



NEW HAMPSHIRE

2007-2008 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."

Two parent surveys were developed and administered to all parents of children receiving special education services in New Hampshire. Both surveys were adapted from the National Center for Special Education Accountability and Monitoring (NCSEAM) item banks. One survey was developed for parents of preschool children (3 - 5 year olds) and the other for parents of school age children (kindergarteners through 21 year olds). Survey development in both instances followed the NCSEAM instructions and guidelines. New Hampshire is utilizing these two surveys as both have been shown to be valid and highly reliable in measuring the concept of parent involvement in improving special education services and results.

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 37,000 surveys were mailed to school districts across NH for distribution to parents. In total, 3,009 preschool surveys were mailed to parents of preschoolers and 34,406 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 April 2008 and they had one month to complete and return their survey in the postage-paid envelope. Over the course of the data collection period, 5,526 useable surveys were received; 576 were from parents of preschoolers and 4,950 were from parents of school age students.

II. Methodology

Over the course of this first project year, NHDOE worked collaboratively with MI in accomplishing the following tasks:

Survey Development—twenty-five items for the preschool survey and twenty-six items for the school age survey were selected. MI developed scannable forms and translated each survey in 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, guaranteeing their confidentiality.

Strategies to Promote Survey Participation/Provide Survey Access—as part of the contracted services, MI worked with the Parent Survey Advisory Group to promote survey participation. In this first year, MI developed a flyer that was shared with 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 survey in both English and Spanish. For the scannable and online forms combined, 37 parents (.7%) responded to the survey in Spanish. Three hundred fifty-five respondents (6%) completed the survey online. Additionally, 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 were implemented 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, 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, we present data and 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 2008 Parent Involvement Survey was 16% with a preschool response rate of 21% and a school age response rate of 15% (see Table 1).

Table 1
New Hampshire Statewide Parent Involvement
Survey Administration Summary¹

	Preschool	School Age	Combined
Surveys sent	2,766	32,698	35,464
Surveys received	576	4,950	5,526
Statewide response rate	21%	15%	16%

In this initial year of New Hampshire’s statewide parent survey, there were no specific targets for survey response rates. Generally speaking, a 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 statewide NH Parent Involvement Survey is acceptable. The fact that the preschool response rate is higher than the school age is also consistent with what other states have reported. There is a general tendency, in New Hampshire as well as in other states, for response rates to drop off for parents of older children who receive special education services.

While there were 174 New Hampshire school districts identified for the survey process, only 172 of those have students receiving special education services. For 10 of the 172 school districts, there are

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.

fewer than 10 students with IEPs. Since response rates for those districts are considered unreliable (i.e. skewed by the small number of surveys sent), those districts are not included in the data reported in **Table 2**.

As presented below, 48% of NH school districts had a response rate (pre-school and school age combined) of less than 16% (i.e., fall below the average acceptable response rate). One strategy for increasing overall response rates for the survey would be to target these districts to provide additional resources/assistance to support parental participation.

Table 2
Number and Percentage of New Hampshire School Districts
for Different Levels of Response Rate
(n=162)

Levels of Response Rate	Number and Percentage of School Districts [n (%)]
< 10%	23 (14%)
10%-15%	55 (34%)
16%-20%	42 (26%)
21%-29%	34 (21%)
30% or >	8 (5%)

Representativeness of the Data

For two demographic variables (age group and ethnicity), the sample of parents who responded to the survey is representative of the statewide population of parents with children with IEPs. However, for five of the disability categories, the respondent sample either over or under-represents NH's percentage for that group, as reported on the 2006 Child Count (see Table 3).

Table 3
Comparison of Respondent's Children to Special Education Population

Age Category	December 1, 2006 Child Count (Estimate of Eligible Population)	Percentage of Eligible Population	Count of Respondent Sample	Percentage of Respondent Sample	Over/Under Representation*
Age Category					
Ages 3-5	2,905	9.3%	644	12.3%	3.1%
Ages 6-11	11,724	37.3%	1,991	38.1%	0.7%
Ages 12-14	7,764	24.7%	1,214	23.2%	-1.5%
Ages 15-21	9,006	28.7%	1,381	26.4%	-2.3%
TOTALS	31,399	100.0%	5,230	100.0%	0.0%

