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Secondary to Postsecondary Transitions for Youth in San Francisco Unified School District

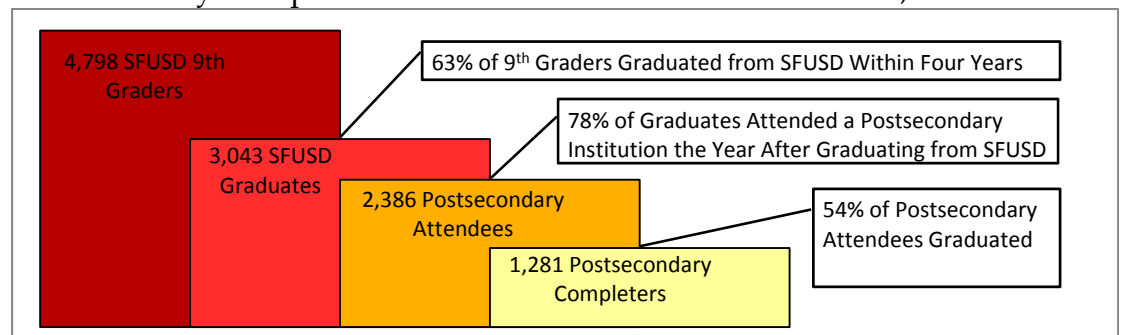
Background

The San Francisco Postsecondary Success Partnership (SF-PSP), a joint effort of the City and County of San Francisco, City College of San Francisco (CCSF), San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), and key community organizations, was formed to promote postsecondary success for all students. As part of this work, SF-PSP asked the Youth Data Archive (YDA) of the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University to investigate how many SFUSD students received a postsecondary credential and where SF-PSP partners could implement programmatic or policy changes to improve postsecondary educational attainment for San Francisco youth.

Findings and Interpretation

The analysis followed 4,798 first-time 9th grade students who were enrolled in SFUSD during the 2000-01 school year. Figure 1 shows that 63% of 9th grade students graduated from SFUSD within four years, 78% of SFUSD graduates attended a postsecondary institution the following year, and 54% of postsecondary attendees earned a credential from a two- or four-year institution within five years. In sum, these findings indicate that slightly more than one in every four SFUSD 9th grade students (27%) earned a postsecondary credential by the approximate age of 23.¹

Figure 1. High School Graduation, Postsecondary Attendance, and Postsecondary Completion Rates for 9th Grade SFUSD Students, 2001 Cohort



¹ The true postsecondary completion rate may be higher as data limitations prevented us from including students who: completed secondary school outside of SFUSD, took more than four years to graduate high school, did not enter a postsecondary institution immediately upon completing high school, and took longer than five years to complete their postsecondary studies.

Linking data from SFUSD, CCSF, and the National Student Clearinghouse, which included the postsecondary attendance and graduation dates of students who did not attend CCSF, showed that:

- There was substantial variation in high school graduation rates and postsecondary attendance rates by ethnicity and gender. Overall, Asian and White students outperformed Latino and African-American students and females outperformed male students.
- More SFUSD graduates initially attended a four-year institution (44%) than a two-year institution (34%). Approximately 65% of students attending a four-year institution received a bachelor degree within five years, though completion rates varied depending on the institution attended.
- Approximately three-fourths of SFUSD graduates who enrolled in a two-year institution enrolled at CCSF. Of these, approximately one-third completed their studies within five years by receiving a vocational certificate, associate degree, transferring to a four year institution, or earning a bachelor degree from a four year institution.
- Multiple factors were independently associated with CCSF completion, including: high school GPA, highest SFUSD math course taken at SFUSD, most recent California Standards Test, enrolling full-time at CCSF, and highest English course taken during freshman year at CCSF.

From Findings to Action

In the past year the SF-PSP made significant progress towards the creation of a system of shared accountability for the postsecondary success of all students. SF-PSP partners have proposed multiple programmatic and policy changes as a result of YDA analyses; some examples include: (1) the creation of professional learning communities among English department staff at SFUSD and CCSF staff to better define and align expectations for students in both institutions, and (2) changing priority enrollment policies at CCSF to ensure more incoming students have opportunities to enroll in core courses. SF-PSP has also committed to use data to continue monitoring student progress; initial results show that high school graduation rates, postsecondary attendance rates, and positive indicators of student enrollment and course-taking at CCSF have all increased from 2001 to 2005.

The next step for SF-PSP is to develop an infrastructure to support its future work, so that these initial discussions can be turned into concrete plans. By supporting more quantitative and qualitative research, the partnership would be able to better understand differences in high school graduation, postsecondary attendance, and postsecondary completion rates, especially for African-American and Latino students. The scope of the SF-PSP work can also be enhanced by increasing the number of data-contributing partners. Linking school data to what students experience outside of school, including involvement with other county services or out-of-school time programs, is critical for creating programs and policies that prepare all youth for productive adulthood. By including a variety of youth-service providers in the SF-PSP collaborative, San Francisco can begin to develop a comprehensive, city-wide approach to youth success.