

2016-17 Evaluation of Translation Services Program

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At-a-Glance

The translation services program of the Dallas Independent School District (ISD), provides translation and interpretation services to schools for English language learners (ELLs) and parents to assist in communicating academic information and to promote participation in all school related activities. During the 2016-17 school year, there were a total of 69,343 ELL students in the Dallas ISD, 43.9 percent of all enrolled students. Fifty-eight percent (57.5%) of district students spoke a language other than English at home. Translation services provides written translation services and oral interpretation services to district staff, students, and parents. Parents were provided face-to-face opportunities to speak with staff to understand the curriculum and assignments. In addition, translation services provided academic tutoring to a small number of district ELL students. The Title I 2016-17 program work scope allocation was \$124,016 which funded three staff members.

The goals of the translation services program in the 2016-17 school year were: 1) Increase parental engagement by supporting programs that assist parents in understanding the state's academic content standards, student academic achievement standards, discipline expectations, and academic assessments; 2) Make available materials and trainings in the parent's native language to help parents work with their children to improve their academic achievement; 3) Ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is disseminated to parents in a format and language that parents can understand in a timely manner; 4) Assist schools in providing information, materials, trainings, and resources in the parent's or family's language at school meetings and activities to promote the informed participation of families with ELLs in decisions that impact their academic achievement; 5) Assist schools in making it possible for parents of ELLs the opportunity to communicate with schools and support their children's learning, and participate as appropriate, in decisions about the education of their children in extracurricular activities.

Purpose and Methods of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to evaluate the extent to which the translation services program was implemented with fidelity and met expected outcomes as outlined in program documents. Data were collected and provided by the translation services department of Dallas ISD. Data sources included logs, records, translation request forms, interpretation request forms,

an online survey administered to staff, and a paper survey administered to parents.

What services did translation services provide?

During the 2016-17 school year, translation services provided 725 written document translations totaling 3,268 pages, 540,164 words, and took 2,175 hours to complete (Table 1). Written document translations included: school letters, flyers, newsletters, calendars, forms, surveys, brochures, manuals, handbooks, ARD (Admission, Review, and Dismissal) documents etc. Documents were translated into requested languages such as Spanish (91.4%), Vietnamese (2.1%), Burmese (3.2%), Arabic (2.3%), and Chin (1.0%) among others.

Table 1: Number, Hours, and Words of Written Document Translations: 2016-17 School Year

Month	N	Hours	Words
August	56	278.5	57,673
September	100	510.5	116,135
October	98	268.5	58,958
November	65	165.5	50,393
December	43	72.5	16,700
January	53	108.5	27,426
February	57	175.5	44,620
March	67	206.5	51,978
April	62	135.0	37,256
May	119	242.5	77,137
June	5	11.5	1,888
Total	725	2,175.0	540,164

Note: Data includes all written document translations completed between August 22, 2016 and June 2, 2017.

Translation services also provided students with academic tutoring services during the 2016-17 school year. There were three tutors who tutored 22 students in Arabic, Burmese, and Vietnamese totaling 724 hours.

As shown in Table 2, translation services staff facilitated 2,337 oral interpretation sessions which totaled 3,079 hours. Oral interpretation services provided language supports for ARD meetings (57.4%), school/parent meetings (23.7%), PTA meetings (5.3%), department/parent meetings (4.6%), family/community meetings (3.5%), special education department meetings (2.8%), board meetings (1.4%), student evaluations (0.9%), and board services community meetings (0.4%). There were 568 oral interpretation requests that were denied out of the 2,905 total

requests during the 2016-17 school year (19.6%). Denials occurred because requests were submitted “too late” (6.7%) although the most common reason was that there was “not an interpreter available” (88.6%).

Table 2: Number of Sessions and Hours of Oral Interpretations: 2016-17 School Year

Month	N	Hours
August	39	72.4
September	250	313.2
October	273	378.6
November	221	288.6
December	199	259.6
January	203	259.8
February	281	328.4
March	230	288.0
April	289	391.8
May	346	489.1
June	6	9.0
Total	2,337	3,078.5

Note: Data includes all oral interpretations completed between August 22, 2016 and June 2, 2017.

