



NEW HAMPSHIRE

2008-2009 Parent Involvement Statewide Survey Results

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I. Introduction

In January 2007, the state of New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE), Bureau of Special Education, contracted with an independent evaluation firm to conduct a statewide parent involvement survey. The goal of the contract was to provide data for reporting requirements for the Department of Education's Special Education State Performance Plan for 2005-2010. The State Performance Plan (SPP) is required to be submitted from each state to the United States Department of Education (USDOE), Office of Special Education Programs, pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These federal reporting requirements mandate that states report on a number of performance indicators relating to special education in their Annual Performance Reports (APRs). Specifically, federal Indicator 8 was the focus of activities under this contract. As stated in New Hampshire's SPP, this indicator is "the percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities."

Spring 2009 was when the second year of data collection occurred using two parent surveys that were adapted from the National Center for Special Education Accountability and Monitoring (NCSEAM) item banks. In 2007-2008, Measurement Incorporated (MI) Evaluation Services (the independent contractor) worked closely with NHDOE and the stakeholders' group to develop these instruments. One survey was prepared and administered to parents of preschool children (3 - 5 year olds) and the other to parents of school age children (kindergarteners through 21 year olds). These NCSEAM surveys have been shown to be valid and highly reliable in measuring the concept of parent involvement in improving special education services and results. The second year of the *NH Statewide Parent Involvement Survey* was conducted with the support of NHDOE and key stakeholders including representatives from NH Parent organizations and school district personnel. National consultants were involved in the data analysis and reporting phases of the project.

Of the 174 NH school districts, two indicated that they had no children receiving special education services. Thirty of the remaining 172 districts reported that they had no preschool children receiving special education services. Over 33,000 surveys were mailed to school districts across NH for distribution to parents. In total, 2,648 preschool surveys were mailed to parents of preschoolers and 30,393 school age surveys were mailed to parents of school age children receiving special education services (through age 21).

Surveys were mailed to parents' homes in March 2009 and they had one month to complete and return their survey in the postage-paid envelope. Over the course of the data collection period, 5,058 useable surveys were received; 541 were from parents of preschoolers and 4,517 were from parents of school age students.

II. Methodology

In this second year of administering the New Hampshire *Statewide Parent Involvement Surveys* MI worked collaboratively with NHDOE to make improvements in the survey administration process based on the results from the previous year. The summaries below provide details of key elements in the survey administration process and reflect the changes that were implemented in the second year of data collection.

Survey Revisions—the changes that were made to the surveys for the second administration, were primarily for clarification and for streamlining the surveys. Items on the school age survey were re-ordered and explanatory comments were added to two items. A gender question was added to both surveys and demographic questions were modified to make it easier for parents to record their child’s information. As in the previous year, MI developed scannable forms and translated each of the surveys into Spanish.

Data Collection Procedures—MI worked with NHDOE special education coordinators in each School Administrative Unit (SAU) to coordinate the details of survey administration. Arrangements were made for the surveys to be labeled and mailed to parents directly from each school district. Each survey packet mailed to a parent contained a postage-paid return envelope addressed to MI. In this way, NHDOE was assured that the most accurate contact information for parents would be used in mailing the survey to the parent. Parents were assured that their responses would come directly to the independent contractor to guarantee their confidentiality.

Strategies to Promote Survey Participation/Provide Survey Access—as part of the contracted services, MI worked with the Indicator 8 Stakeholder Group to promote survey participation. MI developed a flyer that was shared with the special education coordinators and NH Connections who then forwarded the information to other key parent advocacy and support groups. Additionally, to promote participation and to ensure survey access, MI developed an online version of the preschool and school age surveys in both English and Spanish. In 2008, 37 parents (.7%) responded to the survey in Spanish. These numbers and percentages were consistent in 2009 with 35 parents (.7%) completing the surveys in Spanish. In 2008, 385 respondents (6%) completed the survey online. This number increased significantly in 2009 to 456 parents or 9% of all survey responses. Additionally, in 2008 and in 2009, 16 surveys (.3%) were received that had been completed by families with the assistance of interpreters. These surveys had been translated for parents whose native languages were Maay-Maay, Somali, Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, Dinka/French Linguala, Krahn, or Kurdish.

