-1) compares Grade 12 to Grade 11 ratings. There was a significantly higher percentage of 12<sup>th</sup> graders than 11<sup>th</sup> graders who strongly agreed that when they needed help (such as tutoring), their coach referred them to someone who could help them (60% vs. 45%). These differences could indicate that a greater focus was placed on 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, or it could be the effect of being in the second year of the program.

*Experiences of ACES from Year Two and Year One surveys.* There were similar findings between the percentage of students who gave a rating of strongly agree or agree when compared to ratings from last year’s student survey for the same statements (Table 9). Once again, although the vast majority agreed that there were convenient workshop times, they also had the lowest ratings with 87% from Year Two and 86% from Year One. As shown in Table 13, significantly higher differences were found among last year’s survey findings compared to this year’s for a few statements: “Participation in the ACES program is important for me to achieve my future goals” (96% vs. 91%). Also, 92% strongly agreed or agreed that, overall, they look forward to activities, compared to 96% last year; and students would recommend the ACES program to other students (99% vs. 97% in the first versus second year).

Table 9  
 Student Survey: Experience with ACES  
 Percentage Strongly Agree/Agree for Year Two and Year One

Survey item	Year Two		Year One		% Point difference
	N	% Strongly agree or agree	N	% Strongly agree or agree	
The ACES coach provided me with helpful information and guidance.	524	98.1	463	98.7	-0.6
I would recommend the ACES program to other students.	520	97.1	465	98.9*	-1.8
The ACES coach was available to meet if I needed any assistance or information.	509	97.2	461	98.3	-1.1
The ACES program has motivated me to go to college.	518	92.7	444	93.0	-0.3
Overall, the ACES workshop topics were useful to me.	524	94.8	449	96.8	-2.0
Participation in the ACES program is important for me to achieve my future goals.	521	90.8	464	95.5	-4.7*
Overall, I look forward to ACES activities, such as the workshops, meeting with coach, etc.	522	91.9	449	95.8	-3.9*
Overall, the times available for the ACES workshops were convenient for me.	524	86.9	448	86.2	+0.7

\*p < .05

*Overall experiences.* Almost all (97%) student respondents reported they would recommend the ACES program to others, including 68% who strongly agreed and a vast majority (93%) reported that the program motivated them to go to college, including 55% who strongly agreed (Table 10). Most respondents reported that the workshop topics were useful (95%) and that they look forward to ACES activities (92%). Although most (87%) respondents reported that workshop times were convenient, only one third (34%) strongly agreed and 11% disagreed.

Table 10  
Student Survey: Experience with ACES

Survey Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
	I would recommend the ACES program to other students. ( <i>N</i> = 520)	351	67.5	154	29.6	13	2.5	2
The ACES program has motivated me to go to college. ( <i>N</i> = 518)	287	55.4	193	37.3	30	5.8	8	1.5
Overall, the ACES workshop topics were useful to me. ( <i>N</i> = 524)	248	47.3	249	47.5	20	3.8	7	1.3
Participation in the ACES program is important for me to achieve my future goals. ( <i>N</i> = 521)	245	47.0	228	43.8	40	7.7	8	1.5
Overall, I look forward to ACES activities, such as the workshops, meeting with coach, etc. ( <i>N</i> = 522)	220	42.1	260	49.8	38	7.3	4	0.8
Overall, the times available for the ACES workshops were convenient for me. ( <i>N</i> = 524)	177	33.8	278	53.1	58	11.1	11	2.1

Findings only differed slightly (not significantly) between the Grade 12 and Grade 11 student respondents, as shown in Appendix A, Table A-2.

Using a 5-point scale, more than one half of the students surveyed rated their overall experience as excellent (60%) and the overall quality of the program as excellent (63%), as shown in Table 11. Approximately one third gave a rating of good for overall experience (30%) and overall quality of the program (27%). The mean ratings for both ratings were the same as the mean ratings from last year’s survey findings.

Table 11  
Student Survey: Overall Ratings of ACES

	Excellent		Good		Average		Poor		Very Poor	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Overall experience ( <i>N</i> = 521)	312	59.9	158	30.3	42	8.1	7	1.3	2	0.4
Overall quality of the program ( <i>N</i> = 504)	316	62.7	137	27.2	46	9.1	4	0.8	1	0.2

*Positive aspects of the ACES program.* As shown in Table 12, a vast majority (89%) of students reported that the ACES coach is what they liked about the program, which is a similar finding from last year’s student survey (84%). More than three fourths reported they liked receiving information on colleges and universities (79%). More than two thirds liked receiving information on scholarships and financial aid (73%), information on careers and majors (72%), and field trips (69%).

