

# **Survey of Parents of Students Receiving Special Education Services in Texas**

**Fall Administration - December 2006**

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**A Collaborative Effort Among**

**Education Service Center Region 9  
Texas Education Agency  
Parent Coordination Network**



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## Acknowledgement

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*Students.* While this was a survey distributed to parents, the intent of this study is to improve special education services in Texas. In addition to the indirect support for this study by being the focus of their parents concern, many students also served as couriers in delivering the surveys home.

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**Disclaimer.** The descriptions and interpretations provided in this report are those of Academic Information Management and do not necessarily reflect positions of the Texas Education Agency, ESC 9, or other organizations and entities associated with or participating in this survey.

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# **Statewide Survey of Parents of Students Receiving Special Education Services: Executive Summary**

## **Background**

Since 2000, Texas has been following the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP) that is designed to assess, on an ongoing basis, the impact and effectiveness of state and local efforts in providing early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and to their families.

During the spring of 2002, OSEP monitored the state of Texas. The ongoing improvement and planning activities that have occurred in response to the federal monitoring process are referred to as the Texas Continuous Improvement Process (TCIP). OSEP identified five monitoring priorities and twenty indicators to be included in the State Performance Plan (SPP). For each of the indicators, the State must report progress on measurable and rigorous targets and improvement activities over a six-year period of time. The findings presented in this report summarize survey findings related to Indicator 8: *Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving service and results for children with disabilities.*

Based on SPP's Indicator 8, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is required to collect parent involvement information for students receiving special education services. To assist in this task, Education Service Center Region 9 (statewide lead for Parent Coordination) contracted Academic Information Management (AIM) to help develop the survey, distribute, and analyze the fall 2006 survey. The fall parent and principals survey was distributed in October 2006. A second survey will be distributed in spring 2007. This report summarizes information collected from the first two surveys, principals and parent, distributed in fall 2006.

## **Survey Approach and Development**

### **Parent Survey**

*Survey development and production.* In September 2005, the Parent Coordination Network reviewed questions from the National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring (NCSEAM) parent survey and the Statewide Survey of Parents of Students with Disabilities distributed by TEA and Region 9 in 2003. A separate survey development committee was created to develop the SPP survey. A one-page, questionnaire was developed in both English and Spanish versions. The survey's questions focus on the following issues: parent satisfaction, communication between parents and school, parents understating of information, services and information provided, school climate, teacher role, and parent participation in training.

*Sampling.* The fall 2006 parent survey was used in a developmental effort to proof and refine the distribution, collection, and analysis methodology for subsequent, full-scale surveys. As such, a reduced group of parents were sampled (approximately 2,000) compared to the first full-scale survey scheduled for spring 2007 (12,000). One-sixth of all Texas districts will be sampled each year with every district included at some point during the six-year cycle. For the fall 2006 survey, 232 campuses within 100

districts were included in the sample. Once the districts and campuses were selected, a sample of students was drawn based on data provided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

*Survey Distribution.* Surveys were to be completed by the parent or guardian of the students listed on the return envelopes. Each parent received an envelope with the child’s name, a letter of instruction, the survey and a return, postage-paid envelope. For questions, phone numbers were provided for the Region 9, TEA, and AIM.

## Principal Survey

In addition to the parent survey, 232 surveys were mailed separately to principals of campuses included in the fall survey sample. These surveys were distributed in October and principals were asked to return the survey by October 25, 2006. The principal’s survey questions focused on items that parallel the parent survey.

## Findings

A total of 434 parent surveys were returned. Of these, 346 English and 57 Spanish surveys were returned in time to be included in the quantitative analyses (n=403). The overall return rate for parent surveys was approximately 24 percent. Of the 346 surveys, 204 parents also provided answers to the open-ended questions. Of these, 171 provided feedback in English, and 33 responded in Spanish. Of the 232 principals surveys that were distributed, 37 were returned, representing a 16 percent return rate.

A total of 24 questions from the parent survey were examined divided into seven topic specific categories. Grouping the three types of responses (Always-Never, Yes-No, and Agree-Disagree), Table 1 contains a summary of responses within these categories. In general, with one notable exception, the responses were overall positive. The percentage of responses in the least positive category, again with one exception, was also small. This category (Parental Actions) included participation in PTA/PTO, attending training sessions, and whether special education services had helped make changes in family routines.

**Table 1: Summary by Category**

Category	Positive	Neutral	Negative
	Always Agree Yes	Sometimes Neutral	Never Disagree No
General School Issues	70.0%	21.0%	9.0%
Communication Issues	75.0%	28.1%	11.0%
Information and Understanding	81.6%	18.3%	9.3%
Teacher Issues	71.4%	26.3%	2.3%
IEP and ARD	80.1%	13.9%	6.0%
Parental Interactions	80.8%	16.6%	2.6%
Parental Actions	35.6%	24.9%	39.6%

*Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

Regarding communications, the degree to which a parent communicates regularly with the teacher had a lower positive rating. Within the same category, there was also some disagreement whether special education services have helped the parent communicate more effectively with the people who work with their child.

The second category with the least positive ratings is related to teacher issues. When asked if the teacher understands a child’s needs, quarter, 26 percent of parents responded “sometimes.” On the other hand, the

ratings for whether the teachers were willing to discuss a child's needs received a higher rating. Special education teachers were rated higher than general education teachers on the paired items examining implementation of IEPs. Another area that had a relatively high overall rating (General School Issues), had two items that were not highly rated. These two items related to transition from high school.

Overall, parent open ended survey parallels the responses received in the structures survey. Parents that responded to the survey are overall satisfied with the services received by their children's school. Following is a list of the overall findings from parent responses.

*Overall satisfaction*—the majority of respondents expressed being satisfied with the special education services provided by schools.

*Communication improvements, regular reports to parents*—across all questions in the parent open-ended survey, one relevant concern had to do with communication between parents and the special education staff (or communication between the special education setting and the general education setting). Parents want to be kept informed and want to know how to help the academic progress of their children.

*Teachers and student monitoring*—though relatively few criticisms were offered with respect to teachers in the parent open-ended survey, to enhance the relationship with the special education teacher, many parents wanted more contact through progress reports, and thusly, the frequency of student progress monitoring was also brought to fore. This is similar to the communication issue already described.

*More resources*—Parents noted that students with disabilities need intensive services. Respondents want more resources like more student-teacher time or services outside the school day.

The principals that responded to the survey offered multiple examples of successful parental involvement strategies. Most strategies involve improving communications, having “open door policies,” and providing opportunities to participate in making decisions and in volunteering.

Principals also noted how significant parent involvement is to a school. They listed numerous important examples of parent participation activities. Parents have assisted in the classroom as tutors, mentors and overall classroom aides. They have contributed in many school events, like festivals, field trips, fund raising, and many other special projects. Parents have become actively involved in the site-based management process and other school organizations.

Overall, principals noted that parent contributions and involvement is a critical component for schools and for children. The many obstacles and barriers parents face to become more active in their children's education were also noted by the principals. Among many reasons, principals listed lack of time, transportation, and work schedules.



# Statewide Survey of Parents of Students Receiving Special Education Services

## Introduction

### Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires each State to develop a six-year performance plan. This State Performance Plan (SPP) evaluates the State's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEA and illustrates how the State will continuously improve upon this implementation. The Texas SPP was submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) for approval on January 30, 2006. OSEP approved the Texas SPP on May 22, 2006. The first Annual Performance Report (APR) based on the SPP is due February 2007.

OSEP identified five monitoring priorities and twenty indicators to be included in the SPP. For each of the indicators, the State must report progress on measurable and rigorous targets and improvement activities over a six-year period of time. The findings presented in this report summarize survey findings related to Indicator 8: *Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving service and results for children with disabilities.*<sup>1</sup>

Since 2000, Texas has been following the OSEP Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP) that is designed to assess, on an ongoing basis, the impact and effectiveness of state and local efforts in providing early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and to their families. In addition, state and local agencies must ensure a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to children and youth with disabilities.

During the spring of 2002, OSEP monitored the state of Texas. In 2003, the TEA received the OSEP Monitoring Report, which specified areas of noncompliance, highlighted strengths, and suggested areas of improvement for Texas IDEA-B (ages 3-21) and IDEA-C (ages 0-3) programs. The ongoing improvement and planning activities that have occurred in response to the federal monitoring process are referred to as the Texas Continuous Improvement Process (TCIP). Using the TCIP, the state submitted an Improvement Plan in response to the OSEP Monitoring Report. It addresses areas of improvement identified during three phases of the process: the self-assessment, validation planning (public meeting), and validation data collection (on-site visit).

Region 9 Education Service Center (Region 9) is the statewide lead for Parent Coordination. Through its efforts, it has established a statewide Parent Coordination network, made up of representatives from each of the 20 regional education service centers. This network is committed to ensuring that parents of students with disabilities receive accurate and timely information that will help them support their children in their education. The network meets to review the state's current status regarding parent involvement and related issues and to determine the extent to which Texas agencies had achieved the results outlined

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Education Agency. Division of IDEA Coordination. State Performance Plan / 2005 – 2010. <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/spp/>, page 31.

in the TCIP. An overview describing the CIMP, TCIP, the self-assessment, the Texas Monitoring Report, and the Improvement Plan may be found at: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us.special.ed/cimp/>.

In response to the Improvement Plan, the TEA and the Parent Coordination Network, through the leadership of Region 9 conducted a survey in 2003 of parental understanding of special education issues. The surveys were distributed to 32,000 parents and the results were posted on the Region 9 website at [www.esc9.net/survey/](http://www.esc9.net/survey/).

