

2018-19 Evaluation of the Parent and Family Engagement Program

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At-a-Glance

The mission of the Office of Family and Community Engagement (OFCE) in the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) was to develop and implement programs and strategies to engage parents and the community in collaborative parent-school-community partnerships. The OFCE received \$1,062,425 (increase from \$921,347 in 2017-18) in Title I and \$412,527 (increase from \$343,133 in 2017-18) in Title III, Part A funding for 2018-19. Title III, Part A funded the Latino Family Literacy Project and PREP U Adult Ed Track programs.

The interim program director from 2017-18 continued to manage the OFCE through January 2019, when the department was moved from the Communications Department to the Parent Advocacy and Student Success (PASS) department. This change intended to streamline services for families and expand parental offerings districtwide and will continue into 2019-20. Lack of consistent leadership and staff member attrition hindered implementation of program components and the timely collection of program data for evaluation in 2018-19.

The purpose of this evaluation was to evaluate OFCE program implementation fidelity, and the extent to which the program met expected outcomes as outlined in program documents and impacted school climate. The evaluator used program documents, interviews, districtwide parent survey data, and classroom observations to evaluate this program.

OFCE Services Provided

This section includes a review of services provided by the OFCE.

Parent Portal

The Parent Portal, a resource available in English and Spanish, provided parents/guardians means to become more involved with their children's education. In 2018-19, PowerSchool, a new student information system that provides both classroom instruction and family engagement tools, was implemented. With respect to family engagement, the system provided: 1) secure online access to grades, assignments, and attendance; 2) email or text alerts of absences and grade average changes; and 3) two-way communication for parents and teachers. Issues with PowerSchool resulted in no training for parents, and the system could not track the number of parents who had registered with a Parent Portal account.

Parent Resource and Empowerment Program University (PREP U) Workshop Series

The PREP U workshop series provided free workshops to all parents to empower them with strategies and resources to support their children's academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral needs. The weekday family workshops were available to parents from September 2018 through May 2019.

In addition, in collaboration with schools in the high school networks, OFCE provided PREP U Super Saturdays. These information fairs offered families 1) access to community organization resources; 2) free health screenings, immunizations, and educational information; 3) free food and refreshments; and 4) games and giveaways.

A total of 5,988 participants attended six PREP U Saturdays, including health fairs, during 2018-19, a decrease from 9,662 participants in 2017-18.

Training Academy

The OFCE provided professional development (PD) and parent engagement training to principals/assistant principals, community/parent liaisons, other campus staff members (i.e., office managers), and parents. Fifteen PD sessions were provided to 112 campus staff members in 2018-19, a decrease from 30 PD sessions to 216 staff members in 2017-18. This decline mainly was attributed to staffing shortages.

Communication Resources

The OFCE distributed information to parents regarding curriculum, school choice options/transfers, college and career readiness, collegiate academies, transitioning, Parent Portal, and prekindergarten initiatives. Parent/guardian engagement resources also were developed and provided to campuses.

Campus Support Team (CST)

The 2018-19 CST was composed of six OFCE staff members assigned to campuses to support campus-level parent engagement activities. They provided information and resources to community liaisons, parent instructors (staff members who train parents), and other leaders of parent programs. CST members also:

- ensured campuses had what was necessary to meet district parent engagement goals;

- provided support to site-based decision-making committees, parent organizations, PREP U workshops, and any districtwide events for parents and the community;
- assisted schools in setting up parent centers;
- provided PD opportunities for staff members to enhance campus-level parent engagement; and
- promoted districtwide initiatives like the Uniform Assistance program and Parent Portal.

In 2018-19, the CST completed 1,718 visits to all district campuses, an increase from 1,152 visits in 2017-18.

Latino Family Literacy (LFL) Project

In its third year, the LFL project supported parents of English learner (EL) students. Its objective was promoting reading, building strong relationships between parents and students, and increasing parent involvement with campus staff members and teachers to actively support academics and college awareness.

Program implementation was hindered in 2018-19 by the elimination of the community liaison position on many campuses. The program heavily relied on the liaison for coordinating and providing instruction to parents on campuses. This staffing issue resulted in fewer campuses served in 2018-19 ($N=11$) than in 2017-18 ($N=15$). In addition, the district program coordinator instructed at five of the 11 campuses; while community liaisons and parent instructors provided instruction at the remaining campuses.

The LFL project included a 10-week family reading program (elementary school) and a reading and college awareness program (secondary school). The project recruited parents by using SchoolMessenger (an online parent communication tool), fliers (Spanish), campus websites, social media, calendars, newsletters, and bulletin boards. Teachers, community liaisons, and principals were involved in selecting secondary-level students who could benefit from the program. Classes were limited to 25 parents at the elementary school level and to 25 parents and 25 students at the secondary level.