Table 12  
Student Survey: Aspects of the ACES Program Which Students Liked  
Year 2 Survey and Year 1 Survey

	Student Survey Year 2 N = 542		Student Survey Year 1 N = 474		% Point Difference
	n	%	n	%	%
	ACES coach	481	88.7	399	84.2
Information on colleges/universities	426	78.6*	322	67.9	+10.7*
Information scholarships/financial aid	396	73.1	326	68.8	+4.3
Information on careers/majors	390	72.0*	271	57.2	+14.8*
Field Trips	376	69.4*	184	38.8	+30.6*
Meeting individually with coach	332	61.3	309	65.2	-3.9
ACES workshops	290	53.5	225	47.5	+6.0
Connecting with other ACES students	264	48.7*	166	35.0	+13.7*
Other	0	0.0	3	≤1.0	0.0

Note. More than one response could be chosen.

\*p < .05

As seen in Table 12, a significantly higher percentage of respondents compared to last year's survey liked the following aspects of the ACES program: information on colleges (79% vs. 68%), information on careers and majors (72% vs. 57%), field trips (69% vs. 39%), and connecting with other ACES students (49% vs. 35%). The only aspect that was liked less often by student respondents in the second year was meeting individually with the coach, but it was not found to be significant (61% vs. 65%).

*Challenges with the ACES program.* One half of the student respondents reported that the workshops were at times they could not attend (49%), as shown in Table 13. More than one fourth reported that they found it hard to find time to meet with the coach (29%), and almost one fourth found it hard to keep motivated to participate in the program (24%). Finally, almost one fifth (18%) reported that they were not sure whether to go to an ACES coach, a counselor, or the College and Career Information Coordinator (CCIC) for assistance. These were very similar findings as last year's student survey.

Table 13  
Student Survey: Challenges with ACES, by Year 2 Survey and Year 1 Survey

	Student Survey Year 2 N = 542		Student Survey Year 1 N = 474		% Point Difference
	n	%	n	%	%
	Workshops at times unable to attend	267	49.3	239	50.4
Hard to find time to meet with ACES coach	155	28.6	120	25.3	+3.3
Keeping motivated to participate	128	23.6	116	24.5	-0.9
Not sure whether to go to ACES coach, counselor, or CCIC for assistance	99	18.3	93	19.6	-1.3
Other (e.g. time to participate, meeting with ACES coach, overwhelmed, coach's demeanor, etc.)	14	2.6	9	1.9	+0.7

Note. More than one response could be chosen.

\*p < .05

## Parent Perceptions

*Experience with ACES.* More than 90% of parent respondents reported positive experiences with several aspects of ACES (see Table 14). Almost all parent respondents (99%) strongly agreed or agreed that they would recommend ACES to other families, with two thirds (66%) strongly agreeing. Almost two thirds (64%) strongly agreed that the coach provided their student with helpful information and guidance, and just over half strongly agreed that the program motivated their student to go to college (54%) and found the parent workshops useful (51%). One half or less strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the amount of communication (50%), the coach was available (46%), the program met their expectations (44%), and ACES made going to college more possible (44%).

Table 14  
Parent Survey: Experience with ACES Program

Survey Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
	I would recommend the ACES program to other families. ( <i>N</i> = 190)	126	66.3	62	32.6	2	1.1	0
The ACES coach provided my student with helpful information and guidance. ( <i>N</i> = 179)	114	63.7	60	33.5	4	2.2	1	0.6
The ACES program motivated my student to go to college. ( <i>N</i> = 170)	92	54.1	70	41.2	5	2.9	3	1.8
Overall, I found the ACES workshops for parents useful. ( <i>N</i> = 148)	76	51.4	65	43.9	6	4.1	1	0.7
I was satisfied with the amount of communication I received from the ACES coach. ( <i>N</i> = 164)	82	50.0	65	39.6	12	7.3	5	3.0
The ACES coach was available to meet or talk if I needed help. ( <i>N</i> = 161)	74	46.0	76	47.2	6	3.7	5	3.1
The ACES program met my expectations. ( <i>N</i> = 172)	75	43.6	86	50.0	9	5.2	2	1.2
The ACES program made going to college more possible for my student. ( <i>N</i> = 163)	71	43.6	76	46.6	15	9.2	1	0.6

As shown in Table 15, eighty-four percent of parents surveyed rated their overall experience with ACES as excellent (45%) or good (39%). Ninety-two percent rated the overall quality of the program as excellent (50%) or good (42%).

Table 15  
Parent Survey: Overall Experience with ACES

	Excellent		Good		Average		Poor		Very Poor	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
	Overall experience ( <i>N</i> = 188)	84	44.7	74	39.4	22	11.7	6	3.2	2
Overall quality of the program ( <i>N</i> = 182)	91	50.0	76	41.8	14	7.7	0	0.0	1	0.5

*Parent and student experience with program* As shown in Table 16, almost all parents and students responded that they would recommend the program to others (99% parents and 97%

students); that the coach provided helpful information and guidance to the student (97% and 98%); and that the program motivated the student to go to college (95% and 93%). A significantly higher percentage of students compared to parents (97% vs. 93%) agreed or strongly agreed that the coach was available to meet or talk if needed.

