Parent University and Las Llaves del Exito the Keys to Success Exit Surveys: 2008-09

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At a Glance

Parent Universities 2008-2009

Between the dates of 11 September and 2 December, 2008 the Dallas Independent School District hosted Parent Universities at 10 schools. Attendees at these events were surveyed to learn their impressions of the information provided. Some 245 attendees responded to the exit survey in 2008-2009, down sharply from 550 in 2007-2008 and 948 in 2006-2007. Event attendance figures were not available.

The Parent University with the highest number of responses was the one hosted by Sunset (56 responses). The Parent University with the fewest respondents to the exit survey was Franklin D. Roosevelt's (5 responses). Most respondents were the mothers of students (77.7%), followed by fathers (11.2%).

Respondents represented students spread across all grades, but the elementary grades tended to be represented higher than either middle school or high school grades. Respondents represented an average of 33.3 students in each grade for Grades PK through 6. The middle grades (Grades 7 and 8) averaged 26.5 students per grade, and the high school grades averaged 21.5 students per grade. The availability of child care at the University was instrumental in making attendance possible for about 79% of attendees.

Respondents represent a fairly active group of parents in their children’s schools and schooling. More than 63% reported spending at least one hour per week helping their children with homework and 62% reported direct conversations or meetings with their child’s teachers four or more times per year. Some 36.6% reported participating in Parent Teacher Association (PTA) activities at least four times per year. Only 29% reported never participating in PTA activities. Site Based Decision Making (SBDM) participation lagged PTA participation somewhat, as fewer than 23% of parents reported participating more than three times per year in SBDM activities. About 52% reported never participating.

Respondents were pleased with the University’s offerings. Some 95.5% of respondents reported that the physical layout of the event made it easy to locate the things of interest to them and 92.5% reported interest in attending another Parent University. Almost all respondents (98.3%) reported that the University helped them understand more clearly how to help their child succeed in school. Respondents reported wanting more information on how to become more involved with their child’s school (91.7%), how the home, family and neighborhood environment affects student performance (95.1%) and how to prepare their children to deal with gangs (93.0%), drugs (95.7%) or peer pressure (95.7%). More than 82% of respondents reported that they would be more involved in their children’s schools’ activities if the scheduling of events or meetings were better coordinated, such as scheduling PTA and SBDM meetings back-to-back on the same day.

Summary

Although the Parent University sessions proved popular with parents, these parents are very likely among the most active in the schools as evidenced by the relatively high levels of participation in PTA, and to a lesser extent, SBDM activities. Parent University planners may want to evaluate ways and means of reaching out to the less active parents. Survey responses suggest one avenue might be to coordinate the scheduling of events so that it was easier for parents to attend. Indeed, the falling attendance at Parent Universities seems tied to the scheduling of the events immediately after school on weekday evenings, a time when many parents cannot be off work or away from home. Similar events offered on Saturday mornings seem to have garnered a much higher turnout in previous years than the mix of weekday afternoon and Saturday morning.
offerings of the previous two years. It may be that PTA, SBDM and other activities scheduled at times more convenient to the working parent might garner higher turnouts. This survey did not address specifically what scheduling changes would be preferable to parents. Other factors may also be affecting attendance and response rates not addressed by this survey.

Slightly more respondents were parents of elementary-aged children. While it is an excellent strategy to capture the attention of parents of younger children, it is clear that there is much to offer the parents of older children that may help them become more effective parents as their children progress through the school system. Strategies to attract parents of older children, to attract the less active parents, and to boost Parent University attendance to levels achieved in previous years seem indicated by these results.

Fall 2008 Las Llaves del Exito the Keys to Success Exit Survey Analysis

In October 2008, Dallas ISD joined with the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) in hosting the fall 2008 Las Llaves del Exito the Keys to Success (Llaves) college fair for area high school students and their families. The fair was organized along two complimentary pathways. The parent path offered sessions on financial aid and how to prepare one’s child for college. Sessions also featured information on Texas state law governing graduation requirements. At the same time, students were offered sessions on financial aid, PSAT, SAT and ACT testing strategies and other information related to standardized testing. Students also participated in a panel discussion featuring successful members of the community: what decisions did these leaders face, what barriers did they face and what helped them overcome these barriers?

In order to evaluate the utility and effectiveness of the fair, students and parents were asked to complete an exit survey during the final sessions of the day. Some 75 parents and 439 students complied. The Llaves fair primarily attracted parents of high school students. Some 3.2% of respondents were parents of elementary aged children. Another 16.1% had middle school aged children and 80.7% reported their children to be of high school age. Student respondents were primarily middle school (69.9%) and high school (27.4%) aged. About the same number of students and parents reported that internet access was available in the home (73.6% and 75.8% respectively), and that at least one of the parents was a college graduate (34.2% and 36.2% respectively).