Based on SPP's Indicator 8, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) is required to collect parent involvement information for students receiving special education services. To assist in this task, Region 9 contracted Academic Information Management (AIM) to help develop the survey, distribute, and analyze the fall 2006 and spring 2007 surveys. In addition, AIM will develop a general findings report and draft APR. The fall parent and principals survey were distributed in October 2006. This report summarizes information collected from the principals and parent surveys. The survey results will be used to meet the APR requirements under the SPP for school year 2005-06.

A second survey will be distributed in the spring of 2007 to address the State Performance Plan's Indicator 8. The spring parent survey sampling will be much larger.

## Survey Approach and Development

### Parent Survey

*Survey development and production.* In September 2005, the Parent Coordination Network reviewed questions from the National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring (NCSEAM) parent survey and the Statewide Survey of Parents of Students with Disabilities distributed by TEA and Region 9 in 2003. A separate survey development committee was created to develop the SPP survey. Committee members included representatives from TEA, Region 9, Academic Information Management, and from local schools and districts. In addition to the surveys reviewed, committee members also reviewed SPP resource from the Federal Resource Center website ([www.dssc.org](http://www.dssc.org)) and information provided by Joyce Epstein's Parent Involvement Survey. Lastly, committee members reviewed finding from the Statewide Survey of Parents of Students with Disabilities Receiving Special Education Services.

A one-page, two-sided, scannable questionnaire was then developed. The committee selected questions from both surveys with a focus on parent involvement in addition to creating new items. The survey's questions focus on the following issues: parent satisfaction, communication between parents and school, parents understating of information, services and information provided, school climate, teacher role, and parent participation in training. The survey was distributed on scannable forms (English) with supplemental forms in Spanish when the child's TEA home language survey indicated Spanish. Samples of the parent surveys are included in Appendix A.

*Sampling.* The fall 2006 parent survey was used in a developmental effort to proof and refine the distribution, collection, and analysis methodology for subsequent, full-scale surveys. As such, a reduced group of parents were sampled (approximately 2,000) compared to the first full-scale survey scheduled for spring 2007 (12,000). One-sixth of all Texas districts will be sampled each year with every district included at some point during the six-year cycle. However, each district that enrolls 50,000 students or more must be included each year.

To select districts and campuses, a sampling matrix that considered geographic area, district size, and student demographics was developed. The sample for the fall 2006 and samples for annual surveys that will be distributed through 2010-12 were derived from this matrix. In large districts (districts enrolling more than 50,000 students), a further sample of campuses was selected. Selecting campuses within the larger districts facilitated the distribution of surveys so that a large number of campuses would not receive only one or two parent surveys. A list of all districts and campuses sampled each year will be maintained to ensure that all districts (and campuses within the larger districts) will be included in the survey during the six-year cycle. For the fall 2006 survey, 232 campuses within 100 districts were included in the sample.

Once the districts and campuses were selected, a sample of students was drawn based on data provided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) database. AIM entered into a confidentiality agreement with TEA to protect the identity of students. Following all analyses, datasets containing personally identifiable data were destroyed and / or overwritten. The final database includes information regarding student grade level, gender, ethnicity, and disability category. Students were then selected according to a sampling framework that considered these variables in a proportionate manner from the various campuses / districts. From this process, 1,843 students were selected to be included in the fall sample. Not all districts reported serving students with special education services. To increase the return rates for smaller incidence disability categories, over and under sampling was used. For example, while student with a learning disability constitute about 50 percent of the state population, they were included at about 35 percent in the sampling framework.

One issue relevant only for the selection of students in the fall 2006 survey regards the availability of current or up-to date data. The information available to select students was from the 2005-06 school year and was, thus, almost one-year old. For sample selections drawn for the spring 2007 and other future years, more current data will be available.<sup>2</sup>

*Survey Distribution.* Letters, included in Appendix B, were sent to district superintendents and special education directors informing them of the purpose of the survey. Approximately two weeks after the letter was distributed, surveys were sent bundled by campus to the districts included in the survey (distribution the last week of August 2006). Each package included the surveys and instructions to the campus contact person outlining methods for distributing the surveys. These surveys were to be completed by the parent or guardian of the students listed on the return envelopes. Each campus was asked to distribute the surveys to parents. Campuses were allowed to select their own method—sent home with the student, hand-delivered or mailed to the student’s home. For parents of students where the TEA Home Language Survey indicated that Spanish is spoken, English and a Spanish version were included. Additional surveys in English and Spanish were made available by-request.

Each parent received an envelope with the child’s name, a letter of instruction, the survey and a return, postage-paid envelope. For questions, phone numbers were provided for the Region 9, TEA, and AIM. Parents were asked to return the surveys by September 22, 2006. Surveys received by the end of October 2006 were included in the analyses.

## **Principal Survey**

In addition to the parent survey, 232 surveys were mailed separately to principals of campuses included in the fall survey sample. These surveys were distributed in early October and principals were asked to return the survey by October 25, 2006. Postage paid, self-addressed envelope were also provided.

The principal’s survey questions focused on items that parallel the parent survey. A copy of the principals is included in Appendix C. Principals were asked to respond to 14 questions regarding parental involvement. Principals were asked to identify successful parent involvement strategies and to list the most important contributions that parents make to their schools. In addition, principals were asked to identify strategies and practices that are targeted specifically to parents of students who receive special education services. Other issues included in the survey were: successful parent involvement strategies implemented by schools and teachers, parent participation in school activities, methods used by schools to communicate with parents, receive parental input, services provided in school that help increase parental involvement, successful parental contributions made to schools, parent training / annual meeting opportunities, and factors that impede parental involvement.

## **Database construction and analysis**

Surveys were returned in a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope. Each survey was examined—surveys that were not scannable (torn, smudged) were separated and hand entered using a structured data entry program. All other English surveys were scanned. Spanish surveys were also entered using a structured data entry program. All surveys were then combined into a database for further analyses. All primary data analysis was conducted using proprietary AIM software with some supplemental analysis using Microsoft Excel.

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<sup>2</sup> A full description of the sampling and survey distribution procedures was provided to Region 9 (*Parent Involvement – Special Education Services: Technical Operation Document*). Also, a description of the sampling approach is provided in the State Performance Plan available in the TEA website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/spp>.

Open ended comments received by parents and principals were coded and summarized by an experienced evaluation contractor. Responses were analyzed by question and clustered into various themes.

## **Limitations**

The information presented this report is appropriate at the state-level. The relatively small sample size used in this developmental effort was not designed to be representative at the student group (e.g., Hispanic) or disability category (e.g., Learning Disability) level. The percentage of surveys returned by each demographic category was approximately equal to the initial sample. It is emphasized that the fall survey was implemented as a developmental effort. Data collected in the spring 2007, however, will be analyzed from a much larger sample (12,000).

Another limitation to this report is the data used to select the sample of students were from the 2005-06 school year. Because the survey was distributed in September 2006, we were unable to select a sample using enrollment data for the 2006-07 school year. Thus, it was not possible to link directly a student and their parent to a particular campus during fall 2006 (the survey date). In addition, surveys might have been distributed to parents of students not in the sample list – however, this is not likely given that the student’s name was on the return envelope.

## Surveys return rates and demographics

Table 1 presents demographic information of students whose parents returned surveys. The state data were obtained from the Education Service Center 11 Supplemental Special Education Report.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1: Student Demographics: Surveys Returned, Initial Sample, State**

Categories	Surveys Returned	Initial Sample	State Special Education*
Ethnicity			
African American	19.3%	21.4%	17.7%
Hispanic	33.0%	44.0%	40.0%
White	41.7%	30.2%	40.8%
Gender			
Male	54.0%	54.9%	66.8%
Female	46.0%	45.1%	33.2%
Disability Category			
Learning Disability	31.5%	36.6%	50.0%
Speech	34.4%	31.7%	20.2%
Other Health Impaired	14.7%	11.6%	10.0%
Other	19.4%	20.1%	19.8%
Grade Span			
Elementary	62.5%	50.2%	39.7%
Middle	25.1%	19.4%	28.0%
High	12.4%	30.4%	32.4%
Economic Disadvantaged			
Yes	51.4%	57.7%	59.2%
No	48.6%	42.3%	40.8%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys, Initial Sample, ESC 11 SESR

\*The data presented for the state special education population is the most recently available (2004)

### Parent demographics

Parents were asked to provide personal information. This information is not otherwise available. Table 2 contains this information for the Spanish and English surveys combined. Note that these are self-reported data not subject to verification.

**Table 2: Parent Reported Demographic Information**

Level of Education				
Some HS	GED	High School Grad	Some College	College Grad
18.7%	7.8%	19.0%	28.2%	26.2%
Adults in household				
One	Two	More than 2		
17.0%	65.8%	17.2%		
Primary Transportation				
Public	Other	Car		
1.9%	5.3%	92.8%		

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

<sup>3</sup> Published state report by Education Service Center 11, 2004

Approximately equal percentages of respondents reported that they attended some high school or are high school graduates. Likewise, about equal percentages of parents reported that they attended some college or are college graduates. A smaller percentage of respondents to the Spanish survey answered this question as compared to those using the English survey. Only six percent of the Spanish survey respondents indicated that they had attended college or were college graduates. On the other hand, almost 66 percent of the Spanish survey respondents reported that they had attended some high school compared to 14 percent of the English survey respondent.

About equal percentages (17%) of survey respondents reported having only one or more than two adults living in the household. The remaining 66 percent of parents reported that there are two adults in the household. There was little difference in this value between respondents using the English versus Spanish surveys. The overwhelming percentage (92.8%) of parents reports using a car as their primary means of transportation.