Steps to Ensure Validity and Reliability—data tracking procedures from 2008 were implemented in 2009 to ensure that surveys were monitored at each step in the administration process. MI provided timely and ongoing “hotline” communication to NHDOE staff, special education directors, school district personnel, and parents throughout the survey administration process. In the analysis phase of the project, MI examined the data in terms of its representativeness on key demographic variables, i.e., age group, race/ethnicity, gender, and disability category. These results allow NHDOE to make determinations about how well the findings can be generalized to the overall population of New Hampshire parents of children receiving special education services.

III. Findings

In this section of the report, data are presented from both the first (2008) and second (2009) administrations of the NH *Statewide Parent Involvement Survey*. Where it is useful, we compare the data from the two years and report key findings as they pertain to three critical areas:

- Response Rates
- Representativeness of the Data
- Survey Results

Response Rates

The overall survey response rate for the New Hampshire 2009 Parent Involvement Survey was 15% with a preschool response rate of 20% and a school age response rate of 15% (see Table 1).

Table 1
New Hampshire Statewide Parent Involvement
Survey Administration Summary¹

	2007-2008 Administration			2008-2009 Administration		
	Preschool	School Age	Combined	Preschool	School Age	Combined
Surveys sent	2,766	32,698	35,464	2,648	30,393	33,041
Surveys received	576	4,950	5,526	541	4,517	5,058
Statewide response rate	21%	15%	16%	20%	15%	15%

The response rate for the 2009 survey administration is not significantly different from that of the 2008 administration. There was a one point decrease in the preschool survey response rate and, to a large extent, this difference accounts for the one point decrease in the overall response rate. Generally speaking, an overall response rate of 15-25% with this stakeholder group is acceptable. Over 25% is considered a *very good* response rate for parent surveys. Under these guidelines, the response rate for the first and second statewide NH *Parent Involvement Survey* administrations is adequate.

In this second year of the project, school districts under the direction of special education directors, worked with diligence to improve address accuracy. There were 75 preschool surveys returned this year

¹ Response rate was calculated on the number of surveys delivered to families. Those surveys that were returned based on invalid addresses or surpluses at the district level were omitted from the count before response rate calculations. Two hundred forty-three preschool surveys and 1708 school-age surveys were subtracted from the total number of surveys sent in 2007-2008, and 75 preschool surveys and 813 school age surveys were subtracted in 2008-2009.

as compared to 243 last year (86% fewer). There were 813 school age surveys returned this year as compared to 1708 (52% fewer). This reflects a positive trend in the accuracy of mailings by the school districts.

As presented in **Table 2**, 48% of NH school districts had a response rate (pre-school and school age combined) of less than 16% for the 2007-2008 and the 2008-2009 school years. There was an increase in the percent of school districts in the upper two levels of response rates in 2009. Overall, the differences between 2008 and 2009 response rates are not significant.

Table 2
Number and Percentage of New Hampshire School Districts
for Different Levels of Response Rate

Levels of Response Rate	2007-2008 (n=162)	2008-2009 (n=159)
	Number and Percentage [n(%)] of School Districts	Number and Percentage* [n(%)] of School Districts
< 10%	23 (14%)	17 (11%)
10% - 15%	55 (34%)	59 (37%)
16% - 20%	42 (26%)	39 (25%)
21% - 29%	34 (21%)	35 (22%)
30% or >	8 (5%)	9 (6%)

* total percentage for all levels (in 2009) equals 101% due to rounding

Representativeness of the Data

The following set of tables (**Tables 3-6**) compare data from 2009 survey respondents to the NH Child Count data from 2008. These comparisons indicate how well the group of parents who voluntarily responded to the survey represents the total population of parents in New Hampshire who have children receiving special education services. The 2009 responding group of parents is compared to the Child Count data on four important variables: age, race/ethnicity, gender, and disability categories. For all of these comparisons the IDEA guidelines are followed, i.e., a difference of 3 percentage points (higher or lower) than the Child Count data is significant. In this instance, the group of parents who voluntarily responded to the survey in 2009 is different from the total population of statewide parents on that specific category of data.

