

Understanding the Florida ESE Parent Survey: Florida's Tool for Collecting Data Related to Indicator 8 of the State Performance Plan January, 2010

The Florida ESE Parent Survey

The Florida ESE Parent Survey is administered every year in order to collect data addressing Indicator 8 of the State Performance Plan (SPP). The SPP requires states to report, each year, 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.”

The items on the Florida survey were developed through a project funded by the U. S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). OSEP supported this work so that states would have a valid and reliable instrument to use to collect data on schools' facilitation of parent involvement. Many states in the U.S. are using this instrument to collect data for their Annual Performance Reports.

The Schools' Efforts to Partner with Parents Scale (SEPPS)

The 25 items included in the Florida ESE Parent Survey (both the K-12 version and the Pre-K version) describe different ways that schools facilitate parent involvement. When the items were piloted with a nationally representative sample of over 2,500 parents from 6 different states, it was discovered that there was a very consistent pattern in parents' responses. Regardless of the parents' state of residence or ethnic background, or of their child's age or type of disability, parents tended to agree more strongly with certain items than with others, indicating that they have experienced the content of some items to a greater extent than the content of other items. In fact, the items were found to line up in a very consistent order, reflecting the consistency in parents' relative levels of agreement with the different items. This consistent ordering can be interpreted to suggest a general tendency on the part of schools to implement some efforts to facilitate parent involvement more consistently, or more effectively, than other efforts.

Order of agreeability of the SEPPS items

Table 1 displays the K-12 survey items in order of their overall agreeability (note that this is not the order in which the items appear on the form that parents complete on paper or on the web). Each item has a number associated with it - the item's “calibration” value - that indexes the item's agreeability. Items with lower calibration values are more agreeable, overall, than items with higher values. That is, parents tend to respond more positively to items lower on the scale than to items higher on the scale. A reasonable interpretation of this pattern is that schools generally do a better job relative to items that are lower on the scale than they do relative to items that are higher on the scale.

Scores on the SEPPS

A specialized software program is used to assign each anonymous respondent a score on the SEPPS. This score is based on each person's responses to all the items. (It does not matter if the parent skips some items.) The SEPPS score can be interpreted somewhat like scores on well-known tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (the “SAT”). For example, a student's score on the math portion of the SAT gives

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a measure of the student's overall ability in mathematics. A parent's score on the SEPPS gives a measure of the extent to which the parent feels that their child's school facilitated their involvement.

What score on the SEPPS represents an acceptable level of schools' facilitation of parent involvement?

Valid scores on the SEPPS, like those on the SAT, range from 200 to 800. What is a "good" score on the SAT? Different people probably have different answers to that question. What is a "good" score on the SEPPS? Different people probably also have different answers to that question. For purposes of accountability reporting, however, scores need to be evaluated against a consistent standard. In the state of Florida this standard was set at a score of 600. When all the data for a given year are collected, the state counts the number of parents with scores at or above 600 and divides this number by the total number of parents who responded to the survey. The resulting percentage represents the "percent of parents who report that schools facilitated their involvement," and this is the percentage that is reported to the federal government.

What level of agreement on the part of a parent – or, viewed from the school perspective, what level of effort on the part of a school - corresponds to a score of 600? In terms of agreement, a score of 600 means that a respondent has a pattern of responses characterized primarily by responses of "strongly agree" or "very strongly agree" to the items on the scale that have calibration values up to 600. In terms of school efforts, a score of 600 means that, to give only some examples, teachers are available to speak with parents, teachers and administrators respect parents' cultural heritage, teachers treat parents as a team member, all of the parents' concerns and recommendations were documented on the IEP, teachers and administrators ensure that parents have fully understood the Procedural Safeguards, the school communicates regularly with parents regarding their child's progress on IEP goals, and the school explains what options parents have if they disagree with a decision of the school.

Though the federal government allows each state to set its own standard, 17 states besides Florida have adopted the same performance standard, i.e., a score of 600 on the SEPPS, for indicator 8. This is the standard that was recommended by a nationally representative stakeholder group convened by the OSEP-funded National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring (NCSEAM), which developed the instrument. Florida's most recent report of the state's performance on this and other SPP indicators can be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/ESE/pdf/FFY-APRforOSEP.pdf>.

Table 1. Schools' Efforts to Partner with Parents Scale (K-12 Items)

Item Calibration	Schools' Efforts to Partner with Parents Scale (K-12) Items
673	I was offered special assistance (such as child care) so that I could participate in the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meeting.
653	The school offers parents training about special education issues.
647	I was given information about organizations that offer support for parents of students with disabilities.

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634	The school provides information on agencies that can assist my child in the transition from school.
600	The school explains what options parents have if they disagree with a decision of the school.
591	I have been asked for my opinion about how well special education services are meeting my child's needs.
581	The school gives parents the help they may need to play an active role in their child's education.
573	Written justification was given for the extent that my child would not receive services in the regular classroom.
570	The school gives me choices with regard to services that address my child's needs.
564	At the IEP meeting, we discussed how my child would participate in statewide assessments.
561	The school offers parents a variety of ways to communicate with teachers.
550	The school communicates regularly with me regarding my child's progress on IEP goals.
544	Teachers and administrators seek out parent input.
533	Teachers and administrators show sensitivity to the needs of students with disabilities and their families.
528	Teachers and administrators ensure that I have fully understood the Procedural Safeguards [the rules in federal law that protect the rights of parents].
526	Teachers and administrators encourage me to participate in the decision-making process.
523	The school has a person on staff who is available to answer parents' questions.
513	All of my concerns and recommendations were documented on the IEP.
511	Teachers treat me as a team member.
507	I am considered an equal partner with teachers and other professionals in planning my child's program.
505	My child's evaluation report is written in terms I understand.
505	Written information I receive is written in an understandable way.
504	Teachers and administrators respect my cultural heritage.
492	Teachers are available to speak with me.
490	At the IEP meeting, we discussed accommodations and modifications that my child would need.