

**Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy & Trinity College
Partnership Evaluation: Executive Summary and Full Report**

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HMTCA-Trinity College Partnership Evaluation: Executive Summary

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Introduction

In 2011, the Hartford Public Schools (HPS) and Trinity College partnered to create the Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy (HMTCA). The partnership agreement called for the former Hartford Magnet Middle School (HMMS) to be renamed as HMTCA and expand from a grade 6-8 school into a grade 6-12 school. In order to expand its reach to high school students, the partnership envisioned an “Early College” experience that emphasized “preparing students to attend and to succeed in college.” This report includes an overview of the HMTCA-Trinity College partnership (Part I) and an evaluation report (Part 2). The evaluation report shares findings about the partnership between Trinity College and HMTCA in these areas: impact, participant experiences, and areas for improvement. The report concludes with recommendations for next steps in the partnership.

Part 1: Overview of the HMTCA-Trinity College Partnership

Through collaboration between the two institutions, students at HMTCA participate in a number of activities broadly known as an Early College experience. The activities include a number of programs for HMTCA students on Trinity College’s campus. These programs are planned and implemented by a combination of HMTCA and Trinity College faculty and staff. Activities at HMTCA include, but are not limited to, the following:

- All students attend a summer writing and science academy on Trinity campus.
- All seniors enroll in a high school course taught on Trinity campus.
- Students may apply to enroll in introductory college courses for credit at Trinity.
- Students participate in ongoing and/or one-time academic programs and events.

Part 2: The HMTCA-Trinity College Partnership Evaluation Study

This study sought to understand the experiences of people involved with the partnership between Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy (HMTCA) and Trinity College from multiple perspectives. Based on an online survey with over 100 participants, and two focus groups with HMTCA students and educators, the findings included evidence of the impact of the HMTCA-Trinity College partnership and areas for improvement for the partnership.

Strong themes regarding the impact of the program included:

- Improved ability of HMTCA students in navigating a college campus
- HMTCA students' perception of better preparation for college-level work
- A range of academic collaboration between HMTCA and Trinity College

In terms of areas for improvement, participants raised interest in clearer and stronger connections, expanded partnership programming, educational equity in programs, and concerns about logistical and capacity challenges for both institutions. Initial recommendations to begin addressing these areas of improvement include, but will not be limited to, the following actions:

1. Foster Stronger Connections

Establish an HMTCA-Trinity College partnership planning & implementation committee, to meet at least four times per year.

Goals of the committee might include:

- Improved planning (e.g. events, collaboration, programs)
- Addressing logistical and capacity issues
- Identifying aspects of the Memorandum of Understanding to be updated
- Incorporating student voice in decision-making

The HMTCA Principal, the Dean of Academic Affairs at Trinity, and the Director of Urban Education Initiatives at Trinity should work together to appoint members to this committee and decide on its scope, chairs, and schedule.

2. Expand the Partnership Programming

Create new or adapt existing courses and programs for HMTCA students that are not formally participating in the Early College partnership.

3. Promote Educational Equity in Partnership Programs

Promote ways for HMTCA and Trinity to continue working together on educational programs for teachers and students in areas such as cultural competence, multicultural/multilingual education, and equity in education.

HMTCA-Trinity College Partnership Evaluation: Full Report

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Part 1: The HMTCA-Trinity College Partnership

Background

Under the direction of the President and Dean of Faculty's Office, the partnership between HMTCA and Trinity College began in 2011. A formal [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) between the Hartford Public Schools (HMTCA) and Trinity College guides the partnership. This MOU defines the scope of the partnership, including the possibility of collaboration beyond the written agreement. Specifically, the original agreement called for mutual involvement and collaboration for a 9th grade writing and study skills course, a 10th grade science and technology program, and a College Campus Academy Program for HMTCA seniors, as well as any other activities and programs. The HMTCA-Trinity College partnership agreement to create and maintain an Early College program assists in making HMTCA an attractive interdistrict magnet school in a competitive school choice context in the Hartford region.

The partnership with the Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy promotes the College's [mission](#) by creating opportunities for students and faculty in the College and students and teachers in the local community to engage, connect, and transform our city. With the support of the President and the Office of the Dean of Faculty and other campus offices, the HMTCA partnership is implemented through the Director of Urban Educational Initiatives, which is part of the Center for Hartford Engagement and Research (CHER). A combination of Trinity College institutional, grant, donor, and state & local funds supports the partnership.

Selected Literature on Early College Programs: Models, Evaluation, and Equity

Over the last several years, Early College programs expanded with the idea of getting students to experience college academics while still attending high school (Edmunds, 2012). These programs vary in terms of their structure. Some programs provide college credits for courses offered at high school, while others have high school students attending courses on college campuses, and others provide a dual-enrollment feature allowing both high school and college credits to accrue for the same course (Desoff, 2011; Regan, 2017). While there are academic benefits to Early College programs, there are also potential issues related to implementation, student preparation, and funding these programs (Alaie, 2011; Leonard, 2013). Rather than reflecting a national or common model, the HMTCA Early College program is a blend of different models that was planned by Trinity College and HMTCA faculty.

Evaluation of these programs tend to follow two tracks. Some evaluation studies examine whether a particular program is implemented with “fidelity” to a particular model. Other studies evaluate the experiences of participants to understand benefits and challenges in terms of preparation for college (Berger et al, 2010; Alaie, 2011). This report takes the second track using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. Below are aspects of the HMTCA-Trinity College partnership and an evaluation that examines the experiences of participants in various groups in order to understand the impact of the partnership and current challenges.