Similar to the findings in 2008, there is an over-representation of parents with 3-5 year old children receiving special education services (see Table 3).

Table 3
Comparison of Respondents' Children to Special Education Population: Age Category

Age Category	December 1, 2008 Child Count (Estimate of Eligible Population)	Percentage of Eligible Population	Count of Respondent Sample	Percentage of Respondent Sample	Over/Under Representation*
Ages 3-5	2,891	9.6%	611	12.6%	3.0%
Ages 6-11	11,123	36.9%	1,852	38.1%	1.2%
Ages 12-14	7,375	24.5%	1,097	22.6%	-1.9%
Ages 15-21	8,767	29.1%	1,298	26.7%	-2.4%
TOTALS	30,156	100.0%	4,858	100.0%	0.0%

* over (+)/under (-) representation is the percent of respondent children minus the percent of eligible population; anything greater than +/- 3 is considered significant.

While there is significant over-representation (3%) of 3-5 year olds, NHDOE has a close working relationship with groups representing the preschool population, and works hard to encourage parent participation. Additionally, NH has a separate survey for the preschool parent population to specifically address their concerns about children receiving preschool special education services. Both of these facts probably contribute to the margin of over-representation. In many other states as well as New Hampshire there is a tendency for response rates to drop off for parents of older children who receive special education services.

The sample of parents who responded to the survey is representative of the statewide population of parents with children with IEPs in terms of gender and ethnicity (see Table 4 and 5).

Table 4
Comparison of Respondents' Children to Special Education Population: Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	December 1, 2008 Child Count (Estimate of Eligible Population)	Percentage of Eligible Population	Count of Respondent Sample	Percentage of Respondent Sample	Over/Under Representation*
White	28,186	93.5%	4,593	93.5%	0.1%
Black or African American	671	2.2%	79	1.6%	-0.6%
Hispanic or Latino	912	3.0%	140	2.9%	-0.2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	321	1.1%	78	1.6%	0.5%
American Indian or Alaskan	66	0.2%	21	0.4%	0.2%
TOTALS	30,156	100.0%	4,911	100.0%	0.0%

* over (+)/under (-) representation is the percent of respondent children minus the percent of eligible population; anything greater than +/- 3 is considered significant.

In both 2008 and 2009 there were no significant differences in the race/ethnicity of the children whose parents responded to the survey as compared to the 2008 Child Count data.

Table 5
Comparison of Respondents' Children to Special Education Population: Gender

Gender	December 1, 2008 Child Count (Estimate of Eligible Population)	Percentage of Eligible Population	Count of Respondent Sample	Percentage of Respondent Sample	Over/Under Representation*
Male	20,066	66.5%	3,368	67.7%	1.2%
Female	10,090	33.5%	1,605	32.3%	-1.2%
TOTALS	30,156	100.0%	4,973	100.0%	0.0%

* over (+)/under (-) representation is the percent of respondent children minus the percent of eligible population; anything greater than +/- 3 is considered significant.

Parents were asked this year to provide information about their child's gender. There were no significant differences between the children of the survey respondents and the Child Count data reported for 2008. Child gender data was not collected on the 2008 survey administration.

For five of the disability categories, the respondent sample either over or under-represents NH's percentage for that group, as reported on the 2008 Child Count (see Table 6).

Table 6
Comparison of Respondents' Children to Special Education Population: Disability Category

