



Best Practice: Scholarship Program to Encourage Students to Stay in School

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CITY: MEXICO CITY

POLICY AREA: EDUCATION

BEST PRACTICE

In 2007 the Department of Education of Mexico City launched **Prepa Sí**, a scholarship program to address upper-secondary student retention along with an accompanying comprehensive implementation strategy. The program is open to all students in Mexico City who are enrolled in public upper-secondary schools. The scholarships are payments awarded to students who enroll in the program and stay in school. The amount of the scholarship increases based on performance, offering students incentives do well in school.

ISSUE

According to the General Population and Housing Census in 2005, the population of residents between 15 and 19 years of age in Mexico City was 740,280. Of these youth, 237,201 or roughly 32% were not attending school. Thus, one in three youth within 15 and 19 year old age range dropped out of school.

According to the National Youth Survey in 2005, 31.3% of youth between 15 and 19 years of age had dropped out of school because they had to work or for economic reasons.

Mexico City developed *Prepa Sí* as a strategy to combat the high dropout rate.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The main goals of the *Prepa Sí* program are to ensure that all young people in Mexico City who are willing to study at the upper-secondary level can undertake their studies successfully and prevent students from dropping out because of economic reasons.

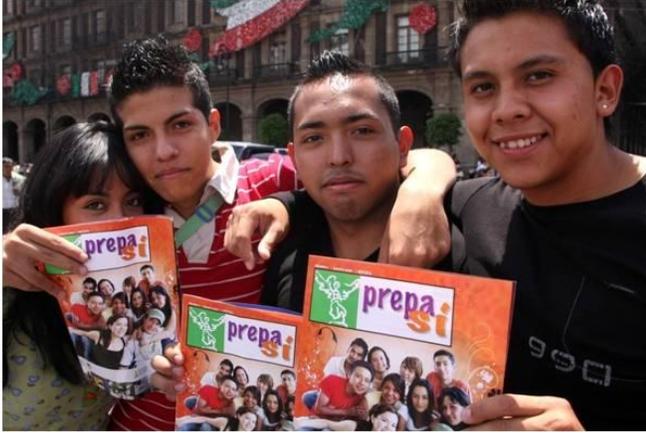
Specific Goals:

- To give the opportunity to all young people of upper-secondary-school age to study and complete a high school diploma.
- To prevent young people studying at the upper-secondary level from leaving their studies due to economic reasons.
- To improve the students' academic attainment.
- To contribute to the students' professional development.
- To improve students' standard of living.
- To contribute to the improvement of the city and the relationship between young people and their city through community activities.
- To increase social integration that can ultimately result in lower delinquency rates among the youth.

IMPLEMENTATION

The *Prepa Sí* program was officially launched on August 15, 2007 by the Upper-Secondary and Higher Education Department of Mexico City. Since January 2008, the Guaranteed Education Trust office has been responsible for the program.

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Photos of students participating in Prepa Si community programs.

Scholarships

In order to receive a scholarship, students are required to stay in school for an entire school year (ten months). They are offered the option of renewing their scholarship annually. The amount of the scholarship depends on the academic performance of the student. Students who have a grade point average (GPA) between 6.0 and 7.5 (on a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being the highest) receive 500 Mexican pesos (\$38 USD) monthly. Students who have a GPA between 7.5 and 9.0 receive 600 Mexican pesos (\$46 USD) monthly. Students who have a GPA between 9.1 and 10.00 receive 700 Mexican pesos (\$53 USD) monthly. The scholarship funds are deposited into bank accounts set up by the city. The students receive a bank card that they can use to check their account balance and withdraw funds.

In order to motivate students and reward academic performance, the program provides additional benefits to the students: 1) Accident Health Insurance; 2) Life Insurance, and 3) access to official events organized by the city.

Community Activities

The Community Activities Department of Mexico City organizes activities to keep students engaged in school and civic life. The activities take place on campuses and other public places. Activities are organized by the following commissions: 1) the Commission for Education, Cultural and Innovation Activities; 2) the Commission for Environmental Protection and Environmental Education; 3) the Commission for the Promotion of Safety and Health; 4) the Commission for Sports Events and Activities; and 5) the Commission for Activities of General Support to the Community.

Community activities are multidisciplinary and are grouped into five different categories as described below:

- Innovation, Cultural and Educational Activities: includes adult literacy programs in highly marginalized areas of the city, workshops and remedial courses for upper-secondary school students, events to promote technological innovation, academic contests, and cultural events (music, dance, plastic arts).
- Environmental Protection and Awareness Activities: includes activities to promote environmental protection, based on the Green Plan of Mexico City. For example, campaigns to reduce water waste, regeneration and improvement of public space and green areas, campaigns to encourage non-motorized mobility, promotion of actions for the protection of ecological areas in the city, and the separation and recycling of garbage.
- Promotion of Health and City Safety: includes workshops and educational sessions promoting public safety and health.
- Sports Events and Activities: includes recreational and sport activities.

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- Community Support: includes programs to keep community members up-to-date with information on programs and resources offered by Mexico City for the general public. With a wide range of education, childhood, youth, environmental protection, public safety, transportation, cultural, recreational, sports, and health protection programs, the Community Activities Department must consistently promote its activities and services.



Photos of students participating in Prepa Si community programs.

Territorial System and Planning Events

Initially, the Community Activities Department functioned within a territorial structure, which was established in four regions based on the geographic jurisdictions of Mexico City and according to the territorial units per borough. Based on the needs of each borough, liaison personnel were assigned with the task of setting up the territorial structure of the program and identifying and inviting student leaders to participate in the program as Territorial Unit Coordinators. These Coordinators in turn invited other students to participate as the Group Heads. Together, the Coordinators and Group Heads were responsible for coordinating and promoting community activities among the beneficiary population on their respective school campuses.

