



Virginia M. Barry, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education
Tel. 603-271-3144

Paul K. Leather
Deputy Commissioner of Education
Tel. 603-271-3801

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
101 Pleasant Street
Concord, N.H. 03301
FAX 603-271-1953
Citizens Services Line 1-800-339-9900**

Bureau of Special Education FY'15 Memo #12

Date: January 15, 2015

To: Superintendents of Schools
Special Education Directors

From: Office of the Commissioner of Education

Division of Educational Improvement
Bureau of Special Education

Re: Changes to the Administration of the Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education

In March 2015 the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE), Bureau of Special Education will begin conducting the eighth annual Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education. The NHDOE is required by the Office of Special Education (OSEP) in the Part B State Performance Plan (SPP) and the Annual Performance Report (APR) to conduct a statewide survey to measure the percentage 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 (Indicator 8). **Starting with the 2015 Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education, New Hampshire will be conducting a census survey over a two year period.**

What does this mean?

For the last seven years, New Hampshire has conducted an annual statewide survey of all parents of children with disabilities receiving special education services. Starting with the 2015 Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education, districts will be divided into two Survey blocks. Survey Block A will administer the Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education this year (March 2015). Survey Block B will administer the Parent Involvement Survey in FY'16 (March 2016). Over a two year period, all families in New Hampshire will have participated in the Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education.

Why did the Bureau make this change?

As this year marks the beginning of a new SPP period, it presented the opportunity to set a new baseline and targets for Indicator 8. Over the last several years, concerns have been raised over survey fatigue. Both district staff and families have also expressed concerns that there is a very small window of time between when survey results are available and the next administration. Further, this small window is not sufficient to implement strategies to strengthen family involvement and family-school partnerships. Thus, the determination was made to conduct a census survey over a two year period. This reflects New Hampshire's unique culture and still allows all parents to provide the important input to their district and State.

How did the Bureau gather stakeholder input when considering this change?

The NHDOE utilized the Indicator 8 Input Group which is made up of Special Education Directors, Parent Leaders from local family-school partnership groups (parents of children with disabilities), a representative from each of the following: New Hampshire Superintendents and Special Education Administrators Associations, the Parent Information Center, the NH State Advisory Committee (SAC), as well as staff from Gibson Consulting Group (the survey vendor) and the NH Connections project (technical assistance project funded by the NHDOE to support the development and improvement of family-school partnerships in special education) to help determine the most appropriate strategies to address the concerns raised. Additionally, the NHDOE consulted with Dr. Batya Elbaum, a nationally recognized expert on the Parent Involvement Survey in Special Education, to assist them in considering national trends and best-practices.

How were the Survey Blocks determined?

The Bureau worked with Gibson Consulting Group, Inc. to assign districts to the two Survey Blocks using a cluster stratified random sampling process. First, some districts that were nested within SAUs were blocked together for ease of survey administration, and then districts were stratified or arranged into groups based upon student enrollment size. Within those stratifications, districts were then randomly assigned to one of two groups named Block A or Block B. This process resulted in two groups or blocks of districts that are balanced on measures of average total student enrollment. The two groups (Block A and Block B) each have representation from every region of the State. The value of this approach is that each year, even though half of the State will be surveyed, each half is representative of the State overall.

How and when will districts know what Survey Block they are?

The Bureau will send letters to inform districts which Survey Block they have been assigned; this will happen within two (2) weeks of issuance of this memo.

What if I am in Survey Block A and will be administering the survey this year?

The letters for districts in Survey Block A who will be administering the survey this spring will include a detailed timeline and more information on the administration process. Additionally, the NHDOE has supplied Gibson with the name and contact information of the Special Education Director for each school district and they will contact districts in Block A to begin the survey administration process.

What should districts do if they are not administering the survey this year?

The letters for districts in Survey Block B will provide detailed information on resources available to support district staff and families in understanding their Indicator 8/Parent Involvement Survey data and in developing action plans for implementing strategies to improve family-school partnerships in special education. The NH Connections Project (www.nhconnections.org) is available to support districts in these activities regardless of which Survey Block they may be in.

How do we communicate this change to parents?

It is important to communicate to families that the NHDOE and local school districts value their input and this is why New Hampshire has chosen to conduct a census over two years. This ensures that all families have the ability to provide their input and allows time for families and school district staff to develop and implement strategies to improve family-school partnerships in special education. The NHDOE and the NH Connections project have developed materials to help districts communicate the change in the survey administration process to parents. These materials can be accessed on both the NHDOE and NH Connections websites:

- http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/special_ed/parent_involv.htm
- (www.nhconnections.org)

The Department of Education looks forward to working with your district to ensure an effective administration of the parent survey. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mary Lane at: 603-271-3740 or Mary.Lane@doe.nh.gov.