At-a-Glance

The Parent Initiatives department, formerly Parent Services, at the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) strived to increase parental engagement and participation through various activities. Parent Initiative activities included the implementation of the district’s Parent Portal, establishing the District Parent Advisory Council, providing trainings to campus administrators in the areas of Title I and SBDM Compliance, workshops, and resources to parents and support to the parent/community liaisons.

The focus of this 2011-2012 Parent Initiatives report was to describe the Site Based Decision Making (SBDM) training afforded to school SBDM committee members. The primary purpose of the committee is to advise and consult with the principal about matters affecting the campus, with particular emphasis on items that affect student success. Brief comments outlining other Parent Initiatives programs and activities will also be provided.

The 2011-2012 school year was a particularly difficult one for the staff of the Parent Initiatives department. The staff was reduced from eleven to two. Positions reduced included the executive director, director, and manager, one coordinator, two specialists, three parent trainers and two administrative assistants in April of 2011, leaving two coordinators in 2011-2012. Although this deep reduction in staff hurt the department’s ability to deliver the services set out in the department’s website, the staff of two nonetheless endeavored to present a program as complete and integrated as in previous years. During the 2011-2012 school year, district officials determined that the personnel cuts to the Parent Initiatives department were too deep and added three staff members at the end of 2011-2012, two in May and one in June. One more staff member is scheduled to start in August.

The Parent Initiatives department was also transferred administratively from Teaching and Learning’s College Readiness group to School Leadership, and then restructured in January 2011-2012. As part of the move to School Leadership, Parent Services was renamed to become Parent Initiatives. Parent Initiatives was structured to have two working groups, elementary and secondary. Parent Initiatives was then moved from the main administration building on Ross Avenue, to offices located at Lincoln Instructional Center.

Title I and SBDM Training

Parent Initiatives staff worked with external auditors and Region 10 to improve district compliance with Title I requirements. In May 2011, staff provided compliance documents to auditors. Staff also developed a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to help improve district services to parents and to effectively document compliance with Title I requirements. In June 2011, staff met with auditors to review the CAP.

Also in June, Parent Initiative staff attended Title I and SBDM training provided by Region 10. This was the first year that Region 10 provided training in that area. After this training, staff implemented improvements to the district’s Title I and SBDM Compliance training program through the development of a compliance website located on INET where resources and materials would be available to campus administrators. The SBDM training and materials would later be added to the Parent website for stakeholder access.

Training for SBDM members began in September 2011 and was completed in November 2011. The training was organized around feeder patterns. Each feeder pattern hosted a meeting where Parent Initiatives staff presented training to the entire feeder pattern in one sitting. Staff trained SBDM members representing elementary, middle and high schools from 21 of 22 feeder patterns using that model. The 22nd feeder pattern elected to use a Train the Trainer model and so Parent Initiatives staff trained principals to train their own school’s SBDM committee. The reason for this was occasioned by mounting schedule conflicts between key actors within the feeder pattern as the year wore on.

SBDM training focused on providing committees with the tools necessary to function effectively as an advisory council to the principal, and to meet the legal and policy defined requirements of the committee. One important improvement to the training program in 2011-2012 over past years was the provision of the source of the authority for those tasks presented as mandatory. This enabled committee members to better understand what was required and why, and where to find the governing
policy, Texas Education Code or requirements found in law.

In addition to where to find the requirements, trainers presented a comprehensive presentation of the decision making process and how to document proceedings and decisions. This included discussions of what site based decision making is, minimum requirements for meetings, how to document meeting minutes and how to establish by-laws.

Trainers covered the duties of all required SBDM officers and explained stakeholder representation requirements. Trainers emphasized that each SBDM committee must have a minimum of eight members to meet requirements, but the precise number of seats for any given committee was set by that committee’s by-laws.

