



POST-SECONDARY READINESS ENRICHMENT PROGRAM (PREP) : 1996–2003

Frequently Asked Questions

What was PREP?

PREP provided supplementary academic and cultural enrichment programs for middle and high school students in at risk situations to assist them in preparing for post secondary education. Additionally PREP offered opportunities for entire middle school classes to visit one of the 34 public colleges or universities and experience being a “college student for a day,” and programs for parents to familiarize them with information and resources related to college going for their children. At it’s height there were 25 enrichment programs that coordinated by University System institutions throughout the Georgia.

PREP’s Goals:

1. To close the gap in readiness for college between middle and high school students from majority and minority groups and between high and low income groups.
2. To educate parents of middle and high school students in at-risk situations as to how to help their children become college ready.
3. To increase college success of students from poor and minority groups

Why was PREP needed?

In 1995 the Georgia Board of Regents, University System of Georgia, raised admission’s standards that would fully go into effect in September 2001 at all 34 public colleges and universities. However it was realized that many students in the state would be unable to meet these new standards without additional academic support systems. The state ranked 50th out of 52 (50 states plus District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) in “chances” for college attendance for students from low-income groups. A significant number of students did not consistently develop the appropriate foundation in high school and upon entering post secondary education were placed in remedial classes. Thus in conjunction with the changing admissions policy, the Board of Regents approved the establishment of academic enrichment programs beginning at the middle

school level, so that these students would have several years to receive assistance in preparing for higher education.

How were students selected for PREP?

The selection process included teachers and counselors in consultation with the PREP Coordinators who recommended students with academic potential but who were faced with situational barriers such as a low socioeconomic family background, isolated environment, residing in a neighborhood frequented by violence, lack of self esteem that could thwart their opportunity for a

college education. Parental consent was required for a student to participate in the program. Generally students considered it an honor to be selected for the program, for many this was the first time that they had been recognized within the academic realm. Most programs had a code of conduct that students must follow to remain in the program. Since the inception of PREP in 1996, more than 34,000 students participated in the program.

What services were offered through PREP?

PREP was a comprehensive year round program. During the academic year students participated in tutoring /mentoring, academic readiness, career exploration, leadership development, conflict resolution, computer skill development sessions, and community service projects. These programs were offered during school, and after school at middle and high schools and on Saturdays on college campuses. Summer Enrichment programs were held on college campuses for two-week periods. Generally students attended academic classes in the morning and participated in cultural enrichment and community service programs in the afternoons. Field trips to cultural events in and out of the state and an overnight stay on a campus were highlights of the summer program. PREP high school students had the opportunity to attend a week long Summer Leadership Institute sponsored by the Georgia Business Forum.

Who staffed PREP programs?

College students, as tutors and mentors, were major staff resources for the programs. They worked with students one on one or in small groups. The tutor/mentors received training on an ongoing basis. Middle and high school teachers/ counselors who are energetic, creative and had a strong commitment to working with students from diverse backgrounds were employed to supervise the tutors and teach classes. College and technical college faculty taught some classes particularly during the summer sessions. Business and community leaders gave special presentations to the students throughout the year. Additionally many businesses and community organizations made invaluable contributions to the program in the form of supplies, food and transportation. Each PREP Program had a Coordinator who was an employee of a college or university and was responsible for the administrative and operational aspects of the program.

Was PREP an effective program?

There were three external evaluations of PREP, the latest occurring in 1999-2000. Interviews were held with 570 PREP staff, teachers, tutors, parents, and business and community partners. Over 1000 stakeholders responded to a file card survey, and six focus groups were conducted in different areas of the state. Findings from the survey were: students, 89% indicated that PREP had helped them to improve their grades and most were proud to be a part of a select group; parents, 84% had observed an improvement in their children's grades and school performance as a result of their participation in PREP; middle and high school teachers, 99% reported that the program was well managed and 98% felt that participation in PREP activities had a positive effect on students' grades and academic achievement, and tutors, 63% reported that the grades and academic performance of students had improved during their time with them. While PREP was an effective program funding did not allow the program to continue to grow and reach adequate numbers of students. The program was discontinued as designed in 2003.

