



## MERRITT COLLEGE EMERGING TEACHER PROGRAM (ETP)

First 5 Alameda County (F5AC) funded the Merritt College Emerging Teacher Program (ETP) beginning in 2005 to increase the number of ECE providers who speak the languages and represent the cultures of children in Alameda County. Non-traditional students who may be older, non-native English speakers and who work and attend school at the same time find it difficult to complete general education requirements necessary for a college degree. To support English-language learners and enhance workforce diversity, greater emphasis was placed on their recruitment and retention of students.

The Merritt College three-year ETP program supports students who work in ECE with Child Development Corps incentives, academic counseling, peer support in a cohort learning model, weekend classes and tutoring. To be eligible to participate in the cohort, students must have a minimum of 9 ECE credits upon entry and an ESL assessment score at the level 4 (intermediate) on the CELSA test of English-language proficiency.

Students complete general education and advance as a cohort in the following course sequence:

SEMESTER	COURSE	GENERAL ED AREA
Intersession	Couns200	N/A
Summer 1	Music 10	Area 3 (Humanities)
Fall 1	ESL 201B	N/A
Spring 1	ESL 21A	Area 4.a (English Comp)
Intersession	CIS 205	Area 4.c (Computer Literacy)
Summer 2	M/Lat 6	Area 5 (Ethnic Studies)
Fall 2	Speech 20	Area 4.d (Oral or Written Communication)
Spring 2	Nutrition 10	Area 1 (Natural Sciences)

Monthly cohort meetings provide the opportunity for networking with other students, opportunities to advocate for program needs and to acknowledge students for their motivation and effort. Additional supports include tutoring, transportation reimbursement and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) faculty training.

### EVALUATION

Student interviews, surveys and academic results have been tracked for the past 3 years to learn more about the effectiveness of offering these supports in a cohort model.

Evaluation Questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the students?
2. What kinds of support did the students receive and how helpful was the support?
3. Did ETP make a difference for students?
4. Does ETP lead to AA degree and if so, do students plan to continue their education?
5. What are student-perceived challenges to success?

### RESULTS

Since the 2005 fall semester, twenty-five students were enrolled in each of three cohorts (75 total).

1. Demographics
  - The majority of students responding to the survey in each cohort were center-based, many from Head Start programs in the county.
  - Although the majority of all students were Spanish speaking, the number of Spanish-speakers declined over time from 87% in cohort 1 to 75% in cohort 2 to 60% in cohort 3. Other primary languages spoken included Mandarin and Cantonese
2. Type of assistance received fluctuated, over 90% reported receiving help with educational plans, homework, English writing and speaking and tutoring at some point in time.

TYPE OF SUPPORT RECEIVED	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Help with education plan	39
Tutoring	38
Help with English writing & speaking	38
Review of transcripts	27
Help with homework	20
Help with course selection	20
Help with study skills	11
Formal/informal discussions	6

Overtime the most helpful support reported was Saturday classes (76% - 100%)

3. 82% of Cohorts 2 and 3 reported that ETP made a difference in their professional and personal lives including:
  - Improving their English reading and writing
  - Providing clear information about prerequisites
  - Help with homework
  - Having someone available to talk to
  - Learning about dealing with children’s behavior and emotions, stimulating children’s cognitive development
4. Obtaining an AA degree
  - 60% of cohort members graduated with an AA degree in 2008 or 2009
  - Cohort 3 is expected to graduate in Spring 2010

The average GPA of graduating students was 3.23.

Intention to pursue a BA degree

- 75% initially reported that they planned to pursue a BA degree; by graduation 68% of the first cohort planned on pursuing a BA degree
  - 50% of cohort 2 students planned to pursue a BA degree
  - 57% of cohort 3 students plan to pursue a BA degree
5. Primary challenges encountered were consistently reported to be and the time classes were offered (67%) and financial support (55%)

CHALLENGES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Time classes offered	28
Financial	23
Transportation to class	14
Not having strong computer skills	12
Work	12
Location of classes	11

## INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with randomly selected students from each ETP cohort beginning in 2005.

Students reported that what sets the ETP program apart is that teachers affiliated with the program tend to be more friendly, welcoming and approachable than other college faculty. Many of the students reported sharing what they learned with co-workers such as, “how to redirect children” and “learning a lot about communication with children and parents.”

“The program is helping me because I have an opportunity to learn English. This is the most important assignment in this career. “

2005-2006 ETP student interview

“I feel more confident. I can talk to parents. They are very happy we are coming back to school when they hear we will get our AA. They want their kids to be bilingual too.”

2006-2007 ETP student interview

“Day by day I am immersed in a new world...if you are challenged you will reach your goal.”

2006-2007 ETP student interview

“I’ve been taking classes for 10-12 years and finally have gotten guidance on what courses to take.”

2008- 2009 ETP student interview

An ETP student was a recent immigrant from China and reported that she was always afraid to, ‘open her mouth,’ and was, “very scared to answer [questions].” She said, “Chinese do not raise their hand. Now I do.” The counselor [encouraged] her to take one class/semester for 6 years. Now she is enrolled in ETP.

2008- 2009 ETP student interview

National studies of degree achievement at the community college levels show that on average, only about 30% of students who attempt the highest level of general education classes actually complete these class within three years; by the third year, enrollments drop; and fewer than 10% of the students earn an AA degree in three years (Achieving the Dream Initiative, Brock T., Jenkins D., Ellwein T. et al., 2007). This three year evaluation of the Merritt College ETP program has demonstrated that with consistent support, non-traditional students can exceed the best expectations for their progress.