Disability Category	December 1, 2008 Child Count (Estimate of Eligible Population)	Percentage of Eligible Population	Count of Respondent Sample	Percentage of Respondent Sample	Over/Under Representation*
Autism	1,427	4.7%	441	9.8%	5.0%
Deaf-Blindness	4	0.0%	6	0.1%	0.1%
Developmental Delay	2,180	7.2%	573	12.7%	5.5%
Emotional Disturbance	2,363	7.8%	250	5.5%	-2.3%
Hearing Impairments	262	0.9%	51	1.1%	0.3%
Mental Retardation	823	2.7%	119	2.6%	-0.1%
Multiple Disabilities	419	1.4%	203	4.5%	3.1%
Orthopedic Impairments	107	0.4%	19	0.4%	0.1%
Other Health Impairments	4,982	16.5%	501	11.1%	-5.4%
Specific Learning Disabilities	11,990	39.8%	1,454	32.2%	-7.6%
Speech or Language Impairments	5,418	18.0%	838	18.6%	0.6%
Traumatic Brain Injury	58	0.2%	20	0.4%	0.3%
Visual Impairments	123	0.4%	42	0.9%	0.5%
TOTALS	30,156	100.0%	4,517	100.0%	0.0%

* over (+)/under (-) representation is the percent of respondent children minus the percent of eligible population; anything greater than +/- 3 is considered significant.

As presented in **Table 6**, there are five disability groups where the respondent sample significantly over or under-represents the NH population as reported on the 2008 Child Count. These categories and the differences they represent are the same as those identified in 2008. On the survey, parents voluntarily indicate the disability category for their child; it is entirely possible that the parent's designation is not consistent with what the school district has on record. For this reason, it is difficult to know if the respondent sample is or is not accurately representing the disability groups or whether there is a difference in the way the data are being recorded by parents.

Survey Results

In 2009 there was an increase in parental agreement for essentially all survey items on both the preschool and school age surveys (see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7
Percentage of Parent Agreement on the Preschool Survey

Survey Item Number	Preschool: Partnership Efforts and Quality of Services	% Agree 2008	% Agree 2009
1	I am part of the IEP decision-making process	94	97
11	People from special education respect my culture	97	97
4	My child's evaluation report (written summary) was written using words I understand	92	96
8	People from preschool education are available to speak with me	93	96
2	My recommendations are included on the IEP	90	95
12	People from preschool special education value my ideas	88	93
13	People from preschool special education ensure that I have fully understood my rights related to preschool special education	89	93
9	People from preschool special education treat me as an equal team member	86	91
10	People from preschool special education encourage me to participate in the decision-making process	85	90
3	My child's IEP goals are written in a way that I can work on them at home during daily routines	84	89
21	People from preschool special education offer parents different ways of communicating with people from preschool special education (e.g., face-to-face meetings, phone calls, e-mail)	83	86
14	People from preschool special education communicate regularly with me regarding my child's progress on IEP goals	77	84
17	People from preschool special education give me enough information to know if my child is making progress	79	82
23	People from preschool special education give parents the help they may need, such as transportation, to play an active role in their child's learning and development	76	82
5	The preschool special education program involves parents in evaluations of whether preschool special education is effective	79	81
18	People from preschool special education give me information about the approaches they use to help my child learn	77	81

Survey Item Number	Preschool: Partnership Efforts and Quality of Services	% Agree 2008	% Agree 2009
15	People from preschool special education give me options concerning my child's services and supports	70	79
22	People from preschool special education explain what options parents have if they disagree with a decision made by the preschool special education program	73	78
16	People from preschool special education provide me with strategies to deal with my child's behavior	75	76
6	I have been asked for my opinion about how well preschool special education services are meeting my child's needs	67	73
7	People from preschool special education provide me with information on how to get other services (e.g., childcare, parent support, respite, regular preschool program, WIC, food stamps)	56	73
19	People from preschool special education give me information about organizations that offer support for parents (for example, Parent Training and Information Centers, Family Resource Centers, disability groups)	53	56
24	People from preschool special education offer supports for parents to participate in training workshops	44	53
20	People from preschool special education offer parents training about preschool special education	55	51
25	People from preschool special education connect families with one another for mutual support	38	45

Table 8
Percentage of Parent Agreement on the School Age Survey

Survey Item Number	School age: School's Efforts to Partner with Parents	% Agree 2008	% Agree 2009
1	I was given information about my rights as a parent of a child who is eligible for special education services	88	96
2	At the IEP meeting, we discussed accommodations and modifications that my child would need	86	95
3	I am comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns to school staff	82	91
22	My child's evaluation report (written summary) is written in terms I understand	80	88
19	The evaluation results were thoroughly explained to me	79	87
24	IEP meetings are scheduled at a time and place that are convenient for me	80	87
23	I have a good working relationship with my child's teachers	76	85
25	Teachers treat me as a team member	76	83
18	All of my concerns and recommendations were documented on the IEP	75	82

