At-a-Glance

The Office of Family and Community Engagement (OFCE) has been operating in the district for more than a decade, though the name has changed and the mission has been adjusted in order to meet the district’s evolving needs. The 2014-2015 OFCE was staffed by thirteen staffers, one director, one manager, six coordinators, specialists and trainers, in addition to five Campus Support Team (CST) members assigned to specific feeder patterns. The original commitment of bringing parents into active involvement in their children’s education and schools by managing the various programs offered to the schools by the OFCE remains a strongly held goal. The CST members were assigned to go to the schools and to work with campus Community Liaisons and others at the campus level assigned to work directly with parents. The OFCE’s webpage, http://www.dallasisd.org/Domain/135, provides additional information and links for parents.

Evaluation Component

The evaluation was guided and informed by the Title I, Part A 2014-2015 Federal Funding workscope. The workscope was prepared by the Project Manager and staff and clearly outlined the project(s) to be undertaken, the approach to implementation, the goals and expected results of the program, and metrics by which program success may be measured and evaluated. The workscope provided $882,556 in funding to help execute this program.

Program Components

PREP University Family Workshop Series

One of the key programs the OFCE continued that helps foster parental involvement was the PREP University Family Workshop series (PREP U). Incorporating lessons learned from 2013-2014, the family workshops were divided into three configurations in 2014-2015, the morning, evening and the Saturday series, called Super Saturday. The number of sessions offered at Super Saturdays was curtailed and replaced with Demonstration Tables. The success of this approach is reflected in the attendance numbers. In 2013-2014, Prep U attendance was documented at 3,213. The workscope goal for Prep U was a ten percent increase for 2014-2015. What Prep U achieved was a 160 percent increase or 8,345 parents signed up and trained.

Demonstration tables focused on the types of parental involvement that the OFCE particularly wanted to address. These were Parent Portal, PTA/PTO, health and exercise, and finally nutrition. At each table, a staff member would engage the parent in an activity appropriate to the table’s topical area and the parent’s interest. This year, the Demonstration Table approach was only piloted at Saturday events, but was better received than the Super Saturday format. In this way, critical information was provided to parents, but in a fun, often game playing way. The OFCE received quite a bit of anecdotal positive feedback on the change to this approach.

Figure 1 is the response to the exit survey question, “Do you want to be more involved in your school” after a table demonstration session. While it is doubtful that all who selected Agree or Strongly Agree will become volunteers next year, a few might be so motivated and that is success.

Overall, the Office of Family and Community Engagement presented a variety of workshops in 45 sessions. These workshops were presented from October 2014 through May 2015. Parents representing 2,113 students responded to an exit survey about the workshops they attended. The response rate represented about a one in three or about one person per family group, an acceptable rate. Parents gave the workshops they attended an overall rating of 94.8 percent positive, up slightly from last year’s 90 percent, indicating that the OFCE presented a workshop series helpful to parents.

Parent Portal Registrations

The OFCE was responsible for training parents on how to access and effectively use the district’s Parent Portal website. The Parent Portal system was a gateway into a comprehensive look at student performance that included classroom assignments, test scores, and
attendance records. The website also offered an opportunity for parents to communicate with teachers. The goal for 2014-2015 was to increase registration by 15 percentage points. Last year, registration stood at 52 percent. This year, registration ended the year at 70.3 percent, topping the published goal of 15 percentage points by 3.3 points.

Parent Publication

The OFCE made a commitment to produce and distribute a minimum of eight issues of a parent publication by June, 2015. *Dallas ISD Village/La Voz del Dallas ISD* is the district’s bilingual newsletter for parents. The newsletter is (thus far) the exclusive work of the OFCE.

The newsletter was sent to almost 7,000 readers via email and provides parents with useful information on a variety of subjects such as public school choice, student surveys, testing, STAAR and workshop opportunities. The information provided supports the goals of both the district and the department in encouraging parent engagement in their children’s education to increase student achievement.

PREP Leaders Program

The PREP Leaders program trained parents to be leaders and skilled parent-educators as they took a significant role in fostering their children through the educational processes. The immediate goals of the program were to “increase parental involvement and to empower parents to become leading advocates in their children’s education.” In 2014-2015, the PREP Leaders Program had a goal of training 60 PREP Leaders. The program exceed that goal, fielding 63 Leaders representing eight feeder patterns, Thomas Jefferson, H. Grady Spruce, Hillcrest, Lincoln, Madison, Townview-Magnet, Wilmer-Hutchins and Pinkston.

The PREP Leader training goal is the least successful aspect of the program. By the end of May, each PREP Leader was to have hosted a minimum of four parent workshops or meetings. Toward the end of the year, there were not enough workshops left in the year for all of the parents who trained to handle a minimum of four workshops as the lead trainer. However, the OFCE made sure that all of the PREP Leaders took part in the production and presentation of a minimum of four workshops.

Overall, the Office of Family and Community Engagement presented a variety of workshops in 45 sessions. Parents representing 2,113 students responded to an exit survey about the workshops they attended. Parents gave the workshops they attended an overall rating of 94.8 percent positive, exceeding their goal of 75.0 percent.

The final goal identified in the workscope was for the OFCE to produce and distribute a minimum of eight issues of a parent publication by June, 2015.

Recommendations

1 Program Management Strategy and Implementation, 2013-2014
Evaluators have reviewed this program in one form or another every year for the past decade. Evaluators have monitored and evaluated this program as it underwent mission changes, shifts in goals, staffing changes and the department to which the program reported. The program seems to now be experiencing some much needed stability to consolidate gains and determine what pathways to the future will best utilize the group’s skills, initiative and training.

It is our recommendation that this program not be reviewed for at least one year. We further recommend that the program take the time out of the spotlight to solidify the gains of the past few years and to reflect privately as to what the future mission should be and how best to position the group to accept the challenges that mission will undoubtedly present.