Finally, many Early College programs report educational equity as one goal. In this case, the HMTCA-Trinity College partnership has an equity goal of improved access and opportunity for historically underserved students, particularly children and families residing in Hartford. This goal is particularly important given the ways that schools serving high numbers of Black and Latinx often lack college preparatory courses and learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2013). However, without specific attention this goal, organizational practices may not produce the intended outcome of promoting equity in access and opportunity. As recent scholarship on equity and early college programs suggests, educators must examine the difference between organizational practices and students’ needs (Ari et al, 2016; Locke and McKenzie, 2015).

Who does the HMTCA-Trinity College partnership serve?

HMTCA is located on Hartford’s Learning Corridor, which is across the street from Trinity College’s campus in the city’s South End neighborhoods. HMTCA is a public interdistrict magnet school that is operated by the Hartford Public Schools (HPS) district. City and suburban families apply to HMTCA through the Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) lottery. Recently, HMTCA added a high school addition to its original middle school facility. In 2017-18, HMTCA enrolled 1,069 students from grades 6-12. In terms of student enrollment, the school is the largest operated by the Hartford Public Schools.

As an interdistrict magnet school that intends to meet the goals of the *Sheff v. O’Neill* desegregation settlement, HMTCA enrolls half of its students from Hartford and half from surrounding towns. According to CT SDE data, the school serves students in the following groups: 46.8% Latina/o, 23.6% Black or African American, 19.7% White, 5.1% Two or More Races, and 4% Asian students. In addition, 59.2% of students were eligible for free or reduced priced meals in 2017-18. Based on this data, the school currently meets the standard of being a “reduced isolation” setting, or an official state designation as a racially diverse school.

Aspects of the Partnership

A. The HMTCA Summer Writing and Science Academies

Over the last seven years, **all** rising 9th grade students at HMTCA attended a summer writing academy and **all** entering 10th grade students attended a summer science academy on Trinity’s campus. HMTCA summer academies are a graduation requirement for all HMTCA high school students. Therefore, roughly 500 HMTCA students enrolled in the summer writing and science academies over the last five years. (See Table 1)

Table 1: HMTCA Summer Academies Student Enrollment

Summer	Writing Academy (# of 9th grade students enrolled)	Science Academy (# of 10th grade students enrolled)	Total Students
2015	127	114	241
2016	141	95	236
2017	125	134	259
2018	120	135	255
Total	513	478	

The academy courses are taught by a combination of Trinity faculty, HMTCA staff, and trained undergraduate students. Trinity and HMTCA faculty collaborate to design the curriculum and instruction. The partnership MOU initially defined the goals of the summer academies. The writing program intended to promote “time management, writing, and study skills.” And the science program intended to promote “science and technology skills.”

In recent years, the 9th grade summer writing academy changed from a course in essay writing to a course about multiple forms of college writing. Similarly, the 10th grade summer science academy also shifted from an exploration of the scientific method to a focus on environmental science with concepts from biology and chemistry.

In addition, the summer science academy is supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), featuring a unique collaboration between Trinity College and partner institutions (Vassar College, Bryn Mawr College, Barnard College, and Brown University). Each summer, Trinity hosts an NSF Teaching Experiences for Undergraduates (TEU) program for

about 12 undergraduate students who are interested in becoming science teachers, selected from a consortium of 50 liberal arts colleges across the nation. The NSF grant supports undergraduates to serve as apprentice teachers in the HMTCA summer science academy, which is supervised by local master science teachers. The science academy also offers teacher professional development through lectures related to racial and linguistic equity in teaching and learning.

B. HMTCA Students in Trinity College Courses

Since Fall 2014, a sizeable portion of qualified HMTCA students have attended introductory-level Trinity College courses. Most of these students are seniors; however, a small number of juniors have also taken courses. The partnership agreement states that the Trinity faculty and Registrar shall set the standards and decide on enrollment of HMTCA students in Trinity College courses. The application and enrollment process has been the result of intensive cooperation between the Trinity faculty and Registrar, the Dean of Faculty's Office, the Director of Urban Educational Initiatives, and HMTCA faculty and guidance counselors.

HMTCA students must apply to take a Trinity course. These students typically have a 3.0 high school GPA or better, strong teacher recommendations, strong writing skills, and other skills as determined by placement or other tests, as determined by Trinity faculty. The availability of specific courses is also determined by Trinity faculty and the Registrar.

From Fall 2014 to Spring 2019, 83 HMTCA students completed at least 1 course at Trinity College and earned a combined total of 95 course credits (since some students completed more than one Trinity course). During this period, the number of HMTCA students that have completed a course ranged from 20-30% of the graduation class. For example, in 2014-15, 22 out of 74 HMTCA graduates, or 30%, took a course at Trinity College. In 2017-18, there were 20 out of 75 HMTCA graduates, or 24% took a course at Trinity College. (See Table 2)

HMTCA students completed a range of courses in academic areas such as STEM (e.g. Computer Science, Calculus I and II, Chemistry), humanities (e.g. American Studies, Literature, Languages and Classical Studies, Hispanic Studies), and social sciences (e.g. Psychology, Sociology, Urban Studies). During each semester, HMTCA students are advised by a combination of HMTCA and Trinity faculty.

In addition, it is important to note that HMTCA students have access to other opportunities in higher education. These opportunities include AP and courses at other colleges and universities.

