

## **Refugee Parents Involvement Survey Data Analyze.**

One of the main goals of the Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG) is to increase parents' understanding of the educational system, increase the involvement in their children's education, and foster positive attitudes toward school. One of the avenues to achieve that goal is to improve communication between refugee parents and the Anchorage School of District (ASD).

RSIG staff has developed Refugee Parents Involvement Survey (RPIS) in order to measure how much the parents understand and feel connected to the ASD. The survey consists of 11 questions which range from interpreter usage to the process of enrollment. The questions are rated on an ordinal scale from 1-3 with 1 being dissatisfied and uninvolved with the school system to 3 being satisfied and involved. In addition, two "YES NO" questions indicated whether parents knew basic information about their student's education. These surveys are given to refugee parents when they arrived and again in 6-8 months period. The expectation is that over the 6 months of their children being in school, parents will demonstrate increased knowledge and understanding of how the school system works and feel connected to the school system. These surveys are provided in the client's native languages or with an interpreter. RSIG case managers are present during the survey and all questions are explained to the parents if they did not understand them.

On average, there are about 20-30 participants for this survey every semester except for the last year when we had about 12-15 participants due a decrease in the new refugee family arrivals for Alaska. Data has been collected for the last two school years of 2011-12 and for the first semester of 2013. This data represents the second part of the survey for each family ( the families who have been here for more than 6-8 months) and have been exposed to the school system.

Question #	First semester of 2011	Second semester of 2011	First semester of 2012	Second Semester of 2012	First semester of 2013
1. Do you know how the school enrollment process works?	1.15	2	2.8	2	3
2. Do you feel that you know enough about the school that your child is attending?	1.77	1.9	3	2.8	2.6
3. Do you know what to do if your child is in need of help at school?	1.65	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.6
4. Do you know how to participate in Parent Teacher Conference's?	1.62	2.5	3	2.5	2.8
5. Do you know how to get your child to school?	1.8	2.8	3	3	3
6. Do you understand the paperwork for parents that come from your child's school?	1.2	1.7	1.25	1.1	1.1
7. Do you understand the phone messages that are provided to you by the school?	1	1.9	3	2.4	2
8. Do you feel like you are getting the interpretation help at school that you need?	1.65	2.9	3	2.4	2.23
9. Overall, how do you feel about your knowledge of how the school system works?	1.25	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.6

For the two YES NO Questions:

1. Do you feel that you know who your child's teacher is?	35%	83%	90%	90%	90%
2. Do you know what grade your child is in?	74%	89%	100%	100%	100%

Here are the salient findings from these surveys:

- According to data from this survey, most of the parents stated that the telephonic messages they are receiving from their children schools are still only in English. They do not understand them and have to ask for a help from their children or somebody else who can speak at least some minimum English. Of course, that information can be interpreted incorrectly/ inaccurately.
- On scores reflecting the parent's understanding of paperwork sent home from school the scores stayed low over time from the 1<sup>st</sup> survey to the second (average score of 1.0 in the 1<sup>st</sup> survey and 1.1 in the second survey). A few parents stated that, in order to understand the informational papers brought home by their children, they have to ask for help from their oldest children with translation. This feels very unsatisfactory for the parents and can disrupt the generational roles in the family unit when the parents must depend on the youth for information the school is trying to distribute.
- Interpretation that is available to refugee parents at their children's school has expanded and helped the families to communicate effectively with school staff. Usually, in the first survey, the average score was a 1 and this has increased to a 2 or 3 in the second survey. The data varies from one year to another. This can be explained by the ability to access to the languages the ASD provided. For an instance, in 2012 the score is 3 and this is a better than recently, probably because the ASD had a better access to Nepalese interpreters when majority of the interviewers were from Bhutan. For the last year this number went down because the majority of the families we have interviewed were from Somalia. Unfortunately, most of them do not feel that they receive appropriate interpretation help from the ASD. Last semester, a couple times the interpreters arranged by the ASD were late or did not show up to the PTC, which attributed to the dissatisfaction of the refugee clients as well as the ASD staff.
- RSIG has found increases in parents' knowledge of the school enrollment process and that parents feel that they have enough information about the school system.

- There was an increase in Parent Teacher Conference involvement. The parents are more aware of when and how to attend the conferences and feel more supported in these interactions.

It appears that the actions taken through this grant including provision of interpreting, orientation and parent-teacher meeting outreach continue to improve parent connection with the school and that newer parents are feeling more connected with the school that their children are attending. In order to improve telephonic and paperwork connection between the refugee families and the ASD, the RSIG staff will continue to provide feedback to the schools about the client's lack of communication with their schools and encourage the ASD to use available funds to address these issues. Based on this data, the items needing prioritization are ways to communicate more effectively with parents telephonically and to help them have access to the written material directed at parents that student bring home.

RSIG has continued to have conversations with the ASD ELL department. Recently we discussed these findings and began to identify some recommendations to improve support for non-English speaking families.