### **Survey return rates**

A total of 434 parent surveys were returned. Of these, 346 English and 57 Spanish surveys were returned in time to be included in the quantitative analyses (n=403). The overall return rate for parent surveys was approximately 24 percent. Of the 434 returned surveys, 204 parents also provided answers to the open-ended questions. Of these, 171 provided feedback in English, and 33 responded in Spanish. Of the 232 principals surveys that were distributed, 37 were returned, representing a 16 percent return rate.

While it is desirable to have a 100 percent return rate, this rarely happens. Five factors that potentially impact whether the parent received the surveys are discussed, along with four factors that may have been important once parents received the packet.

### **Factors Affecting Whether Parents Receive Survey Packets**

*Mobility.* Mobility is defined as student movement from one district to another during a school year. According to previous TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report, there is about a 22 percent mobility rate among Texas students. Mobility data are not available separately for students receiving special education services, but there is no reason to suspect that they would differ dramatically from students in general. Although schools were asked to forward survey packets to a transferring student's new district, the likelihood of this actually happening was assumed to be low, based on AIM's prior experience. For some students, the new school may not have been known, or more than one district may have been involved. In any case, this mobility rate means that, in all likelihood, more than 20 percent of surveys never reached parents due to mobility alone. The issues of mobility will not be as large a problem in subsequent years when sampling data will be derived from the current school year.

*Leaving school.* For a variety of reasons – graduation, dropout, or withdrawal from home school, among others – some students leave the school system altogether. According to the AEIS reports, about 5 percent of students receiving special education services graduate each year, and there is a 1.1 percent *annual* dropout rate. Thus another six percent of surveys probably never found their way to parents. Again, this issue will be smaller in subsequent years.

*Grade level and intra-district mobility.* Because survey materials were packaged according to campus, based on student grade level during the previous year (the most recent available), approximately 17 percent of students (about 700,000) would have moved to another campus (e.g., elementary to middle). As noted, while campuses were asked to forward packets to students at their new schools, there is no assurance that this was done. It is impossible to determine how many surveys were not distributed due to such matriculation. However, we conservatively estimate this to be about 8 percent (or half of the

percentage who will have moved to another campus). As in the previous two categories, this issue should not be much of a factor in subsequent surveys.

*Not distributed by school.* It is possible that some districts or campus selected not do distribute the survey materials to parents.

*Not taken home.* As previously noted, although several methods for delivering survey materials to students' parents were suggested, it was likely that many schools sent them home with students. Nonetheless, it is very likely that many survey packets did not make it home. For example, some questionnaires were fairly obviously completed by students, based on statements on the surveys.

In summary, AIM estimates that at least 30 to 35 percent of survey packets never reached the parents for one or more of the reasons listed above.

### **Factors important after parents receive survey packets**

*Apathy.* Some parents, unfortunately, do not care to fill out a questionnaire. It is likely that this is a relatively small percentage.

*Suspicion.* Other parents may have been suspicious of the intent of the survey. Although reassurances were given that the unique code number did not identify the child or the school, the unique number may have influenced some parents to not complete the survey.

*Doubt that completing a survey will help their child.* Another reason for non-return of the survey might be parents' skepticism that this survey would have any positive impact for their child.

*Loss, other.* It is likely that a certain percentage of parents lost the questionnaire, forgot about it, or did not complete the survey for some reason other than those listed above.



## Findings

Three components are presented in the findings section—findings from the structured parent survey, open-ended parent responses, and findings from the principal survey. While each of these is presented separately, pertinent information from each component is presented as is relevant.

### Parent Survey

For the parent survey, seven categories of information were established. These seven categories are contained in Table 3. These groupings were selected to organize information to better understand patterns within the parents’ responses. This will help provide some context within which to interpret findings. Findings for the parent survey will be presented according to the categories listed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Structured Survey Reporting Components**

Categories	Description
General School	Centered on school actions and behaviors and perceptions of school climate
Communication	Communication between the school, teachers, and parents
Information & Understanding	The amount and quality of information provided and the level of understanding of the information by the parent
Teachers	General and Special Education teacher issues
IEP and ARD	Issues specific to IEP and ARD
Parental Interactions	Interactions between the parent and child and family issues
Parental Actions	Parent instigated actions relating to special education resources and training

### General School Issues

The first category of questions, *General School Issues*, includes questions with prompt containing phrases such as “the school . . .” or “the principal. “. Naturally there are overlaps among the other categories. Responses from eight questions were averaged and are presented in Table 4. Only one item within this category has a yes/no response and is not included in this table. For this report, a Type 1 Rating uses an *Always to Never* dimension; a Type 2, *Agree to Disagree*; and a Type 3, *Yes or No*.

**Table 4: Average Ratings Across Items in General School Issues**

Type 1 Ratings			Type 2 Ratings		
Always	Sometimes	Never	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
69.9%	20.3%	9.7%	52.5%	33.1%	14.4%

*Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

Within the ratings ranging from *Always to Never*, there were four items highly rated and one with a much lower percentage of *Always*. Likewise for the two items in the *Agree to Disagree* range, one was highly rated and one less so.

A key element to a successful partnership between the school and the parent is the school environment. The first question in this category relates to the school being a positive and welcoming place for the child. As seen in Table 5, less than one percent of parents responded *Never*. As well be seen in the majority of items within the survey, parents who responded using the Spanish version of the survey were more positive than those using the English version. Given the larger number of English surveys, the combined rating (adding Spanish to English) will strongly resemble the English version alone. With 80 percent of

parents saying that the school is *Always* a positive and welcoming place and another almost 20 percent responding *Sometimes*, this is a very welcome finding. However, the 20 percent who said *Sometimes* indicates that things could be better.

**Table 5: The school is a positive and welcoming place for my child**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	80.8%	79.2%	90.9%
Sometimes	18.4%	19.9%	9.1%
Never	0.8%	0.9%	0.0%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

While it is not possible to examine each question by each of the available demographics (such as student ethnicity, parent education, etc.), in some cases issues that might be reasonably associated with these variables will be examined in more depth. For the question presented in Table 5, focusing on the English version only, Hispanic parents (using the ethnicity of the child) were more likely to have a positive response (87%, *Always*), than African American parents (77%, *Always*), followed by White parents at 73 percent. The percentage of Hispanic parents reporting *Always* (87%) from the English survey is very close to that found in the Spanish survey (91%). In other words, regardless of language of the survey, Hispanic parents had a more positive response pattern. When considering the reported level of education, regardless of other variables, there was almost no difference in the percentage of parents reporting *Always* (around 80%) except for those reporting being a college graduate with about 74 percent reporting *Always*.

Table 6 presents data that are related to Table 5<sup>4</sup>. Except for African American parents, there were a higher percentage of parents that responded *Always* (The school is a positive place) for the Other Health Impaired (OHI) disability category. Otherwise there was not a strong trend one way or the other that has not already been covered (such as Hispanic parents being more positive in general).

**Table 6: “The school is a positive place;”  
Responses by disability and ethnic categories**

Reported Disability	Ethnicity			
	African American	Hispanic	White	Overall
L.D.	66.7%	83.3%	68.2%	73.7%
Speech	84.2%	80.6%	66.0%	74.3%
O.H.I.	77.8%	94.9%	84.6%	87.2%
All Other	78.6%	86.7%	65.0%	75.5%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

This finding was also observed in the parent open ended responses, where a large number of parents

... Through intimidation, we are made to feel that the requests we make for more inclusion in the regular education setting with modifications are unreasonable or impractical. When our student is placed even in the resource setting for some semblance of inclusion, there is no effort made to ensure success... Any attempts at improved communication or intervention from home are treated negatively and even used as an excuse to deny services or ignore the student...—Parent Survey

reportedly feel positive about school and the services they receive. There were few parents, however, that expressed discomfort in the school setting, as in the following quote.

<sup>4</sup> This table covers responses from a relatively small number of parents within each of the cells – more stable data are expected from the larger surveys in the future.

Responses to the second item in this category are reported in Table 7. Only 15 percent of parents responded *Sometimes*, while over 80 percent responded *Always*. The combined 1.3 percent of parents who respond *Never* represents 5 parents out of about 400 respondents.

**Table 7: The school provides my child with all the services documented on my child's IEP**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	83.3%	81.6%	94.2%
Sometimes	15.4%	17.2%	3.8%
Never	1.3%	1.1%	1.9%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

The first item within the *General Issues* category where parents' responses were different from the previous items is shown in Table 8. In this table, the percentage of parents that responded *Always* is lower than other questions in the category (with one exception.) In addition, there were about the same percentage of parents who responded *Sometimes* and *Never*. Issues relating to transportation may be a factor in this response. Special transportation services are often provided for students receiving special education services. After-school transportation services may not be available for these students, or for general education students. Although the majority of parents reported that a car was their primary means of transportation, this does not mean that the car, or the parent, is available to pick up their child from after-school activities or take them to school in the morning.

**Table 8: The school ensures that after-school and extracurricular activities are accessible to my child**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	70.8%	68.9%	84.8%
Sometimes	16.4%	16.9%	13.0%
Never	12.8%	14.2%	2.2%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Table 9 is specific to the principal as compared to the overall school. Within the context of "school", general education teachers, special education teachers, support staff and administrators are included. For this question, the principal, who is the instruction leader and holds overall responsibility for the school, is the focus of whether he or she supports special education services for their child. The responses to this question mirror those reported in Table 7 where the question related to the school providing IEP documented services. Over 80 percent of parents responded that the principal *Always* supports special education services. One distinction however is the percentage of parents who report that the principals *Never* support the special education services. For this item, approximately three times more parents (4.0%) answered *Never* compared to the percentage that reported *Never* reported in Table 7 (1.3%).