Table 16  
Parent and Student Surveys: Experience with ACES Program

Survey Items	Parent		Student	
	Strongly Agree/Agree		Strongly Agree/Agree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
I would recommend the ACES program to other families/students.	188	98.9	505	97.1
The ACES coach provided my student <sup>a</sup> with helpful information and guidance.	174	97.2	514	98.1
The ACES program motivated my student <sup>a</sup> to go to college.	162	95.3	480	92.7
The ACES coach was available to meet or talk if I needed help.	150	93.2	495	97.2*

\* $p < .05$

<sup>a</sup>The words “my student” was used in the parent survey; the word “me” was used in the student survey.

*Positive aspects of the ACES program.* In response to an open-ended question about what they liked about the ACES program, 165 out of the 199 parents left a comment. Below are categories of similar comments:

- Specific program component comments (n = 110, 67% of those commenting)
- Positive feelings about the program (n = 50, 30%)
- Positive comments about the coach/staff (n = 39, 24%)
- Miscellaneous (n = 8, 5%)

#### Specific program component comments

More than two thirds (67%) of comments were about specific program components. Just over one half (56%) included comments that the program was informative, provided information about college, or provided information about the college application process. Parent respondents also liked receiving financial aid and scholarship information, college tours, help and motivation regarding academics, help with college placement tests, the parent workshops, and the summer program.

#### Positive feelings about the program

Close to one third (30%) of the parents left a more general positive comment about the program, especially that it motivated their son or daughter. Additional comments in the category “positive feelings about the program” included that they liked the program in general, it created opportunities, it had their student set goals, and that their child liked the program.



### Positive comments about the coach/staff

One fourth (24%) of the parent respondents stated that they liked the coach and staff, specifically, the support from the coach, their students' specific coach, and the communication from the coach. A table showing categories of comments with counts and some examples can be found in Appendix B, Table B1.

*Suggestions for the ACES program.* In response to another open-ended question about ways that ACES could better meet their needs or their students' needs, 123 of the 199 parent respondents (62%) left a suggestion. Below are categories of similar comments among those who responded ( $N = 123$ ):

- Programming assistance and needs (n = 49, 40%)
- Parent communication (n = 47, 38%)
- Program availability (n = 17, 14%)
- Miscellaneous (n = 18, 15%)

With respect to the 49 comments on programming assistance and needs, one half of the comments in that category were requests for more scholarship and financial information. Respondents would also like there to be: more meetings between coaches and their students, information on specific topics, academic help for students, and college visits.

Most of the parent communication comments were suggesting more frequent communication and meetings (40 of the 47), but there were also suggestions regarding better timing of parent meetings and offering communication in other languages. Another group of suggestions were to make the program more available with more coaches or more students. There were other individual suggestions (i.e., miscellaneous) which did not fit into a category of comments. A table showing categories of comments, counts of types of comments, and examples can be found in Appendix B, Table B2.

*Parents' expectations for student.* In the end of the school year survey, parents responded to two questions about their expectations for their student after high school. One question asked, "Before your student began the ACES program, what did you expect your student to do after high school?" and a second question asked, "What are your current expectations for your student after they graduate high school?" As shown in Table 17, six of 10 parents reported that they had an expectation of their student attending a 4-year college (62% before ACES and 66% currently). Thirty-six percent reported that before the ACES program, they had an expectation that their student would attend MC and transfer to a 4-year college; 41% had this as a current expectation, after participation in the program. More parents (6%) reported that they were not sure of their expectation before ACES compared to 2% after participating in ACES.

**Table 17**  
**Parent Survey: Expectations for their Students’ Post-Graduate Plans**  
**Before and After ACES Program (N = 199)**

	Expectations Before ACES		Current Expectations	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Attend a 4-year college and receive a Bachelor’s Degree	124	62.3	131	65.8
Attend Montgomery College, transfer to a 4-year college and receive a Bachelor’s Degree	72	36.2	83	41.7
Attend Montgomery College (full-time or part-time)	38	19.1	38	19.1
Get a job (full-time or part-time)	22	11.1	28	14.1
Attend a vocational school	5	2.5	5	2.5
Join the military	3	1.5	3	1.5
Other	4	2.0	7	3.5
Not sure	12	6.0	3	1.5

*Note.* Expectations Before ACES and Current Expectations were two questions in the same survey at the end of the school year.

*Note.* More than one response could be chosen.

**Evaluation Question 3: To what extent do parents participate in program activities and offerings?**

Findings are based on parent surveys; therefore, characteristics of parents responding to the survey are shown first. Grade level and school for the students of these parents are shown in the methodology section above.

**Parent Survey Respondents**

Of the 199 parent survey respondents, slightly more than one half (55%) had students in Grade 11, and 45% had students in Grade 12. As mentioned before, it is assumed that some of these Grade 11 students are actually in Grade 10 based on their high school credit standing; however, that was not a choice that could be selected on the survey. Parents from all ten ACES schools participated in the survey.

