

2018-19 Evaluation of Translation Services

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At-a-Glance¹

The Translation Services program of the Dallas Independent School District (ISD), provided translation and interpretation services to campuses and departments. District students and families spoke 56 different languages. Translation Services aided English learners (ELs) and their parents to communicate academic information and promoted participation in all school-related activities during the 2018-19 school year. Translation Services also provided academic tutoring to ELs who were new to the United States. The 2018-19 Translation Services program was supported by \$199,668 in Title I funds and \$176,732 in Title III funds, the same budget as in 2017-18.

A total of 69,419 ELs were enrolled in the Dallas ISD during the 2018-19 school year. Fifty-two 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 2018-19 school year including:

- increasing parental engagement by supporting programs to assist parents in understanding state academic content standards, student academic achievement standards, discipline expectations, and academic assessments;
- offering materials and trainings in parents' dominant languages to help parents work with their children to improve academic achievement;
- ensuring that information related to schools and parent programs, meetings, and other activities was disseminated in a timely manner to parents in a format and language that they could understand;
- assisting schools in providing information, materials, training, and resources in the parents' or families' languages at school meetings and activities to promote the informed participation of families with ELs in decisions that impact academic achievement; and
- assisting schools in making it possible for parents of ELs to communicate with campuses and to support their children's learning, and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions about their children's education and in extracurricular activities.²

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the extent to which the translation services program was implemented with fidelity and met expected outcomes, as outlined in program statements. Translation Services staff members collected and provided most data,

including logs, records, translation request forms, interpretation request forms, and online parent and staff member surveys. The evaluator also conducted interviews with Translation Services staff members.

What translation services were provided?

The Translation Services program provided oral interpretation and document translation services to district staff members and students in the following languages: Burmese, Arabic, Amharic, Swahili, Nepali, Vietnamese, Afro-Asiatic, French, Chinese, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Additional languages were added during the 2018-19 school year including American Sign Language, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, and Swahili. These additions allowed for parents to speak face-to-face with staff members 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. Submission of a translator request form with the document needing translation was required for service. Documents were processed in order of receipt.

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

Finally, Translation Services provided academic tutoring services to students whose dominant languages were Arabic, Burmese, Swahili, and other languages spoken by immigrants new to the United States. The purpose of the service was to help ELs attain English proficiency and to support academic achievement. Department staff members contacted campus principals and teachers to raise awareness of the service. Teachers submitted request forms for specific student tutoring needs (short/long term), as

¹ Portions of this report were adapted from Rincon (2018).

² Federal Funding Proposal 2018-19, Program Narrative.

required throughout the school year. In addition to tutoring services, staff members also provided oral interpretations at parent meetings and were involved in document translation.

Oral Interpretations

In 2018-19, oral interpretation services were provided for 4,463 districtwide meetings, compared to 3,740 in 2017-18. The types of meetings serviced included 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. Translation Services also accommodated 400 parents attending large meetings who needed oral interpretation with translation equipment (headsets and receivers) with an interpreter translating for each language requested.

In February of 2018 the department hired an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter who served the district through 2018-19 by providing ASL interpretation services for deaf and hard-of-hearing district students, parents, and campus staff members. A total of 72 ASL interpretations were provided in 2018-19, mostly for school meetings (50%) and Admission, Review, and Dismissal meetings (25%).

As shown in Table 1, all monthly requests for oral interpretations increased in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18. These services were requested most often for ARD (65% of total requests).

The total number of oral interpretation service denials increased by 110 in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18. The largest number of denials in 2018-19 occurred during the month of October (16%; $n=138$) and requests for ARD meetings were the type of meeting most often denied (85%; $n=724$). The primary reason requests were denied was interpreter unavailability.

Table 1: 2017-18 and 2018-19 Total Number of Oral Interpretation Requests and Denials by Month

Month	2017-18		2018-19		Req	Den
	Req <i>n</i>	Den <i>n</i>	Req <i>n</i>	Den <i>n</i>	Chg <i>n</i>	Chg <i>n</i>
August	92	7	151	4	59	-3
September	340	50	446	49	106	-1
October	466	98	584	138	118	40
November	401	84	500	109	99	25
December	278	60	284	45	6	-15
January	352	105	451	68	99	-37
February	444	127	538	131	94	4
March	394	111	420	92	26	-19
April	461	80	538	125	77	45
May	489	20	520	91	31	71
June	23	0	31	0	8	0
Total	3,740	742	4,463	852	723	110

Source: Data provided by Translation Services program staff members on June 11, 2018 (2017-18) and June 27, 2019 (2018-19).
Note: Req = Requests. Den = Denials. Chg = Change from 2017-18 to 2018-19.

Document Translation Services

Translated documents totaled 905 in 2018-19, a decrease of 758 documents from 2017-18, likely because the Special Education Department started regularly using an automated translation program to meet their needs in 2018-19. Documents were mostly translated from Spanish to English. but, as shown in Table 2, the department provided translations from English to several languages.

Table 2: 2017-18 and 2018-19 Total Number of Translation Requests by Language

Language	2017-18 (<i>N</i> =1,663)		2018-19 (<i>N</i> =905)		Chg
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	%
Spanish	1,501	90.3	740	81.8	-50.7
Burmese ^a	87	5.2	64	7.0	-26.4
Swahili ^b	62	3.7	62	6.9	0.0
French	8	0.5	0	0.0	-100.0
Italian	1	0.1	0	0.0	-100.0
Portuguese	4	0.2	0	0.0	-100.0
Arabic	0	0.0	39	4.3	N/A

Source: Data provided by Translation Services program staff members on January 08, 2019 (2017-18) and June 27, 2019 (2018-19).