**Table 9: The principal supports special education services for my child**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	83.7%	81.9%	94.6%
Sometimes	12.3%	13.5%	5.4%
Never	4.0%	4.8%	0.0%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Central to issues surrounding parental involvement is the relationship between the school staff and parents. In this case, about 70 percent of parents believe that they are an equal partner. Also notable is the smaller relative difference between parents reporting with the English and Spanish surveys. While a higher

percentage of parents using the Spanish survey agreed that they are equal partners, this percentage is much closer to the percentage of English version surveys when compared to other questions. While, overall 70 percent of parents agreed, about one-quarter of parents were *Neutral* with regard to this question. Hispanic parents were generally more positive than African American parents who, in turn, were more positive than White parents. This same pattern holds for this question as well. In fact, only about 65 percent of White parents *Agree* with this statement.

**Table 10: I am considered an equal partner with teachers and other professionals in planning my child's program**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Agree	70.0%	69.1%	75.5%
Neutral	24.4%	25.0%	20.8%
Disagree	5.6%	5.9%	3.7%

*Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

The next question is specific to high school transition services. The majority of parents who responded to this question had a child in the high school grades. Only a few parents whose child was not listed in the high school grades responded to this question. It may be that these latter parents had experience with other children or have older children than the one selected for the survey. In any cases, removing these parents (who did not have high school children) did not change the patterns. Table 11 shows approximately one-third of parents said that these services were not provided. While this question does not address directly parental involvement, transition services would normally be a parent / school / outside agency partnership. If a noticeable percentage of parents report no transition services, meaningful involvement of parents at the high school level may be suspect.

**Table 11: The school provides transition services to help my child reach his or her goals after high school**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Yes	66.8%	61.9%	73.2%
No	33.2%	38.1%	26.8%

*Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

Similar to Table 11, Table 12 asks whether the school provides information on agencies that assist in the transition from high school. Also similar to Table 11, only about one-third of parents agree that the school provides this information. In this case, the difference between those responding using the English and Spanish versions was smaller than seen in many instances especially in the *Agree* category. Taken together with the previous table, the patterns of response indicate that this is an area of concern for parents at the high school level.

**Table 12: The school provides information on agencies that can assist my child in the transition from high school.**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Agree	35.0%	34.5%	38.3%
Neutral	41.8%	40.1%	53.2%
Disagree	23.2%	25.4%	8.5%

*Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

For the final question in this category, a more general question asked about services outside of school. This question is applicable to all grade levels as opposed to the previous two tables. The responses, however, are very similar with actually a lower percentage of parents responding that they agree with the

statement. Almost 30 percent of parents say that special education services are not helping with outside services. With the lowest rated question in this category, this area needs attention. With limited resources within the school, outside support is critical to both the school and the continued well-being of students. Again, for students in a transition period, outside support is critical as they transition from school into their post-school years. For this question, parents of students receiving speech services were much less likely to Agree (by about 10 percentage points) than parents of the other disability categories.

**Table 13: Special education services have helped my family and me get the services that my child needs outside of school.**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Agree	31.4%	29.4%	44.2%
Neutral	39.0%	37.9%	46.2%
Disagree	29.6%	32.7%	9.6%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

### Communication Issues

The communication category includes six items and involves the school, school staff, and parents. There was only one question where parents could response *Agree* or *Disagree*. Communication with the school is an important component of parental involvement. Without effective communication, trust is an unlikely component of interactions. Lacking trust, those responsible for the education of a child are probably not in a position to offer the best education for a child. While most schools routinely communicate with parents by providing documents, sending e-mails, and arranging meetings, these activities do not necessarily mean that effective communication has taken place. A school may provide numerous methods to communicate, but if parents are not involved, it is likely that the communication efforts have not been successful. Alternatively, a school may provide documents that are not conducive to understandable information. Ultimately, it is imperative to provide information in a manner that parents receive, understand, and believe that district feels that they believe they are important. It is important to assess both what districts and campuses report they are providing, as well as parents' beliefs regarding these communication efforts. The principal survey findings summarized principals perceptions regarding the communications efforts put forth by schools and lists communications strategies listed by principals. Table 14 contains the average ratings for the questions in this area.

“Communicate! Both at campus and administrative levels... As a rule, parents of children with developmental disabilities are made to feel like second class citizens—teachers seem to want to avoid any contact.”—Parent survey

**Table 14: Average Ratings in the Communications Area**

Type 1 Ratings			Type 3 Ratings	
Always	Sometimes	Never	Yes	No
67.5%	28.0%	4.6%	84.6%	15.4%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

“...My child has come a long way as long as teachers communicate with me and go by the ARDs IEP...”—Parent survey

The open ended parent responses indicate that communication issues and regular reports to parents are important. Respondents were concerned with communication issues between parents and the special education staff. Parents were also concerned about the communication between the special education setting and the general education setting for the purposes of coordinating services

for students. Parents want to stay informed and suggested increasing the frequency of reports to them about the progress of their children.

Table 15 shows that about 70 percent of parents agree that the school communicates regularly regarding IEP progress and other important issues. As with most other areas, the responses from the Spanish surveys are more positive. Overall one-fourth of parents said that only *Sometimes* communication occurs, and about five percent reported *Never*. Communication is one of the key points in establishing trust and partnerships. Almost one-third of parents noted that the school communicates *Sometimes* or *Never*, indicating that communication is an area that should be improved.

**Table 15: The school communicates regularly with me regarding my child’s IEP progress and other important issues**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	69.8%	67.9%	81.8%
Sometimes	25.4%	26.8%	16.4%
Never	4.8%	5.2%	1.8%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Table 15 involved the school communicating with the parent. In Table 16, the issue is the parent communicating with the teachers (school). An even smaller percentage of parents say that they communicate regularly about important issues. While still more positive than the English survey respondents, those using the Spanish version are notably closer to their English counterparts. Other indicators of school involvement, like participation in school activities and organizations, are discussed in the section summarizing the principal survey. Taken together, Tables 15 and 16 indicate that communication is an important area that should be addressed. Without communication, continued progress for the child and partnerships between school and parent, would seem to be in jeopardy.

“...More communication with teachers...My son has a new speech teacher, and I have yet to meet or even talk to her...”—Parent survey

**Table 16: I communicate with my child’s teacher regularly about my child’s IEP progress and other important issues**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	65.2%	62.5%	71.4%
Sometimes	30.5%	32.8%	26.8%
Never	4.3%	4.7%	1.8%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Further exploring the area of communication, the findings in Table 17 reflect communication between the parent and others who work with their child. This is a more general statement than in the two prior tables and reflects on the efforts of Special Education Services to facilitate this communication. An even lower percentage of parents *Agree* (61 %) that this is taking place. Fully one in ten *Disagree* that this is happening and about 30 percent are *Neutral* in this area. Of special concern is the response pattern by ethnic group. While Hispanic parents continue to be more positive (71% *Agree*), only 56 percent of White parents respond in this category and for African American parents only about half *Agree*. In most other areas, the African American parents were slightly more positive than White parents.

**Table 17: Special Education Services have helped my family and me communicate more effectively with the people who work with my child and family.**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Agree	61.0%	60.1%	70.4%
Neutral	28.5%	28.6%	25.9%
Disagree	10.5%	11.3%	3.7%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Another aspect of effective communication is not just that it occurs, but that the communication conveys important, useful information. The Table 18 addresses this aspect. About three-quarters of parents believe that the school proved them with information about their child’s disability and about 25 percent noted that the school does not provide this information (Table 18). While it is likely that schools are providing important information, and this is noted in findings from the principal survey, there are still a

“Just talk to me as a person and keep things simple so I can also understand. I am very down to earth and I would like the teachers to be too!”—Parent survey

meaningful percentage of parents who responded that the school did not provide this relevant information.

**Table 18: The school provides me with information about my child’s disability**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Yes	73.1%	70.2%	90.9%
No	26.9%	29.8%	9.1%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Because the provision of information is such an important area, other questions were included on the surveys to further explore this area. The specific aspect examined in the question reported in Table 16 centers on *written* information. In this case, there does not appear to be a major issue with 88 percent of parents responding *Yes*. While there is a percentage (12%) of parents who report *No*, it must be remembered that language contained in written communication is often dictated by federal and state requirements and can be quite difficult to understand (even for a sophisticated parent).

**Table 19: Written information I receive from school is easy to understand**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Yes	88.0%	88.3%	85.6%
No	12.0%	11.7%	14.4%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

One final aspect of this area asks about information provided in the native language. In this case, parents responding using the Spanish language survey do have a less positive response than in almost other areas. Sixteen percent of parents using the Spanish survey report that they did not receive information in their native language. This would seem to be an area that can be relatively easily addressed. The evaluation team did contact several districts with all responding that they did provide information in Spanish. An examination of the TEA web site finds important information in many different languages. Still, this does appear to be an issue that can be addressed. Note that about 5 percent of parents using the English survey also said that they did not receive information in their native language. In Texas, there are at least 100 distinct language groups – findings such as this might be expected.

**Table 20: Information is provided to me in my native language**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Yes	92.7%	94.1%	84.0%
No	7.3%	5.9%	16.0%

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

A few (1%, n=3) Spanish-speaking parent respondents of the open ended survey would like to receive more information in Spanish.

### Information and Understanding

While closely related to the prior section, we believe that this area is slightly different in directionality and specificity of the question. Moving from communication to understanding, the four items in this section, averaged, are shown in Table 21 averaged over the two questions within each of the reporting dimensions.

“I receive news letters each week from my child’s school to inform me and involve me on what she does at school.”—Parent survey

**Table 21: Average Ratings in the Information and Understanding Area**

Type 2 Ratings			Type 3 Ratings	
Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Yes	No
73.0	18.3	8.7	90.2	9.8

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

As seen in Table 22, the large majority of parents *Agree* that teachers and administrators ensure that parents understand the Procedural Safeguards. This large percentage is not surprising given the vast amount of information that is available from the schools directly as well as resources such as TEA and ESC websites in addition to several advocacy groups dedicated to special education issues.

