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Documenting Commanding English:

*A partnership of Minneapolis Public Schools &
University of Minnesota College of Education and
Human Development*

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Setting the Scene

- *Minnesota and particularly the Twin Cities has experienced rapid diversification through immigration in the past twenty years.*
- *Latinos are the largest and fastest growing group.*
- *The state is home to the largest Hmong and Somali populations in the nation.*

[A Clear Need...]

- Immigrant students, many of whom had experienced minimal or interrupted formal schooling needed support in order to participate successfully in post-secondary education.

[A response...]

- In 1980, a first-year cohort model was designed within what was then the U of MN General College specifically for immigrant students.
- Commanding English offers a connected series of required subject-area coursework linked to adjunct language support.

Presence but not Access

- Though the Commanding English College program had been in existence for ten years the area's immigrant groups were not well-represented at the U of MN.

[Reaching Out]

- In 1990, a partnership was established at Edison High School within the Minneapolis district to provide a bridge into college for Hmong students, then the largest refugee group

Extending the Reach

- Over the past sixteen years, the partnership has grown to include two other district high schools.
 - Roosevelt High School: Serving primarily Somali juniors and seniors.
 - Washburn High School: Serving a mix of Latino, Somali, and Hmong students.

[Ready, and not...]

- The state of Minnesota Post-Secondary Enrollment Options program allows college-level coursework to be offered to high school students who have completed their high school curriculum.
- High performing ELL students are ready for the challenge of college content, but may not have the language skills to participate successfully in traditionally structured AP and IB courses.

[Ready and Able]

- The Commanding English program provides an option for high performing juniors and seniors who are English language learners by building in additional language support to college-level subject-area classes.

[Program Structure]

- Commanding English courses are taught in partner schools and on-campus—in differing configurations (on and off site) and duration (one to two years) based on the needs of the schools.

[Program Curriculum]

- Students can earn up to 16 college credits
 - Intro to College Reading and Writing
 - Developing College Reading
 - Literature of the American Immigrant Experience
 - Basic Writing
 - Cultural Anthropology paired with Reading in the Content Areas

Program Purpose: Academic Literacy

- *Program instructors*
 - Scaffold college-level reading in discipline-areas,
 - Locate students' experiences within fields of scholarship and creative expression model college level academic writing in discipline areas
 - Develop grammatical competence that is contextualized within reading and writing strategies.

Program Purpose:

Navigate toward college

- Program instructors:
 - Teach strategies for managing college-level work loads,
 - Structure experiences that convey norms for academic participation
 - Discuss college-level expectations for class presentations, group work, and written products
 - Provide assistance with college admissions, financial aid, and course planning.
 - Establish relational networks with college faculty
 - Build familiarity with a college campus

[Program Structures]

- *ESL Coordinators, school faculty and counselors work with U of MN program staff around identifying, recruiting, enrolling, and supporting students in the program.*
- *A liaison coordinates across institutions.*
- *Admission procedures to the UM are adapted for students who have completed the program.*
- *Support in college application is provided.*

[What do we know so far?]

- 65-85% of students who enroll complete the program.
- Students who complete the program all graduate from high school.
- Students who complete the program go on to post-secondary in very high numbers (90% and higher), often with merit-based scholarships.

What would we like to learn?

- How do students who participate in Commanding English compare in school performance, graduation rates, and post-secondary enrollment with other eligible students who don't elect to participate?
- What do students and instructors report about the efficacy of the program in developing academic literacy and supporting students' acculturation to college?
- What are the post-secondary retention and college graduation rate of students who completed the program?