



New Hampshire Parent Involvement
Survey in Special Education: *2016-17*
Statewide Results

November 2017



New Hampshire Department of Education

Executive Summary

Background and Project Context

The New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE), Bureau of Special Education, has contracted with Gibson Consulting Group (Gibson) to conduct the NH Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education. The goal of the contract is to provide data for reporting requirements for the Department of Education's Special Education State Performance Plan. Each state must submit a State Performance Plan (SPP) to the United States Department of Education (USDOE), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Federal reporting requirements mandate that states report their progress relating to special education in their Annual Performance Reports (APRs). Specifically, NHDOE reports on Indicator B-8 by measuring "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." In order to meet this requirement, as well as to collect data to help inform improvements at the district and state levels, New Hampshire uses the National Center for Special Education Accountability and Monitoring (NCSEAM) Parent Involvement Surveys.

In January 2014, Gibson was awarded a contract with the NHDOE for the administration, analysis, and reporting of results for Indicator B-8 for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. NHDOE renewed Gibson's contract in 2016 for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years.

NCSEAM Parent Involvement Surveys

To measure the percentage of parents who felt that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for their child with disabilities, the research team administered the NCSEAM Parent Involvement Survey instrument. The NCSEAM instruments are comprised of two separate survey versions: one for parents of preschool aged students (referred to hereafter as the "Preschool" survey) and one for parents of students ages 6 through 21 (referred to hereafter as the "School Age" survey). Both surveys present a series of questions about parent involvement in their child's education. NCSEAM's survey development process resulted in the creation of item banks from which states have some flexibility to choose questions. New Hampshire selected and finalized its items in 2007-08 and has used the same items every year since. The preschool survey consists of 25 items, while the school age instrument consists of 26 items. Parents respond to each item on a scale of 1 (very strongly disagree) to 6 (very strongly agree). The survey instrument collects additional background information including the child's age, primary disability/exceptionality, grade, ethnicity, and the name of the child's school.

In 2014-15, the Gibson team and the NHDOE project staff slightly modified the survey instrument to include one additional question: whether the parent had completed the survey about the same child in the prior year. This additional question was retained for future survey administrations. The research

team made surveys available in English and Spanish, and worked with school districts to make the survey accessible to parents in any other languages needed.

Survey Block Assignment

Prior to 2014-15, New Hampshire surveyed parents of all students receiving special education services in the state every year. In 2014-15, New Hampshire migrated to a “census over two years” method, such that parents of students receiving special education services in a representative half of the state were surveyed in 2014-15 (Block A), and the other half in 2015-16 (Block B). This strategy allows districts time to consider and implement improvement strategies, and to reduce the experience of survey fatigue for district staff and parents. In 2016-17, the two-year cycle started over and Block A was surveyed.¹ Block A included all the same districts that were surveyed with Block A in 2014-15.

Survey Administration

Survey administration followed the same process used in previous years, with minor modifications driven by lessons learned from prior administrations.

Preparation for Launch

To reach parents of students receiving special education services, the research team coordinated with districts and SAUs within survey block A to obtain the number of surveys needed based on the number of students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) as of February 1, 2017. The research team collected counts using an online form through which district and SAU contacts input the number of students for whom the reporting district was the district of liability.²

Survey Launch

In March of 2017, the research team packaged and shipped survey kits to each district based on the student counts provided in February. When multiple districts were nested within an SAU, kits were shipped to the SAU, but materials were packaged separately by district. Each kit contained sealed postage-paid preschool surveys and sealed postage-paid school age surveys. Envelopes were printed with a return address, but the address field was blank. Each envelope included a hard copy survey and an enclosed letter to parents. Districts and SAUs were instructed to address each envelope to the individual signing each student’s IEP. Thus, parents with multiple children receiving special education services would receive multiple surveys.

The letter to parents enclosed in the envelope and the survey instrument itself both included instructions for accessing the survey online. Thus, while paper surveys were mailed to parents of every student receiving special education services, respondents could choose to complete the survey online or mail back a hard copy survey. This flexibility enabled the research team to rely on additional marketing

¹ For details on the block assignment process, please see Rapaport, A., M. Garland, and J. Carle. 2016. “2014-15 and 2015-16 Statewide Results: New Hampshire Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education.”

² Counts of the number of students receiving special education services provided by districts in February will differ somewhat from state counts, which are based on data as of October of each school year.

materials for follow-up efforts because the ability to respond was not contingent on a parent physically receiving a hard copy survey. The online version of each survey instrument was available at www.NHparent.com in English and Spanish.

Follow-Up Activities to Increase Response Rates

Included in the initial survey kits were postage-paid postcard reminders. Staff were instructed to mail these postcard reminders, one to the signer of each student's IEP, two weeks following the survey launch.