**Table 22: Teachers and administrators ensure that I fully understand the Procedural Safeguards (also know as the Rights booklet).**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Yes	91.0%	90.6%	94.2%
No	9.0%	9.4%	5.8%

Source. *Analysis of English and Spanish Parent Surveys*

Also with high ratings, and little difference between English and Spanish surveys, parents report that the evaluation report is written in a manner that the parent can understand. Understanding a student’s progress and situation is important if the parent is to be actively involved in the student’s education.

**Table 23: My child’s evaluation report is written in terms I understand**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Yes	89.4%	89.8%	87.5%
No	10.6%	10.2%	12.5%

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

Paralleling information covered earlier in Table 18, there are a sizable percentage of parents who report that special education services have not help understand a child’s disability and another about 20 percent who were neutral in response to this question. The earlier question asked whether the school had provided



information regarding the child’s disability. The percentages from the earlier table were about the same as in Table 24. This might be expected that if the school didn’t provide information, it would follow that special education services would also have low or neutral ratings. This question was also examined using disability categories to subset the *Agree* responses. There was considerable variation, with almost 70 percent of parents of Learning Disability (LD) students in the *Agree* area (close to the overall average). For speech students, 77.4 percent of parents *Agree* with this statement, but only 56 percent of Other Health Impaired (OHI) parents gave an *Agree* response.

**Table 24: Special Education Services have helped my family and me understand my child’s disabilities.**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Agree	69.8%	68.9%	74.5%
Neutral	19.3%	18.9%	21.8%
Disagree	10.9%	12.1%	3.6%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Although rated higher, as seen in Table 25, about 25 percent of parents were either *Neutral* or *Disagree* with special education services help to evaluate how much progress the child is making. The lower rating given to this question than the higher ratings given to an earlier question concerning a child’s evaluation report is somewhat puzzling. However, the difference between a positive response is not extreme in that about 90 percent reporting understanding the evaluation report and about 75 percent agree that special education services help evaluate a child’s progress.

**Table 25: Special Education Services have helped my family and me be able to evaluate how much progress my child is making.**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Agree	76.1%	75.1%	81.8%
Neutral	17.3%	17.5%	16.4%
Disagree	6.6%	7.4%	1.8%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

### Teacher Issues

The next six questions are grouped in an area that relates to teacher issues. There are some interesting findings in this area with a summary over the six questions included in Table 23. Only Type 1 ratings were used for these questions. While Table 26 contains the averages, the actual range of responses in the *Always* range went from a low of about 61 percent to a high of slightly over 80 percent.

**Table 26: Average Ratings for Teacher Issues**

Average Type 1 Ratings		
Always	Sometimes	Never
71.4%	26.3%	2.3%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Both tables 25 and 26 center on a teacher’s awareness of a child’s needs and their willingness to discuss these needs. Both of these questions pertain to a teacher’s attitude and caring for a child – not necessarily to the teacher’s skill in instruction. Of all six items in this area, the question represented in Table 24 was the lowest rated with only about 60 percent of parents agreeing that teachers (in general) understand my child’s needs. The difference between the English and Spanish survey was the greatest for this question.

Although almost 40 percent of parents also said that teachers understand a child's needs *Sometimes*, almost no parent responded with a *Never* rating. As with other questions, Hispanic parents (70%, *Always*) were much more positive than African American (53%, *Always*) or White parents (53%, *Always*).

"...I have the most respect for all the teachers in this school and especially with special education; they are all very dedicated to their work and to all the children. I am very happy with my choice of schools. Thank you." —Parent survey

While 60 percent said that teachers *Always* understand their child's needs, the results seen in Table 28 indicate that 75 percent of the teachers were *Always* willing to discuss issues and only about 3 percent of parents said that teacher *Never* willing. In other words, even if there was a perception that teachers did not understand a

child's need, most of them were *Always* or *Sometimes* willing to discuss these needs.

**Table 27: Teachers understand my child's needs**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	60.8%	60.2%	87.0%
Sometimes	37.8%	38.4%	13.0%
Never	1.4%	1.5%	0.0%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

**Table 28: Teachers show a willingness to discuss my child's needs**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	74.2%	75.2%	75.4%
Sometimes	23.0%	23.3%	21.1%
Never	2.8%	1.5%	3.5%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

As before, there were very few parents saying that teachers would *Never* work together. Interestingly, almost 30 said that teachers were only *Sometimes* willing to work together. While not an overly large percentage, still if the perception of 30 percent of parents is that teachers are only *Sometimes* willing to work together, this may reflect indirectly on the willingness of teachers (taken together) to work with the parents as well.

**Table 29: Teachers work together to set appropriate expectations for my child**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	69.7%	67.9%	80.4%
Sometimes	27.8%	29.4%	17.9%
Never	2.5%	2.6%	1.7%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

As shown in Table 30, about 70 percent of parents report that teachers *Always* understand their roles in implementing IEPs. As with all questions in this area, only a small percentage (1.3%) report that teachers *Never* understand their role regarding implementing an IEP.

**Table 30: Teachers understand their roles in implementing my child’s IEP**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	70.5%	67.8%	87.0%
Sometimes	28.2%	30.6%	13.0%
Never	1.3%	1.5%	0.0%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Tables 31 and 32 are considered together with the same questions differentiated between general education and special education teachers. As might be expected, special education teachers had a higher rating of *Always* implementing accommodations and modifications as indicated on the IEP. However, it must be noted, that general education teachers were still at over 70 percent of parents responding *Always*. Very few parents reported that either general or special education teachers *Never* implemented the IEP appropriately. Still there were issues for some parents with about one-quarter saying that general education and about 16 percent reporting that special education teachers only *Sometimes* implement accommodations and modifications.

General education does not seem to get IEPs in enough advance time to inform themselves of the needs of my child to be successful in the class.” —Parent survey

**Table 31: General education teachers implement accommodations and modifications as indicated on my child’s IEP**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	72.0%	69.7%	86.3%
Sometimes	25.2%	27.1%	13.7%
Never	2.8%	3.2%	0.0%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

“I have two children in special ed services. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade student—teachers need to become more aware of the students’ IEPs and accommodate the student’s needs so they are successful. High school teachers (majority) do not care. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade student—teachers are more willing to help and work with students and families.” —Parent survey

**Table 32: Special education teachers implement accommodations and modifications as indicated on my child’s IEP**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	81.3%	80.9%	83.7%
Sometimes	15.6%	15.8%	14.3%
Never	3.1%	3.2%	2.0%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

### Individual Education Plan and Admission, Review and Dismissal

This section of the report focuses on issues directly related to the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee. This particular area has the highest average rating

of 80% in the *Always* category. However, the percentage in the *Never* category is higher than other areas; but this is driven primarily by one question. There were three questions included in this area.

**Table 33: Average Ratings for IEP and ARD Issues**

Average Type 1 Ratings		
Always	Sometimes	Never
80.1%	13.9%	6.0%

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

As seen in Table 34, about 80 percent of parents say that their concerns and recommendations are considered *Always*. While a very small percent say *Never*, there remains almost one in five parents who chose the *Sometimes* category. Even if the parents concerns do not lead directly to actions, it should be that the parent’s concerns and recommendations are at least considered. Part of parental involvement is that their concerns should be considered and the parent should believe that, in fact, this is being done in an honest fashion.

**Table 34: My concerns and recommendations are considered by the ARD committee in the development of the IEP**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	79.7%	80.2%	76.4%
Sometimes	18.5%	18.0%	21.6%
Never	1.8%	1.7%	2.0%

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

Leading from Table 34, information in Table 35 is the next step. If the parent’s concerns and recommendations are considered, do these concerns lead to joint selection of accommodations and modifications? We have interpreted the parents’ response to this question with an emphasis on **we** select. In this case, over 86 percent of parents say that this happens *Always*. For this question the difference between the English and Spanish surveys was quite small.

**Table 35: At the ARD meeting, we select accommodations and modifications that my child needs.**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	86.4%	86.2%	88.0%
Sometimes	11.0%	11.2%	10.0%
Never	2.6%	2.6%	2.0%

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

A singular aspect of the ARD was the target of the next question (Table 36). The question asked specifically about participation in statewide assessments. The state is transitioning from TAKS and SDAA II to regular TAKS (as before) and the new assessment for students receiving special education services (TAKSalt). The implications for students and parents should be a topic of concern for all involved. A subsequent analysis of this question that restricted the analysis to parents with students in grade 3-11 (where TAKS and SDAA II are given) found little difference to the values contained in Table 33. The percentage who responded *Always* was about 5 points higher and about 5 percent lower in the *Never* category.

“The people who come to the ARD meetings are always informative about changes in what they recommend for my children. ...Thank you for taking the time to test my child and work with her at my and my teachers’ request.” — Parent survey

**Table 36: At the ARD meeting, we discuss how my child will participate in statewide assessments (like the TAKS)**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	74.2%	72.8%	83.7%
Sometimes	12.1%	12.7%	8.2%
Never	13.7%	14.5%	8.2%

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

### Parental Interactions with Child

In this section, three questions were included that examined issues surrounding parental interactions with their child. Included in Table 37 are the two questions with a Type 1 rating. In this case, there was very little difference between the two questions. There were almost no parents who responded in the *Never* category.

**Table 37: Average Ratings for Parental Interactions with Child**

Average Type 1 Ratings		
Always	Sometimes	Never
81.9%	17.2%	0.9%

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

About 80 percent of parents did respond that they *Always* engage in learning activities with their child. There was little difference between English and Spanish surveys. Only about 2 percent of parents said that they *Never* engaged in these activities. No meaningful difference was found from the values in Table 38 when the analysis was restricted to parents of students in grades before high school where it might be more common for direct learning activities to occur.

