

# Kentucky Post School Outcomes Center

## 2018 Parent Involvement Report

Prepared for the  
Kentucky Department of Education  
Office of Special Education and Early  
Learning

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The 2018 Parent Survey was administered from March through May 2018. The Kentucky Department of Education contracted with the Kentucky Postschool Outcomes Center to develop the instrument, assist with distribution, collect and analyze data, and report results both related to IDEA Indicator 8 for the Annual Performance Report as well as other items deemed to be in the state's interest. This report presents analyses of the data collected. Further analysis is available upon request.

## **Methods**

In consultation with the Kentucky Postschool Outcomes Center, the Kentucky Department of Education decided to include all parents of students with IEP's during the 2017-18 school year as participants in the study. The State Director of Special Education contacted local Directors of Special Education and distributed instructions to them regarding how to contact parents to complete the survey. A sample letter was provided to local directors for distribution to parents of students with IEP's by school staff who had such students on their caseload. The letter informed parents of multiple ways for them to access the survey, including a direct link located on the [KyPSO website](#), a "QR" code which could be scanned by a mobile device, and the opportunity to take the survey at the school at any time including during the annual ARC meeting. The survey was made available in both English and Spanish, as were the sample letters to parents. See the appendix for copies of the survey and sample parent letter.

Potentially, the survey could have been distributed to parents of the 89,859 students with IEP's in the state of Kentucky. It is suggested that only one parent filled out the survey per child. If parents had multiple children with IEP's they should fill out one survey for each child. 3942 responses were completed and collected.

## **Results**

The first and most important item of the survey is what is used for federal reporting purposes under Indicator 8. This item is deliberately worded to try to capture the language of the indicator itself. The actual item is, "Did the school involve you in a meaningful way to improve services and results for your child?" Response options were simply "Yes" and "No." In 2018, 90.61% of respondents gave an affirmative ("Yes") response. This continued a positive trend from 2015 (85.10%), 2016 (86.8%), and 2017 (87.9%) (Figure1). Other items included in the survey were not reported as part of Indicator 8, but were considered valuable to the state for feedback related to parent involvement.

The second question on the survey asked about the parents' level of understanding of the IEP process. Specifically, the item was worded, "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1= "I don't understand the IEP process at all" and 5= "I fully understand the IEP process," how well would you say that you understand the IEP process?" The mean response for this item was 4.29 on the five-point scale, indicating that parents who answered the survey believed they were fairly knowledgeable about the IEP process. 2.37% of respondents scored the item a "1" indicating that they did not understand the process at all, and another 2.61% scored the item a "2." However,

over half of respondents (54.11%) scored the item a “5.” The percentage of respondents reporting full understanding of the IEP process compared favorably to 2017 (49.90%).

Figure1

*Did the school involve parents in a meaningful way to improve services and results in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018?*

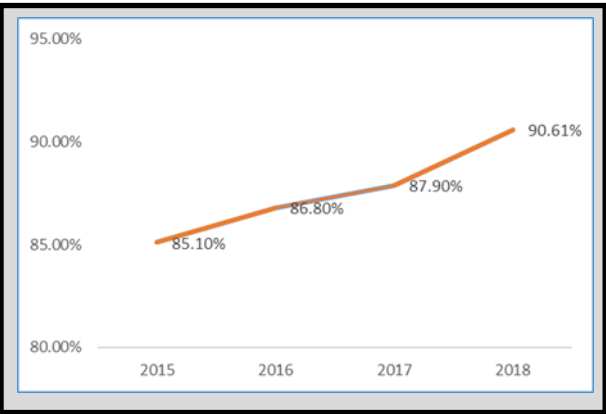
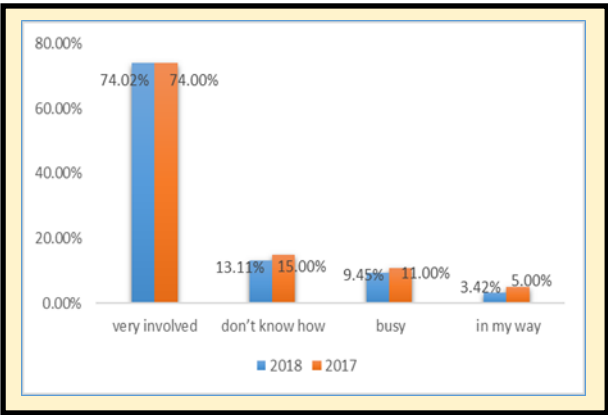