Note: Chg = Change from 2017-19 to 2018-19. ^a=Includes Chin.

^b=includes Kinyarwanda and Kirundi. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Tutoring Services

The program director provided information about tutoring services to the evaluator, who conducted frequency analyses to determine service usage. As of May 17, three tutors provided services to a total of 83 students at 7 campuses, for a total of 1,155 hours during 2018-19.

What were parent and staff member perceptions?

Program staff members developed and distributed satisfaction surveys to 400 parents and 390 Dallas ISD staff members to collect feedback about Translation Services. Parents completed a paper survey after oral interpretation meetings throughout the 2018-19 school year. Program staff members administered an online survey to district staff members between April 25, 2019 and May 10, 2019. Data were provided to the evaluator for analysis of response frequencies and content analysis of open-ended questions.

Parent Survey

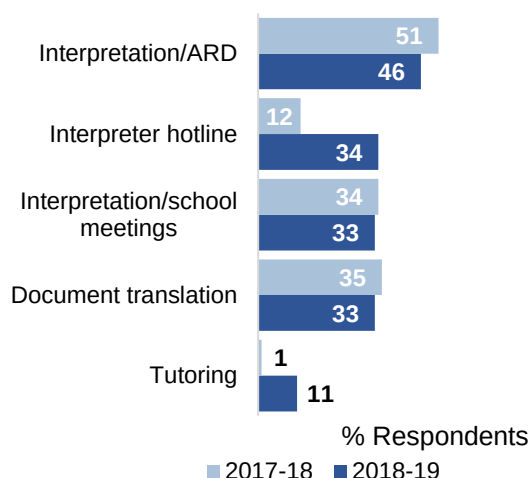
A total of 400 parents (100%) completed a parent survey after receiving interpreter services through Translation Services. Most (99%) responded that the information they received helped them in their children's education, and 38 percent indicated that when an interpreter was not available, a teacher or office staff member would interpret for them. Respondents also indicated that they would like interpretation services also to be provided for parent meetings (31%) and principal/counselor meetings (14%).

Staff Member Survey

A total of 261 of 390 district staff members who received services responded to the online survey (67% response rate). As shown in Figure 1, respondents most often requested interpretation/ARD services (46%) during 2018-19, a five-percentage point decrease from 2017-18. Tutoring (11%) was the least requested service by respondents in 2018-19 and use of the interpreter hotline (+22 percentage points) and tutoring (+10 percentage points) increased from the previous year.

In addition, 19 (66%) of the teachers who indicated requesting tutoring services reported seeing improvement in student academic performance, self-esteem, and participation after receiving services. Teachers also indicated a need for tutoring in other languages, including Karenni, Rohingya, Nepali, Malay, Chinese, Tamil, and Japanese.

Figure 1: 2017-18 and 2018-19 Staff Member Survey: Percent of Respondents Requesting Services



Source: Translation Services staff member satisfaction surveys.
Note: N (2017-18) = 370. N (2018-19) = 261.

Most respondents indicated that having interpreters at meetings/workshops (71%) and having documents available in their dominant languages (82%) helped parents of ELs become more involved in their children's education, and 68 percent were satisfied with the availability of language interpreters for meetings.

About 61 percent of respondents felt that the interpreter hotline was a useful resource for helping staff members talk to parents with limited English proficiency regarding their children when no campus staff member was available to interpret.

In response to open-ended questions about the program in general, 39 percent of respondents ($n=101$) expressed concerns and provided suggestions regarding the Translation Services program. In general, most respondent comments or suggestions about translation services (99%) indicated satisfaction with the services provided by the Translation Services department and the outstanding professionalism of the staff members who assisted with their needs. Many (81%) recommended that services continue for the 2019-20 school year.

Other concerns and/or suggestions expressed by respondents included the following:

1. Oral interpretations (51%, $n=51$)
 - More ASL interpreters are needed.
 - Better equipment is needed for parents to use in large meetings.
2. Document translations (32%, $n=32$)
 - More personnel are needed to reduce turn-around time.

3. Telephone interpreter hotline (30%, $n=30$)
 - More interpreters are needed for the hotline to reduce the on-hold time.
 - More knowledge of services is needed throughout the district.
4. Tutoring (10%, $n=10$)
 - More information should be disseminated about this service.
 - Tutors for more languages are needed.

Recommendations

- **Review interpreter and translator staffing needs.** Staff members' responses indicated a need for more interpreters to fill the demand for this service, especially in meetings and for the telephone hotline. Respondents also mentioned long hold times on the hotline and long turnarounds for translations, which may indicate inadequate staffing.
- **Replace old interpretation equipment.** Respondents indicated a need for better interpretation equipment. The Translation Services Department should consider if quality and availability of better equipment would strengthen parent participation in school meetings.
- **Improve communication to district personnel about the availability of tutoring services in languages other than English.** Some staff member survey respondents indicated that they did not know the district offered tutoring in certain languages. Better communication about availability of services will improve student access to needed services.

Reference

Rincon, R. (2018). 2017-18 Evaluation of Translation Services. 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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