Similarly open ended responses from parents reflected a perception that there is no need to improve parental participation in child's education.

**Table 38: I engage in learning activities with my child at home**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	80.2%	80.6%	77.8%
Sometimes	18.3%	18.0%	20.3%
Never	1.5%	1.4%	1.9%

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

As seen in Table 39, an even higher percentage of parents reported talking to their child about what they are learning in school with only a couple of parents responding with *Never*. As before, the responses were slightly higher from the Spanish survey compared to the English survey.

**Table 39: I ask my child to talk about what he or she is learning in school**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	83.5%	82.6%	88.9%
Sometimes	16.0%	16.8%	10.1%
Never	0.5%	0.6%	0.0%

Source. *English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

With one of the higher *Never* response rates, Table 40 contains responses regarding whether special education services have helped their family. The differences here are quite large between the Agree and Disagree categories between the English and Spanish Surveys. While still a relatively low percentage in

“The school has been generous enough to send me a year in advance calendar that covers areas that teachers are covering. However, the day to day academics, I struggle to understand how to reinforce what teachers are teaching because not much homework comes home. Or at least if I knew what ‘concepts’ need to be learned, I can help my child by reinforcing concepts at home.”  
—Parent survey

the *Never* category, nevertheless, this is an area that should be addressed. If a parent does not believe that special education services are helping, the likelihood of effective parental involvement and partnerships to increase instructional effectiveness is not great.

**Table 40: Special Education Services have helped my family and me feel that my efforts are helping my child.**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Agree	78.8%	77.6%	86.8%
Neutral	15.5%	15.8%	13.2%
Disagree	5.7%	6.6%	0.0%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

### Other Parental Actions

There were four questions that we have grouped together in a category labeled Other Parental Actions. The average rating for the three Type 1 response items are included in Table 41. It is cautioned that these average ratings are derived from questions with very different response patterns. The responses to three of these questions are very different from the remainder of questions in any of the other categories.

**Table 41: Average Ratings for Parental Actions**

Average Type 1 Ratings		
Always	Sometimes	Never
30.6%	22.3%	47.1%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

The question in this area that most closely resembles the combined patterns seen within the other categories is covered in Table 42. About 70 percent of parents respond that they are comfortable making suggestions to benefit their child. However, also see in Table 42, is there is a very large difference between respondents to this question between those using the English survey compared to the Spanish one. Less than 50 percent of those using the Spanish survey responded *Always* compared to almost 75 percent of the English survey parents. In the *Never* area, about twice the percentage of Spanish survey respondents was seen compared to the English survey. These findings do not seem to indicate that the parent feels an equal partner with the school, especially for those using the Spanish survey. This is an area that certainly seems to call for actions on the part of districts, especially for Spanish speakers.

**Table 42: I feel comfortable in making suggestions that I think would benefit my child and other children with disabilities.**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	70.4%	74.0%	46.0%
Sometimes	24.2%	21.3%	44.0%
Never	5.4%	4.7%	10.0%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Although no comparable data were available for parents of general education students, the findings contained in Table 43 do not speak for participation in support organizations. In fact, a comparison to other organizations for general education, e.g., PTAs or PTOs, may not be a good comparison given different agendas. The question remains “what is a good finding” as far as this percentage is concerned. The answer from the organizations might be close to 100 percent and from schools a much lower percent. The reported information, however, speaks quite clearly that parents are not involved in these organizations to any extent. Only 1 in 10 of those using the Spanish survey said that they *Always* or even *Sometimes* participated. Whether they do not know of these organizations, do not see a need to be involved, or some other reason was not part of this study. There were no remarkable differences among the various disability categories, however, White parents were much less likely to participate (73.4%, *Never*), Hispanic parents (58.4% *Never*) and African American Parents at 65.6% indicating *Never*.

**Table 43: I participate in an organization for parents of children with disabilities**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	10.0%	11.2%	2.0%
Sometimes	20.6%	22.5%	7.8%
Never	69.4%	66.3%	90.2%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

Somewhat similar response patterns to Table 43 are seen in Table 44 where the question centered on attending training sessions. Training sessions can be provided by special interest organizations, local districts, education services centers, universities or others. Still, even with a multitude of trainings offered, a small percentage report attending these trainings. As noted in the previous table, the percentage of Spanish speaking parents actively involved is considerably lower than for the English survey parents. Note that this question is not organization specific. It refers to any training. Again, whether parents do not know of these trainings, do not see them as helpful, difficult to attend, or some other reason was not assessed in this survey. In our opinion, trying to identify the locus of the decision not to participate would be quite difficult.

**Table 44: I attend training sessions relating to the needs of children with disabilities and their families**

Response	Combined	English	Spanish
Always	11.4%	13.1%	0.0%
Sometimes	22.0%	22.6%	18.0%
Never	66.6%	64.4%	82.0%

Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.

One final question in the structured area of the survey is represented in Table 45. Only about 50 percent of parents (combined over both surveys) responded that special education services have helped make changes in family routines that will benefit their child. As with some of the other questions in this area, it is not clear whether the changes were needed or welcomed. If changes in family routines, such as a more

structured environment, might be helpful, from these data, it does not appear that there is strong support that special education services are a strong component of changes in family routines. However, a clear distinction must be made between the impacts of special education services on the households reporting 2 adults. For this group, only 43 percent said that *Agree* with this statement. Of households with one adult, 54 percent responded with *Agree* and almost 59 percent of households with more than 2 adults said they *Agree*.

**Table 45: Special Education Services have helped my family and me make changes in my family routines that will benefit my child with special needs.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Combined</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Spanish</b>
Agree	50.6%	48.4%	64.7%
Neutral	32.6%	33.1%	29.4%
Disagree	16.8%	18.5%	5.9%

*Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*



## Parent Open-Ended Responses

A total of 204 surveys containing open-ended questions were received. Of these, 171 were in English and 33 were in Spanish. Unless there are important differences, English and Spanish open-ended responses will be combined. Parent open-ended surveys were analyzed by question and responses clustered into several themes. As these are open ended questions, responses are distinct and unique to parents' needs. When there was a commonality of response theme, critical elements will be highlighted. Not all parents answered each question.

Parents of students who receive special education services were asked to share their views by means of five open ended questions on (1) the overall improvements needed in special education services, (2) how to improve or enhance their participation in their children's education, (3) how to improve their relationship with teachers, and (4) were asked to identify the major roadblock to participate in their children's education. Also (5) they were asked to add any comment regarding the special education services they receive. The responses to each question are described in the following section. Following are highlights of the open-ended responses.<sup>5</sup>

### Overall themes

Overall satisfaction—consistently across all questions, responses indicate that a majority of parents are satisfied with the special education services provided by schools. Even when parents were asked to suggest improvements or identify major roadblocks, the most prevalent response was appreciation to the school and or the teachers for their good work.

As with the structured responses discussed previously, parents highlighted the need for communication improvements and regular reports to parents. Specifically, there is a concern regarding communication between parents and the special education staff (or communication between the special education setting and the general education in coordinating services for students). Another important theme is that parents want to stay informed and suggested increasing the frequency of reports sent to them, whether by e-mail, phone or on-line newsletters.

**More resources**—Students with disabilities need intensive services. Parents want more resources; in general, they want more student-teacher time or have needs that extend beyond the school day. In terms of resources, more educational and therapeutic resources were mentioned.

**Teachers and student monitoring**—although relatively few criticisms were offered about teachers, many parents wanted more contact to enhance the relationship with the special education teacher. Specifically, an increased frequency of student progress reports was requested. This reinforces the communication issues already described above. Though teachers were not considered the major roadblock to parental participation in the education process of students, improving their communications skills was a theme that consistently emerged.

### Parent survey descriptive narrative

Following is a summary for each of the five questions asked in the open ended section of the survey.

**What could be done to improve the special education services that your child receives?**

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*Overall satisfaction*—. Overall, the majority of responses indicate that parents do not think that improvements are needed. The majority of respondents to this question (57) noted that schools need to keep up what they have been doing; another 14 answered that there was nothing more to be done.

“I am very satisfied with the work done by the special ed. staff. My son has made tremendous progress in this school and with the teachers and their patience.”—Parent survey

*Keeping parents informed*—Some parents (14) said more information should be provided regarding their child’s disability.

*More student-teacher time*—the most prevalent (9) response regarding resources was related to more one-on-one time with the teachers. Also noted were 1) teachers spending more time with students and 2) more frequent special classes.

### **What can the school do to increase your involvement in your child’s education?**

The most prevalent response to parental involvement expressed a sense of satisfaction with the status quo.

“I think that the special education services up to now are doing a great job working with students. I can’t think of anything right now that can improve it.”—Parent survey

The majority (43) noted that nothing more can be done to enhance their involvement.

*Keep parents informed*— again, within the context of how to increase involvement in child’s education, the next most prevalent theme (15) has to do with keeping parents informed about student progress, status, and behavior. Other specific suggestions have been listed below.

- ARD teachers should provide weekly or bi-weekly reports (5)
- More frequency of contact (e-mail progress reports online access to information) (6)
- Better communication (4)
- Invite parents to sit in on class (4)
- Send daily reports to parents (3)
- Hold meetings before or after school (5)
- Teachers need to talk more with parents(3)

Suggestions to enhance parental involvement in child’s education—the third major theme revolves around types of parental participation. Some (17) respondents asked for help to understand what how they can help students at home and with homework. A few respondents (6) asked in a general fashion that parental participation be enhanced. Only one respondent asked that the school and teachers follow their modification sheet.