Figure2

*How parents feel about being involved in their child’s education in 2017 and 2018?*



A third item asked parents to describe how they felt about being involved in their child’s education. This was an item that allowed respondents to check each of the four response options that applied to them. 74.02% said that they were very involved in their child’s education (Figure2). 13.11% of respondents indicated that they wanted to be more involved but didn’t know how to be and 9.45% were too busy to be involved. 3.42% respondents indicated that they preferred educating their child in their own ways instead of getting help from the school. There was very little change from 2017 to 2018.

The survey then asked a question about how welcome school staff made parents feel in participating in their child’s education. Compared to 2017 (88%), respondents in 2018 gave somewhat more favorable responses, with 90.16% respondents reporting feeling welcomed by school staff.

The survey included items related to the race/ethnicity of the child as well as their primary disability and age (Table 1 and Table 2). While several of these categories had too few responses to be included in this report, we included breakdowns by item for the largest groups.

Table1

*Overall meaningful involvement, the level of understanding IEP (mean ratings), school staff welcoming , and transition agencies data of races, disabilities, and ages.*

	School Involves parents meaningfully (%)	School Staff are Welcoming (%)	Understand IEP (Mean Score 1-5)	Transition Agencies (%)
White (N=3078)	91.10	89.99	4.27	82.59
African-American/Black (N=256)	86.72	89.06	4.32	72.58
Hispanic (N=89)	82.02	83.15	4.25	88.46
Other races (N=289)	89.27	89.27	4.27	70.27

	School Involves parents meaningfully (%)	School Staff are Welcoming (%)	Understand IEP (Mean Score 1-5)	Transition Agencies (%)
Speech/Language Impairment (N=959)	92.60	92.49	4.26	88.89
Autism (N=572)	89.51	89.51	4.40	76.36
Developmental Delay (N=454)	90.31	89.87	4.28	76.19
Specific Learning Delay (N=488)	91.39	89.96	4.27	87.59
Mild Mental Disability (MMD) (N=219)	89.95	92.24	4.30	85.56
Functional Mental Disability (N=65)	89.23	90.77	4.11	83.33
Age<5 (N=485)	91.13	90.72	4.23	-
Age5-10 (N=1823)	91.55	91.44	4.28	-
Age10-13 (N=595)	91.76	89.24	4.29	-
Age14-18 (N=696)	86.06	84.48	4.15	81.2
Age>=19 (N=233)	75.76	78.79	4.55	-

Table1 depicts data regarding overall meaningful involvement, the level of understanding IEP (mean ratings), school staff welcoming, and involvement of transition agencies based on race, disability category, and age group. In 2018, responses for all race categories were all above 80% and Whites reported the highest scores (91.07%) to the question “Did the school involve you in a meaningful way to improve services and results for your child?” In general, about 90% of responses in various disability groups indicated meaningful involvement with schools. Compared to other disability groups, parents of children with a speech/language impairment felt the most involved by the school (92.6%). Among all age groups, students older than 19 had the lowest meaningful involvement percentage (75.76%) and students at middle-school age gave the highest involvement percentage (91.76%).