**Table 2: HMTCA Students Completed
Trinity College Courses: 2014-2018**

Year	Fall (# students)	Spring (# of students)
2014-15	12	15
2015-16	20	8
2016-17	8	5
2017-18	18	6
2018-19	14	16

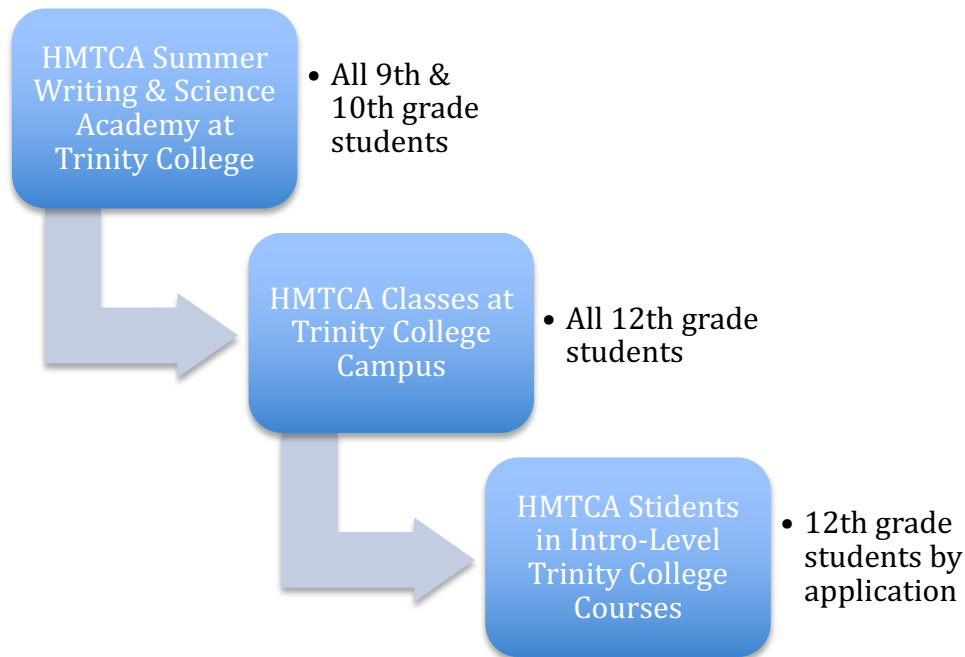
Note: Some HMTCA students enroll in more than one Trinity course (e.g. one in fall, one in spring). Also, some HMTCA students may have taken a course in Fall and/or Spring semester.

As of Fall 2018, the average college course grade point average (GPA) for HMTCA students completing a Trinity College course was 2.7 out of a scale of 4.3, or a B- average. Grades ranged from A to F with the most common grade (mode) being 3.0, or a B (18 students).

C. HMTCA Classes on Trinity College's Campus

Regardless of their enrollment in Trinity courses, all HMTCA seniors attend a Senior English course taught by an HMTCA faculty member in a classroom located on the Trinity College campus. Attending a high school course on Trinity College's campus provides students in this Senior English course easier access to on-campus lectures and activities hosted by Trinity College. With collaboration from the Trinity College Office of College Events, one Trinity classroom is dedicated to HMTCA classes and programming, located near the center of campus and other academic buildings on campus. (See Figure 1 for complete program timeline)

Figure 1: Timeline Of HMTCA-Trinity College Partnership Programs



D. Additional Collaboration between HMTCA & Trinity College

Collaboration that preceded the official HMTCA-Trinity partnership agreement also continued or expanded over time. For example, Trinity students observe and participate in classes at HMTCA as part of their Educational Studies program courses, including EDUC 200: Analyzing Schools. Also, the long-standing Jones-Zimmerman Academic Mentoring Program (J-Z AMP) program, administered by Trinity’s Office of Community Service and Civic Engagement, involves Trinity students mentoring a cohort of HMTCA middle school students over the course of three years.

Over the years, Trinity students and faculty also conducted a number of Community Learning (CL) projects in collaboration with HMTCA faculty. These projects intended to improve curriculum and student learning. Some projects are ongoing, such as a metacognition learning project with Trinity College faculty and students in the Department of Psychology. Other collaborations are related to Trinity College students’ projects or senior theses.

Other recent collaborations include the HMTCA Writing Center, developed with support from Trinity College’s Writing Center faculty & students. Also, by request of HMTCA students,

Trinity College students in the *La Voz Latina* (LVL) organization co-created an HMTCA Puerto Rican and Latinx Club.

E. HMTCA Events and Activities at Trinity College

HMTCA students and staff participate in yearly formal events on Trinity’s campus, such as the HMTCA graduation, National Honors Society induction ceremony, senior reception, jazz concerts, and other academic activities. In addition, HMTCA sports teams play a limited number of games/matches on Trinity College’s athletic fields.

A recent development is greater participation of HMTCA students in academic lectures, presentations, and events. This development has been in response to informal requests by HMTCA student and faculty for greater participation in campus life. Over the last year, HMTCA students attended an exhibit and lectures at Trinity, which are listed below. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2: Special Exhibits and Events

Erika P. Rodriguez & Patrick Raycraft, “Picturing Maria, The Wrath and Aftermath of a Hurricane.” February 2018.

Alvin Chang, “Educational Inequality through Digital Storytelling.” Vox.com journalist, February 2018.

Jemele Hill, “The Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Sports, Journalism, and Today’s Political Climate.” ESPN, March 2018.

State of Connecticut Supreme Court, “On Circuit” Educational Program. October 2018.