One third of the parent respondents (33%) reported that they had no college experience (Table 18). More than one third (38%) reported that they graduated from a 4-year college, and 10% graduated from a 2-year college. With respect to the students’ other parent or guardian, respondents reported that fewer than one half (44%) had no college experience; almost one third (32%) graduated from a 4-year college, and 6% graduated from a 2 year college.

Table 18  
Parent Survey: Parents' College Graduation Level

	Parent respondent (N = 197)		Other parent/guardian (N = 161)	
	n	%	n	%
No college experience	65	33.0	70	43.5
Attended a 2-year or 4-year college	37	18.8	30	18.6
Graduated from a 2-year college	20	10.1	9	5.6
Graduated from a 4-year college	75	38.1	52	32.3

Note. Only those who responded to question are included. If two responses were checked, highest achievement was selected

*Participation in workshops and partnership events.* Just over one half of parent respondents (53%) reported that they attended an ACES kick-off meeting (Table 19). More than one third reported they attended a meeting or workshop on financial aid (38%) or on the college application process (37%). More than one fourth reported they attended a meeting or workshop on scholarships (28%) or on exploring colleges (27%). One fourth (26%) of the parents reported that they did not attend any meeting or workshop.

Table 19  
Parent Survey: Parent Participation in Meetings or Workshops

	N = 199	
	N	%
ACES kick-off meeting/orientation	105	52.8
Meeting or workshop on financial aid	75	37.7
Meeting or workshop on the college application process	73	36.7
Meeting or workshop on applying for scholarships	56	28.1
Meeting or workshop on exploring various colleges and universities	53	26.6
None	51	25.6
Other	12	6.0

Note. More than one response could be chosen.

Parents reported on their participation to partnership events (Table 20); one fifth (20%) reported they attended the Montgomery College Scholarship Conference, and one fifth (20%) attended a USG open house. Thirteen percent attended the MCPS College Preparation and Scholarship Fair, and just over one half (55%) reported that they did not attend a partnership event.

Table 20  
Parent Survey: Parent Participation in MCPS/MC/USG Partnership Events

	N = 199	
	n	%
None	110	55.3
Montgomery College Scholarship Conference (Fall or Spring 2014–2015)	39	19.6
USG Open House (Fall or Spring 2014–2015 or Summer 2014)	39	19.6
MCPS College Preparation and Scholarship Fair (Spring 2015 at USG)	25	12.6
Other MCPS/Montgomery College/USG partnership event	7	3.5

Note. More than one response could be chosen.

*Individual meeting with ACES coach.* Almost two thirds (64%) of parent survey respondents reported that they did not meet with the ACES coach this year (Table 21), although this was not a systemwide expectation for coaches to meet with all parents. About one sixth reported they met and discussed students' participation (17%), the college application process (17%), high school academics (17%), financial aid and scholarships (17%), post-graduation plans (17%), and exploring colleges (14%).

Table 21  
Parent Survey: Purpose of Individual Meeting(s)  
with the ACES Coach (with or without students present)

	N = 199	
	n	%
No, I have not met with my student's ACES coach individually this school year.	127	63.8
We met to discuss my student's participation/attendance in ACES activities.	33	16.6
We met to discuss the college application process.	33	16.6
We met to discuss my student's high school academic progress.	33	16.6
We met to discuss financial aid and/or scholarships.	31	15.6
We met to discuss my student's plans after graduation.	30	15.1
We met to discuss exploring colleges or choosing a college.	27	13.6
Other	12	6.0

*Note.* More than one response could be chosen.

#### **Evaluation Question 4: For students and their parents, to what extent does the ACES program impact their knowledge of the college application and financial aid processes?**

##### **Students**

As shown in Table 22, a vast majority of students (88%–93%) agreed or strongly agreed that the ACES program helped them as follows: assisted them with exploring colleges and universities (56% strongly agreed); assisted them with understanding the college application process (51% strongly agreed); assisted them with exploring majors and career interests (50% strongly agreed); provided their parent or guardian with helpful information (50% strongly agreed); helped them prepare academically for college applications (47% strongly agreed); and assisted them with understanding how to apply for scholarships and financial aid (46% and 44% strongly agreed respectively). Findings by grade level can be seen in Appendix C, Table C1; more Grade 12 students than Grade 11 students agreed with most of these statements.