Survey Item Number	School age: School's Efforts to Partner with Parents	% Agree 2008	% Agree 2009
20	Teachers and administrators encourage me to participate in the decision-making process	73	81
21	I felt part of the decision-making process	73	81
16	I feel I can disagree with my child's special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child	71	79
11	The school communicates regularly with me regarding my child's progress on IEP goals	70	76
17	I am considered an equal partner with teachers and other professionals in planning my child's program	68	76
13	I was given all reports and evaluations related to my child prior to the IEP meeting	67	75
12	My child's school gives me enough information to know whether or not my child is making adequate progress	67	74
6	The school gives parents the help they may need to play an active role in their child's education	62	72
10	The school explains what options parents have if they disagree with a decision of the school	63	70
15	Teachers and administrators seek out parent input	62	70
8	The school gives me choices with regard to services that address my child's needs	56	68
14	Teachers and administrators at my child's school invite me to share my knowledge and experience with school personnel	61	68
7	I have been asked for my opinion about how well special education services are meeting my child's needs	56	63
26	In preparation for my child's transition planning meeting I was given information about options my child will have after high school.	34	54
9	I was given information about the research that supports the instructional methods used with my child	41	50
5	My child's school has helped me find resources in my community such as after-school programs, social services, etc.	39	47
4	The school offers parents training about special education issues	36	43

Survey Results- Indicator 8 and Rasch Analysis

In 2009, there was a dramatic increase in the percentage of parents who indicated that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving special education services (see Table 9).

Table 9
Percentage of Parent Response
At or Above the Standard

STATEWIDE	2007-2008					2008-2009				
	TOTAL RESPONSE	RESPONSES AT OR ABOVE THE STANDARD*		95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL		TOTAL RESPONSE	RESPONSES AT OR ABOVE THE STANDARD*		95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL	
		NUMBER	PERCENT	LOW	HIGH		NUMBER	PERCENT	LOW	HIGH
Preschool	574	304	53%	48.9%	57%	539	308	57%	52.9%	61.3%
School Age	4935	1462	30%	28.4%	31%	4497	1945	43%	41.8%	44.7%
Combined	5509	1766	32%	30.8%	33.3%	5036	2253	45%	43.4%	46.1%

* the standard is set at a Rasch score of 600 based on recommendations from the NCSEAM pilot study

Using the Rasch method of data analysis, each parent survey is scored and then the percent of parent surveys above the “cut off” score are tallied. A score above the standard (cut-off score) indicates agreement that the child’s school district facilitated parental involvement as a means of improving the child’s special education services. In 2009, these results were more positive in all categories, the percent of preschool parents rose from 53% to 57%, the percentage of school age parents rose from 30% to 43% and the combined percent of parents (preschool plus school age) rose from 32% to 45%.

Parent responses can also be evaluated by examining Rasch average scores. Looking at the Rasch averages for a particular group allows stakeholders to make a judgment about how close that group came to meeting the standard (a Rasch score of 600 or better). Using these averages it is possible to make comparisons across groups. In **Table 10**, note that the preschool mean was 616.1 which is above the standard, while the school age and combined mean are both below the standard for 2008. In 2009 scores indicate a significant improvement, with a combined preschool and school age Rasch mean score of 600; this is 45 points higher than the average from the 2008 survey. Confidence intervals are provided for both the percent of parents who met the standard (**Table 9**) and for the Rasch mean scores (**Table 10**). The 95% confidence interval means that we can be 95% sure that the actual value (percent or score) falls in the range between the low and high values that are reported.

