

2017-18 Evaluation of Translation Services

Rosemary Garcia-Rincón, B. A.

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At-a-Glance

The Translation Services program of the Dallas Independent School District (ISD), provided free translation and interpretation services to schools and departments for English language learners (ELLs) and to parents to assist in communicating academic information and to promote participation in all school related activities during the 2017-18 school year. In addition, Translation Services provided academic tutoring to ELLs new to this country. The Translation Services program received \$124,216 in Title I and \$176,732 in Title III funds.

A total of 69,211 ELLs were enrolled in the Dallas ISD during the 2017-18 school year. Fifty-one percent of district students spoke a language other than English. To meet the communication needs of these students and their families, the Translation Services program set goals for the 2017-18 school year that included the following:

- to 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;
- to make available materials and trainings in the parent's native language to help parents work with their children to improve their academic achievement;
- to ensure that information related to schools and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is disseminated to parents in a format and language that parents can understand in a timely manner;
- to assist schools in providing information, materials, training, 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; and
- to 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 and 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. The Translation Services department collected and provided most data. Data sources included logs, records, translation request forms, interpretation request forms, an online survey administered to staff and a paper survey administered to parents. Data regarding tutoring implementation were obtained from classroom observations and interviews conducted by the evaluator.

Translation Services Provided

The Translation Services program provided oral interpretation and document translation services to district staff and students in Arabic, Burmese, Chin, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Additional languages were added during the 2017-18 school year that included: American sign, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, and Swahili. This allowed for parents to have face-to-face opportunities to speak with staff to understand the curriculum and assignments. Interpreter request forms were required for service. Interpreter availability was determined by language requested and how far in advance a request was made.

Document translations included: school letters, flyers, newsletters, calendars, forms, surveys, brochures, manuals, handbooks, and Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) documents. Document translations were provided in the languages mentioned above plus English. Submission of a translator request form with the attached document for translation was required for service. Documents were processed in the order they were received.

Translation Services also included a telephone-based interpreter hotline, used to bridge the language gap between district staff and limited English proficient parents. Campus staff (i.e., nurses, teachers, counselors, etc.) called the hotline number when an interpreter was not available on campus. Services were available in Spanish, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Requests for other language interpreters required a telephone call to check for availability.

Translation Services also provided academic tutoring services to students new to the country, whose native language was Arabic, Burmese, Chin, or Vietnamese. The purpose of the program was to help ELLs attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement. Department staff contacted school principals and teachers concerning the service. Teachers submitted a request form for specific student

tutoring needs (short/long term) as needed throughout the school year. In addition to tutoring services, tutors also provided oral interpretations at parent meetings and were involved in the translation of documents.

Oral Interpretations

In 2017-18, oral interpretation services were provided for 3,740 districtwide meetings, compared to 2,337 in the 2016-17 school year (Table 1). They included the following: ARD meetings, student evaluations, board meetings, Board Services Community meetings, school parent meetings, department parent meetings, family/community parent meetings, Special Education department meetings and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. For large meetings, Translation Services accommodated 1,135 parents in need of oral interpretation with translation equipment (headsets and receivers) with an interpreter translating per language request.

The data in Table 1 showed an increase in all monthly requests for oral interpretations during the 2017-18 school year, compared to requests made in 2016-17. Of these requests, ARD meetings accounted for the greatest need for this service (66%) among all requests made.

There was an increase in the total number of “Denials” during the 2017-18 school year (N=742), compared to 2016-17 (N=568). The largest number of denials in 2017-18 occurred during the months of January, February and March (N=105, N=127, and N=111, respectively) and were primarily ARD requests (N=93, N=108, and N=99, respectively). The primary reason for the denials was due to the unavailability of interpreters.

Table 1: Total Number of Oral Interpretation Requests and Denials by Month: 2016-17 and 2017-18

Month	N Requests		N Denials
	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18
August	39	92	7
September	250	340	50
October	273	466	98
November	221	401	84
December	199	278	60
January	203	352	105
February	281	444	127
March	230	394	111
April	289	461	80
May	346	489	20
June	6	23	-
Total	2,337	3,740	742

Source: Data were provided by Parent and Family Engagement program staff.