In addition to discussing required documentation, trainers provided training on where to find examples of conforming by-laws, agendas, minutes and current membership rosters on the Parent Initiatives website. Trainers and attendees discussed how these documents could be adapted to fit the needs of each school and what features of the document must remain unchanged for compliance reasons. By-laws in particular received quite a bit of attention from both trainers and trainees at the meetings.

The purpose and function of the by-laws and, thus the purpose and function of the committees became a subject of discussion among many. Trainers emphasized the role of the SBDM committee as an advisory committee to the principal. The SBDM is expected to establish plans for compliance and improvement of student performance, the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) and to provide input into the management of all areas of campus administration.

After discussing the SBDM committee’s function and responsibilities, trainers turned to discussing subcommittees. Trainers noted that the Evaluation and Modification committee is a required subcommittee, but that four additional subcommittees are likely to be required by most campuses under district policy. As previously mentioned, the Trainers provided citations to the source of each potential requirement in board policy so that SBDM members could quickly look up the applicable policy for themselves.

Finally, the formal training presentation turned to a discussion of how to apply to the Commissioner of Education for a waiver of a requirement or prohibition imposed by the Education Code. They discussed required content and referred committee members to the Dallas ISD Waiver Procedure Handbook for further information and provided the procedure’s website address.

Trainers provided an SBDM timeline document to help clarify when various key events must be completed throughout the year. For example, SBDM elections must be held in May and the committee must be in place and ready to conduct business by August. Other key events are included on the timeline. Trainers also provided information concerning when required documentation needed to be filed and provided detailed timelines to help make the filing deadlines for the entire series of documents clear. SBDM committee members were also provided with a list of resources to help them perform their jobs throughout the year. The resources listing included reference materials and required documents, and listed the sample documents that the committee had available for their review. Parent Initiative staff contact information was included and committee members were encouraged to contact a member of that staff if they had questions they could not resolve by reviewing the resources listed.

Although the training was detailed, comprehensive and formal in its presentation, the atmosphere created by the presenters encouraged questions and comments throughout. The overall effect was that the training was highly participatory on the part of the trainees. Trainees freely asked questions and provided comments, often offering insight into how their school handled the issue in question during the previous year.

Other Parent Initiative Activities

Although the SBDM training is the focus of this report, that training represented only a small part of the Parent Initiatives activities designed to meet Title I requirements and to promote parental involvement in Dallas ISD schools. The listing of completed activities below was taken from Parent Initiatives Year in Review document, prepared by Parent Initiatives staff. Permission to edit and reprint was obtained from Parent Initiatives.

May 2011

- Coordinated African American Education Series Year 1 @ U.T. Arlington (150 students)
- Coordinated Bryan Adams Cinco De Mayo Celebration
- Coordinated Dallas Police Academy (middle school students learn about police training from DPD)
- Coordinated Frazier Neighborhood Initiative Fair
• Coordinated Parent/Community Liaison Meeting – last meeting of the school year
• Secured Title I Parent Involvement and SBDM compliance documents for auditors

June 2011
• Developed summer PD workshops for Parent/Community Liaisons
• Met with district auditor to review Corrective Action Plan for Parent Services
• Received Title 1 and SBDM training from Region 10 (new)\(^1\)
• Coordinated Hispanic Youth Symposium @ SMU (200 students)
• Pack Arcadia Park offices and supplies to move to Nolan Estes

July 2011
• Delivered summer PD for Parent/Community Liaisons
• Met with district auditor for approval of Title I compliance materials for website
• Developed Title I Parent Involvement Compliance Training (new)
• Enhanced SBDM Compliance Training (new)
• Revised parent section of student handbook (new)

August 2011
• Added Title I Parent Involvement Compliance on the district CIP template (new)
• Received template for completing Title I District Comprehensive Needs Assessment
• Communicate SBDM training by feeder pattern to lead principals (new)
• Developed Parent Services Strategic Plan (new)
• Secured transportation at no cost to the department or district with Dallas County Schools for two initiatives: Las Llaves and African-American Education Series (new)
• Supported Parent Academy @ Clara Oliver Elementary School