In order to carry out the community activities, proposals from the regional sub-department were presented to the Community Activities Department, which were then submitted for approval to the Under-secretary for Upper-secondary and Higher Education. Once the proposals were approved, the Regional Sub-departments communicated with borough liaison personnel. Together, they supported the Territorial Unit Coordinators in the promotion of activities within their community, offering general assistance during the event.

For example, borough liaison personnel would take attendance and gather the necessary information to generate reports on the participation of youth in the activities. The attendance lists were submitted to the Community Activities Department in order to prepare the reports for the Under-secretary for Upper-secondary and Higher Education.

Operational Organization of the Prepa Sí Program

In recent years, the PREBU Department (Programa de Estimulos de Bachillerato Universal or the "Universal Stimulus for High School Program") was incorporated into the Guaranteed Education Trust office. The PREBU Department is in charge of directing the actions of the Control Department, which oversees two offices: New Beneficiaries and Incidences. The Organization has a pyramidal structure: the PREBU Council, the Technical Committee, the Community Activities Department, six Commissions, liaison personnel between the departments and the program, 16 liaisons of Departmental Units who coordinate 500 Territorial Units Coordinators, and 5,000 Heads of Group.

Each Departmental Unit Liaison is in charge of selecting and coordinating 50 Territorial Units Coordinators; this group is integrated by beneficiaries of the Program. Each Territorial Unit Coordinator is responsible for selecting and coordinating 10 Heads of Group, who are also beneficiaries of the Program. Each Head of Group is in charge of coordinating 40 beneficiaries.

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Government Authorities involved: Guaranteed Education Trust, PREBU Council, the Technical Committee of the *Prepa Sí* Program and the government departments that integrate the commissions. The government agencies involved in the work of the commissions are as follows:

- Commission 1: coordinated by the Youth Institute and involves the Science and Technology Institute, the Women's Institute, the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, the Department of Tourism, and the Department of Rural Development and Equity for the Communities (SEDEREC).
- Commission 2: coordinated by the Integral Family Development Agency of Mexico City and involves the Department of Urban Development and Housing (SEDUVI), the Department of the Environment, the Water System of Mexico City, the Department of Works and Services, Department of Transport and Roads, Mexico's Secretary of Transport and Road (SETRAVI), The Underground System Department (STC Metro), the Passengers Transport Network (RTP), the Electric Transport and the Housing Institute (INVI).
- Commission 3: coordinated by the Technical Secretariat of the Safety Cabinet of the Government of Mexico City and involves the Head of Government Department, the Department of Health, the Department of Public Safety, Attorney General's Office, the Home Affairs Department, the Adult Protection Institute, and the Legal Counseling Department.
- Commission 4: coordinated by the Sports Institute and involves the Department of Finance, the Social Agency of Mexico City, the Office of the Head Clerk, and the Department of Labor and Employment Promotion.
- Commission 5: coordinated by the Department of Citizens Participation and includes the Department of Social Development, the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Civil Protection, the Bus Rapid Transit System of Mexico City (Metrobus), and the Comptroller.

COST

The annual cost of the *Prepa Sí* Program is estimated at 1.1 billion Mexican pesos (approximately \$85 million USD).

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The Department of Education of Mexico City evaluates the *Prepa Sí* Program each semester and every school year. Each assessment analyzes progress based on aggregated data from the schools (i.e. average grade, desertion rates). The Department also conducts periodic opinion surveys. Main points regarding program evaluation are described below:

- In September 2007, there were 128,815 upper-secondary students enrolled in the *Prepa Sí* Program and by December, this number rose to 132,061. In January 2008, the number of students enrolled in the program was 151,927 and by July 2008, the number reached 180,362 students. By July 2011, the number reached 189,410 students and by December 2011 the number of students was 205,911.
- In the academic year 2006-2007, the Upper-Secondary school dropout rate in Mexico City was 16%. In the academic year 2010-2011, the dropout rate decreased to 5.82%. Also, after the first year, the dropout rate at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), which accounts enrolls 25% of eligible students, was zero.
- Regarding academic performance, the grade point average of the program beneficiaries increased from 8.47 in December 2010 to 8.61% in June 2011. The percentage of students in the GPA range of 6.0-7.5 also decreased from 46% to 43%, while the population in the GPA range 7.6-9.0 increased from 44% to 46%, and the percentage of the population in the GPA range 9.1-10 increased from 10% to 11%.
- The *Prepa Sí* program has also impacted low-income households. For students from families within the lowest income range, the scholarships accounted for 32% to 44% of the total monthly family income. The scholarship



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covers the cost of education, contributes more to the family income, and helps reduce the pressure on students to have to drop out of school to work and support their families.

- Regarding the students' opinion of the program, 79.7% of a sample population interviewed indicated that the scholarship is very important for them to continue their studies given that many of them face economic, education and family-related challenges. The scholarship helps mitigate the pressures of their lives in general.
- A student population interviewed gave the program an overall score of 8.7 (on a 1 to 10 scale, 10 being the highest).

TIMELINE

August 2007	<i>Prepa Sí</i> Program was officially launched
October 2007	The Operational Rules of the Program were published
August 2008	First Evaluation of the <i>Prepa Sí</i> Program
August 2009	Second Evaluation of the <i>Prepa Sí</i> Program
August 2011	Third Evaluation of the <i>Prepa Sí</i> Program
January – June 2012	Impact Assessment of the <i>Prepa Sí</i> Program

TRANSFERABILITY

The *Prepa Sí* program can be transferable to any city involving multiple public agencies. The Department of Education also believes that the results of the program can inspire other cities, countries and regions to consider adopting similar practices.

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Facts and figures in this report were provided by the highlighted city agency to New York City Global Partners.