Table 22  
Student Survey: Helpfulness of ACES Program with College Processes

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
The ACES program assisted me with exploring colleges and universities to which I might want to apply. ( <i>N</i> = 518)	289	55.8	190	36.7	33	6.4	6	1.2
The ACES program assisted me in understanding the college application process. ( <i>N</i> = 518)	264	51.0	210	40.5	35	6.8	9	1.7
The ACES program assisted me with exploring college majors and career interests. ( <i>N</i> = 519)	260	50.1	200	38.5	51	9.8	8	1.5
The ACES coach provided my parent(s)/guardian with helpful information and guidance. ( <i>N</i> = 522)	261	50.0	202	38.7	48	9.2	11	2.1
The ACES program helped prepare me academically for the college application process. ( <i>N</i> = 519)	244	47.0	223	43.0	46	8.9	6	1.2
The ACES program assisted me with understanding how to apply for scholarships. ( <i>N</i> = 497)	227	45.7	225	45.3	41	8.2	4	0.8
The ACES program assisted me in understanding how to apply for financial aid. ( <i>N</i> = 488)	214	43.9	213	43.6	54	11.1	7	1.4

Students in Grade 12 were asked how helpful ACES was to their college plan. Almost all of the Grade 12 survey respondents reported that ACES was very helpful (78%) or somewhat helpful (16%) to their college plan. A small percentage of students rated it a little helpful (6%) or not at all helpful (1%).

## Parents

*ACES helpfulness with college processes.* As shown in Table 23, most parents of ACES students (86%–96%) agreed or strongly agreed that the ACES program helped their student prepare academically for the college application process (51% strongly agree) and provided them with helpful information (50% strongly agreed). Not as many parents strongly agreed with the following statements, although most agreed or strongly agreed: helped them with how to explore colleges (41% strongly agreed); assisted them in understanding the application process (40% strongly agreed); and assisted them in how to apply for financial aid and scholarships (39% and 35% strongly agreed, respectively).

Table 23  
 Parent Survey: Helpfulness of ACES Program with College Processes

Survey Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
	The ACES program helped my student prepare academically for the college application process (e.g., high school course selection, grades, taking the SAT/ACT/ACCUPLACER, etc.). (N = 179)	91	50.8	80	44.7	8	4.5	0
The ACES coach provided me with helpful information and guidance. (N = 153)	77	50.3	66	43.1	7	4.6	3	2.0
The ACES program helped me understand how to explore colleges and universities. (N = 159)	65	40.9	79	49.7	12	7.5	3	1.9
The ACES program assisted me in understanding the college application process. (N = 151)	60	39.7	76	50.3	13	8.6	2	1.3
The ACES program assisted me in understanding how to apply for financial aid. (N = 149)	58	38.9	71	47.7	18	12.1	2	1.3
The ACES program assisted me in understanding how to apply for scholarships. (N = 153)	54	35.3	77	50.3	19	12.4	3	2.0

*Parent and student feedback.* Findings between parent and students were similar with most strongly agreeing or agreeing with statements regarding assistance from the ACES program. A significantly higher percentage of parents than students strongly agreed or agreed that the program helped their student prepare academically for the application process (96% parents vs. 90% students). There were no other significant differences. A table of comparison and statistical significance can be found in Appendix C, Table C-2.