Part 2: HMTCA-Trinity College Partnership Evaluation Study

Purpose and Scope

The partnership agreement (MOU) between HMTCA/HPS and Trinity College calls for periodic evaluation of the program.¹ In accordance with this partnership goal, the Director of Urban Education Initiatives conducted this evaluation in Fall 2018 and in consultation with the HMTCA Principal and the Center for Hartford Engagement and Research (CHER) Director at Trinity. proposed an evaluation study in Fall 2018. This study sought to understand the experiences of people involved with the partnership between Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy (HMTCA) and Trinity College from multiple perspectives.

For the first stage of the evaluation, multiple groups were invited to participate in an online survey after consultation with the school administration. These groups included:

- HMTCA alumni who applied to take a course at Trinity College 2014-18
- HMTCA current high school seniors (both enrolled and not enrolled in Trinity classes), with parental consent
- HMTCA teachers, administrators, and staff
- Trinity College faculty and staff who participate in the HMTCA partnership

For the second stage of the evaluation, HMTCA current high school seniors and teachers, administrators, and staff were invited to participate in two different focus groups. The Trinity College Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this evaluation study, and in accordance with ethical research practices, all participant responses were voluntary, confidential, and recorded anonymously. The benefits of this study were to evaluate the impact of the HMTCA-Trinity partnership and to make improvements in the future based on the experiences of people involved with the programs.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Responses to the survey and field notes from the focus groups were analyzed through inductive and deductive approaches. One round of open-coding to generate themes and one round of focused coding to modify and clarify these themes, as well as develop sub-themes (Emerson et al, 2011). In particular, this analysis focused on partnership impact and challenges. A limitation of the online survey and focus group method were that responses are not from a random sample

¹ The MOU Section 3(b) on page 4 states, “Faculty from the College will be involved in the design and periodic evaluation and redesign of academic program designed to prepare Academy students for acceptance into the Early College Academy high school grades and subsequently for admission to college.”

of participants, but rather a sample of participants that may be more motivated to provide feedback for one reason or another. Findings are in three sections: Section 1: Overall Rating of Partnership; Section 2: Impact of the Partnership; and Section 3: Areas for Improvement.

Participation

In October 2018, an online survey using *Qualtrics* was sent to 241 participants that included HMTCA teachers, students, alumni, as well as Trinity faculty and staff. In addition, researchers invited four classes of HMTCA seniors, roughly 80 students, to participate in the survey. The response rate varied by subgroup. For example, eighty (80) out of the 241 adults completed the online survey for a response rate of 33%. In total, 25 current HMTCA seniors (with parent permission) out of the 80 invited students completed an online survey. (See Table 3)

In total, 105 people completed an online survey (n=105). Participants in the online survey were invited to participate in small focus groups. Seven HMTCA students (n=7) and eight HMTCA faculty and staff (n=8) participated in focus groups.

Table 3: Survey Participation (2018) by Group

Group	Invited (online)	Completed	% Participation
HMTCA Staff/Faculty	110*	26	23.6%
Trinity Staff/Faculty	48	24**	52%
HMTCA alums	83	29	34.9%
HMTCA seniors	80***	25	n/a
Total	241	80*	33.1%

Notes:

* All HMTCA faculty and staff received an invitation to participate in the survey regardless of their past participation in the HMTCA-Trinity partnership.

** Deleted one Trinity staff/faculty survey from total that was submitted as “complete” with no responses.

***HMTCA seniors participated in an open link to the survey if they obtained parent permission or provided consent as legal adults. Roughly 80 permission slips were distributed to students and 31 students obtained parent permission and 1 legal adult student provided consent. 25/32 students with parent permission and consent participated in the online survey.

Findings

Section 1: Overall Rating of the HMTCA-Trinity College Partnership

On a scale of 1 (worst) – 10 (best), the average overall rating by all participants (n=105) for the HMTCA/Trinity partnership was 7.5 out of 10. By group, Trinity staff and faculty had the highest average overall rating (8.5). Former (7.0) and current HMTCA students (8.0) were in the middle. HMTCA staff and faculty had the lowest average overall rating (6.6).

Table 4: Overall Rating of Partnership by Group (1-10 scale)

Groups	Participants	Overall Rating
HMTCA Staff/Faculty	26	6.6
HMTCA alums	29	7.0
HMTCA seniors	25	8.0
Trinity Staff/Faculty	25	8.5
Grand Total	105	7.5

Compared to a similar survey in 2016 with fewer participants, there was effectively no change in the rating of the partnership in 2018. In 2016, all participants rated the partnership a 7.6 out of 10 in 2016 (compared to 7.5 in 2018). Comparing average (mean) group scores on surveys from 2016-2018, Trinity faculty and staff reported higher overall ratings of the partnership. However, HMTCA staff/faculty, alumni, and current students reported slightly lower overall ratings.

In all cases except for Trinity staff, there were greater numbers of participants in 2018 compared to 2016. In 2016, only HMTCA faculty and staff with a direct connection to the partnership work received a survey invitation. On the other hand, all HMTCA faculty and staff received an invitation to the online survey in 2018. Therefore, these differences in overall rating by group could be distorted by differences in group composition from year to year.

Section 2: Impact of the HMTCA-Trinity College Partnership

Theme 1 - Improved Ability to Navigate a College Campus

Current and former HMTCA students reported improved ability in navigating a college campus. Students noted the experiences of taking summer academies and taking their senior English course on campus as experiences that helped in becoming better at navigating the college campus. This improved ability to navigate a college campus ranged in areas from gaining a realistic view of a college environment, familiarity with professors, and a greater sense of time management by going back and forth from a high school to college campus. As one HMTCA student noted, “Being on and taking a class on a college campus by myself has made me more comfortable navigating other college campuses.”