Note: Data for “Denials” per month were not available for 2016-17, however the total number of “Denials” was 568.

During the 2017-18 school year, Translation Services acquired the responsibility of providing sign language interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing Dallas ISD students and parents in their communication with teachers, administrators, and other students. Translation Services provided this service since the Special Education Department could no longer provide the service due to funding. Translation Services hired a sign language interpreter (English to Spanish), who started work in February 2018. A total of seven requests were made for sign language interpretation services and were provided between February 2018 and June 2018.

Document Translation Services

A total of 977 documents were translated in different languages (majority in Spanish) between August 2017 and June 2018, as shown in Table 2. Most of the translations occurred during the months of August 2017 through November 2017.

Table 2: Number of Written Document Translations by Language and Month, 2017-18 School Year

Month	Spanish	Vietnamese	French	Italian	Total
August	110	2	1	-	113
September	178	-	-	-	178
October	217	-	-	-	217
November	130	2	1	1	134
December	52	-	-	-	52
January	56	-	1	-	57
February	51	-	-	-	51
March	43	-	1	-	44
April	58	-	1	-	59
May	55	-	4	-	59
June	13	-	-	-	13
Total	963	4	9	1	977

Source: Data were provided by Parent and Family Engagement program staff.

Tutoring Services

Three tutors provided tutoring services to a total of 62 students, at six campuses, for a total of 1,314 tutorial hours during the 2017-18 school year. Information obtained from interviews with the tutors and classroom observations, indicated that they met with students for one hour, either one or two times per week, Monday through Thursday. Sessions occurred primarily during school hours.

Tutors expressed that the major challenges they encountered in providing tutoring services included: finding a room to meet with the students on a regular basis, meeting in an environment not conducive for tutoring purposes, and Newcomer students who were unfamiliar with the classroom environment and procedures (loud and disruptive behavior). Classroom observations conducted by the evaluator, confirmed that two of three tutoring sessions observed were held

in environments not conducive to tutoring. These included a teacher's lounge (teachers coming and going, restroom use, heating food, and talking on cell phone) and a library where the librarian instructed a group of students regarding a library activity (students walked around the library talking).

A total of nine teachers responded to a survey administered by Translations Services staff to obtain feedback regarding tutoring services. All teachers (100%) responded that they saw improvement in the student's academic performance and in the student's self-esteem and participation, and would request the service during the 2018-19 school year. They indicated that they would like tutoring offered in other languages including; Arabic, Karenni, Rohingya, Nepali, Malay, Chinese, and Japanese.

Parent and Staff Surveys

Satisfaction surveys were developed by program staff and distributed to 534 parents and 943 Dallas ISD staff to collect feedback about the services provided by Translation Services and for program improvement. Parents completed a paper survey after oral interpretation meetings throughout the 2017-18 school year. Program staff administered an online survey (Translation Services Effectiveness Survey 2018) to district staff using SurveyMonkey between May 15, 2018 and May 25, 2018.

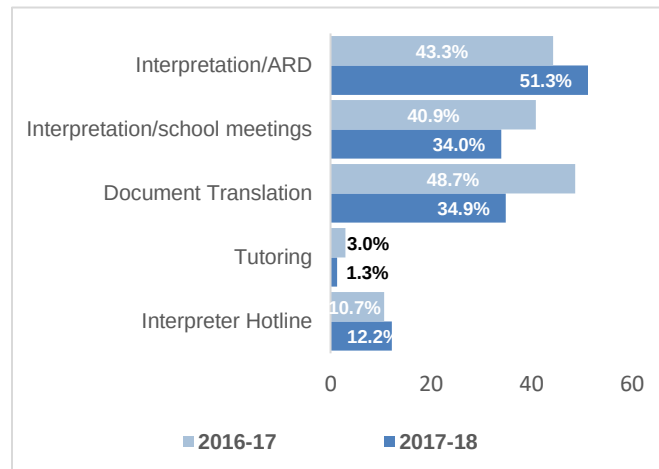
Parent Survey

A total of 464 parents completed a parent survey after receiving interpreter services through Translation Services. Almost all (98%) responded that the information they received helped them in their child's education. Half of the respondents (52.8%) indicated that when an interpreter was not available, a teacher or office staff member would interpret for them. Respondents indicated that they would like interpretation services also provided for parent meetings (65.9%) and principal/counselor meetings (48.5%).