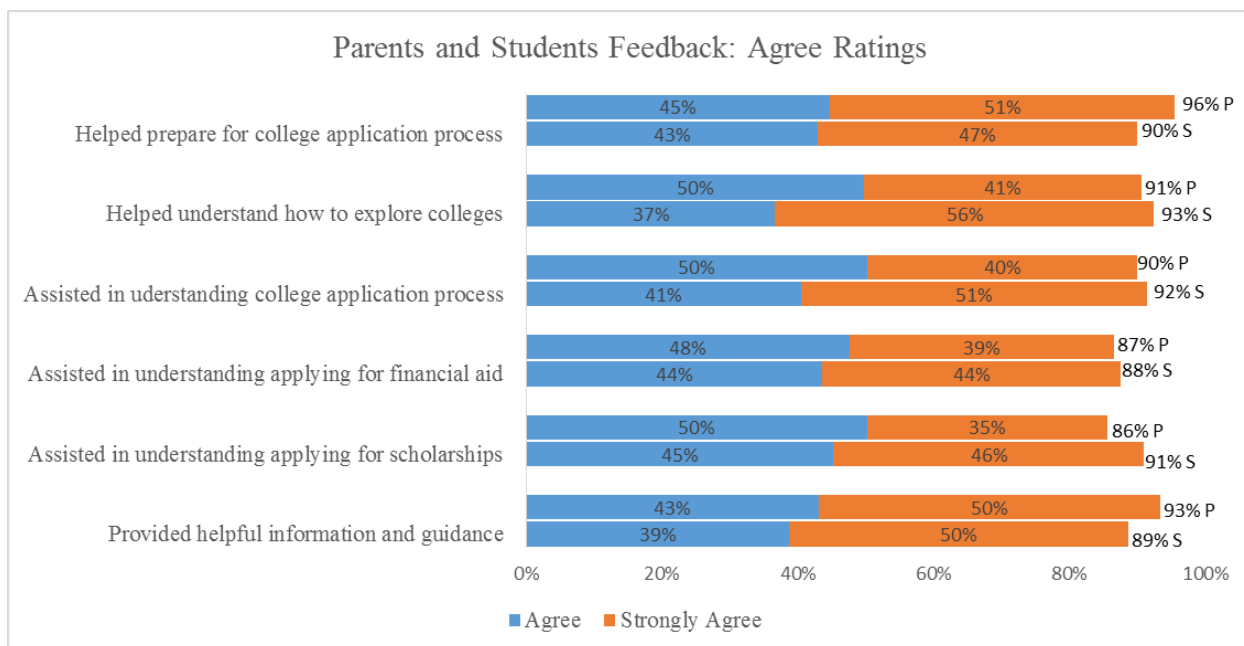


Figure 1. Parent and student feedback on program assistance

Note. P = Parent, S = Student

## Conclusion

In conclusion, ACES met its goal of serving an underrepresented population. Students and their parents gave very positive ratings for all aspects of the program and experiences with coaches. There is evidence from the student survey that several aspects of the program have improved from the first year: information on colleges, information on careers and majors, field trips, and connecting with other ACES students. There are some areas that have opportunities for improvement, such as increased parent communication and more meetings between coaches and students; these areas are highlighted in the recommendations below. Some higher ratings among 12<sup>th</sup> grade students (compared to 11<sup>th</sup> grade students) related to case management could mean more emphasis is being given to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, or it could be a reflection of these students in their second year of the program. The characteristics of the ACES students also showed a higher participation among females than males. This year, females made up 62% and males 38% of the participants.

## Recommendations

- Provide more parent communication (e.g., meetings, e-mails, and newsletter updates per some parent suggestions). Ensure that financial information, such as how to complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and apply to scholarships, is included in parent communications. Consider making workshop and meeting information available for parents who were not able to attend (e.g., e-mail, newsletter, website, etc.).
- Continue to seek ways for students to meet with their coaches throughout the year and provide opportunities for students to participate in workshops they weren't able to attend.
- Encourage more male students to apply to ACES. This year, females made up 62% and males 38% of the participants.
- In order to increase the number of students actively in the program, consider replacing students who are accepted to the program in the spring of their sophomore year and then exit the program over the summer due to moving out of the ACES school or MCPS.

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## Appendix A

Table A1  
Student Survey: Experience with ACES

Survey Items	Strongly Agree/Agree		Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>The ACES coach provided me with helpful information and guidance.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 217)	214	98.6	160	73.7	54	24.9	2	0.9	1	0.5
Grade 11 (N = 307)	300	97.7	209	68.1	91	29.6	7	2.3	0	0.0
<b>The ACES coach was available to meet if I needed any assistance or information.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 214)	210	98.1	141	65.9	69	32.2	3	1.4	1	0.5
Grade 11 (N = 295)	285	96.6	170	57.6	115	39.0	9	3.1	1	0.3
<b>When things happen that might affect me going to college, my coach has suggestions for what to do.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 206)	202	98.1	120	58.3	82	39.8	3	1.5	1	0.5
Grade 11 (N = 271)	258	95.2	127	46.9	131	48.3	11	4.1	2	0.7
<b>My coach helps remove or reduce any barriers between me and attending college.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 204)	198	97.1	115	56.4	83	40.7	3	1.5	3	1.5
Grade 11 (N = 271)	259	95.6	120	44.3	139	51.3	11	4.1	1	0.4
<b>My coach understands the things that could make it difficult for me to attend college.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 208)	202	97.1	123	59.1	79	38.0	3	1.4	3	1.4
Grade 11 (N = 287)	272	94.8	137	47.7	135	47.0	12	4.2	3	1.0
<b>I have a good relationship with my coach.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 215)	208	96.7	137	63.7	71	33.0	6	2.8	1	0.5
Grade 11 (N = 306)	286	93.5	175	57.2	111	36.3	16	5.2	4	1.3
<b>When I need help (like tutoring that my coach can't give), he/she refers me to someone who can help me.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 195)	187	95.9	117	60.0*	70	35.9	8	4.1	0	0.0
Grade 11 (N = 274)	252	92.0	124	45.3	128	46.7	13	4.7	9	3.3
<b>My coach keeps on top of what's happening with me.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 217)	209	96.3*	137	63.1*	72	33.2	4	1.8	4	1.8
Grade 11 (N = 309)	270	87.4	145	46.9	125	40.5	31	10.0	8	2.6
<b>My coach worked with me to develop a plan for college.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 216)	200	92.6*	137	63.4*	63	29.2	11	5.1	5	2.3
Grade 11 (N = 308)	259	84.1	135	43.8	124	40.3	40	13.0	9	2.8

*Note.* Students who did not respond or checked "not applicable" are not included.

\* $p < .05$  Only Strongly Agree/Agree and Strongly Agree were checked for significance.

