

**MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF TENET 4 OF THE ACTION PLAN:
FOCUS ON PARENT INVOLVEMEN AND
ENGAGEMENT IN ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS**

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Monitoring Report No. 15 is focused on the level of implementation of the 14 action steps found in Tenet 4 of the Action Plan. The goals of the action steps are to increase parent engagement and advocacy for all students and to devise strategies to use parents' cultural knowledge and language in ways schools function to benefit their children.

School-related activities in the action steps center around two major issues --- effective school-parent communication and provision of training for parents to assist their children

Being more specific, Tenet 4's action steps were concerned with:

- Establishing better communication with parents so that they are informed about curricular matters, school plans, and the need to become involved in school advocacy groups to assist their children.
- Providing training for parents to assist their children in reading and mathematics and other education activities and strategies.
- Surveying parents about what kinds of effective communication are needed and about their cultural and language expectations in their children's schools. implementing 'teach-ins' so teachers can learn from parents' feedback about issues, ideas, concerns and strategies to assist their children.

Sample

For this report, parent involvement and engagement implementation information came from a purposeful sample of 21 schools. LAUSD elementary schools with the largest African American student populations were selected to be in the sample. Local districts 3, 7 and 8 provided the core sample of elementary schools while local districts 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 each had one elementary school selected. The student statistics were from the *LAUSD Fall 2006 Preliminary Ethnic Survey*.

Summary of Findings

Part 1: Implementation of Tenet 4 by
Elementary School Staff — Parent
Engagement and Involvement in School-
Related Activities

Overarching Finding

- Most of the LAUSD groups responsible for implementation of Tenet 4 did not provide sufficient evidence to show full implementation of the indicators.
- The exception was the indicator --- Knowledge of Action Plan and Tenet 4's action steps.
- Only the parent center coordinators and Title 1 coordinators as groups had insufficient evidence that they implemented the indicator.

Part 1: Implementation of Tenet 4 by Elementary School Staff - Parent Engagement and Involvement in School-Related Activities

1. Many parent centers were not at the stage of development to effectively involve and engage parents in schools' instructional programs. Governance issues and elections of parents' groups consumed much of the time and limited time for instructional activities for parents.
2. Parent Centers lack standardization. A social club structure operating in some parent centers denied access and service to all parents.
3. All in all, the training received by the local district coordinators seemed to be sparse and limited both in scope and frequency. Based upon the coordinators' responses, there was not a clear pattern of organized, consistent effort to provide training to these specialized staff charged with implementing one of the most important aspects of the Action Plan.

Part 1: Implementation of Tenet 4 by Elementary School Staff - Parent Engagement and Involvement in School-Related Activities

4. Results revealed that the local district coordinators had no idea where their central directions should come from. According to the coordinators' descriptions of their roles, there seemed to be no standard functioning of this position throughout the LAUSD.
5. According to the descriptions provided by the parent center coordinators, the parent centers are all different and few are working on an instructional focus. Some parent center directors perform duties unrelated to the parent center such as safety monitors and clerical duties for the schools.
6. Many parent centers are not at the stage of development to effectively involve and engage parents in the schools' instructional programs. Governance issues and elections of parents' groups consumed much of the time and limited the time for instructional activities for parents.

Part 1: Implementation of Tenet 4 by Elementary School Staff - Parent Engagement and Involvement in School-Related Activities

7. Title 1 Coordinators were ambivalent about the need to organize African American only parent groups to assist their children to improve academically. Some saw the need but were uncomfortable with the premise of groups organized by race.
8. One-third of the Title 1 coordinators did not provide Literacy and Math workshops to assist parents to help their children improve academically. Two-thirds of the coordinators did not provide workshops on time management and appropriate use of time for children.
9. Many of the Title I coordinators viewed the parent centers as meeting rooms for social service activities and social activities.

Part 1: Implementation of Tenet 4 by Elementary School Staff - Parent Engagement and Involvement in School-Related Activities

10. Most of the coaches felt that they had no role in assisting parents to help their children achieve. Seventy-one percent of the coaches presented workshops to parents while twenty-nine percent did not.
11. Coaches were reluctant to view African American students' academic and other needs apart from other students. They felt no need to directly assist African American parents only.
12. African American parents sometimes resented and became impatient having to listen to translations that prolonged meetings. Coaches saw need for simultaneous translations to hold and keep African American parents involved.

Implications of Findings and Recommendations

Implications

- Many parent centers as now constituted are developed for failure.
- There is a “silo effect” in operation among the local districts with varied directions and governance issues for the parent centers. There is no standard set of operational principles so some parent centers have become social clubs with very little emphasis on providing instructional support to parents to help their child improve academically.
- In addition, some principals do not value the parent center coordinators for several reasons – lower levels of education, minimal hours on the school campus (e.g., 3 hours per day), few resources available for center to function, disrespect for the major function of the coordinators to assist parents instead being used as safety monitors and clerks.

Recommendation

Local district superintendents and their local district parent coordinators need to meet and decide upon standard operational structures and principles for the parent centers and communicate these understandings to all staff at the schools who are involved with the parent centers -- school principals, Title 1 coordinators, local parent center coordinators, literacy and mathematics coaches, etc.

Recommendation

Elementary schools need to implement a collaborative organizational structure for assisting parents to help their children achieve academically. All staff who are responsible for parent workshops need to work together to do the following:

- Organize a reasonable time schedule for the workshops.
- Decide what topics are to be covered in the school year.
- Decide who will be responsible for presenting the information.
- Have the principal and administrative staff provide the facilitative and management support to ensure effective and continuous communication about Tenet 4 of the Action Plan and other parent assistance is available to all parents in the schools.