In addition to the postcard reminder, the research team stayed in close contact with districts and SAUs during the survey administration window. Each district received the following materials for use in advertising and supporting the survey effort:

- Email content (in English and Spanish) that could be sent to parents for whom the district had email information on file.
- A flyer suitable for dissemination throughout schools alerting parents to the importance of the effort and further publicizing the online survey URL.
- A script for districtwide phone messaging systems to call parents of students receiving special education services (in English and Spanish) and reminding them of the survey effort.
- Content for use on social media sites (in English and Spanish).

Other email communications with districts and SAUs included reminders to send the postcards and to use the marketing materials for advertising the survey effort. Halfway through the survey administration window, the research team provided each district with their prior year's response rate along with a response rate to-date to try to motivate additional district efforts to reach out to parents. As parents submitted responses, the research team also made calls to districts and SAUs that were not on track to exceed their prior year's response rates to verify that district and SAU staff sent reminder postcards and utilized the follow-up materials provided.

The research team sent a "final push" email to all districts and SAUs one week prior to closure of the survey administration window. This final email again included survey response rates to-date and reminders to advertise the survey. The survey administration period officially closed in mid-May, but the research team accepted completed submissions through mid-June.

Response Rate

In 2016-17, the research team sent over 14,000 surveys to parents. A total of 2,211 were completed and returned (a 16% response rate). In 2014-15, the research team sent roughly 14,300 surveys to parents and 2,359 were completed and returned (a 17% response rate).

Respondent Group

Parents provided information on the survey about the characteristics of their children. According to their responses, students who had parents respond to the survey were mostly representative of the state's population of students receiving special education services (based on the population of students served during the 2016-17 school year).³ Similarities and differences between the overall respondent group and the state's population of students receiving special education services included:

- Sixty-eight percent of surveys completed by parents were about a male student, and 66% of the state population of special education students were male.
- The respondent group was similar to the state's population of students receiving special education services as defined by race/ethnicity. However, the respondent group was over-representative of parents identifying their student as multiple races (10% in the respondent group, compared with 2% in the state). Additionally, 6% of the state's special education population is Hispanic and 2% are Black (Not Hispanic), compared with 1% of the responding parent group who reported their child as Hispanic and Black (Not Hispanic), respectively. All other differences were less than one percentage point in size.
- The respondent group varied in two primary ways from the state population as defined by the student's primary exceptionality/disability. First, a greater percentage of respondents reported their students' primary exceptionality was Autism (15% among the respondent group compared with 10% across the state). Second, a smaller percentage of the respondent group reported their students' primary exceptionality was Other Health Impairment (11% in the respondent group compared with 18% in the state) and Specific Learning Disability (27% in the respondent group compared with 32% in the state). All other differences were roughly three percentage points or fewer in size.
- Responses were distributed across all grade levels and age ranges. Thirteen percent of responses were from parents of preschool aged students, 37% among parents of students in elementary school, 23% from parents of middle school students, and 25% from parents of high school students.

Key Findings

The items on the preschool and school age surveys each hold a position on a nationally validated scale. An item's position on the scale is referred to as its item location. Items with lower values (item locations) are easier to agree with; items with higher values are more difficult to agree with. The research team calculated a scale score for each returned survey. A scale score of 600 on the Parent Involvement Survey was recommended by NCSEAM as the threshold for determining whether a parent with a child receiving special education services reports that the schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of

³ Hersh, Terry. (2016). *New Hampshire Department of Education Statewide Census by Disability*. (http://education.nh.gov/instruction/special_ed/documents/child_count_october_1_2016.pdf)

improving special education services and results. Using this threshold in New Hampshire led to the results reported below.

Table 1 presents overall statewide results on the percent of parents meeting the NCSEAM threshold and the average scale scores, separately for preschool and school age surveys, as well as overall. Results are further discussed in the sections below.

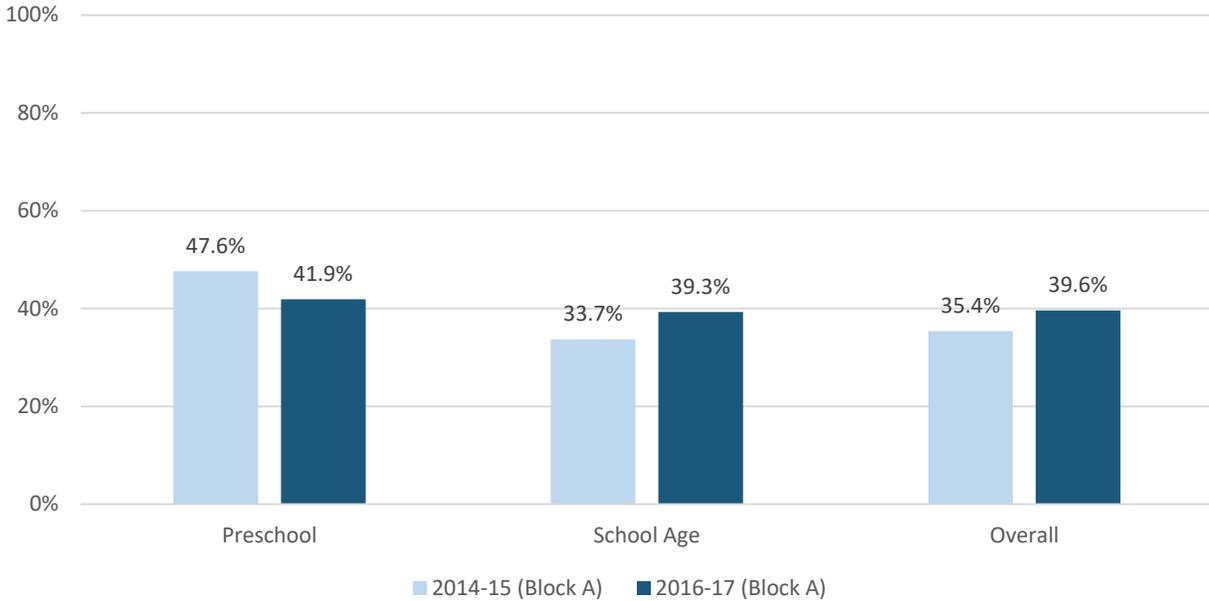
Table 1. Overall Statewide Results, Block A Comparison