Staff Survey

A total of 370 district staff responded to the online survey. A comparison of data in Figure 1 showed more requests were made for interpretation/ARD services during the 2017-18 school year than all other services, with an eight percent increase in requests made from the 2016-17 school year (43.3% and 51.3%, respectively). Tutoring and interpreter hotline services were the least requested services for both 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years.

Figure 1: Comparison of Translation Services Provided in 2016-17 and 2017-18



Source: SurveyMonkey results provided by Translation Services staff.
Note: Total N Respondents for 2017-18=370; unknown for 2016-17.

Most respondents indicated that having interpreters at meetings/workshops (75%) and having documents available in their native language (83%) helped parents of ELLs become more involved in their child's education. Seventy-five percent responded that overall, they were satisfied with the availability of language interpreters for their meetings.

Sixty percent of respondents indicated that they felt that the interpreter hotline was a useful resource in helping staff talk with limited English-speaking parents regarding their child when no campus staff was available to interpret.

A total of 181 respondents expressed their concerns/suggestions regarding the implementation of the Translation Services program. In general, most comments or suggestions about translation services made by respondents (N=108) indicated they were satisfied with the services provided by Translation Services and the outstanding professionalism of the staff who assisted with their needs and highly recommended that services continue for the 2018-19 school year.

Other concerns and suggestions expressed by respondents included the following:

1. Oral interpretations (N=43)
 - untimely notification of when an interpreter would be available for a scheduled meeting even with requests made with much notice (notifications received one or two days before a scheduled meeting of unavailability of interpreter resulting in cancellations and re-scheduling); sometimes multiple requests made because of uncertainty that an interpreter would show up, resulting in multiple interpreters showing up or interpreter

showing up after the meeting was cancelled, etc.;

- the unavailability of an interpreter each time requests were made by some respondents;
- an issue with the email link on the interpretation request form (not working; resulting in request not completed);
- auto response system was not always accurate (result: interpreters a no show);
- need more interpreters, especially for ARD meetings; and
- availability of interpreters for off-site events (i.e., Baccalaureate, graduation ceremonies).

2. Document translations (N=9)

- translation of documents takes too long (sometimes months); and
- need more staff to translate documents.

3. Telephone interpreter hotline (N=12)

- more staff to handle calls (call waiting period is sometimes long when caller's time is limited);
- longer service hours to address the needs of district staff with telephone calls to limited English-speaking parents regarding their child because staff workday ends at 4:45 p.m. and the hotline service ends at 5:00 p.m.; and
- staff not familiar with this service.

4. Tutoring (N=9)

- not familiar with this service and wanting information.

Recommendations

- **Increase the number of staff members to meet all requests for oral interpretations during the 2018-19 school year.** There was an increase in requests for oral interpretation services during the 2017-18 school year (N=3,740), compared to the previous school year (2016-17; N=2,337). Also, primarily due to unavailability of interpreters, there was an increase in denials from 2016 (568) to 2017 (N=742). Survey respondents also expressed the need for more oral interpreters.

- **Reflect on the feedback from the Translation Services Effectiveness Survey 2017-18 and consider the following recommendations for improving Translation Services in 2018-19:**

- Improve the process for requesting and providing oral interpreters with better communication and in a timely manner as to the availability of interpreters;
- Increase the number of staff members to meet all requests for document translations and complete the translations in a timely manner during the 2018-19 school year;
- Communicate with campus staff requesting tutoring services, that it is crucial to provide an adequate room conducive to tutoring;
- Improve the promotion of tutoring services to all campus staff;
- Increase staff to operate the telephone hotline to meet the needs of district staff in communicating with parents and avoiding long call waiting periods;
- Consider revising the hours of operation for the telephone hotline service to better serve all campus/district staff, taking into account their work schedules; and
- Put more emphasis on promoting the telephone hotline service to districtwide staff.

An electronic version of this 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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Dallas ISD
Department of Evaluation and Assessment
H. B. Bell School Support Service Center
2909 N. Buckner Blvd.
Box 10
Dallas, TX 75228