Elementary Level

LFL project community liaisons and parent instructors were certified through the OFCE to teach parents and to provide campuses with materials, kits, and a lending library. Parents and students used the library books to practice reading at home. The program also offered participants the opportunity to 1) learn English as a second language, 2) improve Spanish vocabulary, 3) improve literacy skills, 4) learn guiding questions to ask children during home reading time, 5) create a family album, 6) build a pictiary, and 7) create a cultural project (parents only).

Secondary School Level

The purpose of the LFL project at the secondary level was to learn about resources and tools necessary for successful graduation from high school and for college awareness. To accomplish this, the LFL project provided an interactive parent-child program designed to build early college awareness through storytelling of a family's journey from middle school to college. Families read from the book, *Graciela's Dream*, listened to weekly speakers, learned about the many academic opportunities offered by the district (e.g., magnet, choice, collegiate). All parents received a certification of program completion, even if they did not attend all sessions.

Overall, 1,828 Dallas ISD parents and students attended the literacy class series at eight elementary and three secondary campuses in 2018-19, an increase from 1,616 served in 2017-18.

The evaluator conducted four classroom observations at two elementary (Henry Gonzales and L. O. Donald) and two high schools (W. W. Samuell and W. H. Adamson) to observe program implementation. Parents at both elementary schools followed the same agenda and participated in reading activities, using similar materials. At the high school level, no reading activities were observed, and session focus was information about graduation requirements and college opportunities. A speaker (counselor) presented information to parents for part of the session at each campus. According to the instructor, parents were usually tired and not motivated to read because the sessions met after school and/or after work.

PREP U Adult Ed Track

The PREP U Adult Ed Track program offered non-traditional English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to parents of ELs at 17 campuses within all trustee districts. The program, designed to take participants from a basic literacy level to a high beginner level, promoted basic literacy skills and interactive life skills in a non-threatening environment. The curriculum and six teachers were provided through Excel Institute. All teachers received training and instructional materials and followed the provided curriculum.

Classes convened from the week of September 17, 2018 through the week of November 5, 2018, and from the week of February 4, 2019 through the week of March 4, 2019. Instead of 18 planned classes, twelve classes were provided in 2018-19 because of an unforeseen issue requiring board approval during the first semester. As a result, some parents dropped out of the program. Participants met for two hours, bi-weekly (Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday) during school hours (mornings or afternoons).

District Parent/Guardian Survey

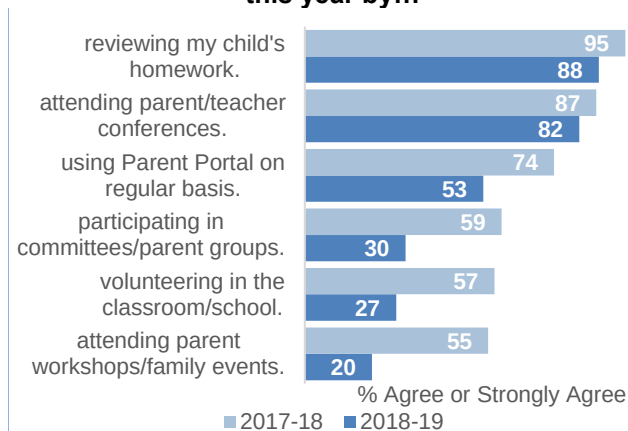
The districtwide Parent/Guardian Survey is conducted each spring as part of the Principal Excellence Initiative. The survey was designed to measure parent/guardian engagement with and support for the direction of their children's campuses. The 2018-19 Parent/Guardian Survey was administered both online and via telephone to ensure adequate sample sizes per campus. The evaluator extracted and summarized rates of favorable responses from the Parent/Guardian Survey data files.

A total of 20,658 parents responded to the parent survey, an increase from 17,185 respondents in 2017-18. About 81 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the direction of the district in 2018-19, a decrease from 84 percent in 2017-18. Also, 90 percent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that their child's school welcomed parent involvement and engagement, a decrease from 93 percent in 2017-18.

As shown in Figure 1, although the pattern of agreement among items was similar to the previous year, reported involvement decreased in all areas surveyed in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18, with the greatest declines in workshop and family event attendance (-35 percentage points), volunteering (-30 percentage points), and participation in committee/parent groups (-29 percentage points).

Figure 1: 2018-19 Parent/Guardian Survey: Parent Involvement

I have been involved in my child's education this year by...

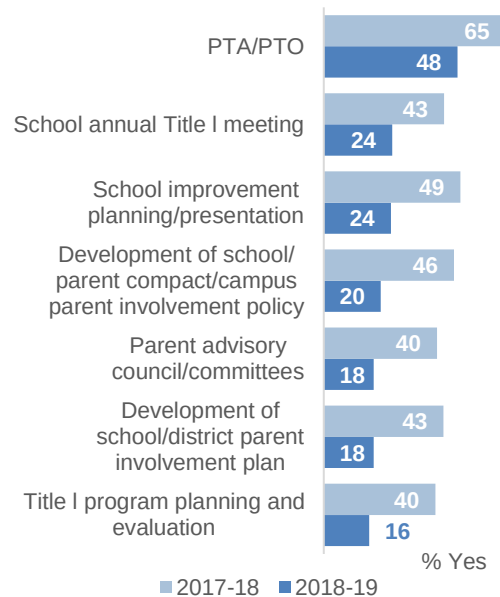


Source: 2017-18 and 2018-19 District Parent/Guardian Surveys.