In 2018, a greater percentage of White respondents (89.99%) than of respondents of other races reported feeling welcomed by school staff. Hispanic families reported the lowest percentage of being welcomed by school staff (83.15%). Among different disability types, about 90% of respondents believed that school staff were welcoming, and there were few measurable differences in the percentages of the various disability groups. The percentage of students older than 19 reporting “school staff are welcoming” (78.79%) was lower than any other age groups and the percentage of elementary students (age 5-10) was the highest (91.44%). For parents of students of at least 14 years of age we asked if their child’s school provides information on agencies that can assist in transition to a career, technical training or higher education. 81.2% answered that their child’s school did provide such information. Responses varied widely by race/ethnicity, with parents of Hispanic children having the most positive responses (88%) followed by Whites (82%), African-Americans (73%) and finally other races at 70%. Responses also varied by disability type, with Speech Language Impairment and Specific Learning Disability receiving the most positive responses while parents of children with Autism and Developmental Delay were the least likely to agree.

More details about how parents felt about being involved in the child's education was further examined by student's race, disability type, and age (Table2). There were four responses to this question: I am very involved with my child's education; I want to be involved in my child's education in my own ways and do not need the school's help; I want to be more involved, but I'm too busy with other commitments; and I want to be more involved, but I don't know how to be. In general, over 63% of respondents reported that they were very involved in their child's education, and over 12% of respondents reported that they did not know how to be involved (except for the age group over 19), regardless of race, disability type or age group.

Among all races, African-American/Black respondents reported the highest percentage of being very involved in their child's education (75%). Hispanic families reported the highest percentage of not knowing how to be involved (20.22), and other races including Asian, Multiple races, Pacific Islander and Native American reported the highest percentage of being too busy to be involved in their child's education (12.80%). The percentage of respondents who preferred their own ways of being involved was similarly small among various races (<4%).

Table2

*How parents/guardians feel about being involved in the child's education data of races, disabilities, and ages.*

	I am very Involved (%)	I don't need school involvement (%)	I don't know how to be involved (%)	I am too busy to be involved (%)
White (N=3078)	70.89	3.67	14.75	9.91
African-American/Black (N=256)	75.00	1.56	12.11	10.55
Hispanic (N=89)	65.17	2.25	20.22	11.24
Other races (N=289)	68.86	2.77	14.19	12.80
Speech/Language Impairment (N=959)	73.41	3.55	13.03	9.59
Autism (N=572)	71.50	3.32	14.86	9.44
Developmental Delay (N=454)	69.82	3.30	14.98	11.45
Specific Learning Delay (N=488)	70.08	3.48	15.16	10.25
Mild Mental Disability (MMD) (N=219)	63.47	5.94	13.24	17.35
Functional Mental Disability (N=65)	69.23	9.23	15.38	4.62
Age<5 (N=485)	70.10	1.44	16.91	10.72
Age5-10 (N=1823)	71.04	3.46	14.87	9.98
Age10-13 (N=595)	73.61	3.19	12.94	10.08
Age14-18 (N=696)	70.11	4.45	13.51	10.63
Age>=19 (N=233)	72.73	6.06	9.09	9.09

Among six disability groups, Speech/Language Impairment reported the highest percentage of being highly involved in the child's education (73.41%), and Mild Mental Disability (MMD) reported the highest percentage of being too busy to be involved (17.35%). The percentage of respondents who did not know how to be involved in the child's education did not show significant differences among disability types. Interestingly, the respondent group of Functional Mental Disability distinguished itself with the highest percentage of not being in need of school's involvement (9.23%) and the lowest percentage of being too busy to be involved (4.62%). The potential explanation will be discussed in the following section.

In 2018, the percentage of parents of middle-school aged students (age10-13) who reported that they were very involved in their child's education (73.61%) was higher than other age groups. Parents of children younger than five reported the lowest rate of being involved in their child's education in their own ways (1.44%) and the highest percentage of not knowing how to be involved (16.91%). The age group above 19 reported the highest independence of education involvement (6.06%), and the lowest percentage of not knowing education involvement (9.09%) and of being too busy to be involved in their child's education (9.09%).

