At-a-Glance

Thriving Minds, formerly known as the Dallas Arts Learning Initiative, is a city-wide effort to improve creative learning among Dallas youth. The collaboration is an expansion of several partnerships between Dallas ISD, the City of Dallas, community organizations, and Big Thought to integrate resources and increase creative learning in schools and neighborhoods.

Budget

Thriving Minds has received funding from public and private organizations and individuals, including $8 million from the Wallace Foundation. The Wallace Foundation provides funding and support to programs that improve student achievement through quality creative learning, and incorporate in and out of school involvement. Currently, the Foundation supports city-wide efforts in Dallas, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles striving to improve creative learning for youth.

Highlights

Dallas ISD requires that every elementary student receive 45 minutes of music and 45 minutes of visual art instruction per week from a certified instructor.

- A sample of music instructors will integrate a new curriculum along the parameters of the Theater Project, a U.S. Department of Education Project.

Big Thought developed a neighborhood network in Far East Dallas, Pleasant Grove, Oak Cliff, West Dallas, and South Dallas.

- Each community has a Neighborhood Leadership Team that connects programs to families and identifies gaps.
- Families can receive newsletters, available in English and Spanish, with program information specific to their area and a map of facilities.

Research

Several methods of research are used to monitor and assess creative learning programs to ensure quality and sustainability. Participation from Thriving Minds partners is necessary.

Quality Panels

A panel tests a rubric of quality creative learning programs three times a year. Each quality panel consists of Dallas ISD instructors, community artists, and researchers who observe programs in several disciplines throughout the City of Dallas. Results define the elements of high quality creative learning and set the standards for teacher training.

Family Interviews and Focus Groups

Families are invited to a neighborhood facility to answer questions, enjoy a meal, and meet other families. Families are interviewed in individual or group settings to explore family (caregivers’ and children’s) attitudes toward creative learning. Interviewers are trained before sessions are conducted to ensure reliable and valid data are collected.

Results may identify gaps in programming that will help maintain program sustainability and contribute to neighborhood investment decisions. A Family Creative Capital construct is defined and incorporated into the Survey of Creative Life in Dallas.

Survey of Arts Activities of Dallas ISD Students

This survey identifies the demands and values of Dallas youth for creative learning programs.

In Fall 2007, nearly 5,000 students from Dallas ISD schools in grades 4 through 12 participated. Results defined the Youth Creative Capital construct and facilitated the design of the Survey of Creative Life in Dallas.

Survey of Creative Life in Dallas

This survey is a longitudinal assessment distributed every two years to monitor the Creative Capital of Dallas youth and families.

October 2008 was the first administration of the survey, distributed to students and their families in 36 Dallas ISD schools. Nearly 10,000 surveys were sent home to a random sample of caregivers with students in grades 1 through 12. Results will monitor the overall success of the Thriving Minds Initiative.

For more information please visit http://www.bigthought.org/Literature/tabid/138/Default.aspx