September 2011
• Developed Title I Compliance materials and resources on INET for administrators (new)

October 2011
• Developed Parental Involvement tab on “Curriculum Central” to build teacher capacity/knowledge – ongoing
• Finalized the DIP for Parent and Community
• Coordinated Parent Portal Demo meeting
• On-going training for SBDM Feeder Pattern
• Participated in Coordinated School Health Trainings
• Participated in District-wide College Fair
• Developed Parent Services website – ongoing

November 2011 – January 2012
• Completed SBDM feeder pattern training (21 out of 22 feeder patterns trained)
• Served as project manager in implementing the Parent Portal districtwide
• Developed the Parent Portal training packet and trained all campuses
• Coordinated districtwide training for 232 campuses
• Served as point of contact to support technical issues, registration updates
• Served as project manager for Parent All-STAAR event (638 attendees)
• Initiated “Winter Writing for STAAR Essay Contest for Students (703 elementary/129 secondary students participated) Collaborated with Reading/Language Arts department
• Parent Services was restructured and became Parent Initiatives – two divisions:

\(^1\) The annotation (new) means that this activity was not performed in 2010-2011.
Elementary Parent Initiatives and Secondary Parent Initiatives

- Packed supplies and office and move from the administration building to the Lincoln Building

February 2012
- Full implementation of the Parent Portal districtwide. Served to support all schools with registration and technical assistance
- Trained secondary counselors on Parent Portal

March 2012
- Co-sponsored Las Llaves del Exito/Keys to Success College Fair
- Supported Sunset Health Fair
- Provided parent materials to District 5 Academic Fair
- Organized supplies for distribution to schools with parent/community liaisons

April 2012
- Held Planning sessions with Teaching and Learning for STAAR live forums
- Assisted with planning transition meetings and provide parent workshops at Cary, Billy Dade, Lang Middle School
- Represented Dallas ISD at Area 14 PTA Leadership Orientation
- Presented at Parent Academy at Sudie Williams

May 2012
- Developed and sent survey to community liaisons for needed workshops for 2012-2013
- Held last District Parent Advisory Council
- Coordinated African-American Education Series Year 2 @ Texas A&M Commerce (150 students)
- Developed end of year Title I and SBDM survey
- Coordinated parent transition meeting for Zan Holmes Wesley Jr. Middle School (200+ parents in attendance)
- Coordinated Mustang Mania for Roosevelt HS (65 8th grade students in attendance)
- Distributed parent information for Balch Spring MS
- Coordinated Latino Magazine STEM field trip for five high schools (150 students)

- Distributed parent information at Dallas Reads
- Parent Portal Registration Count as of May 28: 10,764 parents registered

June 2012
- Communicated Title I and SBDM survey online
- Provided logistic support College 101 and College Roadtrip Tour
- Supported transition parent meetings at new middle schools
- Prepared for opening of schools in the fall (Parent Portal, Title I and SBDM compliance, and PTA/PTO)

Recommendations

Parent Initiatives staff was able to articulate departmental goals in 2011-2012, and they were able to show how these departmental goals fit with larger district strategies and goals. This minimalist staff was able to meet the requirements of the district throughout the year. Nonetheless, they operated under a great deal of administrative stress as their management changed during the year and the department to which they were transferred underwent a major reorganization. The lack of staff and the disruption associated with the administrative upheavals the department experienced hindered the staff's ability to accomplish all that they had wanted to accomplish. The district recognized that staffing levels were inadequate to meet the demands placed upon the Parent Initiatives staff and expanded the staff from two to five at the end of 2011-2012, and added an administrative assistant. At this point, Evaluation's recommendation for Parent Initiatives is to establish SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound) for the department aligned with district goals, and then evaluate the results. Parent Initiatives did very well in 2011-2012. Expectations should be high for 2012-2013 with the expanded staff.

For more information, contact Program Evaluation at 972-925-6457.