Table 10
Rasch Score Averages
(Mean scores)

STATEWIDE	2007-2008					2008-2009				
	TOTAL RESPONSE	RASCH MEAN SCORE	95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL			TOTAL RESPONSE	RASCH MEAN SCORE	95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL		
			CI (+/-)	LOW	HIGH			CI (+/-)	LOW	HIGH
Preschool	574	616.1	10.5	605.6	626.6	539	640.7	10.9	629.9	651.6
School Age	4935	548.2	3.5	544.7	551.6	4497	595.2	3.8	591.4	598.9
Combined	5509	555	3.3	551.9	558.6	5036	600.0	3.6	596.5	603.6

IV. Conclusions

The final section of this report highlights successes of the 2009 Parent Involvement Survey and makes recommendations to improve the survey administration process, increase response rates, and use data to inform improvement activities.

Successes

NHDOE and MI....

- in collaboration with parent organizations and school districts successfully promoted and administered the NH Statewide *Parent Involvement Survey* to over 33,000 parents of children receiving special education services.
- worked collaboratively with the Indicator 8 Stakeholder Group to encourage collaboration and engagement with all key stakeholders in facilitating parental involvement with special education services.
- revised the preschool and school age surveys based on feedback from parents, special education directors and key parent groups.
- conducted phone conferences and obtained consensus about ways to promote survey response and to raise parent awareness and understanding of the survey purpose/process.
- established an on-going system for communicating based on lessons learned in 2008. A “hotline” response system was implemented to address or refer questions from school district personnel and/or parents.
- provided interpreters for 7 other languages, as well as readers for families with limited literacy skills, where these needs were identified by school districts.
- developed and implemented effective logging and data monitoring procedures.
- developed a data analysis plan and a reporting format to make information useful for both stakeholders and NHDOE.
- consulted with NCSEAM experts about data analysis, setting targets and reporting Rasch scores.

In this second year of the project, MI again would like to acknowledge the contributions made by the New Hampshire Department of Education and the Indicator 8 Stakeholder Group and we thank them for their cooperation throughout the process. Their assistance and support helped to ensure a second year administration of a quality, useful survey and results that the Department can include as part of their Annual Performance Report to the USDOE.

Strategies for Improving the Process

MI and NHDOE can work together to...

- continue to improve the accuracy of survey numbers needed for individual school districts and work directly with local school district contacts to reduce dissemination inefficiencies.
- increase response rates by developing additional promotional efforts for survey participation at the local level (e.g., post flyers in schools, use other local media to promote survey awareness, involve the Indicator 8 Stakeholder Group more systematically in promoting survey awareness and participation).
- increase the use of alternative survey methods (i.e., interpreters, readers, online access) in more school districts for more families in need of these services.
- use the evaluation feedback gained from special education directors to revise the process and procedures for the 2010 survey administration.
- broaden the base of understanding for the survey process and for what is being measured in Indicator 8 of the NH SPP.
- provide trainings to schools and families about the importance of the parent involvement survey.

Suggestions for Improving Response Rate

- Improve the accuracy of school district counts of children receiving special education at the preschool and school age levels.
- Improve addresses by working directly at the school district level to verify addresses.
- Use more public media opportunities at the local and state level to promote survey participation.
- Work with school districts that had a rate below the state average to identify specific strategies for their school districts (e.g., post flyers, use local parent groups to promote participation, identify families needing interpreters/readers to be able to complete the survey, etc.).
- Collaborate with the parent group organizations early in the process and identify proactive strategies based on “lessons learned” in spring 2009.
- Provide written information to each family about the survey at their child’s IEP meeting.

- Use the web site/links established in 2009 to reach all parents whose children are receiving special education services.
- Provide guidance to all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) on what steps they may take to boost their survey return rates and to use the results of the survey to improve services to children and families.

Suggestions for Using the Data

- Use survey results to identify key areas for school staff and parent training.
- Review policies, procedures, and documents to ensure that they are family friendly and understandable. Ensure that these policies and procedures foster parent participation in the special education process.

Activities from the NH Annual Performance Report (APR)

By 2009-2010 the NHDOE will...

- work with selected districts that substantially exceed the state target or average to learn what methods/activities have contributed to parent involvement.
- provide professional development for school districts to improve partnership efforts between schools and families.



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