The majority of attendees, 93.2% of parents and 92.9% of students, agreed that Llaves helped increase their understanding of how to prepare for college. More parents than students (94.6% vs. 72.5%) reported that the information presented helped them realize that college was financially attainable. Students were more uncertain than their parents (21.4% vs. 4.1% answered I don’t know) when asked if the information they received helped them realize that they could afford to go to college. Some 74.6% of students reported that they learned something useful about financial aid at the Llaves fair. Some 38.8% of students and 15.3% of parents report that the family depends on the student for at least some financial support.

Both parents (85.7%) and students (83.4%) agreed that the information about how to complete college application forms was helpful. Most parents (95.4%) and students (89.3%) reported learning something useful about the admissions requirements themselves. Students were asked about the information they received to complete scholarship applications, and most (77.6%) reported the information to be helpful. Parents were slightly more likely than students to realize that one’s immigration status was not a barrier to college admissions (76.4% vs. 70.1% respectively).

Overall, 82.5% of students and 95.1% of parents report that they can see a way for the student to go to college. Further, 90.9% of students and 86.6% of parents agree that the student’s primary intention after high school is to attend college. Both parents and students (95.8% and 81.8% respectively) agreed that they knew of others who would benefit from attending future Llaves fairs.

Approval ratings for schools concerning the delivery of college preparation information were a bit lower. Only 53.7% of parents and 65.1% of students reported their school to have been a consistently helpful provider of college
preparation information. When asked if the school emphasized the importance of taking the right courses in preparation for college, only 61.2% of parents and 77.6% of students answered in the affirmative. When asked when they were first given information about college, 24.9% of students and 17.6% of parents reported during elementary school. Students and parents reported middle school as the first time they were provided information, 59.8% and 19.6% respectively. Some 62.7% of parents and 15.4% of students report high school as the first time they received college preparatory information from the school.

Summary

The general finding emerging from the exit survey is that the Fall 2008 Las Llaves del Exíto the Keys to Success college fair was a successful event.

The district needs to continue to strive to attract students and parents who may be more ambiguous about the possibilities of college attendance. A perception among about half of respondents that the schools did not provide them with information relating to college-bound curriculum until their high school years is disturbing. Further, only about 3 out of 4 students, and fewer parents, consider the schools as reliable providers of information promoting college preparation and readiness. This finding is consistent with findings in prior years.

Spring 2009 Las Llaves del Exíto the Keys to Success Exit Survey Analysis

On March 7, 2009 Dallas ISD joined with the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) in hosting the Spring Las Llaves del Exíto the Keys to Success (Llaves) college fair for area high school students and their families. The Las Llaves fair featured sessions on financial aid and how to complete scholarship and admissions applications forms.

Students and parents were asked to complete an exit survey during the final sessions of the day. Some 61 parents and 220 students complied. Parents and students were asked if the student of interest was in either Grade 11 or 12. Some 41 parents and 131 students responded to this item. About half, 53.7%, of respondent parents reported their student of interest to be in the 12th grade. Among students, 84.7% of respondents reported themselves to be in Grade 11. Since response rates to this item were decidedly lower than other items, one might cautiously presume that many of the non-respondents were associated with grades below Grade 11. Parents were asked if at least one parent was a college graduate. Most (71.1%) reported no.

The majority of attendees, 98.3% of parents and 91.3% of students, agreed that Llaves helped increase their understanding of how to prepare for college. The leading reason for not expecting to attend college among both students and parents was financial. More parents than students (59.3% vs. 30.9%) reported that the reason for the student not going to college was financial. Some 24.2% of students, vs. 11.1% of parents answered I don't know when asked if they could afford college. Some 79.7% of students and 76.5% of parents reported that the help they received to submit financial aid applications was helpful.

Attendees were offered help completing scholarship applications. Both parents (90.6%) and students (87.5%) found the help beneficial. Parents were asked if the financial aid and admissions areas of the fair were helpful. About 93% reported both were helpful to them. Among these respondents, most families did not depend on the student for significant financial support. About 11% of parents and students (10.7% and 10.9% respectively) reported that the family depends on the student’s contribution to the family’s financial support.

Parents and students both agreed (94.2% and 81.7% respectively) that the information about how to complete college application forms was helpful. Parents and students were in general agreement that one’s immigration status was not a barrier to college admissions (77.4% vs. 76.3% respectively). More parents than students (98.2% vs. 84.9% respectively) agreed that they knew of others who would benefit from attending future Llaves fairs.

Summary

The general finding emerging from the exit survey was that the Spring 2009 Las Llaves del Exíto the Keys to Success college fair was a successful event.