What were parent and staff perceptions of translation services?

Two client satisfaction surveys were developed and distributed to both parents and Dallas ISD staff in an effort to collect feedback and determine areas of strength and weakness in the program. A paper survey was given to parents during oral interpretation meetings with program staff throughout the 2016-17 school year. This survey requested information about parent experience and perceptions about translation services (n=1,249). An online survey was sent to Dallas ISD staff who had requested written document translation during the 2016-17 school year. This survey was sent to 866 staff members between May 23, 2017 and June 1, 2017 through SurveyMonkey. There were 298 people who completed the survey (completion rate of 34.4%).

Staff Survey

The most commonly requested services from staff were document translation (48.7%), ARD interpretation (44.3%), interpretation at school meetings/PTA (40.9%), Spanish interpreter hotline (10.7%), tutoring (3.0%), and interpretation during testing (0.7%). Ninety-five percent (94.6%) of respondents believed that, “parent conferences are more successful by having an interpreter to assist in discussing/sharing the English learner student progress in the parent’s native language.” Fourteen percent (13.8%) of survey respondents selected “No” when asked, “if language interpreters from the district are not available, are you still able to communicate with parents of students who are English language learners?” Eighty-two percent (81.9%) of respondents selected “yes” or “sometimes.”

Seventy-eight percent (78.2%) of respondents selected “yes” when asked, “does having interpreters at meetings/workshops help parents of English learners become more involved in their child’s education?” Seventy-five percent (75.2%) of respondents selected “yes” when asked, “overall, are you satisfied with the availability of language interpreters for your meetings?” Nine percent (9.4%) selected “no,” when asked, “do you feel having school documents available to parents of English learners in their native language increases their involvement in school activities?” Eighty-three percent (83.2%) selected “yes” while 2.0 percent selected “no.”

Respondents were asked how often they used the Spanish Interpreter (SÍ) hotline. Fifty-six percent (56.4%) of respondents selected “0-5” times per week. Sixteen percent (16.1%) selected “five or more times per week” while 27.5 percent did not know about the service. When asked, “by having a tutor work with your EL student, have you noticed an increase in class performance, participation, or attendance?,” 89.9 percent of respondents selected “do not know/I have not requested tutoring.” Seven percent (7.1%) selected “yes” and 1.0 percent selected “no.” Eighty-four percent (83.6%) of respondents selected “do not know” to the question, “based on test results and other measures of academic progress, do you feel having a tutor who worked with your student in his/her native language contributed to the student’s progress?” Thirteen percent (12.8%) selected “yes” and 1.3 percent selected “no.”

Parent Survey

Ninety-eight percent (98.1%) of parent survey respondents selected “yes” to the statement, “the information I receive from Dallas ISD in my language helps me be part of my child’s education.” Eighty-one percent (80.7%) of parents selected “yes” to the statement, “I came today because I knew an interpreter would be present.” When asked, “how did you know there would be interpretation services?,” 33.4 percent of respondents who answered the question selected “I found out when I arrived,” 26.9 percent selected “informed by the teacher,” 23.3 percent selected “phone message,” and 16.5 percent selected “announced on a flyer.”

When presented the question, “when an interpreter is not available, who interprets for you?,” 35.5 percent of respondents selected “my son/daughter,” 34.8 percent selected “office staff,” 18.2 percent selected “teacher,” and 1.6 percent selected “a neighbor.” The remainder of respondents selected “other.” Virtually every parent selected “yes” when asked if their interpreter was timely (99.3%) or easy to understand (97.6%).

Recommendations

- **Increase the availability of staff members to fulfill oral interpretation requests.** There were 568 oral interpretation requests that were denied during the 2016-17 school year, 19.6 percent of all requests. Interpretation logs indicate that the most common reason was “interpreter not available” (88.6%). Program staff mentioned that there were shortages in the number of interpreters available to fulfill requests during the 2016-17 school year. Efforts should be made to increase the availability of interpreters to complete requests.

The 2016-17 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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