On a Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), HMTCA alumni (n=29) perceived that participation in the HMTCA-Trinity College partnership resulted in better preparation for navigating the college campus. This was true for both students that took a Trinity course (mean = 5.6) and those that did not (mean = 5.8). Both groups’ perceptions of preparation for navigating campus had very little numerical difference (D’Angelo, 2018).

A Realistic View of a College Campus

One student called the walk from HMTCA to Trinity College, “a realistic view of what college life will be like next year.” Because of the realistic view, this student concluded, “I think it has better prepared me in the sense of taking a class already on a college campus.” As one teacher noted, “My students have been able to attend presentations on Trinity College campus. They get to walk to Trinity for their course giving them increased independence and responsibility over their learning.”

While some students felt being on the college campus developed their ability, some found that they already were well-prepared to navigate a college campus. For example, one HMTCA student who did not enroll in a Trinity course wrote, “Being able to walk to a college campus and participate in the classes has opened me up to a world that I didn't know that I would be already prepared for.”

Despite the fact that not all students take a Trinity College course for credit, many students viewed taking their senior English course as a benefit to their education. One student who took a Trinity College course for credit and had their senior English class on campus found this benefit. The student wrote, “My high school English class, which is held at Trinity, feels much more

serious (in a good way) because of the college classroom setting. Also, I enjoy the exercise and the sense of freedom we get from walking to and from Trinity. It helps to clear the mind.”

HMTCA Student Interactions with Trinity College Professors and Students

Many HMTCA students and teachers noted more familiarity with Trinity College professors, even if they did not enroll in Trinity courses. One student who did not enroll in a Trinity class wrote, “My experience with Trinity helped me have a first look on what college professors are really like. I learned this from the writing summer session.” One HMTCA teacher in the focus group also reported this benefit as well. One other teacher stated that, “Students benefit from working with college professors and talking with college students about the college experience.” Similarly, one HMTCA alum wrote that their Trinity College course, “taught me how to interact with professors.”

In addition, HMTCA students enrolled in Trinity courses were more easily able to interact with college students. One Trinity College professor noted unexpected interactions between HMTCA and Trinity College students. The professor witnessed a Trinity College student mentoring an HMTCA student on the latter’s college application essay at Peter B’s café. One HMTCA student, reflecting on their experience wrote: “From the activities and events that were on campus to the interactions with your peers in class, you do experience and ‘taste’ the different perspectives of the college atmosphere around you.” Interestingly, Trinity faculty reported that HMTCA students participated frequently in their college courses and often invigorated class discussions.

Time Management in Moving from Campus to Campus –

Multiple students stated that walking over to Trinity’s campus was helpful in developing better time management skills. The walk from HMTCA to Trinity College several days a week helped facilitate particular skills such as “time management.” As one student in the focus group discussed, walking back and forth from class to class in a timely fashion required “time management,” which was a skill “that’s really important in college.”

Along similar lines, another student noted the additional responsibility of time management and added benefits of being able to use additional college spaces. As one HMTCA student that was not enrolled in a Trinity course said, “It prepares me with the fact that I must walk over to Trinity and be here by a certain time, however I can make time to stop and get food on campus which gives the college life feeling due to the freedom.” Responding in the online survey, one student connected time management with a self-reported, better work ethic. The student wrote, “My work ethic and time management had improved much more than how it was before.”

Formal and informal experiences allowed students to practice managing their time and navigating public spaces on a college campus. Related to time management, a number of students also discussed their navigation of the Trinity campus. One student in the focus group expressed how it is nice to stay and study at Trinity during their free block. Similarly, another student enjoyed being on campus because they can use the quiet study rooms in the library, whereas at HMTCA it can more difficult to find a quiet space.

Despite the general positive experience with navigating back and forth from two campuses, several students noted challenges of making a high school and college schedule work. One student worried about losing class time by walking between campuses. Another student noted instances in which competing schedules and the far walk from campus to campus resulted in lost class time in some instances. The student wrote, “it’s difficult missing classes for Trinity and the walk is far but the call is educational and it’s better preparing me for college.” According to this student, the tradeoff for missing some high school class time was taking a college course for credit and the potential of earning a credit now and saving money in the future.

Theme 2 - Perception of Better Preparation for College-Level Work

In addition to the familiarity with campus and time management skills, HMTCA students and alumni reported increased perceptions of being prepared for college-level work. This perception was most visible with regard to students that have taken a Trinity College course. In addition to perceptions of better preparation, HMTCA students that completed Trinity courses obtained college course credit. As one Latinx HMTCA alum transferred Trinity credits to their current college wrote, “It was a great experience that was only given to a couple of students at the time I was at HMTCA and it did help a lot with learning a little more about college classes and earning a small credit.”

Better Preparation for College-Level Work

HMTCA alumni reported perceptions of college readiness in a number of areas. On scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), HMTCA alumni perceived that participation in the HMTCA-Trinity College resulted in better preparation for college reading, writing, studying, technology, classroom behavior, and navigating the college campus. On average, responses were 4.0 or better for all categories and groups with the exceptions of “Motivation to Engage.”

Trinity professors who taught classes with HMTCA students indicated that they required students to complete the same work as Trinity College students. As students at Trinity College, these HMTCA students were required to complete all tests, quizzes, essays, as well as learn how

to use online learning platforms such as Moodle. The only modifications were on time or scheduling because of disparate high school and college schedules.