Demographic Characteristic	December 1, 2006 Child Count (Estimate of Eligible Population)	Percentage of Eligible Population	Count of Respondent Sample	Percentage of Respondent Sample	Over/Under Representation*
Race/Ethnicity					
White	29,711	94.6%	4,920	94.7%	0.1%
Black or African American	502	1.6%	65	1.3%	-0.3%
Hispanic or Latino	815	2.6%	125	2.4%	-0.2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	247	0.8%	65	1.3%	0.5%
American Indian or Alaskan	124	0.4%	18	0.3%	0.0%
TOTALS	31,399	100.0%	5,193	100.0%	0.0%
Disability Category					
Autism	1,060	3.4%	534	10.7%	7.3%
Deaf-Blindness	4	0.0%	1	0.0%	0.0%
Developmental Delay	2,110	6.7%	579	11.6%	4.9%
Emotional Disturbance	2,519	8.0%	258	5.2%	-2.8%
Hearing Impairments	284	0.9%	67	1.3%	0.4%
Mental Retardation	895	2.9%	156	3.1%	0.3%
Multiple Disabilities	385	1.2%	287	5.8%	4.5%
Orthopedic Impairments	105	0.3%	20	0.4%	0.1%
Other Health Impairments	4,843	15.4%	498	10.0%	-5.4%
Specific Learning Disabilities	13,000	41.4%	1,678	33.7%	-7.7%
Speech or Language Impairments	6,014	19.2%	851	17.1%	-2.1%
Traumatic Brain Injury	53	0.2%	25	0.5%	0.3%
Visual Impairments	127	0.4%	32	0.6%	0.2%
TOTALS	31,399	100.0%	4,986	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 (3.1%) of 3-5 year olds, NHDOE solicited input from groups representing the preschool population to encourage parent participation. Additionally, NHDOE developed a separate survey for the preschool parent population to specifically address their concerns about children receiving preschool special education services. In light of these measures, there seems to be a reasonable margin of over-representation.

On the variable of disability categories, there are five disability groups where the respondent sample significantly over or under-represents the NH population, as reported on the 2006 Child Count. On the survey, parents indicated 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. The data in **Table 3** are for the total respondent group (preschool and school age combined).

Survey Results

The majority of parents agreed with most items on both the preschool and the school age surveys. Items where the majority of parents disagreed can provide insight for stakeholders and be useful in discussions about ways to improve special education services (see Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4
Percentage of Parent Agreement on the Preschool Survey

Survey Item Number	Preschool: Partnership Efforts and Quality of Services	% Agree	% Disagree
11	People from special education respect my culture	97	3
1	I am part of the IEP decision-making process	94	6
8	People from preschool education are available to speak with me	93	7
4	My child's evaluation report (written summary) was written using words I understand	92	8
2	My recommendations are included on the IEP	90	10
13	People from preschool special education ensure that I have fully understood my rights related to preschool special education	89	11
12	People from preschool special education value my ideas	88	12
9	People from preschool special education treat me as an equal team member	86	14
10	People from preschool special education encourage me to participate in the decision-making process	85	15
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	17
5	The preschool special education program involves parents in evaluations of whether preschool special education is effective	79	21
17	People from preschool special education give me enough information to know if my child is making progress	79	21
14	People from preschool special education communicate regularly with me regarding my child's progress on IEP goals	77	23
18	People from preschool special education give me information about the approaches they use to help my child learn	77	23
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	24
16	People from preschool special education provide me with strategies to deal with my child's behavior	75	25

Survey Item Number	Preschool: Partnership Efforts and Quality of Services	% Agree	% Disagree
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	27
15	People from preschool special education give me options concerning my child's services and supports	70	30
6	I have been asked for my opinion about how well preschool special education services are meeting my child's needs	67	33
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	45
20	People from preschool special education offer parents training about preschool special education	55	45
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	47
24	People from preschool special education offer supports for parents to participate in training workshops	44	56
25	People from preschool special education connect families with one another for mutual support	38	62
3	My child's IEP goals are written in a way that I can work on them at home during daily routines	16	84

Table 5
Percentage of Parent Agreement on the School Age Survey

Survey Item Number	School age: School's Efforts to Partner with Parents	% Agree	% Disagree
26	I was given information about my rights as a parent of a child who is eligible for special education services	88	12
22	At the IEP meeting, we discussed accommodations and modifications that my child would need	86	14
25	I am comfortable asking questions and expressing concerns to school staff	82	18
20	My child's evaluation report (written summary) is written in terms I understand	80	20
23	IEP meetings are scheduled at a time and place that are convenient for me	80	20
17	The evaluation results were thoroughly explained to me	79	21
21	I have a good working relationship with my child's teachers	76	24
24	Teachers treat me as a team member	76	24