Two open-ended questions were asked to get detailed information about parents' perceptions of school involving them in their children's education: 1) What do you think the school is doing well in terms of involving you in your child's education; 2) What do you think the school can do better to involve you in your child's education (Table3)? There were 2983 responses to the first question. 21.02% parents noted general satisfaction without giving details. 1952 parents (65.44%) noted good communication with the schools. Many parents reported that they liked receiving regular reports on students' behaviors regarding progresses and challenges (31.65%), having meetings with school staff and exchanging information about students face to face (16.46%), participating in class activities and events with students (2.82%), and collaborating with skilled/caring teachers in the students' education process (8.75%). Other areas that the school was doing well in terms of involving parents in their child's education included offering good school support and after-school support, sending homework that parents can help their child with, following IEP programs, making themselves available to parents, understanding the child's needs, and being responsive to feedback.

The question regarding what the school could do better to help parents in their child's education had 2664 responses. About half of respondents reported that there was nothing the school could do to improve parental involvement (49.51%). Similar to the response to the question above, communication and regular reporting drew most attention from parents. 11.11% parents suggested improvement in communication between parents and schools. Among those responses, 15.88% suggested strategies to make things more understandable to parents and students including study materials, IEP procedure, homework, and other supportive information; 6.76% suggested the use of social media, such as school website and cellphone applications; and 22.97% asked for more contact for their concerns. 11.86% parents suggested having schools give more reports and records at a higher frequency, among which about a third of parents highly recommended giving reports on child's progress on a regular basis (weekly or monthly). 3.57% parents also reported their concern about meetings, especially about the flexibility of scheduling meetings. Other improvements suggested by parents included more

school events and activities for parents, sending more homework for parents and child working together, following the IEP, education related to more daily-life skills, personalizing study plan for students, and stopping bullying and labelling children with disabilities.

Table 3

*Responses to two open-ended questions.*

The School...	General Satisfaction/No Comments	Communication	Regular Report	Meetings	In-Class Events/ Activities	Skilled/Caring Teachers
Is Doing Well (N=2983)	21.02%	65.44%	31.65%	16.46%	2.82%	8.75%
Could Improve (N=266)	49.51%	11.11%	11.86%	3.57%	3.30%	2.85%

## Discussion and Conclusion

Several noteworthy findings emerge from the analysis of the 2018 Parent Involvement Survey. First, the overall level of involvement of responding parents continues to be very high, and is even improving. The number of respondents remains constant, so it is likely that the parents that respond to the survey are similar from year to year. Still, results must be taken cautiously. Even with nearly 4000 responses, this is less than 5% of the overall population of students with IEP's in the state, and there is little reason that they are representative in terms of their involvement of parents in general. We suspect that those parents who are the most involved are the ones responding to the survey. We encourage the state to supplement our findings with extant data from all students with IEP's, such as the number of students with IEP's whose parents have created and accessed the Infinite Campus Parent Portal. HDI would be happy to be involved with this if the data were made available.

Differences in responses based on race/ethnicity are noteworthy. Parents of Hispanic students reported the lowest levels of involvement according to several measures. This may be for multiple reasons: parents of Hispanic students reported the highest rates both of not knowing how to be involved as well as being too busy to be involved. This may speak to communication issues resulting from language barriers, as well as the need for schools to accommodate differing work schedules of parents. This group also reported the lowest rate of feeling welcomed by school staff. Conversely, parents of Hispanic students were the most likely to report that the school provided information on transition-related agencies. We strongly recommend conveying this finding to school districts in the hope that they will reach out to parents of Hispanic students.

Responses from parents of African-American students presented an interesting finding. While they reported high involvement in their child's education according to the item, "How do you feel about being involved in your child's education", they also had lower scores on the item regarding the school's efforts to involve them in a meaningful way. On the first item, they scored approximately 5% higher than parents of White students;

while on the second item they scored about 5% lower. This may indicate that parents of African American students are involved with the school, but that they do not feel that the school is initiating this involvement at the same level as it does for White students and their parents. Parents of African-American students reported the least favorable responses related to transition. This is curious, as transition outcomes for African-American students with IEP's are generally more positive than for other races with IEP's. This may reinforce the notion that this group finds resources outside of school to be of greater assistance than in-school resources.