All alumni participants in the survey included former students that met eligibility to take a Trinity course and applied to take one. Thus, the alumni group consists of two categories of students with similar academic and motivational backgrounds: one group that took classes and another that did not. This comparison of former HMTCA students that applied to take a course helps reduce, but does not entirely eliminate, potential selection bias. Nevertheless, when comparing HMTCA students that had taken a Trinity College course (n=23) to those that did not (n=6), the former tended to have much higher perceptions of readiness for college studying (5.3/4.2), classroom behavior (5.9/4.2), and motivation to engage (5.4/3.2) (D’Angelo, 2018).

Table 5: Comparison of HMTCA Alumni Students on Perceptions of College Preparation

	Non-Trinity Course Students	Trinity Course Students	T-Statistics
Sample Size (N)	6	23	
Prepared for Reading	4.7 (2.1)	5.8 (1.5)	1.54
Prepared for Writing	5.0 (.90)	5.8 (1.6)	1.16
Prepared for Studying	4.2 (1.0)	5.3 (1.3)	2.02*
Prepared for Technology	4.0 (1.3)	5.0 (1.7)	1.37
Prepared for Classroom Behavior	4.2 (1.7)	5.9 (1.2)	2.84*
Motivation to Engage	3.2 (1.3)	5.4 (1.4)	3.61*
Comfortable Navigating Campus	5.6 (1.0)	5.8 (1.2)	0.31

Scale → 1: Strongly Disagree to 7: Strongly Agree
 *P-value <.05 Statistically Significant

Note: Table from senior project presentation entitled, “Early College Coursework and College Readiness: Evidence from HMTCA.” Prepared by Paige D’Angelo, Trinity College, 2019.

Current and former HMTCA students taking college courses for credit at Trinity College noted being prepared in different ways. In survey responses, some current HMTCA students reported that they gained “better insight into how a classroom is run” and became more familiar with college lectures for a “general college course.” On the other hand, some students reported feeling better prepared with content knowledge. Several students mentioned learning more about the disciplines they studied. One student wrote that taking a course, “assisted me only in the specific field I was taught about...”

In terms of skills, several current and alumni students reported learning more about college-level essay writing. One student wrote, “I wrote my first college essay and my professor was very supportive and guided me through the process.” As one Trinity professor wrote, “The student who took my lecture class was challenged and did a very good job in the class. She worked with the TA on her essays, which was a bonus for her.” This experience of writing essays and, more specifically, obtaining support at Trinity College emerged in a number of responses.

Learning About Differences Between College and High School Classes

HMTCA students noted a number of differences between the way that high school courses are conducted when compared to Trinity College courses. From the student perspective, instructional differences included use of lectures, discussion, interaction between students, and expectations for course readings. These differences were very much dependent on the type of classes in which HMTCA students enrolled (e.g. lecture, seminar, lab, intensive language). Similarly, while some HMTCA alumni felt like “outsiders” in their Trinity College courses, while others felt treated as peers to Trinity College students.

Given the range of HMTCA student’ experiences, it is difficult to make broad generalizations. However, as one student in the focus group reflected, seeing these different styles appear to help students prepare for college. As one teacher observed in the focus group, the partnership has been a great opportunity for HMTCA students who are eligible to take Trinity classes to have an authentic early college experience. The teacher also observed that the partnership has, “also really opened the eyes of some students who have not been successful.”

Positive Contributions of HMTCA Students to Trinity Courses

A prominent theme emerged regarding the positive contributions of HMTCA students in Trinity College courses. While HMTCA students are challenged as much or more than the traditional college students, Trinity College faculty noted the strong participation and work ethic of these high school students. Professors also reported HMTCA students as well-prepared academically.

There was a strong feeling on the part of Trinity faculty that participated in this survey that HMTCA students made strong positive contributions to their Trinity courses. One Trinity professor wrote that, “HMTCA students enrich my classes.” Different Trinity faculty used words and phrases like “well-prepared”, “motivated and responsible”, “eagerness”, “refreshing perspectives,” and “model students” to describe HMTCA students in their courses. Although there were some HMTCA students that struggled in Trinity College course, professors in this survey reported strong positive experiences.

Theme 3 - Academic Collaboration Between HMTCA and Trinity College

Participants noted a variety of beneficial academic collaborations between HMTCA and Trinity College. These collaborations could be categorized as formal, informal, and emerging. Participation in one aspect of the partnership tended to help in getting involved with other collaborations.

Formal Collaboration

Participants spoke about formal collaborations as those following the official demands of the partnership agreement. The most extensive formal collaboration between Trinity faculty and HMTCA teachers is the HMTCA summer writing academy. One Trinity professor noted that they “Enjoyed working with [the] HMTCA teacher and principal.” Similarly, one HMTCA teacher wrote, “I work with a Trinity professor in the summer writing academy. We work well together and the kids enjoy working with the professor.”

Neither HMTCA or Trinity faculty spoke or wrote at length about the summer academy collaborations. Similarly, few students mentioned these programs besides having attended them. This finding could be the result of time between the survey (senior year) and summer programs occurring before 9th and 10th grade. This finding warrants more study of these summer programs.

Informal Collaboration

Several long-standing collaborations are included in the informal category because they are not required by the partnership agreement or they are emerging. These collaborations can be ad-hoc, occasional, or one-time collaborations. For instance, HMTCA students have attended programs at Austin Arts Center, Cinestudio, and Mather Hall. These are occasional, one-time events not formally listed on the partnership agreement.