### **What could be done to improve your relationship with your child’s teachers?**

*Overall satisfaction*—consistent with previous answers, a common response (63) expressed that nothing needed to be done to improve the relationship with their child’s teacher. Parents expressed that they are satisfied with things as they are, or expressed their gratitude and adulation for a specific teacher.

*Keep parents informed*—another theme also consistent with previous responses has to do with improving communication with parents. Several respondents (35) suggested contacting them by e-mail, letters, or phone.

“The school could send more notes, progress reports, or something to let me know his progress. Also, some suggestions on how to help him out at home—Parent survey

### **What is the biggest roadblock to participating in your child’s education?**

*Overall Satisfaction*—consistent with the previous questions, the majority of respondents (40) noted that there are roadblocks to participating in their child’s education. Respondents expressed a feeling that everything was “okay” with their children’s education.

*Personal or work time constraints*—the other prevalent roadblock theme was related to parents being busy with other children or other personal time constraints (25). Some (19) specified their job or their work conflicting with their child’s educational needs.

*School or teacher issues*—another theme emerging around roadblocks discussed that teachers need to improve their communication skills (8) or expressing that the teacher or principal were not helpful (8). Other issues are listed below.

### **5. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the special education services your child receives?**

“The programs he has participated n have been excellent. The staff has been wonderful, caring individuals.”—Parent survey

*Overall satisfaction*—consistent with previous responses, respondents expressed appreciation for

“The only thing I have to say is that I’m very satisfied with everything you have provided her throughout the years.”—Parent survey

the school and teacher’s efforts. A majority (45) said that the school has been doing a great job. Others (20) mentioned specific staff and teachers who had been very helpful. Other respondents (14) said that their overall situation was better now and that there had been improvement.

*Communication issues*—some parents focused their final commentaries on specific suggestions. An important theme involved a need to improve communication between special education and general education (11).

“I would like to be informed a little more because honestly I don’t actually know what services are being provided. Last I know is that he may not have qualified for speech therapy any longer. I have an idea of my child IEP but am unsure of any progress...”—Parent survey

*Teacher issues and schools' resources*—other comments revolved around improving teachers serving special education students, whether via more training, or by being more attentive. Other issues expressed parents wanting more therapy for the student. Other themes revolve around the intensity of resources required to support children with disabilities. A few express the need to obtain extended day or year support for students, more teachers per student, more therapy, more time for sessions, more counseling, and so forth.

## Principal Survey

The principal survey was distributed to 232 principals whose schools were included in the fall 2006 parent survey. Of these, 37 principals responded to the survey, yielding a 16 percent return rate. A copy of the principal survey is included in Appendix C.

Principals were asked to respond to 14 questions regarding overall parental involvement. In addition, principals were asked to identify strategies and practices that are targeted specifically to encourage parents of students who receive special education services. The following general topics were addressed in the survey:

- Successful parent involvement strategies implemented by schools
- Successful parent involvement strategies implemented by teachers
- Information about written parent involvement plans
- Overall parent involvement in parent teacher organizations (PTO/PTA)
- Methods used by schools to communicate with parents and receive parental input
- Services that are provided in school that help increase parental involvement
- Successful parental contributions made to schools
- Parent training / annual meeting opportunities
- Factors that impede parental involvement

### **Successful parent involvement strategies implemented by schools.**

Principals were asked to list the two most successful efforts or approaches used in their schools to encourage parents to become actively involved in school activities. A wide variety of responses were listed, primarily involving improved communication strategies, promoting the participation in parent/teacher organizations (PTA/PTO), offering parent information and training sessions, and organizing fundraisers and other school festivities.

*Effective communication Strategies.* Principals, overall, said that an important component in encouraging parental involvement is to first “set the tone at the onset of the school year.” One principal, for instance, noted that there should be “an open invitation for parents to come to school everyday.” Another principal said success occurs when there is open communication with parents. Principals listed several strategies that encourage parents to become more active in school activities. These strategies ensure that parents are informed of school events. The strategies listed below indicate that school staff needs to take an active role in communicating with parents. Also, schools are using several avenues (voice mail, newsletters) to increase parent communication. Principals noted the following strategies:

- Making sure that there is direct one on one contact with parents
- Send invitations to parents through e-mail, regular mail and in newsletters
- Using the school or district’s website
- Make follow-up phone calls to personally invite parents to the school
- Use recorded message via a district calling system
- Making personal call to the home
- Sending weekly newsletters to the home
- Use of parents to call other parents
- Invite parent to meetings where all teachers are present
- Word of mouth invitations
- Parent Teacher conferences
- Provide grade level meetings
- Early release day for parent conferences

- Invite district staff to come and talk to staff about the benefits of parents

In addition to requesting successful communications strategies, principals were asked to list the most commonly used method that their school uses to communicate with parents. Table 46 shows the number of principals that indicated the type of communications most frequently used. Principals were asked to list only one response; however, several principals noted more than one communication method.

**Table 46: Type of Communication: School to Home**

Type of Communication	Number of Responses*
Letter	13
Telephone	11
Email	4
Notes given to students	14
Newsletter	17
Other: web page, student agenda, home visits	2

*Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

*Family/ Parent Events, Training, Workshops,* In addition to communication, principals said that offering information sessions, workshops and school events are successful practices that involve parents. Principals listed various social, academic and fundraising activities that are implemented in schools. While these events are overall similar, social and fundraising activities are customized and sponsored by each school, therefore creating a wide variety of unique strategies. Some strategies involve parents only, while many involve both parents and students alike. Some of these events are listed below.

- Family nights for math and reading
- Student fairs and competitions
- Meet the teacher night
- Family Reading nights
- Breakfast with the Principal (Or Math and Muffins, Dads and Donuts)
- Open House
- Night outs
- Fall Festival
- Day of the Dolphin
- Easter Weekend
- Walk / jog Wednesdays
- Fast Feet Fridays
- One Saturday per year

One principal noted that it is important to organize events that are important or “relevant” to parents. Examples of these include honor roll assemblies and celebration events of Black History month or Hispanic Heritage Day. Events that involve children, for example, having children perform in music programs or special events, including students in parent conferences, or back to school nights were listed as examples of activities that are relevant to parents. One principal noted that a successful strategy to improve communication is to ensure that teachers communicate with parents when a student’s grade drops or a student is performing poorly. To improve communications, one principal noted that a successful strategy was to implement a parent center that offers information sessions and workshops.

Principals were asked to indicate if the school provides parent training workshops to encourage parent involvement. Thirty-four principals responded to this question. Of these, 24 noted that training is provided and 10 said that training is not provided. One principal said that training is only provided at the district level, and another principal said that while training is provided, training is not specifically provided for parents of students receiving special education services. On average, 2.5 training sessions were held per year specifically for parents of students receiving

special education services. Principals noted that these sessions are held at different times throughout the year, most typically once per semester. The majority said that meetings are held in the evenings, though other time periods were also listed (lunch, Saturdays, during school, or in the morning.)

Principals were asked if their school holds an annual meeting to inform parents of children receiving special education services about the school’s special education program. Thirty-three principals responded. Of these, 15 noted that annual meetings are provided, while 17 noted that special annual meetings are not provided. One principal said that these information sessions take place during the ARD meeting. Three principals noted that information sessions are provided at the district level. Of those principals who said that information sessions are provided, they noted that the parent participation rate in those sessions ranges from 0 to 90 percent. Averaging over all of the responses, 29 percent of parents of students receiving special education services attend these information sessions.

*Services.* Principals were also asked to list services that are provided for parents to encourage parental involvement. Principals were instructed to select as many services as apply to their particular school. Table 47 shows that holding meetings in the evening and providing opportunities for parents to be involved in site-based decision management are the two services provided listed by the majority of principals. Only four of the 37 principals that responded to the survey listed transportation as a service that is provided to parents. A majority (23) provide interpreters and/or translators and parent education courses.

**Table 47: Services Provided by Schools**

<b>Service Provided</b>	<b>Number of Responses*</b>
Transportation	4
Interpreters / Translators	23
Books videos	16
Baby-sitting services	8
Meetings held in evenings	36
Opportunities to be involved in site-based management	34
Parent education courses	20

*Source Fall 2006 Principal Parent Involvement Surveys.*

Other services listed by principals that are provided to encourage parental involvement include: refreshments, door prizes, parent community liaison, website, parent resource center, technology, conference cards, English as Second Language classes, referrals to community services, learning center, pre-school program, wellness events.

A few principals noted that implementing specific curriculum or programs has had the added benefit of increasing parental support. Two specific approaches, the accelerated school reform model, and communities in schools were listed as successful strategies to increase parental involvement.

*Parent Teacher Organizations and Volunteer Opportunities*

The majority of principals said that an effective way to increase parental involvement is to support the schools parent teacher organization or association (PTA/PTO.) Principals said that schools should provide ample opportunities for parents to join these organizations and should support the many PTA/PTO functions, fund raisers and events. Likewise, principals said that the schools should provide parents the opportunity to be school volunteers. One principal noted that

is important to “solicit parent volunteer for all activities through monthly newsletters and notes from teachers.” More specific information regarding volunteering at the PTA are provided in other sections below.

**Successful Strategies specific to parents of students who receive special education services.**

In addition to providing a list of overall parent involvement successful practices, principals were asked to list strategies that are used that are specifically tailored for parents of students that receive special education services. The majority of principals noted that the strategies used to involve these parents are the same strategies used to involve parents of all students. These principals said that there is no difference in strategies—“We do nothing different;” “We follow an inclusion model-parents participate along with all parents”; “We generally do not target any specific group of parents.”

