



Prioritizing Families

How Baltimore City Public Schools puts families first, ensuring that each and every parent is invited to be involved in their child's education, regardless of their ability to speak English.

Baltimore City Public School District

When Baltimore City Public Schools got word that their parent notifications may not meet standards, administrators instantly mobilized to find a solution. Like all school districts, Baltimore is legally required to give equal access to all students by providing school-to-home communications in a language parents can understand. In a diverse area such as Baltimore, languages spoken include Spanish, French, Somali, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic. Providing translations in so many languages is a finance and manpower challenge big enough to stagger any school district. Given that a single page translation may be priced at upwards of a thousand dollars, the cost to provide translations across the board skyrockets to incredible amounts.

Baltimore City Public Schools CEO, Dr. Andrés Alonso, claims families as partners. Parent involvement is presented as a high priority and not a goal to be discarded in times of limited resources. Unable to do it all on their own, Baltimore City Public Schools turned to TransACT for a workable solution.

Over ten years ago, long before NCLB was introduced in its present form, Baltimore City Public Schools partnered with TransACT to create a comprehensive solution. By subscribing to TransACT® online parent notifications, every administrator, principal and teacher in the Baltimore school system is instantly provided with access to hundreds of parent letters, notices and forms. These notices have already been written by compliance experts and professionally translated in over 20 languages. Baltimore staff no longer need to spend any time researching content that must be included, or chasing down translators. They simply log-on to the site, select the document

they are looking for in the language they need, and press print. It's that easy.

Meeting parent communication requirements is simple with TransACT. Administrators are able to provide the notifications parents need in a language they can understand. Usage reports and metrics are also generated to document what letters are being used. This documentation creates compliance evidence. Guidance tools built into the subscription walk administrators through complex legal requirements. Staff are informed regarding what forms need to be sent out at what time.

Jill Basye-Featherston, ESOL Specialist at Baltimore, explained



The Challenge

Tough communication requirements to be met on a tight budget. Districts are required by law to provide information to parents in a language they can understand. However, to create the resources necessary to do so requires an investment of staff, expertise and millions of dollars beyond what current budgets provide.



The Solution

Baltimore City Public Schools subscribes to the TransACT® Comprehensive Subscription to gain access to a ready-made parent notification library already proven to meet communication mandate requirements and available in multiple languages.



The Result

Not only are parents served with information in their native language, but Baltimore has not received a single fault finding regarding parent communication since subscribing to TransACT.

that before subscribing to TransACT, even though Baltimore had a small collection of translations, they lacked an effective distribution tool and a way to document usage.

"When we had our own translations, we didn't have a centralized way of making the schools realize how important it was to both distribute the documents and keep a record of use. We need documentation that we are providing equal access," said Basye-Featherston.

TransACT enables districts to record their compliance activities. When the Office of Civil Rights reviews programs, this documentation makes it quick and easy to demonstrate compliance.

Basye-Featherston explained, "I kept track of everyone that was trained and how to use TransACT. Now I can log-on and see who is using it in a report that is ready made. That way, I am able to evaluate how well we are doing. Our partnership agreement with the Office of Civil Rights requires that we provide regular updates on how we are meeting compliance requirements, so the TransACT reporting feature is great usage reporting."

Baltimore City Public Schools administrators have done an excellent job of educating staff about the resources available to them and providing training. Baltimore's most effective implementation tactics include:

- Writing the use of TransACT parent notices into internal policy.
- Including TransACT basic information in the handbook
- Conducting regular on-site trainings for building administrators and principals
- Providing users with printed samples of documents used most often

"Principals are really thrilled when their schools are not mentioned in a complaint. That's really what the TransACT training evaluations say at end of session. They report, 'I didn't realize we had

this great resource at my back and call.' New principals that I train are always happy to find that they have all this available to them."

Baltimore City Public Schools took extra steps to ensure the successful implementation of TransACT throughout their district.

"We created an administrators' handbook on every possible thing that they may have need for. Under

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*ESOL Specialist
Baltimore City Public School District, MD*

the TransACT section, we teach each administrator how to use their subscription and give them a login. We provide a paper copy with the bare minimum notices they may need.

They can always go back to TransACT to find what they need regarding free lunch applications, any health issue,

and most importantly to us, what they need to help students enroll in school. Pulled from our TransACT subscription, we even provide a registration packet created in Spanish. They can find additional languages online," said Basye-Featherston.

"People respond to personal visits. When office staff come on board, I make sure I welcome them and give them their logon. I also give them samples that would be useful to them. For example, I show the staff in the Title I Office, Guidance Office or the Truancy Office a sample that is available already. The English is already done for us. We don't have to write our own letters because we know we can depend on the TransACT experts. We know these notices meet federal guidelines. That is something people really like."

Basye-Featherston also said that teachers find great value in the behavioral forms available in the TransACT collections. "Teachers just love them because they have everything you need. You can just check off the problem areas and talk about what you've done as an alternative punishment and what is the next plan. You can communicate in a very simple and easy way and don't need to make up a new form." The translations available make these crucial communication tools for ELL parents.

Products

Baltimore City Public School District subscribes to the **TransACT® Comprehensive Subscription.**

This subscription includes the following components in all available languages:

- NCLB Parent Notifications
- IDEA 2004 Parent Notifications
- GenEd Parent Notifications
- NCLB & IDEA RoadMaps
- EduPortal® eLibrary

District Profile

Baltimore City Public Schools is an urban school district with an enrollment of about 88,000 (1,336 ELL). The district employs 5,700 teachers and 5,600 FTE staff at 197 schools.

Contacts

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