As an example of the partnership, several teachers brought up Jones-Zimmerman Academic Mentoring Program (J-Z AMP) that happens at the middle school grades. Regarding this program, one teacher wrote: “I love working with the Trinity Students, the professors who collaborate with us, and the JZ-Amp people. They are wonderful role models for our students, and it is enjoyable to mentor them in their educational growth.” Another teacher called working with Trinity student mentors and the JZ-AMP program as “a pretty good experience.” Several teachers raised concerns that the program only serves one cohort at a time (such as the current 8th graders), which leaves out two other cohorts (current 6th and 7th graders).

Other examples of this informal collaboration included the 8th grade “Day at Trinity.” This program was a yearly visit by 8th grade students to the Trinity College campus. One teacher

stated, “My students have had the opportunity to visit Trinity for an on-campus experience. They had classes in Trinity classrooms and ate lunch at Mather Hall. Students really enjoyed learning about the college experience while also being on a college campus.”

Despite the fact that these programs are organized and long-standing, they are not technically a written aspect of the partnership agreement. When this author raised this issue in the focus group discussion, HMTCA teachers were surprised to learn that these informal programs were not official aspects of the partnership agreement. This interpretation of what constitutes the official partnership matters. In the experience of participants, the HMTCA-Trinity College partnership encompasses more than is written on the official MOU partnership agreement.

Emerging

Emerging collaboration is both informal and relatively new. Teachers primarily rely on existing networks with Trinity College faculty and staff, including this author.

Recently, HMTCA teachers connected with Trinity faculty to institute an HMTCA Writing Center. In order to jumpstart the project, HMTCA teachers recruited assistance from Trinity faculty and students. Regarding the project, one participant wrote, “Starting the Writing Center and getting support from students to help tutor has been invaluable!”

One teacher noted an emerging collaboration between *La Voz Latina*, a Trinity organization led by Latinx students, and HMTCA students to start a Latinx club. The same teacher suggested partnering HMTCA and Trinity College student groups such as Imani, a Trinity organization led by African American students (e.g. Black student union), and the Women’s Center at Trinity, in order to better meet the former’s developmental and educational needs. In particular, the collaboration with *La Voz Latina* has helped students develop “student voice” in the school along with groups such as the Restorative Justice program, Young Women’s Club, and HMTCA Black Student Union.

Questions about Collaboration Process

Teachers spoke positively about the collaborations listed above and others not listed. As one HMTCA teacher put it, “Finding those opportunities aligned with the curriculum or unit being taught. When all the stars are in line it presents a really dynamic learning experience for our students between HMTCA and Trinity.” However, HMTCA teachers raised the questions of how to start a collaboration or inquire about working together.

Survey respondents suggested that the collaboration process may favor HMTCA teachers with an already existing role in the partnership. For example, one HMTCA staff who already has strong relationships with Trinity stated, “I’ve tapped into Trinity resources more, such as science night. We’ve used facilities, walking tours of campus.” As this comment suggests, collaboration might be constrained by the role, or lack thereof, in the formal aspects of the partnership. As one teacher with previous work in the partnership reflected, “A lot of this is folks just don’t know. They can just contact someone and just initiate something.” While Trinity College staff is in place to assist in collaboration, HMTCA teachers with no prominent role in the partnership may not be aware of opportunities to collaborate.

Apart from a teachers’ prior relationship to the partnership, the scope of the partnership programs may limit collaboration. HMTCA teachers may teach a class or group that is not currently associated with a summer program (before 9th and 10th grade), a class on campus (12th grade), or students taking classes at Trinity College (mostly 12th grade). For example, one HMTCA teacher without any connection to these programs wrote, “Sadly, due to the population I work with they don’t get to access the partnership as much. (Academics are not as strong for them.) Though the kids who do go over for classes I know they really like it!” In this instance, the HMTCA teacher believed that the partnership structure limited collaboration. In other words, there was a sense from this teacher that the populations of students they taught corresponded to participation in formal aspects of partnership. This observation relates to the broader theme of equity in access to partnership programming for both teachers and students.

Section 3: Areas for Improvement for the Partnership

Interest in Stronger Connections

Across various groups, there was interest in more interaction and stronger connections between HMTCA and Trinity. For HMTCA faculty, this interest in collaboration came in two categories: programming and facilities. Some HMTCA faculty suggested that the partnership would benefit from, “More opportunities for interaction between HMTCA staff and the Trinity faculty.” This interaction should be on a “weekly/monthly basis.” In addition, HMTCA faculty expressed interest in greater access to learning resources, academic (e.g. classrooms, library, performance/art) and athletic facilities (e.g. fields, clinics), and other co- and extra-curricular programming. These suggestions for stronger connections ranged over a wide variety of areas.

Similarly, HMTCA students suggested that the partnership would benefit from “more connections.” Specifically, these connections might include that possibility that “Trinity would get more involved in HMTCA's learning environment and present more extracurricular opportunities.” As another student who is taking a course for credit at Trinity College put it, “I feel that we are always going to Trinity and Trinity is not coming to us in a way.”

In addition to this feeling of a one-way partnership, others expressed feelings of not being entirely welcome on campus. Several students mentioned the gate and fence along Broad Street as physical reminders of being unwelcome. Perhaps most critically, one HMTCA alum stated, “Besides taking classes, we had no partnership with Trinity College, they never let us use any of their facilities and we seemed like a burden to them rather than a partnership.”

