The Translation Services Program: 2013-2014

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At-a-Glance

The Translation Services program of Dallas ISD, funded by Federal Title I Part A grants, provides translation and interpretation services to schools for English language learner (ELL) students and parents, to assist in communicating academic information and promote participation in all school related activities. During the school year 2013-14, there were a total of 64,452 ELL students in the Dallas ISD. Based on a needs assessment, it was determined that there was a need to increase the involvement of ELL student parents in academic learning and other school activities of their children. This may be helped by providing document translations or oral interpretations in their native language. Language support for evening and weekend events such as family nights and parent workshops was also needed to assist ELL parents to become active participants in their children’s education. Furthermore, tutoring in languages other than Spanish was needed in order to contribute to the academic improvement of ELL students. The Title I 2013-14 program work scope allocation for this component was $111,295.

The goals of the Translation Services program in 2013-14 were:

1. Assist parents in understanding the state’s academic content standards, student academic achievement standards, and academic assessment;
2. Provide materials and training in the parent’s native language to help parents improve their children’s achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, to foster parent involvement;
3. Ensure that information related to schools and parents programs, meetings, and other activities was sent to parents in a format and language that parents can understand;
4. Provide support for parent involvement activities as parents may request;
5. Provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children’s achievement, such as literacy training and using technology to foster parental involvement.

The purpose of this report was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Translation Services program based on data collected at the end of school year 2013-14. Data were collected and provided by Translation Services Department of Dallas ISD. Data sources include logs, records, translation request forms, and interpretation request forms.

The Translation Services program provided document translations and oral interpretations at Dallas ISD Title I schools involving student academic and school-related activities. While the translation services translated written documents (e.g., Letter/Flyers, Newsletters/Calendars, ARD, Forms/Surveys, Student Manual/Handbooks) into requested languages such as Spanish, Cambodian, Vietnamese, etc., the interpretation services provided oral interpretations and language support for meetings (e.g., Parent Conference, PTA, Parent Training/Workshop, etc.), testing, and tutoring. Table 1 summarizes the services provided in 2013-14 and the previously evaluated year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Services</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written Document Translation</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Interpretation*</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Tutoring (Hours)</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>378</td>
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*Including language support to parents at Trainings/Workshops

During 2013-14, Translation Services provided 392 written document translations, and 539 oral interpretation services. A total of 378 hours of tutoring were provided to those ELL students who needed additional academic assistance in the areas of reading, mathematics, language arts, and social studies. The reason for the reduction in tutoring hours is that the only tutoring position was split funded and this allowed only half-time tutoring.

Services Satisfaction Survey

To determine areas of strength and weakness of the program, user satisfaction surveys were conducted during February-March 2014. A survey with 16 questions was distributed to 229 staff who requested services during the 2013-14 school year. Also, a brief five-question parent survey was distributed to 500 parents. The survey questions focused on perceptions and satisfactions of the services provided. A total of 229 staff surveys and 138 parent surveys were collected; the response rates were 44 percent and 57 percent, respectively.

Staff Survey. The most requested service type was Document Translation (63.7%) followed by ARD Interpretation (46.9%) and Interpretation at School Meetings/PTA (36.3%). While 82.6 percent of the respondents felt parent conferences are more successful by having an interpreter, 45.1 percent said that they were still able to communicate with parents of
ELL students if language interpreters were not available. Approximately 48 percent of the staff noticed an increase in attendance when parents of ELL students know that the meeting will be offered in their language, and 70.9 percent said that having interpreters at meetings/workshops helped parents become more involved in their child’s education. Overall, 75.2 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the availability of language interpreters for their meetings.

Concerning school and district documents, over 80 percent of the respondents felt that having documents available to parents of ELL students in their native language impacts their involvement in school activities. Most of the staff felt the necessity of translated documents (70.8%). Only 41.8 percent of the respondents requested the services “often,” and 48.0% requested the services "sometimes." Overall, 55.8 percent were satisfied with the turnaround time of documents submitted for translation.

As for the tutoring services, 32.2 percent of the respondents felt that tutoring contributed toward the student’s academic progress compared to 53 percent in the previous survey. If a language tutor was not available, only 28.3 percent said that they would have easy access to another way of communicating information to parents. A new service called Spanish Interpreter hotline (SI) was offered and 49.6 percent of the parents used this service. Users learned about the service through a Translation Services letter or email (37.6%), a coworker (32.7%) and District online newsletter (29.7%). About 97 percent of the users considered that SI is a useful resource in helping to communicate with English language learner parents.

**Parent Surveys.** Two separate surveys were administered to parents; one survey was given to Spanish speaking parents and the other to Vietnamese speaking parents. Among the 115 respondents to the Spanish survey, 98 percent of the parents stated that the interpreter helped them to participate in meetings about their children’s education. Also, 93 percent stated that the information the school sent home in their native language helped them to better understand and be part of their child’s education. When asked what they would do if an interpreter was not available to help, 33 percent said they would rely on teachers, 29 percent said that their daughter or son would help, 29 percent said they would rely on office personnel and 9 percent said that a neighbor would help. In the Vietnamese survey, parents responded that the information in their native language helped them to take part in their children’s education (100%) and that having a tutor who spoke Vietnamese had helped their child improve in school (82.6%). Ninety-six (96%) percent stated that being able to speak to the tutor in Vietnamese has helped them to become more active in their children's education.

**Summary**

The Translation Services program of the Dallas ISD provided document translation and oral interpretation services to schools, ELL students and their parents. The purpose of the program was to provide professional services and expertise in communicating with the diverse communities, to facilitate school communication with limited or non-English speaking parents, and to promote participation in their children’s education.

During the school year 2013-14, Translation Services provided more translation and interpretation services but fewer tutoring services than in 2011-12. According to the staff and parent surveys, the program enabled families of ELL students to participate in academic activities and school functions, and fostered cooperation between home and school As there was only one Vietnamese tutor, which limits the scope of the services, the academic progress result was based on very limited case numbers (N=10). The tutoring service was an effort made to meet the educational needs of ELL students and assist in closing the achievement gap for students in need of additional academic assistance.

**Recommendations**

Based on the survey results, it is clear that having interpreters available and information translated in the parents’ native language increased participation in academic programs and activities, and it promoted parent’s collaboration in supporting their children’s education. It is recommended that the staff increase the utilization of the translation and interpretation services. Similarly, it is recommended that more effort be made to fund and recruit qualified tutors.

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