Differences based on the students' disability are difficult to draw inferences from. While all disability groups rated understanding of the IEP fairly high, it is troubling that parents of students with FMD had the lowest score on this item. This is a very important process for all groups, but arguably, the FMD group has the most to lose from a lack of understanding of the process. This group also reports the highest rates of both not knowing how to be involved, and not needing the school's help to be involved. One possibility is that they have grown frustrated with the school, and while not knowing what to do, do not believe the school can help. Because this is a group that may be in danger of exiting the public school system early (either through dropout or failure to stay until the age of 21, or enrolling in a home school setting) this is a set of findings that deserves attention.

Age, or school level, indicates that parents are the most involved in the middle school years, and the least involved during high school. Particularly as high school is an important time when transition decisions and planning are happening, we think it noteworthy that parent involvement drops off at this critical stage.

A final recommendation is to focus on increasing response rates. This will not only help with representativeness, but also allow districts more directed feedback. While no district or school can force a parent to complete a survey, a full 23 districts had no responses at all. Parents of students with MMD were the least represented group by disability. Districts should be encouraged to request and use the data in this as well as their district reports. The quality of those reports is directly linked to the responsiveness of districts to communicate with parents not only regarding the survey, but also in all matters on involving parents in their child's education.

# Appendix A

## Parent Involvement Survey



### Default Question Block

This is a survey for parents of students receiving special education services. Your responses will help guide efforts to improve services and results for children and families. In responding to each statement, think about your experience in working with the school. You may skip any item that you feel does not apply to you or your child. All responses are anonymous and cannot be traced back to you or your child. Please answer these questions as they pertain to the current school year (2017-18).

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1. Did the school involve you in a meaningful way to improve services and results for your child?

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- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 = "I don't understand the IEP process at all" and 5 = "I fully understand the IEP process," how well would you say that you understand the IEP process?

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- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

3. Which of the following statements describe how you feel about being involved in your child's education? (Check all that apply)

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- ☐ I want to be more involved, but I don't know how to be.
- ☐ I want to be more involved, but I'm too busy with other commitments.
- ☐ I want to be involved in my child's education in my own ways and do not need the school's help
- ☐ I am very involved with my child's education.

4. Do you feel that school staff welcome you to participate in planning for your child's education?

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- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. What do you think the school is doing well in terms of involving you in your child's education?

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6. What do you think the school could do better to involve you in your child's education?

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Please answer a few questions about yourself and your child so that we may focus our efforts to improve services.

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7. What is your school district?

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8. What is your child's race / ethnicity?

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- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African-American
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Multiple Race

9. What is your child's primary disability?

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10. What was your child's age on June 30, 2017?

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11. Does your child's school provide information on agencies that can assist my child in the transition from school to a career, technical training, or higher education?

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- ☐ yes
- ☐ No

## Appendix B

### Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parent,

We need your input! Our school district and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) want to hear from parents regarding how well your child's school is doing to involve you in the special education services provided to your child.

We would like you to complete a brief, online survey to share your experience with your child's special education services during the current school year (2017-18). Please go to [www.kypso.org](http://www.kypso.org), click "*Click here to access the 2018 Parent Survey,*" and complete the eleven-question survey telling us about your current experiences.

You may also access the survey directly by scanning the following code into your smartphone or mobile device:



If you would like to visit the school to complete the survey, you are more than welcome to use one of our computers. Unfortunately, this survey is only available electronically as we are unable to process paper copies.

Only one parent per student should complete this survey. However, if you have more than one child with an IEP, please complete a survey for each of your children.

All responses are anonymous and cannot be traced back to you or your child. Results will be analyzed by the Human Development Institute (HDI) at the University of Kentucky (UK) and used for a report to the U.S. Department of Education. We will also be reviewing the final report to see if we can do more to involve parents in their child's special education program.

The deadline for completing this very important survey is **May 31, 2018**.

Thank you for your help.

[Your name and position]