Parent/guardian participation in 2018-19 decision-making also followed a similar pattern to the previous year, and reported partnership in all opportunities decreased from 2017-18 (Figure 2). Declines ranged from -17 percentage points to -26 percentage points and were smallest for the opportunities with the strongest reported participation (PTA/PTO, Title I meetings).

Figure 2: 2018-19 Parent/Guardian Survey: Parent Input and Partnership

Did you participate in any of the following decision-making opportunities requiring parent input and partnership?



Source: 2017-18 and 2018-19 District Parent/Guardian Surveys.
Note: PTA=Parent/Teacher Association. PTO=Parent/Teacher Organization.

The Office of Family and Community Engagement identified several goals for 2018-19. The goals and results are described in Tables 1 (Title I) and 2 (Title III).

Table 1: 2018-19 Parent Advocacy and Support Services: Title I Goals and Results

Goals	Results
Host a minimum of five PREP U workshops per month.	Between 17 and 19 workshops were hosted each month. *
Increase PREP U attendance by five percent during 2018-19.	Not enough information to determine status
Participate in or host a minimum of five community/network fairs/events where Dallas ISD parents are the targeted audience by June 2019.	Six events were held between September 2018 and April 27, 2019. *
Offer a minimum of two PD sessions for staff members at 22 feeder patterns through Training Academy on the Road by June 2019.	Total of 11 PD sessions were held for staff members districtwide in 2018-19.
Reach 150 employees by June 2019.	Served 112 employees by June 2019
Train employees from 80 percent of schools (184 out of 235) by June 2019.	Not enough information to determine status

table continues

Table 1 (continued)

Goals	Results
Host a minimum of eight Parent Portal sessions for parents by June 2019.	None, because of issues with transition to Power School
Collaborate with School Leadership and campus staff members so a minimum of one parent from each feeder pattern serves on the DPAC.	Parents from 15 feeder patterns served on the DPAC.
Develop and administer the parent survey beginning in April 2019.	Survey was developed and administered February to May 2019. *
Develop and administer the Title I survey for community liaisons/other staff members by May 2019.	Not developed.

Source: Office of Family and Community Engagement staff members.

Note: PD=professional development. DPAC=district parent advisory council. *=goal was met in 2018-19.

Table 2: 2018-19 Parent Advocacy and Support Services: Title III Goals and Results

Goals	Results
Latino Literacy Program	
Launch part two at 50 percent of elementary and secondary school level campuses that completed the program in Spring 2018 by 2019.	Launched in 100 percent of served elementary and secondary schools *
Have minimum of three middle/high school level graduating classes of parents by May 2019.	Three secondary schools in 2018-19 with graduating classes *
Have minimum of eight elementary school level graduating classes of parents by May 2019.	Eight elementary schools in 2018-19 with graduating classes *
PREP U Adult Ed Track	
Offer program at 10 to 15 sites by May 2019.	Program was offered at 17 campuses. *
Have a minimum of two graduating cohorts by May 2019.	Not enough information to determine status
PREP U Super Saturday: Conrad Feeder Pattern	
Host at least one PREP U event for the Conrad feeder pattern by May 2019.	None hosted
Host a minimum of two Parent Portal sessions for the Conrad feeder pattern by June 2019.	None hosted

Source: Office of Family and Community Engagement staff members.

Note: *=goal was met in 2018-19.

Recommendations

- **Improve program leadership's focus on managing high quality programs that meet the needs of all stakeholders.** In 2018-19, 1) the PREP U Adult Ed Track program was suspended for six weeks, 2) decreased PD training was provided by the Training Academy, and 3) no PREP U Super Saturday was hosted at Conrad High School. More focused attention to program details could help to maintain program consistency.
- **Provide more training support for school personnel, parents, and community.** Parent Portal training sessions were not provided to parents, and less PD was provided by the Training Academy to campus staff members and parents in 2018-19. Training is necessary to support optimal parent involvement.
- **Improve the participation tracking process for all activities.** Data collection was delayed through July 2019 because of staff attrition. Program evaluation usefulness depends upon thorough and timely program participation data.
- **Examine why reported parent participation decreased in 2018-19 and use information to improve.** Reported parent involvement declined from 2017-18, especially for attending workshops and events, volunteering, and participation in committees and parent groups. Staff members should explore reasons for these declines and take appropriate action to increase parent involvement.
- **Examine implementation of the LLF project at the high school level to determine how to best service parents with English proficiency needs.** Parents frequently were tired and not motivated to read the assigned book because the sessions met after school and/or after work. Program leadership should explore how parent engagement in the LLF project could be improved.

Reference

Garcia-Rincón, R. (2018). 2017-18 Evaluation of Parent and Family Engagement Program. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

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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