Designing A Broader Reaching Program

HMTCA teachers expressed interest in a greater number of academic opportunities for a broader range of students. The official aspects of the partnership include programs before the 9th and 10th grades, and the 12th grade, but not the middle school or during sophomore and junior years. In this context, some HMTCA faculty called for “More opportunities to attend and access resources across all grade levels.” Another teacher observed that all entering 9th and 10th grade students participate in summer writing and science academies, but “only some students have the opportunity to take classes at Trinity.”

In addition to these gaps in formal programming, several participants raised concerns about equity in access and opportunity. In particular, these participants wrote about their concern that high achieving students may benefit more from the partnership than students perceived as low-achieving. One teacher wrote, “our high-performing students who are given everything.” In

other words, this teacher felt that the partnership structure benefitted student identified as high-achieving the most rather than all students broadly speaking.

As others scholars have suggested, distribution of opportunities along seemingly race-neutral lines such as “achievement” can result in inequities by race, class, and gender. This combination of gaps in programming by year and opportunities for students in all achievement levels was one of the most critical concerns raised by participants.

Current and former HMTCA students also expressed interest in expanding learning opportunities, particularly for students who do not take Trinity College courses. These expanded opportunities could include more co- and extracurricular activities (e.g. lectures, events, activities, and courses), as well as mentoring and advising about college preparation and job training. HMTCA students and alumni suggested expanding the variety of Trinity College courses available, adding that they would like to see “more high school senior classes on campus” and creating “more opportunities for students to take classes.”

This area of improvement presents some challenges for future planning. For example, despite calls for greater HMTCA student participation in college courses, many students agreed that enrollment for Trinity courses required strong high school grades. However, some HMTCA students suggested practical ways to make the college courses more accessible without sacrificing high standards. For example, Trinity College and HMTCA teachers could provide clear and public information about the requirements for taking a Trinity College course early in the high school career rather than waiting until junior year to share the qualifications.

On the other hand, a number of current and former HMTCA students suggested making the summer academies optional, which could reduce opportunities for all students to participate in programs on campus. One HMTCA alumni student noted that HMTCA students were “forced” to take the summer program and being forced to do something “is not a positive experience” and the programs were not worth their time. This particular alumni student did not explain why the summer program was not a positive experience. Although this feeling was not widely expressed, it was worth noting the dissatisfaction among some students and the need for better understanding about the summer program benefits and needs. While HMTCA students asked for greater range of activities at Trinity’s campus that are more individualized, others called for more experiences for *all* HMTCA students.

Logistical and Capacity Challenges for Both Institutions

HMTCA teachers, students, alumni, and Trinity faculty raised a variety of logistical issues. Concerns ranged from challenges in scheduling, facilities, resources, and professional capacity.

Schedule

Trinity professors and HMTCA students noted scheduling conflicts as an issue from time to time. HMTCA students take courses at Trinity with a nearly identical semester calendar (e.g. HMTCA semester 1 is roughly the same as Trinity Fall semester), but the class schedules between the two institutions do not entirely match. For example, HMTCA has rotating block schedules with classes that meet every other day or every day, different vacation days, holiday breaks, and snow days and delays. Thus, HMTCA students may have conflicting HMTCA and Trinity college schedules that inhibit some forms of collaboration.

Facilities and Connectivity

While most facilities requests by HMTCA have been met, some remain challenging. These requests include more athletic usage and additional classroom space at Trinity College campus. Related to these issues were occasional issues of connectivity and access to Trinity College physical facilities (e.g. closed gates, indirect paths to campus, buildings) and online resources.

Resources and Budget

HMTCA faculty named capacity issues such as diminished and limited resources. In the context of “our constantly inadequate budget,” several HMTCA teachers raised the question of the partnership helping to fundraise for academic and extracurricular activities at their school. Along these lines, HMTCA staff raised concerns about the lack of bilingual staff (primarily Spanish-English) that can translate and speak with HMTCA students and parents. Also, teachers raised concerns about the cost of HMTCA students taking Trinity College courses. Meanwhile, Trinity College faculty/staff raised concerns about being able to accommodate requests for academic and athletic facilities. In sum, inadequate and diminished state and local resources at HMTCA add pressure to the partnership with Trinity College.

Finally, HMTCA teachers and students expressed interest in working with Trinity College towards increasing professional capacity at HMTCA. In other words, students and teachers wanted to know more about how Trinity College professors and/or students could improve instructional and other practices at HMTCA. One teacher asked for ways to meet with Trinity professors to discuss the expectations for college writing and courses (e.g. sharing course syllabi

and writing assignments). Other ways that Trinity could “get more involved in HMTCA's learning environment” included better communication about public events (college lectures and programs), invitations to attend professional development opportunities, and special trainings for HMTCA teachers. In terms of academic equity and working with minoritized HMTCA students, one teacher noted, “our staff could really benefit from cultural competency.”

Initial Recommendations

1. Foster Stronger Connections

Establish an HMTCA-Trinity College partnership planning & implementation committee, to meet at least four times per year.

Goals of the committee might include:

- Improved planning (e.g. events, collaboration, programs)
- Addressing logistical and capacity Issues
- Identifying aspects of the Memorandum of Understanding to be updated
- Incorporating student voice in decision-making

The HMTCA Principal, the Dean of Academic Affairs at Trinity, and the Director of Urban Education Initiatives at Trinity should work together to appoint members to this committee and decide on its scope, chairs, and schedule.

2. Expand the Partnership Programming

Create new or adapt existing courses and programs for HMTCA students that are not formally participating in the Early College partnership.

3. Promote Educational Equity in Partnership Programs

Promote ways for HMTCA and Trinity to continue working together on educational programs for teachers and students in areas such as cultural competence, multicultural/multilingual education, and equity in education.

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