	2014-15 (Block A)	2016-17 (Block A)
Percent met overall	35.4%	39.6%
Percent met preschool	47.6%	41.9%
Percent met school age	33.7%	39.3%
Average scale score overall	560	567
Average scale score preschool	609	584
Average scale score school age	553	565

Across the state, 39.6% of parents met or exceeded a scale score of 600 in 2016-17, indicating that they believe districts are facilitating parent involvement as a means of improving services for their child (Figure 1).

- This represents an increase of four percentage points since the last time the same districts were surveyed in 2014-15.
- This overall total was comprised of 41.9% of parents of preschool students scoring at or above 600, a sharp drop from the 47.6% who scored 600 or above in 2014-15. However, 39.6% of parents of school age children scored 600 or above, an increase of roughly six percentage points from 2014-15.

Figure 1. Overall Percent at Standard (Exceeding a Scale Score of 600), Block A Comparison



Across Block A districts surveyed in 2016-17, the average scale score was 567, an increase of seven points from 560 in 2014-15 (the last time the same districts were surveyed).

- Responses at the preschool level were higher on average (584) compared with school age (565), a pattern consistent with results in 2014-15 (609 among parents of preschool students and 553 among parents of school age children). However, the difference in average scale scores between preschool and school age parents decreased between 2014-15 and 2016-17. In 2014-15, preschool parents in Block A districts scored an average of 56 points higher, compared with 19 points higher in 2016-17.

Scale scores varied by student and school district characteristics. Among school age parents (for whom there were more surveys submitted), scale scores ranged:

- By school level: Results at the late middle school and early high school levels were consistently lower than results from the elementary school level.
- By grade: From a low in Grades 8 and 9 to a high in kindergarten and Grade 2.

At the district-level, scale score results ranged widely, though the minimum and maximum scores did not vary much from 2014-15 to 2016-17.⁴

⁴ Only districts that had 11 or more surveys sent (i.e., students served) are included in the district-level analysis.

New Hampshire's Commitment to Family-School Partnerships and Family Voice

Over 50 years of research demonstrates the beneficial effects of family engagement in children's education. When families and schools work together, children are more likely to experience success in school including: earning higher grades, earning credit, adapting well to school and attending regularly, graduating and going on to higher education and positive outcomes in life.

To support the NH Department of Education's work in regards to the Parent Involvement Survey, a group of stakeholders was brought together to form the Indicator 8 Input Group. This input group has been in existence since 2007. Members include Special Education Directors and Administrators, the NH School Administrators Association, a representative from the State Advisory Committee on the Education of Students/Children with Disabilities, Parent Leaders, NHDOE personnel, and the Parent Information Center. The Indicator 8 Input Group assists the NHDOE by reviewing the statewide data and by identifying trends, needs and improvement activities. They continue to support the improvement efforts about the survey administration process and state level activities and they identify the need to advance the research to acquire a universal model for family based engagement practices in New Hampshire.

The New Hampshire Department of Education recognizes the need to build the capacity of all families of children and school staff to work together in partnership by utilizing the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. Developed by Dr. Karen Mapp and Paul Kuttner and released through collaboration with SEDL and the U.S Department of Education, *the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships* lays out a structure for designing family-school partnership initiatives. Based in existing research and best practices, it is intended to act as a scaffold for the development of family-school partnership strategies, policies, and programs that are linked to student achievement and school improvement (SEDL).

The New Hampshire Department of Education continues to partner with families, schools, and organizations working together to address the need for a universal family-school partnership model by providing the implementation of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships as the foundation for the New Hampshire Scholastic Center for Authentic Family Voice.

For More Information:

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/framework>

Scholastic Family and Community Engagement <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/face/>

Information pertaining to the 2016-2017 New Hampshire Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education 2016-2017 Statewide results was provided by Gibson Consulting Group for the New Hampshire Department of Education .