Implications

Those staff (e.g., coaches, Title I coordinators and local parent center coordinators) who interact with parents of African American students are reluctant to implement the action step that calls for African American only parent groups to address the needs of the children.

In schools where African American students are a minority there is a reluctance to address African American student achievement – disaggregated data analysis.

Instead, the discomfort of doing this leaves staff to work on the premise of equal treatment in opposition to equitable treatment.

Recommendation

Instead of ignoring the action step about organizing an African American only parent group, consult with schools who have few African American students in the schools and have African American only parents groups. Review the results and achievement of African American students in those schools.

Summary of Findings

Part 2 : Parents of Grade 5 Students ---

Survey Report about the Implementation of Tenet 4's
Action Steps

Part 2: Parents of Grade 5 Students --- Survey Report about the Implementation of Tenet 4's Action Steps

1. Most Parents had no knowledge of the Action Plan, however, less than one-half wanted it explained to them.
2. Parents' three highest concerns about the elementary school their child attended were achievement of all students, school safety and their ability to communicate with teachers.
3. One-third of the 39 statements related to the Action Plan were Agreed/Strongly Agreed to by sixty (60%) or more of the parents.
4. More than sixty percent of the parents Disagreed/Strongly Disagreed with four statements regarding negative beliefs about African Americans by their teachers and other staff.
5. Parents were almost evenly divided between agreeing and disagreeing about the academic achievement of African American students, in general, and African American male students, specifically.

Part 2: Parents of Grade 5 Students --- Survey Report about the Implementation of Tenet 4's Action Steps

6. Statements regarding African American students, in general, and African American males, specifically, being suspended and referred to Special Education and the intimidation of African American parents were Disagreed/Strongly Disagreed to by more than fifty percent of parents.
7. One-third of the parent center coordinators had not read or reviewed the 14 action steps of Tenet 4.
8. Most of the parent center coordinators were critical of the low level of parents' participation.
9. Three hours per day seemed to be an insufficient amount of time for parent center coordinators to effectively involve and engage parents.

Part 2: Parents of Grade 5 Students --- Survey Report about the Implementation of Tenet 4's Action Steps

10. Principals and Assistant Principals indicated that the parents at their schools were not aware of the Action Plan because they will not attend informational meetings presented by the school.
11. Title 1 Coordinators were ambivalent about the need to organize African American only parent groups to assist their children to improve academically. Some saw the need but were uncomfortable with the premise of groups organized by race.
12. One-third of the Title 1 coordinators did not provide Literacy and Math workshops to assist parents to help their children improve academically. Two-thirds of the coordinators did not provide workshops on time management and appropriate use of free time for children.

Part 2: Parents of Grade 5 Students --- Survey Report about the Implementation of Tenet 4's Action Steps

13. Many of the Title 1 coordinators viewed the parent centers as meeting rooms for social service activities and social activities
14. Most of the coaches felt they had a role in assisting parents to help their children achieve. 71 percent of the coaches presented workshops to parents while 29% did not.
15. Coaches were reluctant to view African American students' academic and other needs apart from other students. They felt no need to directly assist African American parents only groups.
16. African American parents sometimes resented and became impatient having to listen to translations that prolonged meetings. Coaches saw need for simultaneous translations to hold and keep African American parents involved.

Implications of the Findings and Recommendations

Implication

Large numbers of parents continue to have no knowledge about the Action Plan, and specifically, Tenet 4's action steps. Only 15 percent of parents reported that the principal of the elementary school had described, explained or discussed the plan with them, thereby missing opportunities to gain the assistance of parents in reducing the achievement gap.

Recommendation

Make the Action Plan accessible to all parents and present the information in the Action Plan at all parent groups and encourage discussion about the action steps and the expected outcomes as well as a discussion about the role of parents in reducing the achievement gap.

Implication

Almost two-thirds of parents reported a willingness to help at their child's school and one-half were available to help. Parents felt that although they did not always have the time they would make time to help at the school because it was important that they support the school although accommodations might need to be made because of their work and/or school schedules.

Recommendation

Principals should make parent engagement and involvement a major objective. Principals and teachers should continuously work towards involving parents by planning ways this involvement might occur that would accommodate the parents' schedules. This might be done through surveys of parents, by informing parents of ways they might assist the school/classroom and why their involvement is important and by providing sufficient advance notice to parents who may need to adjust work and school schedules. Principals should solicit information from elementary school principals who have been successful in engaging parents.

Implication

Parents expressed concern about the academic achievement of African American students, in general and, specifically, African American male students. While almost two-thirds (63%) felt their child's teacher has high expectations for African American students, in general, only 48% felt the teacher had high expectations for the African American male students and although almost 60% of parents reported having had positive experiences at their child's school many cited concerns about the lack of equity for all students, unconcerned, non-caring teachers and other staff and a lack of respect by staff for parents and students. Parents also identified their top goal for their child was to obtain a good solid education as a result of his/her school experience. After almost five years of implementing the Action Plan many of the same conditions that were its impetus still exist at the elementary school level—low expectations, teachers who lack the skills to positively engage and excite African American students about learning and the scheduling of parent meetings.

Recommendation

Professional development for teachers should emphasize higher performance expectations for all African American students and especially for African American male students and should include strategies that would help make student learning more engaging and enjoyable.

Principals should plan parent meetings at times and days more convenient for parents to attend as well as they should investigate ways to better involve and engage them.