

English Language Learner Task Force, Parent Engagement Subcommittee

Summary of work, October 2015- February 2016

Goals:

- Develop knowledge-based recommendations of practices
- Document the issues facing parent of ELL in BPS
- Develop strategies to engage families through the process of schooling but most urgently before and during enrollment period, translation and interpreter services and an explanation of the implications of “opting out” on the education of the student
- Monitor the availability of translated materials and phone supports and the presence of translated materials and staffing in Welcome Centers

1. Reviewed Goals

2. Focus on documenting issues facing ELL parents and parent engagement

- Presentation from Monica Roberts, Sonia Gomez-Banrey and Kevin Montoyo on the “bright spots and concerns” with regards to parent engagement
- Bright spots : Parent U, ESOL classes, school-based initiatives (Academic Parent-Teacher Teams) Family and Student Engagement Facilitators, partnerships with OELL, BMA, DSNI, Families First, Countdown to Kindergarten, DELLAC
- Concerns:
 - Lack of buy in and involvement of principals,
 - Lack of school ownership of engagement of all families.
 - Parents in schools with English/Spanish tracks do not interact/communicate
 - Lack of parent engagement in middle-school and high school.
 - Lack of engagement of ELL parents in schools that have good parents engagement.
 - Language as the big barrier that inhibits ELL parents to be engaged.
 - No clear definition of what ELL parent engagement means or should look like.
 - Lack of language capacity to communicate with parents,
 - Lack of outreach and engagement of parents of young kids that are about to go to school

3. Crafted questions for site visits and focus groups and identified potential site visits

4. Site Visits: Umana, met with principal and parents. More being planned

5. Issues to be discussed:

- What does ELL parent engagement mean or what should it look like? Parents, leaders, advocates and learners?

The subcommittee would like to propose a draft definition for ELL Task Force consideration.

- In accordance with the Office of Family engagement's definition of family engagement, ELL family engagement should include the components of parents as teachers, leaders, advocates and learners.
 - As teachers – this means being involved in/supporting their children's learning in various ways. This would include checking children's bag packs, helping with homework if possible, if not making sure children have time/space supports to do homework, reading to/with children if possible or making books accessible, attending parent teacher conferences and stress the importance of education to children.
 - As leaders and advocates – involvement in SPC, SSC, citywide parent council and address issues that affect ELL families. This requires parents to understand how the system works.
 - As Learners – attending workshops provided by schools, parent U, parents coffee hour where speakers can come to speak about various issues. Parent participating in parent groups through partnerships with Parent U and other community organizations. This takes leadership and vision from school and district leaders.
 - ELL parent engagement will require the concerted effort of school and district leaders as well as teachers and staff buy-in and parent involvement and input as well as resources for speakers and workshops.
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- Who/what BPS office is responsible for ELL parent engagement, supporting ELL parent engagement with resources and can be held accountable for it?
 - DELLAC – how is it going to work with SPCs, SSCs, Citywide Parent Council and the Multilingual PAC?
 - The current focus on instruction may be leaving out much needed attention and resources for parent engagement, which will impact instruction
 - Interpretation and Translation is a topic that the subcommittee has not focused on very much, partly because Interpretation and Translation resources/plans are still being put in place at BPS (looking to hire a director of Interpretation & Translation) and partly because the subcommittee has not had time to focus on it yet, but will.
 - Budget cuts – how has the BPS budget cut affected support for parent engagement?

6. Working Plan and Timeline

The Subcommittee plans to develop a timeline for its work – activities and deliverables at its March meeting, including how many site visits will be made and when recommendations will be delivered to the ELL Task Force.