**Table A2**  
**Student Survey: Experience with ACES**

Survey Items	Strongly Agree/Agree		Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>I would recommend the ACES program to other students.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 216)	208	96.3	156	72.2	52	24.1	6	2.8	2	0.9
Grade 11 (N = 304)	297	97.7	195	64.1	102	33.6	7	2.3	0	0.0
<b>The ACES program has motivated me to go to college.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 215)	195	90.7	117	54.4	78	36.3	15	7.0	5	2.3
Grade 11 (N = 303)	285	94.1	170	56.1	115	38.0	15	5.0	3	1.0
<b>Overall, the ACES workshop topics were useful to me.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 216)	208	96.3	112	51.9	96	44.4	3	1.4	5	2.3
Grade 11 (N = 308)	289	93.8	136	44.2	153	49.7	17	5.5	2	0.6
<b>Participation in the ACES program is important for me to achieve my future goals.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 214)	189	88.3	113	52.8	76	35.5	20	9.3	5	2.3
Grade 11 (N = 307)	284	92.5	132	43.0	152	49.5	20	6.5	3	1.0
<b>Overall, I look forward to ACES activities, such as the workshops, meeting with coach, etc.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 215)	195	90.7	94	43.7	101	47.0	16	7.4	4	1.9
Grade 11 (N = 307)	285	92.8	126	41.0	159	51.8	22	7.2	0	0.0
<b>Overall, the times available for the ACES workshops were convenient for me.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 217)	190	87.6	85	39.2	105	48.4	23	10.6	4	1.8
Grade 11 (N = 307)	265	86.3	92	30.0	173	56.4	35	11.4	7	2.3

\**p* < .05 Only Strongly Agree/Agree and Strongly Agree were checked for significance.

## Appendix B

Table B1  
ACES Parent Survey: Positive Aspects (Open Ended Questions)

Categories	Parents Leaving a Comment (N = 165) Examples
Specific Program Component Comments (n = 110, 67%)	Informative/information about college/information about college application process (n = 62) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My child and I now know more about the college application process.</li> <li>• Application process info and college career information are some of the best and most important.</li> <li>• Another thing I liked is how it encouraged my child through hints and tips when getting to college.</li> </ul>
	Financial Scholarship information (n = 25) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I like that my child was given help in finding scholarships, in order to have a greater chance of affording college.</li> <li>• Workshop on financial aid. Workshop on applying for scholarships.</li> </ul>
	College Tours (n = 18) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They took my kids to college field trips and tours, which played a major role in the kind of college they would like to attend.</li> </ul>
	Helped with academics/motivate (n = 16) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It keeps my son busy with academic work. It's preparing my son for college properly.</li> </ul>
	Helped with SAT/ACT/ACCUPLACER (n = 14) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for SAT/ACT</li> </ul>
	Workshops (n = 12) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The workshops help students work together and achieve a goal. The parent meeting kept the parents informed about the whole college process.</li> </ul>
	The summer program (n = 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It provides summer programs to help her know about/prepare for college.</li> </ul>
Positive feelings about the program (n = 50, 30%)	Motivates/Motivated my student to go to college (n = 23) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ACES program activities keep the students motivated and focused on the entire college preparation process, including course selection and financial aid.</li> <li>• They got my child excited for college.</li> </ul>
	Liked the program (general) (n = 9) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep up with the great work you have started; it's very beneficial to both parents and their children.</li> </ul>
	Liked that it gave opportunities/Made college possible (n = 8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers a variety of opportunities my child would otherwise not receive</li> </ul>
	Student Enjoys (n = 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I really liked that my student always looked forward to any activities he went to - he talked about ACES with pride.</li> </ul>

	<p>Sets goals/Increased confidence (n = 8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My child became much more self-confident as a result of the ACES program.</li> </ul>
<p>Coach/Staff comments (n = 39, 24%)</p>	<p>Support from the coach (n = 26)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always there for my child. One on one guidance throughout the college process.</li> <li>• Encouragement and motivation and support provided to ACES student</li> </ul>
	<p>Coach is great/Praise for coach (n = 23)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Coach) was an excellent coach and mentor to my son. (Coach) made this a great program for us.</li> <li>• (Coach) was a huge help for my son. (Coach) helped with patience and is a very dedicated person.</li> </ul>
	<p>Communication from coach (n = 14)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My child's coach always replied promptly to my emails.</li> </ul>
	<p>Availability of coach (n = 7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach was always available via email or phone wherever I had questions or concerns.</li> </ul>
	<p>Answered all questions (n = 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coach was always friendly and willing to answer any questions we had.</li> </ul>
<p>Miscellaneous (n = 8, 5%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACES also allowed my student to feel belonged and make many new friends, which I am thankful for.</li> <li>• The coach explained very well how the experience for students taking the ESL ACCUPLACER.</li> </ul>

Table B2  
 ACES Parent Survey: Suggestions (Open Ended Questions)