Survey Item Number	School age: School's Efforts to Partner with Parents	% Agree	% Disagree
16	All of my concerns and recommendations were documented on the IEP	75	25
18	Teachers and administrators encourage me to participate in the decision-making process	73	28
19	I felt part of the decision-making process	73	27
14	I feel I can disagree with my child's special education program or services without negative consequences for me or my child	71	29
9	The school communicates regularly with me regarding my child's progress on IEP goals	70	30
15	I am considered an equal partner with teachers and other professionals in planning my child's program	68	32
10	My child's school gives me enough information to know whether or not my child is making adequate progress	67	33
11	I was given all reports and evaluations related to my child prior to the IEP meeting	67	33
8	The school explains what options parents have if they disagree with a decision of the school	63	37
3	The school gives parents the help they may need to play an active role in their child's education	62	38
13	Teachers and administrators seek out parent input	62	38
12	Teachers and administrators at my child's school invite me to share my knowledge and experience with school personnel	61	39
4	I have been asked for my opinion about how well special education services are meeting my child's needs	56	45
6	The school gives me choices with regard to services that address my child's needs	56	44
7	I was given information about the research that supports the instructional methods used with my child	41	59
2	My child's school has helped me find resources in my community such as after-school programs, social services, etc.	39	61
1	The school offers parents training about special education issues	36	64
5	In preparation for my child's transition planning meeting I was given information about options my child will have after high school.	34	67

Survey Results- Indicator 8 and Rasch Analysis

While 32% of parents overall agree that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving special education services and results, this percentage is much higher for preschool parents (53%) than it is for school age parents (30%) (see Table 6).

Table 6
Percentage of Parent Response
At or Above the Standard

STATEWIDE	TOTAL RESPONSE	RESPONSES AT OR ABOVE THE STANDARD*		95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL	
		NUMBER	PERCENT	LOW	HIGH
Preschool	574	304	53%	48.9%	57%
School Age	4935	1462	30%	28.4%	31%
Combined	5509	1766	32%	30.8%	33.3%

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

Parent responses can also be evaluated by examining Rasch average scores. Looking at the Rasch means for a particular group allows stakeholders to make a judgment about how close that group came to meeting the standard (Rasch score of 600 or better). Using these averages it is possible to make comparisons across groups. In **Table 7**, 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. Confidence intervals are provided for both the percentages of parents who met the standard (**Table 6**) and for the Rasch mean scores (**Table 7**). The 95% confidence interval means that we can be 95% sure that the actual value (percentage or score) falls in the range between the low and high values that are reported.

Table 7
Rasch Score Averages

STATEWIDE	TOTAL RESPONSE	RASCH MEAN SCORE	95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL		
			CI (+/-)	LOW	HIGH
Preschool	574	616.1	10.5	605.6	626.6
School Age	4935	548.2	3.5	544.7	551.6
Combined	5509	555	3.3	551.9	558.6

IV. Conclusions

The final section of this report highlights successes of the 2008 Parent Involvement Survey and makes recommendations to improve the survey administration process, increase response rates, and use data to inform improvement activities.

Successes

Working together, NHDOE and MI...

- established survey administration processes to disseminate over 37,000 surveys to 172 NH school districts.
- worked collaboratively with the Parent Survey Advisory Group to include the perspective of other stakeholder groups in the decision making process.
- compiled, formatted, and translated the final selection of items for both the preschool and school age surveys.
- consulted with NCSEAM experts regarding survey development, analysis, and reporting.
- conducted phone conferences and obtained consensus about ways to promote survey response and to raise parent awareness and understanding of the survey purpose/process.
- developed and copied 3009 surveys for parents of preschool children receiving special education services and 34,406 surveys for parents of school age students receiving special education services.
- developed scannable survey forms and mailed over 37,000 forms to school districts to distribute to parents in 2 languages—both English and Spanish. Parents were given the option of completing the survey online. Both the preschool and school age versions were offered in English and Spanish through a secured website provided by MI.
- established an on-going system for communicating. A “hotline” response system was implemented to establish a communication system to address or refer questions from school district personnel and/or parents.
- provided interpreters for 13 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.

MI acknowledges the contributions made by the New Hampshire Department of Education and the Parent Survey Advisory Group and we thank them for their cooperation throughout the process. Their assistance and support helped to ensure 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...

- 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 Parent Survey Advisory 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.
- evaluate survey administration processes and procedures and revise the elements of survey administration based on those findings.
- broaden the base of understanding for the survey process and for what is being measured in Indicator 8 of the NH SPP.
- develop and provide materials that explain to families the importance and potential results 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 2008.
- Offer parent training sessions to convey a greater understanding of special education and emphasize the importance of their involvement in their child’s special education experience.
- NHDOE will provide technical assistance to schools to ensure census data is valid and reliable.
- Provide written information to each family about the survey at their child’s IEP meeting.
- Establish a web site/links to reach all parents whose children are receiving special education services.
- Provide guidance to all 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.
- Include information on the survey process in a parent handbook and provide this handbook to all parents of students with disabilities.

Suggestions for Using the Data

- Train district personnel on ways to use the survey data.
- Use survey results to identify key areas for 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 NH 2007 Annual Performance Report (APR)

By 2009 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.
- work with the Parent Training and Information Center in collaboration with other key stakeholders to develop and disseminate a parent manual that will include useful information (e.g. information relating to laws, getting to know your team members, available resources, etc.) to parents whose children are entering the special education system.
- provide professional development and parent workshops to improve partnership efforts between schools and families.



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