A few principals, however, listed specific strategies for parents of students receiving special education services. One principal noted that a successful strategy for improved communication is to ensure that both the regular classroom and the special education teachers call parents and attend functions that are important to students receiving special education services. In one school, teachers are instructed to mention school activities and events and to give parents school newsletters during ARD meetings.

**Successful parent involvement strategies implemented by teachers.**

In addition to overall school parent involvement strategies, the survey asked principals to list successful practices that take place in the classroom or by teachers. While the majority of responses overlapped with the general strategies listed for the school overall, several strategies were listed that are specific to teachers. These strategies involve specific teacher activities or classroom management techniques that principals believe are successful in supporting parental involvement. To increase parental involvement, teachers are encouraged to invite parents to assist or volunteer in the classroom in a wide variety of activities. Also useful, teachers implement classroom rules that ensure that communication between the classroom and the home is maximized. Some of the strategies listed by principals are listed below:

- Provide e-mail access to all teachers
- Parent contact logs that are checked periodically
- Mandatory parent contact logs
- Mandatory parent conferences
- Target certain student groups (LEP, 9th graders, etc.) and make personal contact with these parents on an on-going basis
- Have a parent liaison in the classroom
- Provide classroom incentives for students to bring parents
- Once a month coffee in classroom for parent visits
- Talk to students about the importance of inviting parents to school
- Use student agenda to send notes to and from the classroom
- 

Principals listed a variety of classroom volunteer opportunities. Below is a list of the most frequently listed activities believed to improve overall parental involvement:

- Encourage parents to speak about their profession in their child’s classroom
- Invite parents to volunteer as readers
- Partner parents with struggling student
- Have parent mentors
- Invite parents to volunteer at field trips
- Ask for parent help with special festivities or classroom events



### Parent Involvement Plans

Principals were asked if their schools have a parent involvement plan that is separate from an overall district-level plan. The majority (26) indicated that their campus has a parent involvement plan. Several said that the plan is imbedded in the overall campus improvement plan. Eight principals noted that their schools do not have a campus-level parent involvement plan.

### Parent Input and Opinions

An important component of a successful program is to ensure that parents are allowed to provide input and provide opinions about the overall school, school staff, or other school-related issues. Principals were asked to identify way in which their schools ensures that parent opinions are regularly incorporated into the school's activities or planning process.

Two main avenues for parents to provide input were identified by principals: meetings and participating in school committees. Several meeting formats were listed: monthly meetings, small group meeting, one-on-one meetings, grade level meetings, and informal meetings/chats. Parent participation in school committees was also listed by the majority of principals. Committees include: site based management committees, strategic planning committees, parent leadership committees, campus educational improvement committee, and grade level committees, etc. One principal noted that allowing parents to participate in various summer workshops gives parents the opportunity to provide feedback.

One principal noted that he has an "open door policy with the principal" for parents to visit and provide input. Another principal noted that there needs to be "frequent and continuous dialogue" between the school and parents.

### Parent Teacher Organizations

Principals listed the approximate percentage of all parents and parents of students who receive special education services that actively participate in the PTA/PTO. The table below summarized the results. The majority of principals noted that ten percent or less of parents in their schools actively participate in the PTA or PTO. For parents overall, 8 (22%) reported that over 50% of parents in their schools actively participate in these organizations. Only 2 (5%) of principals said that 50 percent of parents of students receiving special education services actively participate.

**Table 48: Services Provided by Schools**

Parent Participation in the PTA / PTO		
	Overall Parents	Parents of students receiving special education services
	Number (%)	Number (%)
10 % or Less	13 (35%)	16 (43%)
11% to 25%	10 (27%)	6 (16%)
26% to 50%	2 (5%)	8 (22%)
Over 50%	8(22%)	2 (5%)
No PTA / PTO	4 (11%)	4 (11%)

*Source. Fall 2006 Principal Parent Involvement Surveys.*

### Parent Contributions

Principals were asked to list the two most important contributions made by parents in their school. The majority of principals listed volunteering and participating in school-level committees and in the PTA/PTO as the two most significant parent contributions.

Principals listed several examples of volunteering activities including helping struggling students, organizing the book club and other school activities (athletics, band, FFA, sponsoring a grade level, etc.), helping in the classroom, library, or teacher workroom, prepping materials for teachers, serving as field trip monitors, room parents or tutors, and helping put together the yearbook.

Principals also noted many examples of how PTA/PTO activities have benefited schools. PTA/PTO's help organize fundraisers, organize large events like fall or spring festivals, are involved in make school level decisions and update school property (buying property, obtaining playground equipment).

Participating in school-level committees was also listed as an important parent contribution. School-level committees include participation in the site-based management decision process, serving as parent leaders, and attending school events (open houses, meeting with staff and principals.)

One other important parent contribution listed by principals involves parent involvement in their own child's education and in the overall support for the school. Examples of these contributions are listed below:

- Keeping track of their own children's education
- Supporting high standards of education
- Helping the school improve student attendance by ensuring that their children come to school and arrive on time.
- Supporting the school's academic programs
- Encouraging of the student to do their best
- Being academically involved

*Parental obstacles to school involvement.*

While principals acknowledge the important contribution that parents make to their schools, they also are aware that many parents face difficult obstacles to becoming actively involved in their children's education. The survey asked principals to indicate the most important factor that keeps parents of students who receive special education services from getting more involved in the school. The most frequently cited factor involves parents' work schedules. Principals noted that many parents work full time and participating in school activities often means that it will take time away from a parent's work. Three principals noted that many parents work full time and are also single parents. Four principals noted that distance to the school and/or transportation is an important factor that keeps parents from participating in school activities. Other factors were also identified: inability to read or write, lack of education, limited knowledge of the English language, overburdened by meeting basic needs, lack of understanding of the importance of parent participation, and little interest and/or apathy. Lastly, three principals noted that some parents have had bad experiences with school staff or had bad personal experiences during their own schooling, and many parents do not feel welcome by the school. These principals also noted that some parents perceive the special education program as a negative service and a permanent label on their children that they do not like.

## Summary

Through over 400 surveys returned in English or Spanish, parents of students receiving special education services voiced their opinion to a set of questions that examined various aspects of parental involvement. Although the number of surveys returned is small, the distribution of demographics is reasonably similar to the statewide percentages by student group and disability category. As discussed in this report, following this developmental effort, a more extensive survey will be conducted in spring 2007 and in subsequent years.

A total of 24 questions from the parent survey were examined divided into seven topic specific categories. Grouping the three types of responses (Always-Never, Yes-No, and Agree-Disagree), Table 49 contains a summary of responses within these categories. In general, with one notable exception, the responses were overall positive. The percentage of responses in the least positive category, again with one exception, was also small. This category (Parental Actions) included participation in PTA/PTO, attending training sessions, and whether special education services had helped make changes in family routines. It is not clear, nor can be determined from these data, whether responses from parents with students in general education would be different.

**Table 49: Summary by Category**

Category	Positive	Neutral	Negative
	Always Agree Yes	Sometimes Neutral	Never Disagree No
General School Issues	70.0%	21.0%	9.0%
Communication Issues	75.0%	28.1%	11.0%
Information and Understanding	81.6%	18.3%	9.3%
Teacher Issues	71.4%	26.3%	2.3%
IEP and ARD	80.1%	13.9%	6.0%
Parental Interactions	80.8%	16.6%	2.6%
Parental Actions	35.6%	24.9%	39.6%

*Source. English and Spanish Fall 2006 Parent Involvement Surveys.*

Although generally positive for the other categories, two categories have areas that should be addressed. Regarding communications, the degree to which a parent communicates regularly with the teacher had a lower positive rating. Within the same category, there was also some disagreement whether special education services have helped the parent communicate more effectively with the people who work with their child.

The second category with the least positive ratings is related to teacher issues. When asked if the teacher understands a child's needs, quarter, 26 percent of parents responded "sometimes." On the other hand, the ratings for whether the teachers were willing to discuss a child's needs received a higher rating. Special education teachers were rated higher than general education teachers on the paired items examining implementation of IEPs.

One area that had a relatively high overall rating (General School Issues), had two items that were not highly rated. These two items related to transition from high school. It should be noted that a relatively small number of parents (appropriately) responded to these questions.

Overall, parent open ended survey parallels the responses received in the structures survey. Parents that responded to the survey are overall satisfied with the services received by their children's school. Following is a list of the overall findings from parent responses.

*Overall satisfaction*—the majority of respondents in expressed being satisfied with the special education services provided by schools.

*Communication improvements, regular reports to parents*—across all questions in the parent open-ended survey, one relevant concern had to do with communication between parents and the special education staff (or communication between the special education setting and the general education setting). Parents want to be kept informed and want to know how to help the academic progress of their children.

*Teachers and student monitoring*—though relatively few criticisms were offered with respect to teachers in the parent open-ended survey, to enhance the relationship with the special education teacher, many parents wanted more contact through progress reports, and thusly, the frequency of student progress monitoring was also brought to fore. This is similar to the communication issue already described.

*More resources*—Parents noted that students with disabilities need intensive services. Respondents want more resources like more student-teacher time or services outside the school day.

The principals that responded to the survey offered multiple examples of successful parental involvement strategies. Most strategies involve improving communications, having “open door policies,” and providing opportunities to participate in making decisions and in volunteering.

Principals also noted how significant parent involvement is to a school. They listed numerous important examples of parent participation activities. Parents have assisted in the classroom as tutors, mentors and overall classroom aides. They have contributed in many school events, like festivals, field trips, fund raising, and many other special projects. Parents have become actively involved in the site-based management process and other school organizations.

Overall, principals noted that parent contributions and involved is a critical component for schools and for children. Principals noted parents' significant role. The many obstacles and barriers parents face to become more active in their children' education were also noted by the principals. Among many reasons, principals listed lack of time, transportation, and work schedules.