Categories	Parents Leaving a Suggestion (N = 123) Examples
Programming Assistance and Needs (n = 49, 40%)	More scholarship/financial information/assistance (n = 21) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much more focus should be placed on early scholarship applications and other financial aid application.</li> <li>• ACES coaches should talk more about scholarships.</li> </ul>
	More meetings/activities with students (n = 13) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet more with students individually</li> <li>• ACES should have more meetings so then the students are more involved.</li> </ul>
	More information/specific information/preparation (n = 10) i.e., college application process, other colleges, honors program, classes, career
	Tutoring/academic help (n = 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If student is not doing well academically maybe ACES can help.</li> </ul>
	College visits (n = 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More college trip visits to open the children's understanding of college life and all that comes with it.</li> </ul>
	Give information earlier (n = 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting earlier in their school year for readiness. More exposure and interaction with good role models will help students to begin looking into the future earlier.</li> </ul>
	More mentorship/motivation (n = 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will be very happy if they assign a mentor for my son. It will be a lot help, because I am single mother.</li> </ul>
Parent Communication (n = 47, 38%)	More communication/meetings with parents (n = 40) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be nice if parents could get a quarterly update on what's going on in the ACES meetings; such as topics the kids are learning. This way parents are in the loop and can reinforce things at home to compliment the ACES coach's teachings. ( A blast email may be)</li> <li>• One way ACES can better meet the parents need is having more informational meetings with just parents.</li> <li>• Contact parents' phone, email, etc. I didn't know about any event that were hosted. I would have gone. My child needs help.</li> </ul>
	Timing of parent meetings (n = 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most scheduled times do not benefit all parents. Therefore, search for another method to those parents ..., parents who are not able to attend any meetings should be able to have the opportunities of having maybe a conference call to discuss issues discussed during meetings time.</li> </ul>
	Offer communication in other languages (n = 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify us via email in Spanish</li> </ul>
Program Availability (n =17, 14%)	More staff/more coaches (n = 7)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please let be more than one ACES coach at each school. It will help the parents &amp; students are able to receive more one on one time to reach educational goals!</li> </ul>
	<p>Allow more students (n = 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I wish more than 65 kids could be in the program.</li> </ul>
	<p>More availability (n = 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ACES coach should increase available times in which he/she can meet with a student to discuss any personal issues/questions or comments.</li> </ul>
	<p>Focus on juniors/younger grades (n = 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to get students since freshman year to help them more.</li> </ul>
Miscellaneous (n = 18, 15%)	i.e., push students more, internships opportunities, improve summer program, more organization, incentives to students, etc.

## Appendix C

Table C1  
Student Survey: Experience with Program Assistance by Grade Level

	Strongly Agree/Agree		Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>The ACES program assisted me with exploring colleges and universities to which I might want to apply.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 214)	199	93.0	124	57.9	75	35.0	10	4.7	5	2.3
Grade 11 (N = 304)	280	92.1	165	54.3	115	37.8	23	7.6	1	0.3
<b>The ACES program assisted me in understanding the college application process.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 213)	204	95.8*	124	58.2*	80	37.6	7	3.3	2	0.9
Grade 11 (N = 305)	270	88.5	140	45.9	130	42.6	28	9.2	7	2.3
<b>The ACES program assisted me with exploring college majors and career interests.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 214)	188	87.9	121	56.5	67	31.3	23	10.7	3	1.4
Grade 11 (N = 305)	272	89.2	139	45.6	133	43.6	28	9.2	5	1.6
<b>The ACES coach provided my parent(s)/guardian with helpful information and guidance.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 216)	195	90.3	114	52.8	81	37.5	17	7.9	4	1.9
Grade 11 (N = 306)	268	87.6	147	48.0	121	39.5	31	10.1	7	2.3
<b>The ACES program helped prepare me academically for the college application process.</b>										
Grade 12 (N =216)	202	93.5*	117	54.2	85	39.4	11	5.1	3	1.4
Grade 11 (N = 303)	265	87.5	127	41.9	138	45.5	35	11.6	3	1.0
<b>The ACES program assisted me with understanding how to apply for scholarships</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 210)	201	95.7*	120	57.1*	81	38.6	8	3.8	1	.5
Grade 11 (N = 287)	251	87.5	107	37.3	144	50.2	33	11.5	3	1.0
<b>The ACES program assisted me in understanding how to apply for financial aid.</b>										
Grade 12 (N = 210)	202	96.2*	122	58.1*	80	38.1	6	2.9	2	1.0
Grade 11 (N = 278)	225	80.9	92	33.1	133	47.8	48	17.3	5	1.8

\**p*<.05 Only Strongly Agree/Agree and Strongly Agree were checked for statistical significance.

Table C2  
 Parent and Student Surveys: Helpfulness of ACES Program

Survey Items	Parent		Student	
	Strongly Agree/Agree		Strongly Agree/Agree	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
The ACES program helped my student/me prepare academically for the college application process.	171	95.5*	467	90.0
The ACES program helped me understand how to explore colleges and universities.	144	90.6	479	92.5
The ACES program assisted me in understanding the college application process.	136	90.0	474	91.5
The ACES program assisted me in understanding how to apply for financial aid.	129	86.6	427	87.5
The ACES program assisted me in understanding how to apply for scholarships.	131	85.6	452	91.0
The ACES program provided me/my parent with helpful information and guidance.	143	93.4	463	88.7

\*p < .05